For Right and Might: The Militarization of the Cold War and the Remaking of American Democracy

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FOR RIGHT AND MIGHT:
THE MILITARIZATION OF THE COLD WAR AND THE REMAKING OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

By

MICHAEL BRENES

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2014
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
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dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

FOR RIGHT AND MIGHT: THE MILITARIZATION OF THE COLD WAR AND THE REMAKING OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

By

Michael Brenes

Adviser: Professor Robert David Johnson

This dissertation examines how Cold War defense spending shaped the evolution of American political culture and public policy from the 1940s until the 1990s. It argues that the Cold War economy contributed to the realignment of American politics in the postwar era. The fight against global communism abroad altered the structure, purpose, and public perception of the federal government following World War II, but also subsidized corporations, suburban communities, and individuals affected by defense spending. The militarization of the Cold War therefore created various dependents of America’s military and defense apparatus that continuously pressed for more defense spending during the Cold War, even if increases in the military budget were strategically and economically gratuitous. Americans in communities dependent upon defense contractors for employment and economic growth lobbied their political representatives to allocate more defense contracts to their towns, while defense companies and contractors formed alliances with activists, politicians, defense workers, and labor unions to ensure their profitability in the face of cuts to the defense budget. The combination of these forces created a unique “Cold War coalition” that worked to keep the defense economy active in shaping the domestic and foreign policies of the United States.
As the constitutive elements of the defense economy were threatened with defense cuts and a thaw in the Cold War after the 1960s, they increasingly gravitated toward political figures and officials who promised continued defense spending. After the economic crisis of the 1970s, residents of such “Cold War communities” saw job losses to inflation and stagnation, but also to a drawdown in the Vietnam War and the era of détente. By the end of the Cold War, communities reliant upon the Department of Defense for employment supported “conservative” proposals for the reduction of federal taxes and government influence in regulating local economies, while also campaigning for additional federal defense contracts to keep local economies afloat. By exploring the realignment of American politics through the context of global events—and their impact on local politics—this dissertation considers how the personal livelihoods and political prejudices of Americans shaped both national politics and foreign affairs.
Acknowledgements

I wrote this dissertation in libraries, living rooms, hotel rooms, coffee shops, train stations, airport lounges, and at home, but the writing stage was the only aspect of the dissertation process that I completed alone. Since I am the sole author of this work, any shortcomings fall on my shoulders, but its completion would not have occurred without the professional and personal support from so many people. It is a pleasure to thank them.

I must first thank Jonathan Rosenberg for his guidance and assistance over the years. I was an eager undergraduate student when I walked into his office in 2006 and said I wanted to earn a PhD in history. Jon informed me of the reasons not to pursue this endeavor, and when I ignored his caveats, he supported my decision and took me under his wing, helping me get into graduate school and encouraging my progress throughout. When this dissertation was at the proposal stage, he commented that it was ultimately about “the state,” a phrase that remained in the back of my mind as I conducted research and committed my ideas to paper. There is no conceivable way I can completely thank him for the many revisions to my work, letters of recommendation, conversations on how to navigate the world of academia, and most important of all, his time and attention. It is a great pleasure to call him my mentor, friend, and now, colleague.

My dissertation adviser, Robert David “KC” Johnson, provided sage advice during the researching and writing of the dissertation, and prevented me from making some very egregious errors. KC encouraged me to probe deeper with my arguments and provide more evidence for my assertions, making sure I weighed all viewpoints before making my conclusions. Kim Phillips-Fein went beyond her responsibilities as a member of the dissertation committee, taking
time to read early drafts of chapters as well as write a letter of recommendation for me. The other members of my dissertation committee, Jon Rosenberg, David Nasaw, and Joshua Freeman provided important insights during the dissertation defense that helped me rethink some of my arguments.

Other professors at the Graduate Center have also shaped my graduate education. Judith Stein, James Oakes, and Andrew Robertson have all left their imprint on this project. In his dissertation seminar, Thomas Kessner disabused me of my initial premises on how to write American political history. I resisted his suggestions at first, but when I gave in, the decision freed me from certain analytical boundaries, allowing me to hone my arguments. Other scholars outside of the Graduate Center read portions of this dissertation as conference presentations. For their comments and suggestions, I thank Jennifer Delton, Jason Friedman, David Farber, Andrew Preston, and Julian Zelizer. Laura Jane Gifford and Dan Williams gave me the opportunity to publish portions of Chapter Two in their edited collection on conservatism in the 1960s, and offered invaluable criticism on my submission.

Every historian knows that archivists are their lifeline. For their ability to uncover valuable sources, archivists at the Bentley Historical Library, the Hagley Museum and Library, the Hoover Institution on War, Peace, and Revolution, the Library of Congress, the Richard Nixon Presidential Library, the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, and the Harry S. Truman Library deserve special mention. On the last day of my research at the Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Jeremy Schmidt pointed me toward some documents that helped significantly in the development of the fourth chapter. He also shared with me his research on the Helsinki Accords and sent me links to documents from the Ford Library archived online. Archivists at the Special Collections at the University of Washington
granted me access to the only classified box left in the Henry Jackson Papers. I also would not have seen important archival collections without the permission of several individuals. Christopher Buckley let me research his father’s papers at Yale, while the family members of Paul H. Nitze gave me permission to use his papers at the Library of Congress. The late William Rusher also granted me access to his papers at the Library of Congress before he passed away.

The research for this project took me into many parts of the “Gunbelt.” I would not have been able to make these trips without the gracious and generous financial assistance from the John Anson Kittredge Fund, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, the Harry S. Truman Library Institute, the Bentley Historical Library, and the City University of New York. A grant from the Robert A. Divine Travel Fund from the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations allowed me to present some of this dissertation’s findings at their annual conference. I must especially thank the Executive Director of the Graduate Center’s History Department, Helena Rosenblatt, who found funds deep within the recesses of the History Department budget to provide me with a fellowship at a very crucial time in my life.

For much of my graduate career, I taught courses in U.S. history at Hunter College. Teaching at Hunter was a profound experience that deeply shaped my approach to thinking about and teaching U.S. history. Jon Rosenberg, Donna Haverty-Stacke, Benjamin Hett, and Rick Belsky allowed me to be their teaching assistants my first years in graduate school and tutored me in the joys and pitfalls of undergraduate teaching. Barbara Welter (along with Josh Freeman) gave me a teaching fellowship at Hunter my second year in graduate school which helped pay the bills.

I knew the CUNY Graduate Center was an excellent academic institution when I joined its student body, but I did not know it was a place where I would meet lifelong friends. For their
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Final thanks go to my family and close friends. Kevin Lee opened his spare bedroom to me when I came to do research in Washington, D.C. More than Kevin’s willingness to provide accommodations, I treasure our longstanding friendship. Julie and David Tasker gave me more than just shelter for my two research trips to the Hagley Library in Wilmington, Delaware, but also transportation, delicious meals, great wine, good conversation, and wonderful hospitality on a daily basis. My brother and sister-in-law, Sean and Kathleen Murray, were always encouraging, and Sean provided a springboard for some of my ideas when they were in their infant stages. My nephews and niece, Connor, Leah, and Lucas, reminded me there is more to life than reading books and typing away in front of a computer screen. I could not have asked for more supportive in-laws than Paul and Karen Wereszynski. From providing everything from friendly advice to childcare, they have been a regular source of comfort and help throughout this process. Karen Parsons regularly told me how proud she was of me, which is all a son needs to hear from his mother. Lastly, I thank my wife, Michelle. Michelle has made a number of sacrifices to see the completion of this dissertation, too many to fit in this space. She kept me
company on extended research trips, offered her editorial assistance, and was my most ardent critic and dedicated supporter. She is everything anyone would want in a partner: kind, open, patient, and above all, loving. I cherish our life together and it is a pleasure to dedicate this project to her. Our son Nathan arrived at the late stages of the writing process, and once born, slept just enough to give his father time to finish the project on a timely basis. His presence in our lives proves that while studying the past is important, looking forward to the future is more rewarding.
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Introduction

In 1990, Theresa Bruno was a thirty-year employee of the Stratford, Connecticut based defense contractor Textron Lycoming when the federal government decided to cancel the company’s contract for the M-1 tank. With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and amidst pressure to reduce the federal deficit, President George H.W. Bush felt the M-1 tank program in Stratford (and in Greer, South Carolina) was outdated. Bruno worked to inspect M-1 tanks before they left the plant, and she worried the cancellation of the M-1 meant her job was in jeopardy. “We work and strive to give [the federal government] a good product,” she said, and had trouble understanding “why they have to eliminate it.” Robert Koetsch, a security guard at the plant, believed the end of the M-1 tank program was representative of “a plan to get our defenses down, get our guard down. If they shut this place down, and something happens in two or three years, it’s going to take a while to start up again.” A recent retiree of Textron Lycoming, John Morrison, concluded the cuts must mean “the generals have enough tanks to play with for a while.” But Robert Miere, who made parts for M-1 engines, found this logic unacceptable. While the Cold War might be over, international politics were still unstable, and it was no time for the federal government to sever its responsibility to defense workers. “Just because the Berlin Wall went down doesn’t mean there’s no threat. There are still other countries,” he said.1

Home to Sikorsky Aircraft and the Stratford Army-Engine Plant (until 1998 when it was closed), as well as Textron Lycoming, Stratford was a town dependent upon defense contracts and the Cold War that provided them. The state of Connecticut received 4.9 billion dollars from the Department of Defense—eighth highest in the country—even though it was twenty-eighth in

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overall population. Defense business was largely concentrated in Southern and Western Connecticut. Sikorsky Aircraft in Stratford was the largest defense contractor in the western part of the state, while General Dynamics Eastern Boat Company in Groton, which made submarines for the U.S. Navy, was located in the east. Like Textron, General Dynamics began to lay off workers following the demise of tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. By 1991, General Dynamics eliminated over twenty-five percent of its workforce. Such cuts were necessary, executives claimed, to keep the company afloat in a time of peace. In a twist of irony, General Dynamics’ executives were rewarded for the cutbacks, receiving bonuses based on their ability to increase the price of the company’s stock, which would be achieved by eliminating labor costs.²

The economic situation for General Dynamics in Groton was so dire that the company threatened to close its doors if it did not receive a new contract for the Seawolf submarine. The elected official fighting the hardest to keep General Dynamics solvent was Connecticut senator Christopher Dodd. Dodd, a Democrat, was part of the class of “Watergate Babies” elected to Congress in 1974. He supported the interests of organized labor and the expansion of the social safety net, but also aimed to stimulate the growth of business (including the financial sector) in his state through deregulation. Disliked by right-wing activists for his politics, Dodd earned a nine percent approval rating from conservative groups like the American Conservative Union (ACU) and the Chamber of Commerce, while a ninety-three percent rating from the Committee on Political Education of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).³ On foreign policy and national defense, Dodd opposed the Reagan defense buildup in the 1980s, strongly criticized the administration’s Central American policies, and voted

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against additional funding for the missile defense program entitled Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

But on the Seawolf submarine, Dodd was a defense hawk. Lobbying for the Seawolf contract alongside Dodd was his Connecticut colleague in the House, Democrat Sam Gejdenson. But both had sought to cut defense spending during the Reagan years, which led The New York Times to comment on the “paradox” of Dodd and Gejdenson’s national defense policies. “When the cold war was alive, Mr. Dodd and Mr. Gejdenson made careers of fighting the Reagan administration’s military buildup. Now they are warning that the country had better not cut military spending too sharply, even when peace is at hand.” Dodd argued the Seawolf program was vital to the economy of southeastern Connecticut, but it also protected the interests of national security, because “[s]tealth marine technology is critical to the country.” In attracting support for the Seawolf, Dodd accumulated unlikely allies, maneuvering a coalition of Democrats and Republicans in the Northeast to obtain more federal funds for the Seawolf, earning the nickname “the wolf” for his diligent efforts.

Visiting Groton after obtaining an additional contract for Seawolf submarines in 1992, Dodd and Gejdenson were greeted with cheers, the union leadership telling workers, “Say hello to Chris and Sam. They’re the guys keeping us afloat. We would have lost our jobs without them.” Sue Mack, a weight estimator at the Groton plant, said that Dodd had “given us a sigh of relief” and she and her fellow defense workers are “going to be loyal to these legislators,” presumably during the next election cycle. On the other side of the aisle, Republican senator John McCain was quick to call Dodd a hypocrite. While McCain opposed the Seawolf program, he generally favored increased military spending. McCain quipped that he wished that
Democrats like Dodd would “at some point develop an equal passion for the overall defense of our nation and weapons systems that are not made in their state.”

The example of the Seawolf submarine—and its relationship to local, national, and international events—demonstrates how national defense politics have acutely influenced American political culture. “For Right and Might” examines this history, exploring how the long-term consequences of defense spending (and its effects on American foreign policy) altered and destabilized American politics in the postwar era, affecting the personal experiences, economic livelihoods, and political affiliations of people like Theresa Bruno and Sue Mack.

Large-scale defense spending provided the structural basis for the United States’ projection of power abroad, as the expansion of America’s military apparatus enabled the U.S. to carry out its global mission of preventing the spread of communism. But the militarization of the Cold War also gave rise to a transformation in the federal state after 1945. The national security state created to fight communism abroad shaped the institutions of American democracy at home. These changes ultimately led to a more conservative political climate that continues to inform contemporary political debates. Cold War militarization, I therefore argue, contributed to the realignment of American politics in the latter half of the postwar era.

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5 I borrow the term “militarization” from Michael Sherry, In the Shadow of War: The United States since the 1930s (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Sherry defines militarization as “the process by which war and national security became consuming anxieties and provided the memories, models, and metaphors that shaped broad areas of national life.” See Sherry, In the Shadow of War, xi. Sherry is predominantly concerned with how a discourse of militarization manifested itself in the United States during the postwar era, and less on structural issues, including electoral politics and political economy. I view militarization as a “process” as well, but one that shapes the institutions and foundations of government and the economy more than discourse. For militarization applied to an analysis of gender and culture, see Laura McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Other works focus on the militarization of American political economy during the early Cold War years, particularly the development of a “military-industrial complex.” See Alex Roland, The Military-Industrial Complex (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 2001); Aaron Friedberg, In the Shadow of the Garrison State: American Anti-Statism and its Cold War Grand Strategy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Benjamin O. Fordham, Building the Cold War Consensus:
The militarization of the Cold War created a “marriage of convenience” between diverse groups of political actors who pushed to increase defense spending. A range of foreign policy issues like the Korean War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, and the Panama Canal Treaty played a significant role in mobilizing individuals and groups constitutive of the defense apparatus, including defense industry executives, white-collar and blue-collar defense employees, ex-military officials, political activists, politicians, and local boosters, to campaign for higher defense budgets. Militarization meant that Americans who depended on defense spending for personal, ideological, or material interests became wedded to the national security state, regardless of where they fell on the political spectrum. When threatened by defense cutbacks, the financial benefactors of the Cold War gravitated toward political candidates who wanted to increase defense spending to perpetuate the benefits the Cold War state provided.

Cold War defense spending also made cities and localities throughout the United States dependent upon the Department of Defense. These “Cold War communities” or “defense communities,” many of them suburban, economically relied upon the next defense contract to the local factory that made planes, parts for tanks, silos for missiles, or military uniforms that fulfilled the promise of middle-class prosperity Cold War communities strove to preserve. Global events had a functional impact on the economy in defense communities, as American involvement in wars and conflicts abroad led to shifts in employment, industrial development, and local electoral politics at home. Cold War communities were therefore cognizant of foreign policy events to a degree that was atypical in other localities that had less of a connection to the

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military and the defense economy. As “captives” of the military-industrial complex (and the international context of the Cold War that supported the defense economy), the livelihood of defense communities rose and fell with the undulations in the defense budget. These particularistic features led more Americans to support conservative Republicans—the largest proponents of substantial defense budgets after the 1960s—and were increasingly less inclined to favor a drawdown in federal defense spending or proposals for defense conversion even after the Cold War ended. While some did, the number of these individuals was never large enough to facilitate alternative policies on U.S. national security. The integrated coalition of liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats, who enlarged the Cold War state for the purposes of economic growth, military expansionism, and local boosterism, demonstrate that the politics of national security do not fall neatly along a “Red-Blue” divide.

The relationship between local and international events is therefore at the analytical core of “For Right and Might.” The links between American foreign policy, the political economy (and culture) of the Cold War, and suburban defense communities provide insight to how “ordinary” Americans came to support militarization. While the defense economy influenced the economic makeup of the country throughout the Cold War, it was never static. Many defense contractors were publicly traded companies beholden to shareholders who sought increases to their quarterly dividends. Like other industries, defense contractors suffered from cycles of booms and busts, layoffs and hiring. But the defense economy was not subject to the same market factors that other business sectors faced. Defense business during the Cold War was (and

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7 John Accordiono, Captives of the Cold War Economy: The Struggle for Defense Conversion in American Communities (Westport: Praeger, 2000). Cold War communities are therefore important and distinct sites of study to examine the connections between international events and local politics, or what some scholars have called the “local Cold War.” Scholarship on the “local Cold War” is limited, but growing. See Jeffrey Engel, editor, Local Consequences of the Global Cold War (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); Gretchen Heefner, The Missile Next Door: The Minuteman in the American Heartland (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2012).
8 This term is borrowed from Matthew D. Lassiter, “Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide,” Journal of American History Vol. 98 No. 3 (December 2011), 760
remains) non-capitalist; defense companies often functioned outside the vagaries of the private market. Rather than compete for market share among private consumers, who often could not and did not purchase the products and commodities made by the Cold War economy, defense companies competed with each other over access to funds and programs provided by their exclusive consumer base: the federal government. Individual consumers therefore could not use their purchasing power to limit or expand the size of defense contractors, nor regulate the prices charged for the products they made; they operated beyond the purview of supply and demand. Furthermore, federal standards for determining which company in which area of the country received a particular defense contract produced a zero-sum game, where defense companies (and the communities where they were located) in disparate areas of the country competed with one another over federal contracts. Those communities that won individual contracts celebrated the job growth and economic development bestowed to them, while the losers faced plant closures and job layoffs without the offer of federal aid.9

The influence of the defense industry on local communities resulted from deliberate decisions made by politicians and policymakers on a national level. When federal dollars and tax subsidies classified under the category of “defense” were steered to communities, the effects altered American politics and society. Indeed, the ideological and cultural justifications that supported the Cold War state blurred the lines between social welfare and defense spending. While viewed as a separate budgetary category from “social” spending, monies outlined for defense went to more than just building weapons. By embracing the Cold War’s purpose of fighting communism at home and abroad through a national security apparatus, policy makers ended up supporting greater spending on health care benefits to veterans, housing subsidies and

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9 This history is discussed in Ann Markusen and Joel Yudken, Dismantling the Cold War Economy (New York: Basic Books, 1992).
education grants for military families, and tax breaks for companies that invested in scientific research and development. Funds for national security went to building public works projects, the construction of airports and highway systems, and research projects in American universities, which also created an influx of labor to areas the United States government singled out as strategically important to confront the urgent and exigent threat of communism. Defense spending also created subsidiary non-defense business in local communities dependent upon the federal government. Small businesses that formed to meet the consumerist needs of federal defense workers (the proverbial coffee shop, pharmacy, or department store) were therefore just as reliant upon military spending as the defense contractor. Within the context of the Cold War, providing tax incentives and subsidies to private businesses in defense-rich localities had social value, and was at the same time a matter of national security. 

These economic conditions produced a distinctive political culture in the United States that led more Americans to support increased defense spending for reasons unrelated to the costs and consequences to America’s fiscal, political, or cultural health. Because of their unique association to the Cold War state, defense communities had the ability to place demands upon local, state, and national politicians to adopt policies that affected the trajectory of defense

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spending in the United States. With defense spending at its highest during the Korean War, many Americans accepted the military economy as a distinctive feature of modern politics. Rearmament during the Korean War gave an additional boost to the Sunbelt defense economy, while domestic mobilization for the war gave unemployed workers defense jobs that temporarily revitalized regions of the country affected by mechanization and capital flight, particularly in the Midwest.\footnote{On deindustrialization in the 1940s and 1950s, see Thomas Sugrue, \textit{The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Jefferson Cowie, \textit{Capital Moves: RCA’s Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor} (New York: The New Press, 2001).} But when the United States began to drastically scale back military spending in the 1960s—due to fears over the escalating arms race and financial inefficiency in the defense budget—it sent panic waves into defense communities. The Kennedy and Johnson administration’s attempts to reduce the size of the military budget inspired collaboration between constituents of the defense economy to reverse the proposed cuts. Defense production during the early years of the Vietnam War seemed to make these concerns fleeting, but the backlash against the war after 1968 led to defense cuts and layoffs that reignited fears among Cold War workers that their industry and occupations were inherently unstable.

In addition to defense cuts, rising inflation and unemployment rates, declining productivity, deindustrialization, capital flight, and the weakening of the American labor movement exacerbated competition for defense contracts among local communities in the late 1960s and 1970s. The economic crisis of the 1970s questioned the promise made by liberals to middle and working-class Americans that the federal state could deliver economic growth and international stability through federally subsidized policies, giving way to the resurgence of the free-market as a panacea to global and domestic problems.\footnote{For works that focus on structural changes to American and international political economy in laying the groundwork for the post-New Deal era, rather than right-wing activism, see Jefferson Cowie, \textit{Stayin' Alive: the 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class} (New York: New Press, 2010); Judith Stein, \textit{Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the 1970s} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Thomas} As the structural edifice of the New
Deal state eroded in the 1970s due to these forces, higher defense spending and foreign policy unilateralism seemed attractive solutions to resolve international conflicts, as well as stimulate economic growth at home. When recession threatened communities dependent upon the military, local politicians turned to the Department of Defense for help in lowering unemployment, raising tax revenue, and eliminating local and state budgetary deficits. Even in the 1980s, the defense economy often served as a proxy for development in areas affected by the economic downturn. In periods of austerity, officials in local, state, and national office sought defense contracts to relieve localities that were victims of deindustrialization and cuts to social programs, even while promoting such cuts.\(^\text{13}\)

The reemergence of market values was therefore concurrent with the remilitarization of American foreign policy. The fall of Vietnam to communism in 1975, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the subsequent collapse of superpower détente between the United States and the Soviet Union, weakened the legitimacy of détente and the reduction in American defense budgets that coincided with the rapprochement toward communist powers. The 1970s were indeed the “pivotal decade” that remilitarized the American public to support a hard-line defense posture after years of diplomacy, international treaties, and renewed relations with communist countries failed to achieve peace and prosperity for the United States. As the country began to question the size of the federal government, efforts to increase the size of the defense budget were used to justify cuts to social programs, limit government regulations on business, and reduce the size of the federal state that dealt with issues unrelated to defense spending.

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I thank Brent Cebul for his help and encouragement on making this point.
Militarization therefore served as a rhetorical weapon used to make policy arguments about the need to scale back social programs in order to spend more on defense and national security.\textsuperscript{14}

The role of the national security state in contributing to American political culture is well-recognized among historians. Scholars have noted that the Cold War state financed and furthered suburban sprawl, occupational mobility, and cross-regional migration, as militarization reorganized the spatial and demographic landscape of modern America to a degree unprecedented in the history of public policy.\textsuperscript{15} Previous scholars have also examined defense workers as agents and activists of the New Right. According to many historians of modern conservatism, since the Cold War provided defense workers (particularly in the Sunbelt) with the means to purchase high-priced homes, send their children to good schools, and carry out the existence of a comfortable suburban lifestyle, they possessed a bellicose anti-communist worldview. The employees of defense companies comprised the traditional base of the modern Republican Party: white, wealthy, and male. When threatened by high taxes and the regulatory arm of the federal government, defense workers supported conservative candidates like Barry Goldwater who vowed to keep the concerns of suburban Americans sacrosanct.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{16} Lisa McGirr writes in her book on Orange County, California that the ideology of modern conservatism “made sense to many Orange Countians who worked in military-installations and defense-related industries or who directly benefited from the defense boom of the region.” McGirr, \textit{Suburban Warriors}, 175. For more on defense workers and Southern California, see Dochuk, \textit{From Bible Belt to Sunbelt}; Michelle Nickerson, \textit{Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
This interpretation, however, underemphasizes the fact that the national security state was conceptualized, proposed, and implemented by New Deal Democrats, and was an outgrowth of New Deal policies. The defense industry seemed to offer a panacea to Democrats concerned about the challenges the United States faced in both the international and domestic arena. The Cold War state thwarted communist aggression, created jobs, ameliorated inflation, and kept American prosperity moving forward, which Democrats argued was not only important for the economy, but to blunt Soviet critiques of the capitalist West.\textsuperscript{17} Support for the national security state among the American public often went in hand with their defense of government-backed health care coverage, public works programs, and social welfare spending. Ultimately, however, the financial demands of maintaining the national security state, coupled with the irrational fear of communism within the United States, came to dominate and override the call for greater monies for domestic programs.\textsuperscript{18}

Moreover, defense communities located outside the Sunbelt were not hotbeds of conservative activism. By drawing attention away from the Sunbelt and into the “Gunbelt”—the swath of defense-dependent cities and states stretching from suburban Long Island to Texas to the Pacific Northwest—this dissertation demonstrates that defense workers were not always equated with modern conservatism, but occupied what historian Matthew D. Lassiter has termed the “volatile center” of American politics.\textsuperscript{19} Suburban activism within defense communities during the Cold War is more messy and complex than previous historians have noted. Defense


workers in many parts of the Gunbelt defended the military-industrial complex, but opposed its role in perpetuating the Vietnam War; they argued for the federal government to mandate better wages and benefits in the defense workforce, but wanted to reduce federal benefits provided to other Americans; they lobbied for more defense contracts to build ICBMs and nuclear warheads, but encouraged policymakers not to deploy them to resolve international crises. The policies that derived from this cognitive dissonance determined the local economies and political context of the Cold War. Indeed, few defense workers in the Northeast and Northwest wings of the Gunbelt were wedded to conservative causes—even fewer still were the foot soldiers for Barry Goldwater’s 1964 presidential campaign or right-wing organizations like the John Birch Society. While the converse might be true in areas such as Southern California—which comprised the nexus of the military-industrial complex during the Cold War—the “blue” states of the Northeast, principally New York and Connecticut, received a significant number of individual defense contracts, even more than the Pacific region of the country after 1966.\(^\text{20}\)

What made the residents of Cold War communities switch to the Republican Party or favor conservative candidates or issues was less a product of their preexisting worldviews or political ideologies than the impact of foreign and domestic events on their lives. What mattered more to defense workers was that their jobs were safe from defense cuts; they stayed off the unemployment line, and the privileges that came with their identities as hard-working, taxpaying citizen-soldiers in the Cold War were recognized and protected. In the 1940s and 1950s, Cold War liberalism safeguarded their collective interests, but after the mid-1960s, these workers turned to conservative ideologies and political figures because of the changes to the Cold War state following Vietnam. The politics of such “Cold War clients” fluctuated based upon

\(^{20}\) For these figures, see Markusen and Yudken, *Dismantling the Cold War Economy*, 175. Markusen and Yudken calculate not the total amount of funds rewarded to each region of the Gunbelt, but the individual contracts per capita. The Sunbelt south remained the largest beneficiary of total defense funds during the Cold War.
particular region, political affectations, and the structural changes to the country from 1945 to 1991, and ran concurrent to broader developments in American politics and foreign policy. It is therefore inaccurate and inappropriate to apply ideological labels to these actors. Expanding the focus on defense workers in the Gunbelt, rather than the Sunbelt, also illuminates how Americans, many of whom were detached from conservative ideology, promoted big-government policies at the local level while increasingly supporting an anti-government agenda after the 1960s.  

The political context of defense communities was shaped by foreign events, but also by a collection of national actors whose relationship to the national security state transformed American political culture and public policy during the Cold War. The first of these groups consist of national security elites: members of Congress, White House policy makers, and diplomats. Also within this group are foreign policy intellectuals whose dedication to anti-communism formed the basis of their support for increased defense spending. This list includes such former Cold War Democrats as Jeane Kirkpatrick, Dorothy Fosdick, Paul Nitze, Paul Wolfowitz, and Richard Perle, each of whom had policy positions in the federal government during the Cold War, and had served as staff members to the hawkish Democratic Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson. Conservative intellectuals such as National Review editor William F. Buckley, Jr. are also part of this group of elites. Many of the conservative hawks on defense spending

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21 I therefore avoid applying the terms “liberal” or “conservative” to defense workers in the Gunbelt, as many of them (but not all) were non-ideological and eschewed political activism altogether. When Democrats became the primary proponents of defense cuts in the 1970s, residents of defense communities increasingly switched their political allegiances to Republicans who aimed to preserve their livelihoods in an age of austerity. Cold War workers were also attracted to the Republicans for their positions on cultural issues during the 1970s. Prior to this time, and afterward, many residents of defense communities had liberal leanings and voted for Democratic candidates. The goal of approaching the residents of defense communities in this fashion, is therefore, in the words of Matthew D. Lassiter, to understand “the large group of voters in the middle (and on the sidelines) of American politics, the ordinary people who are not committed activists, are not particularly ideological, and do not self-identify as warriors on one side or the other of a national divide.” See Lassiter, “Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide,” 763.
were also small-government ideologues. Conservative intellectuals had little influence on policy making in Washington, D.C., but were an advocacy group that policy makers and Presidents (such as Richard Nixon) found they had to ameliorate in order to appease their political base. Movement conservatives that rallied behind right-leaning politicians and activists also had an influence on the militarization of the Cold War. These individuals signed up for anti-communist “Cold War seminars,” attended rallies on behalf of men like General Edwin Walker, and supported Ronald Reagan in his run for the presidency in 1976. These movement conservatives were foreign policy hawks who pushed the moderate wing of the Republican Party to take a tougher stance on communism through a military and nuclear buildup.

But militarization also complicated the trajectory of the Democratic Party and the American left after the 1960s. Indeed, massive defense spending to confront the threat of communism was supported with expansive bi-partisanship at the outset of the Cold War, with Democrats being the largest proponents of militarization until the 1960s. The enlargement of the national defense budget to serve American interests abroad occurred under the stewardship of New Deal liberals like Henry Jackson, Hubert Humphrey, Stuart Symington, and John F. Kennedy, who believed the federal government could also be a force of justice for disenfranchised racial minorities and the poor. Indeed, the Cold War was a “Democratic” war as much as and even more than a conflict originated by conservatives.

The anti-Cold War left was thereby largely relegated from the Democratic Party until the Vietnam War. The presidential candidacy of former Vice President Henry Wallace in 1948 was the first significant political challenge to Cold War liberalism. Wallace condemned massive defense spending in the name of anti-communism and feared American interventionism would lead to global instability. Remnants of the Cold War left after 1948 were found in the anti-
nuclear movement in the 1950s, the critique of the Cold War by the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s, and the nuclear freeze movement in the 1980s. But critics of defense spending were more numerous in the Democratic Party after 1968. When the war in Vietnam proved that military power could not defeat a well-disciplined communist insurgency, Democrats in power began to adopt anti-militarist positions, calling for cuts in defense spending and foreign policy retrenchment in the 1970s. But congressional Democrats often had to sacrifice their anti-militarism to the national security structure. The constituents that depended on the Cold War would not tolerate rhetoric and policies that eliminated the defense jobs that predated the post-Vietnam reaction against the military establishment. Indeed, anti-militarist Democrats had few good answers to the problem of militarization. Economic conversion from defense to civilian work never gained traction among defense workers once the United States’ economy declined in the 1970s. When threatened by deindustrialization and demilitarization, defense jobs became more valuable and important to the communities who depended on them. With occupational options restrained for American defense workers during the later years of the Cold War, the possibilities for a significant drawdown on military spending drifted further from view.

Americans who self-identified as “conservative” during the Cold War faced a similar problem. The right’s support for larger defense budgets meant that their faith in the unfettered private market was often superseded by their political and ideological desire to militarize American foreign policy through massive defense increases, leading to a nuclear arms race and a markedly expansive military footprint for the United States. Throughout much of the postwar era, conservatives favored—or participated in—the allocation of federal funds to the Cold War economy in drastic numbers. The expansion of military bases in California and Washington, D.C., the installation of Intercontinental Ballistic Missile silos in the Midwest, and contracts for
defense companies who specialized in Cold War technology were just a few of the programs conservatives argued were necessary to defeat communism. Championing the militarization of foreign policy therefore meant that the American right looked to the state to enhance the power of the United States abroad in ways that departed from U.S. tradition prior to 1940. This included support for the national security state.  

The interrelationship between the Cold War political economy, U.S. foreign policy, and domestic culture, therefore illustrate how the anti-government, anti-statist tendencies among the right are misleading, and defy modern conservatives’ perceptions of the postwar federal state and their role in its alterations. Indeed, right-wing conservatives’ adopted a form of defense Keynesianism during the Cold War. While the right tried to avoid seeing the defense economy as a means to ensure full employment or increase consumers’ purchasing power (as Cold War liberals did), they did understand that foreign policy militarization could serve as a stimulant for economic growth, a resolution to high unemployment, and efforts to modernize and improve infrastructure in states and localities—which in turn created more jobs. Few members of the right recognized or admitted to deliberately promoting defense Keynesianism, since it would belie their stated claims about the proper role of the federal state. But as conservatives participated in the building of the national security state, local towns and economies who relied on the Cold War as an engine of job creation and economic development lobbied these same individuals for more spending. Holding a variety of positions within the United States government including the United States military, Congress, and increasingly after the 1970s and 1980s, the Executive

22 Historian Iwan Morgan has noted that the period from President Richard Nixon to George W. Bush was an “age of deficits” for which both conservatives and liberals are to blame. In examining Ronald Reagan’s approach to deficits and deficit spending, Morgan concludes that Reagan refused to cut defense spending even when it came down to “a choice between defense and deficits.” Iwan Morgan, The Age of Deficits: Presidents and Unbalanced Budgets from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 90.
Branch (specifically the State and Defense Department), the right became willing and active architects of a federal state that contradicted their traditional suspicion of big-government. 23

By embracing the structure of the national security state, the right gained access to the halls of power and policy making in the postwar era. Government entities, particularly the State Department and the Department of Defense, steered federal funds to right-leaning groups that favored a hard-line approach to U.S. foreign policy. Organizations such as the American Security Council, the National Security Information Center, the Committee on the Present Danger, and the Coalition on Peace through Strength worked alongside Congressmen, presidential cabinet appointees, military officers, and defense company executives. These organizations individually

23 Historians have thus far neglected a discussion of how the Cold War placed limits on American conservatism, particularly conservatives’ policies toward reducing the federal government. This is because the most recent historiography on American conservatism has been preoccupied with the process of coalition building among the competing interests of conservative actors and has discounted the limitations, tensions, and conflicts among the right. See McGirr, Suburban Warriors; Joseph Crespino, In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Kim Phillips-Fein, Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009); Kevin Kruse, White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Joseph E. Lowndes, From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Rick Perlstein, Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus (New York: Nation Books, 2009); Bruce Schulman and Julian Zelizer, Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2008). Historian Julian Zelizer has broached these concerns with a recent article in Reviews in American History on the state of the field of American conservatism. Zelizer noted that despite conservatives’ hard-fought efforts to eliminate the welfare state and New Deal liberalism in its entirety, they have failed to do so. Zelizer clearly shows that liberalism is not dead. While New Deal and Great Society programs are faced with constant attacks and cuts from conservatives, they are at the same time well-liked and supported by a vast number of Americans. Considering the continued presence of the liberal state in American politics (albeit weakened), new studies in conservatism should examine, as Zelizer argues, “how conservatism unfolded in dialectical tension with liberalism rather than as a replacement to liberalism.” Zelizer also asks scholars to consider the difficulties faced by conservatives in realizing their policy goals “before and after the 1970s.” Julian E. Zelizer, “Rethinking the History of American Conservatism,” Reviews in American History, 38:2 (June 2010), 367-392. Kim Phillips-Fein and Matthew D. Lassiter raise similar concerns. Phillips-Fein suggests that the flaws of the literature on conservatism rest partly with historians’ failure to explore the “embattled and fragmented” nature of American conservatism, while keeping in mind the changes to the American political and economic system that “are not simply the result of the organizational victories of the Right.” Lassiter too laments the “whiggish” turn in the field, comparing the historiography of conservatism to a “pendulum that has swung too far in one direction” to the detriment of scholars’ attention to “the complex dynamics of political culture, political economy, and public policy.” Phillips-Fein, “Conservatism: A Roundtable”; Lassiter, “Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide.” For recent and important exceptions, see Meg Jacobs and Julian Zelizer, Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989: A Brief History with Documents (Boston: Bedford St. Martin, 2010); Joseph Crespino, Strom Thurmond’s America (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012); Lily Geismer. “Don’t Blame Us: Grassroots Liberalism in Massachusetts, 1960-1990 (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010).
and collectively argued that the U.S. needed to increase its military spending to defeat the Soviet Union and its satellite states. Longstanding lobbying groups for American business such as the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce also worked with government officials to keep defense spending high. Their actions guaranteed the profitability and perpetuity of defense companies during the Cold War, particularly after the 1970s when the military establishment came under attack in response to the quagmire of the Vietnam War. The deep-rooted and interdependent connections between special interest groups, political action committees, federal money, and employees and benefactors of the Cold War state pressured, if not compelled policy makers to adopt measures that enlarged American military power. While these groups and individuals were not always determinative in making policy, they succeeded in providing a consistent advocate for higher defense increases and military interventionism that gained the regular attention of elected officials (both Democrats and Republicans) and others responsible for the well-being of U.S. national security.²⁴

As it did to their counterparts on the left, militarization also proved disastrous to Cold War critics on the right. Neo-isolationists like Robert A. Taft and Kenneth Wherry worried that the United States’ entry into a global Cold War meant a garrison state at home, one that would

²⁴ The militarization of the Cold War therefore offered the right access to political power in ways previous historians have overlooked. In reassessing their ascendency in the 1980s, conservative activists felt their viewpoints and perspectives on politics and policy went unheard until Ronald Reagan granted them safe haven within his administration after 1980. Unable to ensure Arizona Republican Barry Goldwater’s election in 1964, appeased by Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, and ignored by Jimmy Carter, the American right created a narrative of marginalization and ostracism from the highest levels of American institutional power; a narrative some historians of conservatism have been too quick to adopt. This interpretation of modern conservatism, however self-serving, is a fictitious account of the right’s relationship to American politics and the federal state. Indeed, Kim Phillips-Fein has aptly written that while conservatives experienced a “deeply felt sense of themselves as outsiders on the defensive, they were never the excluded figures they believed themselves to be.” Kim Phillips-Fein, “Conservatism: A Round Table,” *Journal of American History* Vol. 98 No. 3 (December 2011), 723-743, p. 739. See William Rusher, *The Rise of the Right* (New York: William Morrow, 1984); Richard A. Viguerie, *The New Right: We’re Ready to Lead* (Falls Church: Viguerie Company, 1980). Such works that highlight the narrative of exclusion are Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendency: How the G.O.P. Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Laura Jane Gifford, *The Center Cannot Hold: The 1960 Presidential Election and the Rise of Modern Conservatism* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009).
absorb the nation’s financial resources. Not only members of Congress, but right-wing activists like Dan Smoot, John T. Flynn, and Gerald L.K. Smith of the Christian Nationalist Crusade questioned the premises that justified Cold War defense spending. While vehemently anti-communist, they argued that federal expenditures on large-scale foreign aid programs (through the Truman Doctrine or Marshall Plan, for example), defense bureaucracies, and a standing military, defied the constitutional limits of American foreign policy. But isolationists were marginalized by the popular consensus and culture that supported the national security state. Right-wing critics of the Cold War persisted beyond the 1950s, but largely outside or at the fringes of the Republican Party. The libertarian wing of the anti-war movement in the 1960s, evangelicals’ support for the nuclear freeze movement, and the handful of Republicans who favored a reduction to the defense budget following the Cold War, reflected the long legacy of the pro-Taft wing within the Republican Party. Once the opponents of the Cold War were marginalized, fissures among the American right on national defense policy were therefore not over whether the federal state should be enlarged to fight international communism, but to what dimensions, and for what purposes.25

The local and national forces that supported higher military spending during the Cold War thus formed a unique coalition that would come to influence politics in the postwar era. This coalition was neither completely conservative nor liberal; nor was it always successful in its outcomes. The defense hawks on the national stage set the tone for local developments in Cold War communities, but local politics were more determinative in pressuring national security

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25 This argument challenges the popular narrative of how the New Right came to support the Cold War national security state. Historian George Nash credited National Review editor-in-chief William F. Buckley with moving conservatism away from isolationism and toward “internationalism.” I argue that modern conservatives supported the militarization of American foreign policy independent of National Review and well before the publication of its first issue in 1955. Buckley, furthermore, was not the sole public figure in creating this shift. See George H. Nash, The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945 (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998, 2nd edition).
elites to enact policies that were perhaps contrary to their intended interests. The symbiotic relationship between the local and national proponents of defense spending therefore made militarization a decisive feature in the process of state-formation and policy making during the Cold War. The partnership between national policy makers and residents of Cold War communities was tenuous on issues outside of defense spending, but was unified in working to keep individuals in power that supported their agenda to increase American military might. Whatever reason they came to support militarization—personal, financial, ideological, or strategic—the various components of this “Cold War coalition” reinforced each other in their collective and universal effort for higher defense spending.

Some clarification is necessary regarding the terms used to describe the political actors in this dissertation. The bipolar paradigms of left/right, liberal/conservative, Democrat/Republican seem inadequate to fully characterize the architects and proponents of militarization. Since the terms liberal and conservative are insufficient when discussing the backers of Cold War national defense policy, I have slightly modified them to account for their inconsistencies. In denoting a liberal or Democratic proponent of the Cold War, I have used the term “Cold War liberal” or “Cold War Democrat.” This term is given to figures such as Senators Hubert Humphrey and “Scoop” Jackson who were liberal-minded on social issues, including civil rights and labor rights, but were adamant that the United States must answer Soviet communism with military and nuclear superiority. The popularity of Cold War liberals was confined to a specific historical context from 1945 to the mid-1960s. Conceived in the Truman years, Cold War liberalism fell out of favor by the 1970s as the class of “New Democrats” or “Watergate Babies” came into office after 1974. I have termed these individuals “anti-militarist” or “anti-militarist Democrats.” Like the term Cold War liberal, I use the term “anti-militarist” to apply to a specific period and
context. I define an anti-militarist as an individual opposed to massive defense increases following the Vietnam War. This term was also used in the late 1960s to denote New Left activists and policy makers who sought a reduction in the defense budget. I have used the term for these reasons, rather than apply an original one that would be anachronistic.\(^{26}\) I also distinguish between the terms “Democrat” and “liberal.” Democrats did not have to be liberal, while liberals were not necessarily Democrats. The linguistic shuffling between the terms “Cold War liberal” and “anti-militarist Democrat” overcomes the vagueness of the term “liberal.”

The terms “conservative” or “conservatism” also need to be qualified, considering their multiple meanings and applications. For decades, historians have struggled to unite the various strains of conservative thought to explain how a conservative “movement” congealed after 1945. Most have acknowledged the theory of “fusionism” promulgated by journalist Frank Meyer and historian George H. Nash. Fusionism posits that after 1945, anti-communism among the right made allowances for the involvement of the state in matters of national security, even while conservatives continued to uphold free-market and anti-statist principles. Indeed, conservatives prioritized the private market over the public sector, but accepted that the federal government best handled national security policy. The prewar and postwar right shared the belief that the state had a responsibility to ensure the security of the American people against external threats. The differences between the Old Right and the New Right were over the degree the state could intervene in Americans’ lives in order to defeat the threat of communism.

In applying the term conservative to certain groups and subjects in these pages, I have accepted the basic definition of fusionism. However, I do so noting that conservatives were willing to use the power of the state to confront economic and social issues, rather than market forces, if they were deemed necessary for the purposes of national defense. Few of the

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conservatives in this project were anti-government purists. Modern conservatives, with the exemption of a few libertarians, sought to reduce the proportions and influence of the state on Americans’ lives, but fell victim to the tensions between their anti-communism and anti-statism. While conservatives maintained coherence between anti-statism and their support for an expansive military both philosophically and intellectually, when it came to making national defense policy, anti-communism often took precedent over anti-statism. The limits of anti-statism in making policy during the Cold War prevented the postwar right from achieving their ultimate outcome: to reduce the size of the federal government.

The conservatives in this project were therefore not “traditionalists” who wanted to conserve or preserve institutions. Through state intervention, the modern right sought to promote policy changes that would reverse the gains made by the New Deal and Great Society during the twentieth century, but they also aimed to institute new political and cultural norms. As this project is more concerned with the right’s views on foreign policy and national defense, I consider this analysis when I use the term “conservative.” In a specific sense, many modern conservatives proposed policies that would lead to an even larger military than what much of the public envisioned after World War II. While Cold War Democrats expanded the size of the military and national defense regime to an unparalleled size, had conservatives taken control of both houses of Congress and the presidency during the Cold War, the size of the national security state would be broadened even further. Lastly, many of the individuals I label as conservative also self-described as “conservative” or members of a conservative movement, further preventing the use of improper labels to a person or group of people.

By explicating the interactions between the national security state, global affairs, and local politics, “For Right and Might” takes a historical approach toward explaining contemporary
problems. The Cold War ended more than twenty years ago, but many of its economic and military structures remain. One of the central issues that this project illuminates is how the Cold War continues to remake American politics beyond its geopolitical lifetime. The United States still spends an exorbitant amount of federal dollars on defense, more than the next ten countries combined. While current U.S. defense spending as a portion of G.D.P. is low relative to years past, worldwide the United States is second only to Saudi Arabia in this figure. American military bases are stationed in all seven continents, the government regularly finances expensive Cold War era defense projects, and the 3,000,000 American military personnel is by far the largest number in the world. Indeed, the United States continues to spend money on a Cold War military despite its inapplicability to the problems the country faces in fighting the War on Terror. Even Secretary of Defense under President George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld (who few would classify as a dove on defense), acknowledged this point and tried to streamline American military forces during his tenure. Rumsfeld, however, like many others before him, “failed to make corresponding cuts in weapons systems that are no longer justified.” This project offers insight into the confluence of political forces that have kept the structure of the national security state intact after the Second World War.

The militarization of the Cold War also offers perspective into the disconnection between the rhetoric and the reality regarding Americans’ relationship to the federal government. In the age of Obama, Democrats and Republicans (albeit to much different degrees) have put forward ways to cut back on government programs in order to trim the size of the federal deficit. This is despite continuing bipartisan support for massive defense budgets. At the same time, the public

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responds favorably to anti-government rhetoric, even while ninety-six percent of Americans receive aid or subsidies from the federal government. Some of the answers to this conundrum are found in the history of the Cold War. Defense spending during the Cold War contributed to what political scientist Suzanne Mettler has called the “submerged state,” as it allowed Americans to experience the advantages of federal spending without attributing them to a welfare state.

Militarization was seen as essential to the protection of the nation during the Cold War, and the benefits it distributed to Americans were viewed as earned, even necessary, rather than given. Thus, the impact of defense spending on American political culture is yet another legacy of the Cold War that remains unaddressed.  

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Chapter One: The State and the Cold War Citizen

On October 9, 1951, in the depths of the Korean War, the head of the United Auto Workers (UAW), Walter Reuther, wrote to President Harry S. Truman urging him to ensure federal assistance to workers adversely affected by the transition to a wartime economy. In December 1950, Truman had launched the Office of Defense Mobilization (ODM) to handle the militarization of the War at home by allocating defense contracts to businesses, hiring manpower, and streamlining production of necessary equipment. Reuther claimed that the rapid shift to defense urged by ODM had left civilian workers unemployed. Grounding his arguments within the context of anti-communism, Reuther wrote that the “working people of America are prepared to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to defend freedom against the threat of communist tyranny.” For this reason, “defense work must be integrated in civilian plants to assure that the unused productive capacity” is utilized to employ more union workers. The solution to unemployment was more defense work.¹

Reuther, a man of the political left who cut his teeth in socialist circles in the 1930s before helping found the Americans for Democratic Action in the 1940s, was not alone in looking to gain from the Cold War. Reuther’s opponents across the political aisle also sought more federal employment from defense spending. Republicans wanted the federal government to spend more funds on national defense to put Americans to work. Republican Representative from Michigan Gerald Ford, months before the Korean War broke out, urged the National Security Resources Board—the predecessor to the ODM—to declare Grand Haven, Michigan (located in his congressional district) “a critical area” in need of defense contracts in order to

¹ Telegram to Harry Truman from Walter Reuther, October 9, 1951, folder: Miscellaneous (1951) A to Z, OF 264, White House Central Files—Office Files, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri (HTL).
help “the labor market conditions” in the city. Other Republicans such as California senator William Knowland wanted greater defense contracts for the “shipbuilding or ship repair industry,” in California, citing the need to invoke Defense Manpower Policy No. 4 for the state, which gave areas with high unemployment priority to receive defense contracts. Months after writing his letter, however, and after he was elected Senate Majority Leader, Knowland led the campaign to repeal Defense Manpower Policy No. 4, most likely after he found it could not be applied to the ailing industry.\(^2\)

This chapter explores the impact of militarization on American political culture during the early years of the Cold War. When militarization confronted “everyday life,” in the words of one historian, the construction of a new national security apparatus reconfigured the public’s relationship to the federal state. Americans’ lives at home were irrevocably affected by the United States’ global assault on communism.\(^3\) As the comments by individuals as diverse as Walter Reuther and Gerald Ford make clear, the public consistently sought access to the benefits the Cold War provided to local communities; Americans turned to the Cold War state for jobs and a multitude of other federal programs when economic recession threatened their pursuit of middle-class prosperity. In the absence of a broader social safety net, militarization provided federal benefits without the stain of social welfare. As the Cold War economy serviced the needs of the unemployed, a defense buildup was encouraged by Americans regardless of whether there was a strategic need for its products.

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The Cold War on the local level therefore reinforced politics at the national—and indeed international—level. Scholars have noted that a domestic culture of anti-communism pressured President Truman to increase the defense budget against his initial wishes, leaving his domestic agenda entitled the “Fair Deal” to languish behind the concerns of fighting communism. But Democrats during the early Cold War were dedicated anti-communists too. With Democrats’ plans toward full employment, national health insurance, and the enhancement of labor unions dashed by Republicans, militarization seemed the logical alternative to deal with social and international problems. Democrats reasoned that the struggle against communism kept prosperity moving forward at a time when the country was concerned about falling into another Great Depression. Local communities rewarded those Democratic officials who brought employment and growth to their areas through military spending. As historian Darren Dochuk has shown, even defense-rich Southern California—the epicenter of American postwar conservatism—was a vibrant area for blue-collar labor-liberals during the early Cold War. Outside of presidential elections, the South, which received a significant portion of funds from the Department of Defense, was still overwhelmingly Democratic in the 1940s, 1950s, and much of the 1960s. Southern Democrats supported militarization along with racial segregation. Not all Democrats, however, fell in line with the Cold War. Progressive critics of American foreign policy such as Henry Wallace were ridiculed for their uneasiness with the growing confrontation with the Soviet Union. Wallace’s 1948 presidential campaign, and the left-wing Cold War critics he marshaled to his side, were a vocal minority that was overwhelmed by the proponents and

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benefactors of the Cold War—and the anti-communist consensus within the Democratic Party. While a substantial number of Cold War critics remained in the federal government among the remnants of the New Deal left, conservative anti-communists who equated dissent with disloyalty silenced their skepticism toward the Cold War.6

Indeed, the domestic culture of anti-communism enhanced the strength of Republicans who used the Second Red Scare to build political power in the United States. For much of the New Deal period and World War II, Republicans were an embattled party. The early years of the Cold War, however, provided opportunities to Republicans to bolster their influence in the name of fighting communism. As David K. Johnson has shown with his examination of the “lavender scare,” where homosexuals in the State Department were branded as communist traitors, Republican anti-communists broadened the structure of the national security state to pursue suspected enemies of the state.7 National security building among Republican elites had long-term consequences for democratic politics during the Cold War. The prevailing scholarship has looked at the anti-statist tendencies of the Republican right during the immediate postwar years, but Republicans in the 1940s and early 1950s—with and without Washington, D.C.—were not as isolationist and anti-statist as historians have originally claimed them to be. 8 A nascent statism emerged among elements of the right that welcomed the expansion of the national defense bureaucracy, believing the militarization of the Cold War had great potential for

coalition building. The primary debate among the right, therefore, was not whether to increase or
decrease the size the Cold War state, but how the state would function in a postwar context. To
maintain power, the right worked within the Cold War state to secure influence among the
American people and positions of power in the federal government. The national security
structure was not imposed upon the right, but was constructed by their policies.

Republicans (and some Democrats) abandoned fiscal austerity on matters of national
security by the 1950s because of the effects the Cold War had on local politics. Once the Cold
War state took on significant dimensions, Republican appeals for reducing the size of
government proved unattractive to many Americans who benefited from the Cold War economy.
Even in trying to lessen the power of the federal government, conservatives from both parties
ended up expanding it in important ways. By the outbreak of the Korean War, dedicated non-
interventionists like Robert Taft and Kenneth Wherry acquiesced, and at times embraced, the
notion that the Cold War state was a structural necessity to defeat communism. Economic
militarization marginalized anti-interventionism on the left and the right after World War II,
making the Cold War an entity that Americans at the local and national level were beholden to
for the next fifty years.\(^9\)

**World War II and the Private-Public Origins of Militarization**

The success of the Allied powers in defeating fascist Germany and imperial Japan
vindicated the capitalist system in the United States. American capitalism, it seemed, had saved
the country from the Great Depression. It was not merely capitalism broadly, but the

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\(^9\) The terms Republican and conservative were not always synonymous in the early years of the Cold War. I have
tried to be careful in this chapter of distinguishing the two. For a book that looks at the evolving conservatism within
the GOP, and how that conservatism changed over time, see Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendency: How
government-directed defense economy that brought prosperity to Americans after a decade of hardship. World War II fetishized the defense economy as massive employment through the warfare state won over an American public previously suspicious of big-government.\(^\text{10}\) The success of defense business in transforming the country made talk of war profiteers and criticism of big business during the 1920s and 1930s outdated, as the achievements of the public-private alliance between government and business forged a renewed faith in the free-market to deliver America from the threat of fascism, rather than government intervention alone. Capitalism, like the war itself, proved regenerative to the American spirit.\(^\text{11}\)

The warfare state that emerged out of World War II had its origins in the Great Depression. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his government program for recovery, the New Deal, while giving relief to the thousands of unemployed Americans through jobs and social programs, fell short of bringing recovery to the American economy. After unemployment fell from 25 percent to 14 percent between 1933 and 1936, the 1937 recession sent unemployment rates skyrocketing once again to near 20 percent. FDR then began to flirt with ideas of government planning, convinced that American capitalism had reached its obsolescence. Roosevelt accepted the premise put forward by his cabinet members and advisors such as Thomas Corcoran that the government had to play a role in managing the economy. The government had to turn to overt “planning” to address the inherent problems of capitalism, Corcoran argued.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{10}\) For more on this point, see James Sparrow, *Warfare State: Americans in the Age of Big-Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).


Roosevelt was convinced that the 1937 recession was partly a result of poor economic conditions in the South. The dragging Southern economy contributed to the absence of an economic recovery, Roosevelt concluded, and that the federal government should play a role in modernizing the region. The Southern economy was still largely agricultural and relied on tenant labor, which brought wealth to a few planters and low wages to an impoverished majority. Roosevelt aimed to change this, believing the industrialization of the South would bring increased wages to the region and economic recovery to the nation. Through the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and government funding for infrastructure projects, the Roosevelt administration succeeded in providing federal stimulus to the South. The New Deal’s presence overwhelmed the region, much to the chagrin of Southern politicians who believed the federal government usurped states’ rights and the racial balance of the region.

When war came to the world with the invasion of Poland by Germany on September 1, 1939, the Southern economy underwent even greater transformation. Attracted by cheap land and even cheaper labor, the federal government and private military contractors invested in building defense plants in the South, making the region an emerging industrial force and the premier site for war production. The Southernization of the defense industry during World War II contributed mightily to the economic recovery of the United States. Consequently, the South—and primarily the Deep South—became the site of defense companies that employed previously out-of-work farmers and laborers to make products for the war effort. As a result, employment in manufacturing in the South rose by 50 percent and wages by 40 percent. After 1945, the defense industry and the American military remained influential in restructuring the Southern economy to the point that the famous American author and southerner William Faulkner commented in
1956, “Our economy is the Federal Government.” According to historian Bruce Schulman, the defense industry “permeated nearly every town” in the Sunbelt as it would come to employ more workers in the South than in clothing manufacturing by 1973. The defense company Lockheed—which only had 10 percent of its business in non-defense related matters—could claim on its payrolls workers who lived in one-third of Georgia’s counties during the 1960s and 1970s.

The defense industry was not simply a Southern phenomenon, but stretched from the Northeast to Pacific Northwest. This region, which political scientist Ann Markusen and others have aptly entitled the “Gunbelt,” was due to both deliberate and fortuitous circumstances. Boeing Corporation, for instance, became a primary employer in Seattle as far back as World War I, simply because its founder, William Edward Boeing, was located in the region after his entrepreneurial engagements with the timber industry failed. World War I was also the genesis for major airplane manufacturers like Curtiss Corporation and Dayton-Wright. Dayton-Wright became a significant local employer in Dayton, Ohio after the 1926 Air Corps Act gave federal funds to build the Wright-Patterson Airbase. Many defense companies during the World War I era were based in the Midwest, an area known for a concentration of industrial skill and output that the federal government heavily financed during the interwar years.

World War II enhanced the power of Midwestern defense companies that mass produced war materiel for the federal government. Ford Motor Company was the third largest defense contractor during the war, as the company’s record of automation, efficiency, and mass

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14 Ibid., 141.
15 Ann Markusen, et al., The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3. The “gunbelt” is defined in geographical terms as the region that stretches from New England through the Sunbelt and up to the Northwest, and is the premier site of defense production in the United States. Areas in the gunbelt have disproportionately benefited from defense spending, which has in turn shaped and distinguished the political, cultural, and economic makeup of local communities.
16 Ibid., 51-56.
production led to an unexpected 428 of the company’s Liberator airplanes being produced a month. Including Ford Motor Company, three of the top five defense contractors during the war were also based in the Midwest. World War II also created new industries and in the South, East, and West. What was at one point a small part of the economy was now the central engine of job creation in many cities and regions. By the mid-1960s, government jobs in defense employed three percent of America’s workforce, over two million jobs. In Long Island, New York and Southern California, the availability of land and space proved pivotal in the development of the airplane industry, as defense manufacturers like Grumman, Fairchild, General Dynamics, and Rockwell would become the primary employers in these areas. Defense spending in such large numbers spurred suburbanization in the Gunbelt, increasing home ownership and the size of the American middle-class. The relationship between militarization and suburbanization, as historian Joshua B. Freeman has argued, were “two of the great social trends of the twentieth century.” Defense communities created by the Second World War were a reflection of America’s global prosperity and consumerist abundance.  

Wanting to keep the “American Dream” alive in their districts and states, local and national politicians from defense communities subsidized the defense industry to serve their respective political agendas, thereby furthering the expansion of the warfare state. Republicans and Democrats rewrote the tax code during World War II to allow defense companies tax write-offs and lower marginal tax rates, believing such measures cut taxes, aided business, and reduced the size of the federal government in one fell swoop. Cheap land grants were given to the Pentagon by Southern Democrats to establish air and naval bases, military hospitals, and other

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federal defense facilities in the South, citing the desire for more high-skilled jobs and industrial progress in the region. After the 1950s, concerns of a nuclear attack from the Soviets and access to federal funds convinced Cold War Democrats to finance the construction of missile silos in the South Dakota plains, leading the Air Force and Army Corps of Engineers to coerce farmers into selling their land to the federal government for the sake of nuclear deterrence. In the East and West coast, Democrats and Republicans alike saw a need to keep federal defense spending flowing to their areas after the war subsided. Entreaties from defense and military workers employed Cold War rhetoric to urge politicians to keep defense installations open in their communities. In the latter half of the 1940s, residents in Washington State urged their young Democratic Congressman named Henry Jackson to keep Sands Point Naval Base open, maintain a strong defense budget, and ensure retirement benefits for military personnel. Defense workers at Boeing’s headquarters viewed themselves as quintessential hard-working Americans who prospered because of the government’s commitment to the profitability of private defense contractors like Boeing. When the U.S. military threatened to relocate Boeing from Seattle to Wichita in 1949, Seattle residents rallied behind the company, arguing that Boeing “should remain in our community” so that its employees “will continue to enjoy the benefits of this magnificent payroll.”

World War II provided the material justification for the national security state, but the ideology of policymakers in the postwar era ensured its perpetuation into the Cold War. In the

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20 Letter to Henry Jackson, September 23, 1949, folder 37, box 9, accession no. 3560-002, HMJP; Resolution on—“Save Boeing’s Payroll for Seattle,” folder 37, box 9, accession no. 3560-002, HMJP.
immediate months following the surrender of the Japanese in the fall of 1945, the Truman administration extracted several lessons from the war’s experience. One of the most enduring lessons of the war was that the United States must prevent the recurrence of a surprise attack similar to Pearl Harbor. American leaders vowed to never again allow the United States to be caught unaware of impending threats to its national security by a foreign enemy. As the United States prepared to confront the threat of its former ally the Soviet Union (and more broadly, communism), the metaphor of Pearl Harbor became all the more profound. The lessons of World War II, in the minds of many policymakers, proved that diplomacy and negotiation produced only appeasement and eventually war. Negotiations could not be conducted with dictators who have imperial ambitions; the outcome of the 1938 Munich Conference was proof that diplomacy was ineffective in dealing with totalitarian regimes. The only answer to thwarting German, and now Soviet belligerence, was military power. Indeed, the desire for American preparedness as a deterrent to communist aggression was echoed repeatedly by leading figures within the United States government, particularly the military establishment. Considering the losses the Soviet Union suffered fighting Germany, the nation posed no considerable military threat to the United States during the postwar years, but American policymakers feared the attractiveness of communist ideology to Western Europe and other strategic areas that had close economic and political ties to the United States. In the face of these threats, America’s military must remain prepared to wage another conflict if needed.\footnote{On the metaphor of Pearl Harbor, see Ernest R. May, \textit{Lessons of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975). On the threat of the Soviet Union, see Melvyn P. Leffler, \textit{A Preponderance of Power: National Security, The Truman Administration, and the Cold War} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).}

The national security state also played an important role in the making of America’s postwar economy policy. The warfare state engendered economic growth and social mobility in
World War II and was therefore deemed fundamental to America’s economic might after 1945. President Truman often conflated economic and military power as justification for increases in the size of the military. In the early years of the Cold War, Truman emphasized to Dean Acheson that “military strength is dependent upon a strong economic system and a strong industrial and productive capacity.”\textsuperscript{22} Officials within the Truman administration also believed economic instability was contributive to the success of communist movements. A strong economy meant a stronger role for the United States in the world; any waverling in the defense budget was a sign of weakness that the communists were sure to exploit.

The Cold War policy of containment also encouraged the production and free exchange of goods to prevent the spread of communism to America’s trading partners. As Truman acknowledged in a speech on American economic policy to the American Legion, “world prosperity is necessary to our own prosperity in the United States.” For the United States to achieve economic growth, it also must be spread to the world.\textsuperscript{23} Throughout the Cold War, U.S. economic policy was directed at keeping European and Japanese markets open to American commodities, and vice versa. The defense economy contributed to the economic fortunes of America’s allies as militarization fueled growth abroad to preserve the security of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Japanese steel was used in American weapons during the Korean War, while American requests for one thousand trucks a month during the war became “Toyota’s salvation.”\textsuperscript{24} As countries profited from the products made by the Cold War, the defense economy conveyed the superiority of American capitalism in both a domestic and

\textsuperscript{22} Memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, May 13, 1948, National Military Establishment—Miscellaneous folder, Box 11, papers of Clark M. Clifford, HTL.
international context. The role of the United States in remaking the global political economy therefore entailed a regular and integral role for militarization during the Cold War.

The global war on communism made the national defense structure an indelible feature of postwar politics in ways that would determine the role of the U.S. in the world. American military power also established new and diverse connections between the economics of the Cold War and the social affects they engendered in local communities, creating varied interests and dependents upon the defense economy. These interests enabled the growth of the national security state to fulfill the mission of the U.S. abroad and the promise of economic growth at home. The ideological justifications behind U.S. Cold War foreign policy furthered the underlying economic and social effects of defense spending, creating a reciprocal relationship between the military and the citizenry. The local effects of the Cold War in turn shaped the international dimensions of American foreign policy, as the public-private origins of militarization altered the role and function of the American political system and the structure of foreign policy making in Washington, D.C.

**Redefining American Politics within the Cold War State**

President Truman initially wanted defense *reductions* during his early years in office, not defense increases. The onset of peacetime demanded a reorganization of budgetary priorities for the President. The defense budget was important, but not as significant as expanding domestic programs for middle-class and working-class Americans. From 1946-1949, Truman struggled to consolidate his “Fair Deal” for Americans, which would have broadened the New Deal through a program of national health insurance, new social security benefits, and civil rights reforms. Truman also wanted to prevent rising inflation rates, and like Roosevelt, embraced the need for a
balanced budget. Reducing defense spending would go a long way toward achieving these goals, Truman felt. But Truman’s domestic agenda was frustrated by his opponents who stymied his Fair Deal. Some anti-Fair Dealers were Democrats like Maryland senator Millard Tydings. Tydings and Democrats like him were fiscal traditionalists who believed the New Deal destroyed the constitutional foundations of the country.

Most of Truman’s opponents, however, came from the Republican right. Republicans too believed that the end of the war meant a new era for the federal state. But unlike Truman, the right wanted price controls lifted, tax rates slashed, collective bargaining rights of labor limited, and regulations on business eased. The 1946 midterms, which gave Republicans control of both houses of Congress, allowed them to achieve some of these goals. The vociferous anti-communist fervor that pervaded the country after World War II stymied Truman’s domestic agenda, halting any further extension of the New Deal state. Congressional conservatives were able to pass anti-labor legislation such as the Taft-Hartley Act, and with the help of entrenched corporate interests and organizations such as the American Medical Association (AMA), killed discussion of a national health insurance program. Republicans dangled the specter of communism over the head of Americans like a Damocles’ sword, warning Americans that an expansion of social welfare was a communist ruse to subvert American individualism and replace it with collectivism.

But anti-statism among the right left congressional elites exposed to critiques that they were “soft” on communism—at least in their willingness to use state power to deal with the Soviet threat. As Georgia Democratic Representative Carl Vinson commented on his Republican

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colleagues shortly after they expressed their opposition to the Truman Doctrine, “They don’t like Russia, they don’t like Communism, but they don’t want to do anything to stop it.”

Comparisons between communism and fascism among right-wing intellectuals exacerbated this problem. In his manifesto to the free-market, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), Austrian economist F.A. Hayek implied that there was no difference between communism and fascism, as there existed “a relative ease with which a young communist could be converted into a Nazi or vice versa.” As historian Jennifer Burns points out, Soviet exile Ayn Rand spent her life and career arguing that American civilization—its system of free enterprise and individualism—were under constant threat by communists who were no different from fascists. The fascist/communist analogy employed by Rand and Hayek made credible Truman’s polices that expanded the size of the federal government for reasons of national defense. If communism was identical to National Socialism in form, purpose, and content, then logic led to the conclusion that the U.S. government was justified in obstructing the spread of Soviet communism with the same means it did to thwart fascist Germany. Within this dichotomy, anti-statism on national defense issues had less weight, as the anti-communist right was invariably trapped within the structural arrangement of the Cold War era.

This predicament contributed to a disconnection between policy and principle among the right. Communism needed to be vanquished, according to Republicans, but defense monies were better spent on projects other than what Truman asked for from Congress. Aid to Europe through the Marshall Plan subsidized socialist countries with taxpayer dollars, compounding federal deficits and leading to increased inflation. Members of the right believed the frontline in the war

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30 See Burns, *Goddess of the Market*. 
between communism and the free world was not in Europe, but Asia. The Chinese Civil War between Chiang Kai-Shek’s nationalists and Mao Tse-Tung’s communists was the most pressing issue to the right. Publisher of the *Manchester-Union Leader* William Loeb felt that General George Marshall’s withdrawal of American forces from China in 1947 was equivalent to “abandoning the Chinese to the Communists as we abandoned the Poles.” A powerful “China Lobby,” headed by John Birch Society member Alfred Kohlberg, and consisting of Loeb, Clare Booth Luce (wife of *Time* magazine publisher Henry Luce), and officials of the Chinese nationalist government, funneled money to a “propaganda campaign on behalf of Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Government” which lampooned diplomats and policymakers within the Truman Administration for the “loss of China,” after Mao came to power in January 1949. While the Truman administration could not decisively conclude just how “closely these extreme right-wing, anti-Semitic groups and individuals are tied in with the central activities of prominent Chinese,” it was apparent that the China Lobby bankrolled Chinese advocates of the nationalist government who sought to influence American elections by financing like-minded political candidates, including enlisting men to “go through the South, at the expense of the Chinese News Service, urging a Republican-Dixiecrat coalition for 1952 on southern politicians.”

In addition to a greater emphasis on Asia during the 1940s, Republican critics of Cold War containment wanted restraints on defense expenditures. Congressional Republicans wanted a defense budget that was smaller and redesigned to accommodate their worldview on how to defeat communism. Rather than a muscular Army and Marines, congressional conservatives worked to reallocate defense funds to a stronger Navy and Air Force—which would be more cost efficient. While Senator Robert A. Taft complained that the defense budget figures requested

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31 Letter to Arthur Vandenberg from William Loeb, February 3, 1947, reel 4, AVP, BHL.
32 Memorandum to Theodore Tannenwald, Jr. from James S. Lanigan, October 9, 1951, U.S. Chambers of Commerce in China folder, Box 140, White House Press Secretary File, HTL.
from the Truman administration were too high, he also said that more funds were needed to modernize the Air Force. According to historian Michael J. Hogan, Taft believed that because “the United States could not match the Red Army man for man, he thought it was better to counter Soviet strength on the ground with American strength in the air, particularly in air-atomic power.”33 While he was opposed to the warfare state, this viewpoint made Taft among the individuals responsible for America’s overreliance on air power following World War II. When the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb in 1949, it proved to Taft “above everything else the necessity of building up an all-powerful Air Force.”34

However, more bipartisanship existed on Truman’s Cold War policies than his domestic ones. Southern Democrats widely backed Truman’s measures on Cold War spending, so much so that political scientist Ira Katznelson has argued that among “all the blocs in Congress that backed the Truman administration’s international polices, Southern Democrats were the most steadfast.”35 Programs defended under the rubric of national defense were also more likely to pass with Republicans. The Republican Party remained divided on Cold War strategy and the amount of federal dollars spent on defense, but a coalition of Republicans voted with Democrats to pass defense budgets even larger than requested by Truman. As the Cold War escalated in 1948 due to the Berlin Blockade and the Soviet coup in Czechoslovakia, anti-communism led to greater consensus on national security policies. Appropriations for modernizing aircraft met the approval of Democrats and Republicans alike. Missouri representative Clarence Cannon, usually a fiscally prudent Democrat on military spending, complained that in the few years following

33 Hogan, A Cross of Iron, 100.
35 Katznelson, Fear Itself, 423.
World War II, “every branch of our armed forces has deteriorated until our military might is but the shadow of its war peak strength.” More air power was needed to confront the Soviets, but the U.S. also “must be provided at all times with the latest military, air, and naval equipment fully abreast of the latest research findings.” Isolationist senator Kenneth Wherry said there must be “a strong air force capable of defending the national security of the United States of America, and that if cuts in expenditures are to be made they should be made in some other place, either in the other branches of the military or on the economic front.”

Amid the international and domestic concerns over communism, both Democrats and Republicans cautioned the American public against returning to the old foreign policy order. The Truman administration aimed to motivate citizens’ vigilance against communism; political indifference eroded Americans’ spirit for victory in the Cold War. The President’s Committee on Religion and Warfare in the Armed Services, known better as the Weil Committee, aimed to rejuvenate civic patriotism in peacetime. The Weil committee would enhance the “moral welfare of our young men,” by helping transition military personnel to civilian status while seeing that the communities they returned home prepared for “their new responsibilities to the peacetime military establishment.” In its report to the President, the Weil Committee warned the American public to avoid complacency if they wanted to win the Cold War. The committee expressed concern that American “civilians too often tend to be apathetic to the needs of our armed forces, and our apathy frequently breeds mutual misunderstanding and resentment. This traditional

peacetime apathy toward our military establishment is dangerous.”  

While members of the Weil Committee discouraged an exorbitant defense buildup to fight communism, they nevertheless accepted that communism was the premier enemy to the security of the United States, and military power was needed to defeat it. The Committee distrusted the “brass hats” within the military, but at the same time wrote that it was America’s armed forces that had best preserved “‘democratic values’ among the ranks of our servicemen and women, and the civilian community by and large has not.”  

Republicans felt the same, believing the United States was a superpower, but its strength was precarious—it relied upon an attentive democracy. Republican Congressman from Michigan, John B. Trevor, feared that because Americans were not sufficiently mindful of the communist threat, “Apathy and timidity are stifling patriotic action, so—Communism marches on!”  

Right-leaning patriotic organizations warned that Americans’ must recognize that the communist threat at home and abroad is severe enough to deprive them of their well-preserved liberties at any moment. Apathy, inattention, and amorality, were the collective perennial threats to the nation’s security. Groups like the American Legion warned against political inaction during the 1940s and 1950s, encouraging Americans to be culturally prepared to fight communism. A local chapter of the Legion in Uniontown, Pennsylvania launched a program of “Americanism” in 1955 that Legion member and former national commander Paul H. Griffith said was “a positive, dynamic demonstration of patriotism and devotion to America and its

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38 First Report of the President’s Committee on Religion and Warfare in the Armed Services, “Community Responsibility to our Peacetime Servicemen and Women,” March 24, 1949 National Military Establishment—Armed Forces folder, Box 11, papers of Clark M. Clifford, HTL
40 “Revolutionary Radicalism,” address by John B. Trevor, April 17, 1940, Communism, info folder, box 1, JBT, BHL.
Indeed, the American Legion was revitalized as a cultural weapon against communism. The Legion’s supporters thought the organization “now confronts a greater responsibility than ever before in the life of the nation because it can furnish organized stability to a large sector of our public thinking” through its patriotic activities. The country was “going to sadly need this sort of rational Americanism.”

The preservation of a moral America was therefore premised on widespread opposition to communist subversives at home and abroad. This anti-communist consensus between Democrats and Republicans led to agreement and collaboration on national defense policy. While debates and differences would continue between the left and the right over the Cold War, significant portions of both parties agreed that a bigger national security state was needed to defeat America’s foreign foes. The differences between many Democrats and Republicans were in the technical details of where and how the money for defense was spent, not over whether (or if) the U.S. should have a large defense budget. Non-interventionist Republicans were against a large defense budget, but did not want a return to a prewar military. While isolationist Republicans thought an expansive Air Force could replace a standing army and a permanent military footing, it only contributed to the larger structure of the military state. The enlargement of the Air Force was not cost efficient, and accompanied the growth of the entire defense structure during the early Cold War—one branch of the armed services did not outweigh another in the fight against communism.

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41 “Legion Ideals Followed in Program Here,” The Morning Herald, May 3, 1955, American Legion—Americanism Day folder, Box 2, papers of Paul H. Griffith, HSTL.
42 Letter to Colonel Alton T. Roberts from Arthur Vandenberg, December 20, 1946, reel 4, AVP, BHL.
43 According to Michael J. Hogan, “Taft’s enthusiasm for airpower was linked to his sense of America as a nation apart with a democratic identity that would be lost if it violated the ancient taboos against a large standing army, entangling alliances, and the stationing of American troops abroad.” This might be true, but Taft’s vision was not one shared by James Forrestal, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other members of the Truman administration who believed the U.S. had to balance military power among all the branches of the armed forces and were more
As the 1940s neared their end, however, a handful of Cold War critics on the left and right sought to reverse the tide of militarization. These individuals saw growing defense budgets as a break with America’s past, one that threatened to supplant the American republic with a military autocracy. Influenced by an isolationist, and at times, anti-imperialist political tradition in the United States, these individuals warned Americans that the structure of militarization made the United States an interventionist power that spelled catastrophe to the institutions of American democracy. A foreign policy without limits, these left-wing and right-wing critics said, made Americans more willing to find comfort in massive military power to protect the United States from external threats.

**The Importance of Regionalism**

At the outset of the Cold War, a lingering strain of isolationism (or non-interventionism) dominated the regions of the Midwest. These isolationists were progenies of Progressive Era activists who had opposed American intervention abroad. In the years between the Civil War and World War II, non-interventionist Republicans combined a Jeffersonian suspicion of foreign alliances with a Hamiltonian desire for a strong, free-market economy. Neo-isolationists also invoked George Washington’s Farewell Address and his caveat that the United States should be cautious of engaging in alliances with other powers. Foreign entanglements that would make U.S. foreign policy beholden to the dictates of its allies were to be avoided. Non-interventionists also criticized America’s incursions into Cuba and the Philippines to secure the business interests of American corporations and take up the “white-man’s burden.” Isolationists were also opposed to a standing army. They were convinced that the militarization of the American economy would

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*responsible for national defense policy during the early Cold War. These individuals supported Taft’s proposals on the Air Force, as they served the larger purpose behind the defense buildup. See Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, 101.*
bankrupt the United States. Prolonged conflicts drained revenues from the state, creating vast deficits that imperiled America’s economic might.\textsuperscript{44} Midwestern isolationists were also suspicious of governing institutions that centralized power, from the Federal Reserve to the League of Nations. As one conservative Senator misleadingly said about the League, “We are ‘Americans’ and no international Banking syndicate can terrify or bulldoze us!”\textsuperscript{45}

In the 1920s, non-interventionist Republicans in Washington continued to call for a more restrained global footprint. The human destruction created by World War I, and the failure of the United States to join the League of Nations, spurred a demand for international peace among global powers. Isolationists Republicans in the 1920s embraced these events. Non-interventionist Republicans shared the concerns of Midwestern progressives over militarism creeping into the body politic. These Republicans were at the forefront of attacks on the “merchants of death”: those companies who profited from trading with the Central and Entente powers during World War I, and were accused of perpetuating the war for financial gain. Individuals such as Felix Morley, who would go on to contribute to the magazine \textit{Human Events}, found themselves in company with liberal Republicans like North Dakota senator Gerald Nye, who laid the blame for the war at the feet of greedy business interests.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Midwestern isolationists merged hostility with New Deal economics and an interventionist foreign policy, believing they were symptomatic of the mistaken efforts by Democrats and their Republican sympathizers to use government power to regulate the outcomes of global and domestic affairs. One critic of Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg complained that because of his collaboration with Democrats on foreign policy

\textsuperscript{44} For the various strands of conservative thought toward American foreign policy, see Colin Dueck, \textit{Hard Line: The Republican Party and U.S. Foreign Policy Since World War II} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

matters, the Senator had “gone over to the New Deal body and soul.”

One Michigan resident, Mrs. Grant Ballantine, in discussing her distaste for foreign aid to Greece under the Truman Doctrine, said that Republicans were more bedfellows than enemies to Democrats. She claimed to speak for “All true Republicans [who] are sick and tired of 15 years of FDR ism.” Despite the overwhelming majority of Republicans in Congress after 1946, the leading members of the G.O.P. are “just [Republican] in name only. That’s why we get no real change from New Deal ism. Our hopes are blasted.”

George Sefcik told his congressional representative that he was tired of the U.S. “spending Billions of dollars in building up Europe and defending them from communism. You are taking from our people money they don’t have to spend in Europe.”

L.E. Osmer from Grand Rapids, Michigan felt likewise, wondering why “the American taxpayer” had to shell out their hard-earned money for a nation like “Turkey, a country who didn’t help us out in our hour of need during world war II.” Osmer argued that the U.S. was “good and big and generous but we are not good enough to bail out the rest of the world and, if countries like France want Communism and countries like England want Socialism, there isn’t a thing that you or anyone else in Washington can do about it.”

Chicago resident and banker Ralph M. Shaw said that as “a strong, unwavering Republican and...patriotic American citizen,” he was appalled at the foreign aid to Greece and Turkey under the Truman Doctrine. Shaw said that the “best way to protect America is to discharge the unnecessary feeders at the public crib in Washington and elsewhere; decrease the taxes; pass much needed remedial labor legislation,” and this can allow

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46 Letter to Ralph M. Shaw from Arthur Vandenberg, March 19, 1947, reel 4, AVP, BHL.
47 Letter to Clare Hoffman from Mrs. Grant Ballantine, March 9, 1947, Hoffman Radio Talks, March 11, 1947 (aid to Greece) folder, box 10, Clare E. Hoffman papers, BHL.
48 Letter to Clare Hoffman from George Sefcik, January 2, 1951, Foreign Policy folder, box 35, Clare Hoffman Papers, BHL.
49 Letter to Arthur Vandenberg from L.E. Osmer, March 15, 1947, reel 4, AVP, BHL.
the United States to “then make ourselves so strong from a naval, military, and atomic point of view that no nation would dare attack us.”

During the early Cold War, Robert Taft was the leading Republican in Congress who feared America’s financial downfall would be due to high defense budgets and a bloated military. Taft led a group of non-interventionist Republicans against the national security state, including John Bricker from Ohio and Kenneth Wherry from Nebraska. Taft and his cohorts felt the threat to the country posed by the Soviets equaled the one posed by large military budgets. Taft believed that the constitutional purpose of the federal state was to protect the country from immediate external threats and little else—Republicans opposed the New Deal and social programs on these grounds. While conservative Republicans shared a limited role for the state on economic issues, a portion of the Republican right believed the threat of communism warranted the expansion of the state on national security. Taft disagreed with his Republican colleagues who argued the federal government could only protect Americans through exorbitant military power. To Taft, communism was a threat, but building a national security state placed limitations and restrictions on Americans that the Founders feared, sacrificing well-preserved freedoms in the process. Massive defense spending accompanied price controls, inflation, and government influence in the market, all that were anathema to the America Taft envisioned. The Soviet Union and its satellites were not urgent threats that demanded the U.S. “militarize our economy.”

The Bricker Amendment was one of the more visible challenges to the new structure of American foreign policy. Sponsored by Republican John Bricker in 1953, the amendment was the isolationists’ answer to the United Nations. The Bricker Amendment circumscribed the

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50 Letter to Arthur Vandenberg from Ralph M. Shaw, reel 4, AVP, BHL.
Executive’s authority in making international treaties that did not accord with the President’s powers as written in the Constitution. Since the Constitution did not envision a Cold War presidency, Congress would exercise greater power over the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, theoretically allowing Republican isolationists to prohibit the United States from entering into treaties with countries and governments they were disinclined to support. The Bricker Amendment, however, never made it passed committee hearings. Liberal Republicans and organizations such as the American Legion and the Chamber of Commerce of the United States (COCUSA) endorsed collective security and the United Nations, even claiming that an “international political organization is necessary for the purpose of maintaining peace and security among nations.”

These organizations were national, while the pro-Bricker Amendment forces were local in context. Vigilant Women for the Bricker Amendment, headed by Mrs. Winifred Barker of Chicago and Mrs. Ruth Murray of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, kept the campaign for the Bricker Amendment alive well into the mid-1950s, lobbying members of the Senate Judiciary committee to keep the “radical left [from] joining with the inter-nationalists” in defeating the amendment. The Bricker Amendment was immensely popular in the Southwest as well. Fred W. Moore, a lawyer from, Houston, Texas argued to Truman official William L. Clayton that there was “a growing tendency of Left-Wing judges and lawyers to justify any socialization of industry under the treat-making power.” Another Texas lawyer, one opposed to the Bricker amendment, said he “went to a meeting of the Bar Association and I would say that a heavy majority of the lawyers, or at least the conservative ones, are for the Bricker Amendment. Asking them why, I found they had never read the amendment (and I knew they had all voted for Eisenhower) and all they could

52 “America Wants World Organization,” Box 16, GLKSP, BHL.
53 “Time for Action,” pamphlet authored by Vigilant Women for the Bricker Amendment, Bricker Amendment folder, box 1, JBTP, BHL.
do was to mumble “Yalta.” The Bricker Amendment was troublesome to him because “the campaign for it is extremely strong. Throughout Texas the so-called “conservatives” and Eisenhower voters—and Republicans—overwhelmingly favor the Bricker Amendment.”

Indeed, support for the Bricker amendment came from a conglomeration of right-wing isolationists. The backers of the amendment were predominantly the “extreme fundamentalist groups, violently cracked preachers and many others of great wealth.” Radio programs and commentators used the power of the airwaves to coordinate the diverse factions among the isolationist right. Willard H. Pope was one such radio commentator. Pope accused opponents of the Bricker Amendment of being communists in disguise and the “anti-Christ foretold by Jesus and Prophets, Revelation 6 through 18.” The U.N. was decried by Pope as “an octopus” that “controls our children” and will eventually “repeal the Taft-Hartley law.” Pope claimed that those rallying to defeat the Bricker Amendment are few and “are the World Federalists with Pro-Soviet” sympathies, while the “savers of the nation are the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the DAR.”

Not all Midwesterners were opposed to an “internationalist” or interventionist foreign policy. Men like Republican senator from Michigan Arthur Vandenberg—who played an important part in shaping a supposed “bi-partisan” foreign policy during the Cold War—was the most popular Midwestern internationalist. Vandenberg offered a careful analysis of his internationalism in a speech made in 1925. Vandenberg argued that the right kind of “internationalism” is a mutually respected “justice” between sovereign “nationalities.”

Vandenberg recognized the value of international alliances in the postwar world, but still lauded

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American exceptionalism and the importance of nation-states. Whereas the “wrong kind of internationalism” is an effort to submerge “nationalisms” beneath a political super-sovereignty which futilely attempts to rely upon international force instead of international conscience,” the “right kind of internationalism” is a mutually respected “justice” between sovereign “nationalities.” Vandenberg also favored a “World Court” and alliances with countries that “do not have to become world vassals in order to deal justly with each other and to be scrupulous in their engagements.” Distorting the lessons of American imperialism in Latin America, internationalism could not encompass the “Far Eastern brown races” as they would not be welcomed “into our own unrestricted citizenship.” But Vandenberg repudiated isolationism as a guiding force in American foreign policy. “Actual national isolation is a ridiculous anomaly in this day when pioneering genius has put the veritable wings of the morning upon world communication and world contacts. There is no such thing as isolation.”

The policy platforms of the America First Party (AFP) demonstrated the problems that confronted right-wing non-interventionism after World War II. Created by right-wing activist and Minister Gerald L.K. Smith in 1943, the American First Party was an outgrowth of the American First Committee, the organizational home for isolationists during World War II. Now that the war was over, the AFP demanded deterrence against foreign threats through federal expansion of the state. America First said that the U.S. “must remain a strong nation. We must defend our outposts. We must maintain a great Navy and a strong Army.” Military strength can be assured through increased expenditures for military salaries, and “not be done by peacetime conscription. It should be done by making the pay of the soldier, the sailor, and the marines so attractive in peacetime that men whose temperaments lean toward the military will actually seek

56 Arthur Vandenberg, “Internationalism—Good and Bad,” April 16, 1925, speech made before the 18th District Conference of “International Rotary” at London, Ontario, reel 6, Arthur Vandenberg Papers (AVP), Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (BHL).
the opportunity to serve with our armed forces.” Rather than loans financed by government debt, military personnel “must be paid with Constitutional money, guaranteed and underwritten by the productive capacity of our nation.” The AFP therefore called for a redistribution of federal resources away from foreign aid and toward veterans’ benefits. “If we cancel the Lend Lease debts of foreign nations to ourselves, it will mean a donation to foreigners of about $2,000 per American family.” Instead of the forgiveness of foreign debt, “each mustered-out veteran should get 1,000 cash.”57 The Christian Nationalist Crusade, also founded by Smith, blended evangelical Christianity, anti-Semitism, racism (particularly racist screeds over interracial sexual relations), with a hatred of foreigners, “internationalists,” bankers, and elites in general into an isolationist worldview on national defense. Through his news bulletin, the Nationalist News Service, Smith promoted this message to his followers, many of which were located in Midwestern states including Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, and Nebraska, as well as in the region of Southern California—which had many transplants from the Midwest. Subscribers to the Nationalist News Service flocked to Smith because of his vehement anti-communism and his call to enlarge the fight against the Soviet Union after the Second World War. Smith thought Stalin was an expansionist despot who cared little for national sovereignty and sought to run rampant over Asia. What would eventually be termed the “domino theory” was sure to be a reality if the United States did not stop communist aggression, Smith warned. Concerned about the threat of communism in China, Smith wrote that when “Stalin takes China he will take Japan, the Philippines, and cross the Bering Strait into Alaska. He, or whoever his successor may be, in

cooperation with the Communist Party in America will threaten the very future existence of our Christian nation."

Isolationist groups like the Allied Patriotic Society (APS) had difficulty reconciling their aversion to internationalism in the face of the Soviet threat. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the APS wanted to take back their earlier opposition to American entry into the war. The APS now expressed its “[r]egrets on unpreparedness” as its members had “surprise and disgust for failure at Pearl Harbor and a strong feeling that we have not yet had all the Truth.” The war was necessary, and needed to be won by the allied powers, but this required more government monies for America’s military. Instead of continued social programs, APS members wanted federal dollars for defense. In one meeting, it was noted that there were “many complains on reckless spending for the idle instead of on work for defense.” The APS assumed that the federal government’s spending on domestic programs had cost the United States dearly in the early months of the war. This presumption underlay their priorities for defense over all other federal responsibilities.

While there was a strong isolationist presence among the right, Iowan and former Vice President Henry Wallace personified the Midwestern anti-interventionist tradition on the left. Postwar progressives identified with Wallace who offered early criticism of what he called America’s “Get tough with Russia” policy. To Wallace, the Cold War drained resources from important domestic programs and led to an ominous standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union. In an article written for the New Republic in 1946, Wallace presciently discussed

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58 Nationalist News Service, November 30, 1945, 1945 Nationalist News Service (newsletters) folder, Box 16, Gerald L.K. Smith Papers, Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan (BHL). For the geographical dimensions of Smith’s and America First Party’s supporters, see the return addresses of checks and money orders sent to America First Party in America First Party (record of checks and money orders received (1) folder, box 20, GLSKP, BHL.
59 “Notes—Re: Dinner,” Allied Patriotic Societies-Lit. folder, Box 1, John B. Trevor, Jr. papers (JBTP), BHL.
the coming arms race between the superpowers. If the United States continued its military buildup, Wallace argued, the results would be devastating in an age of atomic weapons. American belligerence toward the Soviet Union will mean the “Russians will redouble their efforts to manufacture bombs, and they also may decide to expand their “security zone” in a serious way.” To prevent nuclear Armageddon, the U.S. needed to empathize with the Soviets and engage them in diplomacy.60

As the nominee for the Progressive Party during the 1948 presidential campaign, Wallace amassed a number of supporters based on his assessment of the Cold War. Running to the left of Truman, Wallace offered an alternative to massive military spending in the name of anti-communism. Much of Wallace’s support came from the socialist-leaning American Labor Party and radical members of labor unions and farm groups in the Midwest. A number of rank-and-file workers backed Wallace, causing rifts between pro-Wallace union members and the national leadership that endorsed Truman from unions such as the Electrical Workers Union, the Fur and Leather Workers Union, and the Farm Equipment Workers. Indeed, the American Federation of Labor called Wallace a “front, spokesman, and apologist” for communism, while Walter Reuther readied his membership to take “on Wallace and his Joe Stalin associates.”61 In his speeches on foreign policy, Wallace pulled few punches in attacking the moneyed interests who he believed had much to gain from the Cold War. Wallace applied the attack on “merchants of death” in the 1920s to the context of the Cold War, arguing that the “Wall Street war group” that profited

personally and financially from the Cold War ran the Truman administration. The Cold War was a “crisis” created from “willful men with private interests [who] are dictating our foreign policy. Their interest is profits, not people.” Throughout his campaign, however, Wallace had difficulty obtaining endorsements from mainstream labor and Democratic officials. Red-baited by Truman, his supporters, and Republicans for his associations and connections with communists—which he later regretted—Wallace was painted as a patsy for the Soviet Union. Anti-communism tainted Wallace’s insurgency against the Cold War, preventing his Third Party candidacy from gaining momentum outside of radical circles.

Wallace was overly conspiratorial and simplistic in his assessment of the economic origins of the Cold War, but he was correct in stating that the national security state spawned assorted financial dependents. There was no cabal of bankers maliciously creating a new world order to further their profit margins, but militarization led to a hierarchy of actors wedded to the federal state in new ways. Militarization hobbled together groups of people normally at odds with one another who felt the Cold War could rescue them in their time of economic need. Military officials, business executives, local politicians, labor leaders, and unemployed factory workers realized the defense economy’s resources could serve their respective ends.

The Korean War set in motion a role for the federal government that enabled militarization to act as a conduit for relief programs and unemployment after the demise of the New Deal, keeping large military spending an axiomatic characteristic of Cold War political culture. The war also ostracized opponents of militarization, already weakened by the culture of anti-communism, the Cold War consensus in favor of internationalism, and the economic power of the national security state. As defense spending climbed to its highest during the Korean War,

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63 Ibid., 116.
it established a new precedent for militarization, one that more Americans were accustomed to accept.

The Korean War and Military Keynesianism

The United States’ entry into the Korean War in September 1950 unleashed a patriotic fervor that suppressed and constrained previous critics of militarization. The surprise invasion of South Korea shocked the public and compelled Truman to send the United States to war a United Nations coalition. Korea also spurred accusations by Republicans that Truman ignored communist gains in Asia in order to focus on nonexistent threats to Western Europe. Even before U.S. troops landed in Inchon to stave off a South Korean defeat, Republicans attacked Truman for being “over-lenient to Communism,” which diplomat George Kennan noted in August 1950 was a factor in prohibiting the administration from engaging in negotiations with the Soviet Union to end the war. Republican predictions on Asia appeared to come true: communism in Asia was the central locus of the Cold War. Conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly, who had isolationist tendencies prior to Korea, felt that the War was a conflict worth fighting, but that it should have been done through a congressional declaration of war, rather than a decision reached by the United Nations Security Council. Schlafly saw the Korean War as empirical proof of communism’s march to predominance: the proxy war in Korea was symptomatic of the persistent threat of the Soviet Union. As her biographer Donald T. Critchlow has noted, Schlafly justified increases to the defense budget not only to rollback communism in Korea, but also because a “strong defense was necessary to prevent war with the Soviet Union, the main enemy.

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64 George Kennan memorandum to Department of State, 21 August 1950, in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Vol. VII. pp., 623-628.
that faced the nation." Korea also led members of the right to support a military buildup. The Old Right isolationist Frank Chodorov, who ran the libertarian journal *The Free man*, argued that the U.S. government should reallocate spending on social welfare programs to add another two billion in defense spending for the war in Korea and place one million Americans “on the public payroll… [to] be put on the military assembly line.”

The jump in defense budgets during the Korean War was justified by NSC-68, the report issued in 1950 that recommended massive increases in defense expenditures after the advent of communist China and the Soviet test of an atomic bomb. The renewed threat of global communism provided the justification for passage of the 1950 Defense Production Act, which allowed the federal government to mobilize the economy for war through regulation of the private market. A broad consensus of Democrats and Republicans voted in favor of the Defense Production Act. The bill passed the Senate by a vote of 85-3, and the House by 383-12. The “yea” votes for the Defense Production Act included the bloc of Senate Republicans normally critical of militarization, including Taft and Wherry. This was despite the fact that the DPA gave powers to the government to intervene in the economy in ways unseen since World War II. Under the act, the government could control prices, build defense plants, regulate credit, and streamline resources and products for manufacturing, all of which meant a possible “nationalization of the economy,” according to one historian. While the pressure to appear patriotic supporters of the war was a factor in supporting the bill, Republicans also saw the potential benefit defense production had for their constituents. The Illinois Democrat and Senate

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Majority Leader Scott Lucas felt that lawmakers were “proposing amendments, trying to protect some particular commodity” within the legislation, to which Republican John Williams of Delaware responded that if such amendments had “been enforced during the last war, we would have saved the Government or the farmers of the Del-Mar Peninsula, along more than $10,000,000.” Williams was just making sure that the DPA was going “to protect the farmer,” under his jurisdiction.69

The Defense Production Act remilitarized the American economy to levels unseen since World War II. In a report also issued by the National Security Resources Board (NSRB), the agency stated that one of the primary goals of the Defense Production Act of 1950 was an “expansion of the economy as a desirable characteristic of the mobilization effort.” A memorandum to Stuart Symington from the NSRB relayed the administration’s opinion “that current and contemplated national security programs will be of such magnitude as to require a measure of control upon the economy, but not of such magnitude as to prevent, concurrent with defense production, an expansion of the over-all economy.” In the rush to place its citizens and economy on a wartime footing, however, the United States “cannot lose sight, however, of the vital importance of maintaining the economy of this country on a stable and secure basis. If in allotting help to others [through humanitarian aid] we create weakness in our own economy, then all our aims and objectives will be lost; and such an occurrence here will act as a negative catalytic agent throughout the free world.” The United States must be cautious as “defense spending increases monetary purchasing power, while at the same time it fails to increase the

69 Congressional Record, 1950, Vol. 96, 1st Congress, Session 2, 1950, 12500. For the roll call votes on the Defense Production Act, see Ibid., 12910 and 12224-5.
amount of goods available for sale to the public.” While the NSRB called for a “more Spartan existence,” it continued to encourage economic growth through militarization.\textsuperscript{70}

Additional federal mandates such Defense Manpower No. 4 and Defense Manpower No. 1, whose goal was “to bring defense work to the worker,” brought requests for defense contracts from multiple sources. Along with Representatives Nixon and Knowland, the American Federation of Labor worked to use the military-industrial complex to aid economically depressed areas. The AFL specifically hoped Defense Manpower No. 4 could resuscitate the textile industry in New England after companies moved to the South in search of cheaper land.\textsuperscript{71}

Business executives also wondered how they could receive defense contracts from the war effort. Corporate representatives from Merck & Co., for instance, asked Truman officials if there was anything “relative to the application of Defense Manpower Policy No. 4 to the drug and pharmaceutical industry.”\textsuperscript{72}

The militarization of the economy during the Korean War, as it did during World War II, offered economic stimulus disguised as growth liberalism. The Truman administration urged the Council of Economic Advisors to view defense production in 1952 within the framework of other public works projects to provide federal relief and employment. Suggestions were made to the CEA to put forward a “work program” that would create “‘Development and Welfare Programs’ in the areas of natural resources (water, land) transportation infrastructure, health (hospitals, medical research centers), education (new schools, scholarships, teaching training) social security and welfare (“possible extensions of coverage to additional persons”) atomic

\textsuperscript{70} Report of the Chairman National Security Resources Board”, National Security Resources Board General [2 of2] folder, White House Press Secretary Files, HTL; Memorandum for Mr. Symington, September 8, 1950, NSRB Memorandum to Stuart Symington Sept 8 1950 folder, box 127, President’s Secretary Files, HTL.


energy, housing, veterans programs (“housing credit, welfare, and transfer payments.”) The CEA recommended that these types of “programs…are equally essential for defense and for nondefense purposes” as the organization should not operate with the presumption “that simply because budget categories separate defense from other expenditures, we are therefore barred from other approaches which recognize that most so-called nondefense development programs are vital to long-range security. A particular power dam, training program, public health item, or highway may, for example, be more necessary for defense than a particular military expenditure.”

By couching domestic welfare programs within the context of militarization, it made federal involvement more acceptable to Americans’ suspicious of government spending in an era of heightened anti-communism. The defense economy appeared to operate independently from the structure of the welfare state. Even if defense expenditures created deficits, they did so to secure American national security interests, and were therefore indispensable to the war effort.

While using defense contracts to invigorate industries and workers, the Truman administration was careful to avoid the claim that they intentionally marginalized the private sector through a government-directed economy. Truman ensured government controls aligned with the needs of private business as American defense policy in the Korean War revived the private-public alliances the government established during World War II without eroding the power of corporate capitalism. CEA head Leon Keyserling, known as a proponent of national security economics, refuted charges in the months following the Korean War that he believed the defense economy was needed to keep the economy growing and employment levels high. He told the now Senator Stuart Symington he did not believe that “a tapering off of defense spending would necessarily bring hard times. Of course, you know that on grounds of national

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73 Memo to the Council of Economic Advisors from J. L. Fisher, September 29, 1952, box 6, Leon H. Keyserling Papers, HTL.
74 Brinkley, *The End of Reform.*
security I favor an increase rather than a decrease in defense spending, but I do not do this on the
ground that a decrease would be inconsistent with a healthy economy. I believe that we can have
a healthy economy either with a decrease or an increase in defense spending, and that the level of
such spending should be decided on grounds of national security and world conditions.”
Keyserling said he had “the profound conviction as a Democrat that there is high political
desirability in reformulating and popularizing a very different approach to the relationship
between Federal spending and economic prosperity from that traditionally voiced by or at least
attributed to the New Deal and the Fair Deal.” Keyserling still self-identified as a New Deal
Democrat “who does not deviate in the slightest from the objectives and general philosophy of
the New Deal and the Fair Deal,” but he thought the Cold War was a new era where liberals
“should learn from experience and adjust to the present and the future instead of living in the
past.”

Keyserling’s reservations about the defense economy aside, the public welcomed the
employment opportunities the war created. When deindustrialization crept into the industrial
landscape of Midwestern cities like Detroit during the 1950s due to capital flight, automation,
and job losses, Americans searched for answers through economic militarization. As auto plants
in the Midwest began to lay off workers, residents turned to the government for wages. John
Sonnenberg from Michigan wrote to his Congressman Clare Hoffman in 1954 for help in
“alleviating the critical unemployment here” as a Kaiser Motors plant in Detroit where he
worked was scheduled to close within the following few months. Sonnenberg was sure that
“[t]here MUST be a Defense contract which needs to be filled by experienced, capable men and,
with your sympathetic understanding of our problem and what it means to the moral [sic] of
Michigan, we are sure you will do whatever is necessary to correct this condition.” William Zizzi

75 Letter to Stuart Symington from Leon Keyserling on July 31, 1953, box 20, Leon H. Keyserling papers, HTL.
also risked losing his job after over 20 years of employment with Packard Motor Car Co. located in Michigan. Zizzi’s company was responsible for building a variety of products for the government during wartime including motors for P.T. boats and a jet motor for Rolls Royce. Zizzi and his fellow “workers are proud of our past performance” and it was for this reason that “we urge you to do all in your power to see to it that our Gov’t executives provide us with some kind of defense work until such time that we can get back on our feet in the auto industry. We pray that you face up to this enormous task.” Workers like Zizzi and Sonnenberg adopted the ethos of Fair Deal job creation through national security spending.76

Defense work during the Korean War was intended to be temporary by Truman administration officials, but the Americans that sought such work did not view it as impermanent, but a source of reliable income to support themselves and their families for the near future. The defeat of the Fair Deal—and its implications for an expanded social safety net for unemployed, aged, and infirm workers in the United States—combined with the success of the war economy in keeping domestic prosperity surging, made Americans turn to the national security state to for a source of income. Dayton’s Edward Wren was one of these Americans who looked to the defense industry for work. Wren was a victim of ageism and had difficulty finding a job; but Wren argued the federal government should provide him one, as it had done for other Americans in the recent past. Wren said he “never dreamed that such a cockeyed era would arrive in this country when our government would approve a pension plan that would compel industry to discriminate against men over forty years of age in securing a job, and this unquestionably effects [sic] the white collar [worker] more than the skilled laborer. Billions of

dollars have been given and are still being given to help Europeans—billions to subsidize farmers, industries, etc., in fact just recently one hundred and twenty five million dollars” was provided to Argentina “who did everything in their power to help Germany during the last war. Not the slightest effort however is being made to assist in any way the downtrodden white collar man in securing a job and that’s what he wants and nothing more.” Wren asked what “this forgotten man” will do to earn an income before he can qualify for a pension.  

J. Willard Washington from Baltimore made similar comments. Washington was upset over the large number of unemployed workers in Baltimore, which he said was close to 65,000 residents. To resolve this crisis in local unemployment, Truman should “halt extravagant spending abroad and bring back the C.C.C.” John C. Wolf from Pennsylvania told the President that he felt the federal government discriminated against his state in awarding shipbuilding and other defense contracts. According to him, New York State and areas on the west coast were awarded more work by the federal government. Wolf said he wrote to Truman “in the interest of my fellow shipyard worker’s [sic] and in the interest of National Security.” Wolf then complained that a number of workers at Sun Shipbuilding Yard in Chester, Pennsylvania had been laid off in recent months, some with “16 to 18 year’s [sic] of Service.” This was despite the fact that the “shipyard worker’s [sic] were a great asset [sic] to the Nation and to the World in World War 1 and 2.” Wolf concluded his letter by pleading with Truman to, “Please investigate as to why we don’t get Defense work or Ships to Build.”  

Denver M. Christy from Jasonville, Indiana sought work at the Crane Naval Ammunition Depot in Crane, Indiana during the Korean War. Christy was unable to work in the past, having been diagnosed with arthritis for twenty-

77 Letter from Edward Wren to President Truman, May 27, 1950, OF 24 Miscellaneous (1950) folder, box 1034, White House Central Files, STL.  
78 Letter from John C. Wolf to Truman, September 14, 1950, ibid.; Letter from J. Willard Washington to President, undated, ibid.
four years, and had “a stiff hip which bars him from occupational insurance.” But even though Christy now felt “perfectly healthy and has had no pain,” he still could not find work. The Crane Naval plant was his last hope since he did “not want relief.”

79 John Williams from Brunswick, Georgia had lost a limb at the age of 15 and since then he “always had trouble in convincing employers he can hold a job.” Williams tried to obtain work “with the Atomic Plant at Aiken, S.C.,” but he was turned away after the “employment officer only answered him they did not employ one-armed men.” Williams asked Truman to help him “get a job at something as he has a family to support.”

80 As pleas from the unemployed poured into the White House, rising defense production during the Korean War became an easy, but temporary means of adding Americans to payrolls. Defense capitalism gave Americans jobs, but it did not address the systemic problems that confronted the industrial economy after 1945. Without an alternative to the defense economy, Cold War communities became addicted to the ebb and flow of defense contracting. After localities fulfilled orders under a particular defense contract, it made these areas go searching for another to replace the previous one. Moreover, those towns and cities that were denied defense contracts created competition over scarce resources among localities that did obtain federal defense funds. These conditions placed pressure upon both Democrats and Republicans in Congress to bring defense work to local communities. In 1951, Matthew J. Connelly of Pennsylvania wrote to Representative Daniel Flood about the “acute unemployment” in the Wilkes-Barre—Hazleton area, part of Flood’s district. Flood prudently replied to Connelly, telling him, “I want you to know that the people and the leaders of the community are doing their share to alleviate the situation and are not simply sitting back and crying for Federal help. Every

79 Letter to the President from Denver M. Christy, April 3, 1951, White House Official Files, White House Central Files, File 264, Box 1034, HTL.
80 Letter to the President from John V. Williams, December 13, 1951, ibid.
possible effort is being made locally to do our bit to help solve this problem, but as you are aware, it is of such a nature and magnitude that it is physically impossible for the solution to be brought about by local effort alone.” A 1951 speech by Flood on the House floor cited the inadequacy of the defense economy in resolving chronic unemployment across the country. Flood said that “War plants, installations, and war contracts of all descriptions are being channeled into congested, seriously congested, defense areas where there is a need for manpower, but in my area there is not work. This is a deplorable economic waste. The most valuable asset of the Nation is its manpower, and here I cite you a case of where vital and essential and badly needed workers stand idle, yet eager for work and to participate in the defense effort.”

As the fight against communism abroad was increasingly bound up in the personal fortunes of thousands of Americans at home, the anti-interventionist tradition amid both parties had less cache. The rise of the defense economy laid the seeds for the Midwestern isolationists’ demise among the right. As the Sunbelt began to receive more federal investment from defense spending, defense employment began leaving the Midwest. The diversion of federal resources to the South, Southwest and Western Coast, meant that power within the Republican Party swung away from isolationist Midwesterners to Southern Republicans, many of whom were former Democrats. A 1952 advertisement from North Carolina Citizens for Eisenhower asked voters in the state to “Help the South Rise Above Political Tyranny” by repudiating the Democratic Party, since it was now controlled by “Northern City Bosses, Crooked Politicians and Radical College Professors.” The group warned workers in the South that if Democrat Adlai Stevenson was elected to the presidency in 1952, it would mean significant losses in employment.

82 See Markusen, *Rise of the Gunbelt*, chp.4
to the region, since Stevenson supposedly favored giving more defense contracts to the North to divert jobs and employment from the South, allowing the government to “take bread out of your child’s mouth and send it to the North.” With bold headlines such as “Negro Bosses in the Mill if Stevenson Elected” and “White Workers Beware of Democrat F.E.P.C. Plants,” the Republican organization circulated pamphlets that used racism to scare Southern whites into thinking blacks would take over their defense jobs. Once African Americans experienced economic gains from the war economy (giving them social and economic upward mobility through skilled jobs), Southern whites mounted resistance against efforts to integrate defense work to ensure that the financial gains of federal employment went to whites. Southern whites increasingly viewed the Republican Party as the Party that would safeguard their racial and economic interests, as it would protect defense jobs for whites and “allow each state to work out its own solution to the Negro question.”

Indeed, the Korean War was a problem for the most famous Midwestern Republican isolationist in Congress, Robert Taft. Taft felt the pressure of an interventionist public during his remaining years in the Senate. Taft’s gravitation toward militarism was apparent during the 1952 campaign, when he began to make statements like “I feel that Russia is far more of a threat to the security of the United States than Hitler in Germany ever was.” Taft also criticized Truman for his unwillingness to assist Chiang Kai-Shek. “I only insist that we apply to Asia the same basic policy which we apply to Europe,” Taft stated. Taft accused Truman of leaving Korea unprotected from communism aggression, as the President evacuated “all troops from Korea and announced that they would not undertake to defend Korea by the use of American soldiers.” This left Korea exposed to “complete domination of Korea by the Russian Communists” which now poses “a threat to the security of Japan.” Truman “failed to arm the South Koreans with

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modern weapons” to defense themselves. Taft made these comments after Cold War Democrats, seeking to depose Taft of his Senate Seat in 1950, claimed, “Taft votes the Communist line on foreign policy matters. Yes sir, every time Congress was asked to shell out money to fight Communism, Taft was against it. You can take his votes against the Marshall Plan, the arms assistance program—and it fits exactly what the Daily Worker approves.” One confidant of Truman, Robert Holiday, said that Taft vacillated on national defense issues in 1952 for “when Harry ordered the troops into Korea, he and McArthur agreed that it was the greatest thing that had been done in 100 years for peace, and now they want to jump Harry for it.”

Considering the quasi hard-line stance taken by Taft as a presidential candidate, it is a misnomer to label him a strict isolationist in 1952. Opponents of an internationalist foreign policy like Taft did not target the fight against communism in its concept, but in its design. By the 1950s, Taft had moved away from his earlier skepticism of the Cold War. On the campaign trail, Taft was not wholly against an interventionist foreign policy and a large defense budget to support that foreign policy, but the scope of such a strategy. Taft proved reluctant to repudiate the national security state after Korea, telling a favorable audience in Dayton, Ohio in 1950 that “because of the Administration’s strong Communist sympathies, which apparently existed in the Administration before and about the time of the Yalta Conference, we have placed Russia in a commanding position in Europe from which they threaten the security of Western Europe, and a commanding position in China from which they threaten the security of the Far East.” The only way to deal with these circumstances is “to build up armed forces sufficient to make it absolutely certain that Russia cannot gain a position from which they might threaten the security of the

84 “Why I Oppose Truman’s Foreign Policy,” 1952 Campaign Foreign Policy folder, box 453, Robert A. Taft papers, LOC.
85 Quoted in Bell, The Liberal State on Trial, 216.
86 Letter to Donald S. Dawson from Robert L. Holliday, March 13, 1952, File 2950, Box 1742, White House Central Files, HTL.
Indeed, when one considers Taft’s policy in Asia during the Korean War, Taft was more interventionist than Cold War Democrats. Taft now accepted elements of the domino theory, collective security, nuclear deterrence, and the policy of containment. Taft said in an article in 1952 that his “basic criticism of Administration policy today is that no one seems to have worked out a comprehensive plan for the application of this strategy [of containment], or any coordinated use of the many policies necessary to carry it out. Furthermore, no one seems to have recognized that there are serious limits to our economic and manpower capacity, and that we must be selective and restrained in determining the extent to which we can carry out our basic strategy.”

Taft liked to criticize Democrats for lacking a coherent and well-constructed foreign policy strategy, but he suffered the same flaw. Isolationist Republicans like Taft wanted a restrained defense budget yet at the same time sought to extirpate communism from the globe; they requested tax cuts for defense corporations, but wanted further appropriations for military projects and America’s global empire.

The expansion of the warfare state through military Keynesianism during the Korean War thereby marginalized those voices who called for military restraint. Defense production in the 1950s renewed Gunbelt Americans’ faiths in the Cold War to protect the country from communism and keep them financially secure, limiting the appeal of defense reductions after 1953. Indeed, the Korean War emphatically reignited dependence upon and approval of the military state. Through the allocation of war contracts, the state expanded its services to a broader set of Americans, thereby compelling Republican and Democrats in office to support the foreign and domestic policies that they created, and which their constituents now supported.

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88 “Why I Oppose Truman’s Foreign Policy,” 1952 Campaign Foreign Policy folder, box 453, Robert A. Taft papers, LOC.
magnitude of the Cold War state and its influence upon “ordinary” Americans’ lives thus squashed the popular vestiges of anti-interventionism within the left and the right.

**Conclusion**

Isolationist libertarians clung to arguments that the national security state was a waste of federal monies after the Korean War. Ex-New Dealer and contributor to *Human Events* John T. Flynn wrote, “Of course America must be prepared to resist assaults on us by a foreign power. But we must never forget that there is an infinitely more dangerous enemy within our gates than Russia.” Flynn said that the preeminent threat to the United States was internal and came from “Communists, socialists, various editions of collectivists, One Worlders, plus a variety of economic and sectional groups interested for political or business reasons in measures that will break down and finally destroy our free society.” Flynn argued that “Russia as an enemy has become almost a necessity to our government. It is the bugaboo used to frighten our people into fantastic spending of taxes and borrowed money.” Making statements that would later come out of the mouths of the New Left, Flynn wrote, “The creation of millions of jobs in the armed forces and the munitions plants can be defended only when the nation is confronted with the danger of war. Now, every man who studies this subject knows that there is no way we can get into war now without actually launching one ourselves. But this could never be defended before the American people. Hence some other excuse must be found to continue the policy. The champions of this system have now proposed that the United States set herself up as the policeman of the world.”

Texas libertarian Dan Smoot was critical of the federal government’s effort to justify increased defense spending, stating that “practically every major spending

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program of the federal government has been sold to the public with the argument that the program was necessary as a party of our struggle against communism.” Americans were “quite willing to make sacrifices to fight communism,” but Smoot said that the sacrifice also meant higher rates of taxation, which he was unwilling to accept. “Americans are also almost unanimous in their belief that they are enduring a crushing burden of taxation,” Smoot wrote, but when the protest against higher tax rates “They are reminded that their money is being used to maintain our national defenses against communism.” This made Americans reluctant to speak out against foreign policy, creating a reverse McCarthyism since it “puts an ugly stigma on anyone who is against the President’s [defense] program.”

But Flynn and Smoot were a dying breed after the Korean War. Considering the significant structural transformations that occurred in the immediate postwar years, including changes to U.S. grand strategy toward the Soviet Union and the rise of an American economy whose prosperity hinged and thrived on building weapons the country supposedly needed to defeat communism, the isolationist right could not exist as a formidable presence in American politics. Furthermore, in seeking an alliance with Dixiecrats and Southern Democrats, Republicans brought themselves closer to statism and interventionism, making the Party more amenable to spending on defense without regard to deficits—as long as that spending benefited constituents of the Party. When in 1952, William F. Buckley told the right they must “accept Big Government for the duration” of the Cold War to vanquish the threat of communism, they already had. With isolationists at the wayside, the right looked to resolve the Cold War through levels of military spending and expansive defense bureaucracy that rivaled their previous suspicious about a militarized state. While there were evident continuities between the New

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90 “Sacrificing for Communism,” The Dan Smoot Report, April 8, 1957, Foreign Policy folder, Box 8, JBTP, BHL.
91 Buckley quoted in Zelizer, Arsenal of Democracy, 89.
Right and Old Right prior to World War II, the Cold War was transformative in reconfiguring conservatives’ perspectives on national defense policy.\(^9^2\)

The left faced its own dilemma after the Korean War. During the 1940s, the anti-interventionist tradition within leftist politics battled for the soul of American democracy during the early Cold War, only to lose out to the culture of anti-communism. The failure of left-wing Cold War critics to attract a greater constituency meant that the Democratic Party became increasingly monolithic on national defense policy, consistently outvoting the Republicans on military appropriations up until the late 1950s.\(^9^3\) Leftist opponents of the Cold War were thereafter found in social movements outside the party system. The anti-nuclear movement in the 1950s and 1960s were the offspring of the Wallace wing of the Democratic Party, pressuring the Democratic Party to adopt measures that reduced American reliance on military power until Vietnam proved the folly of such policies.

By the end of the Korean War, the militarization of American foreign policy had taken on a life beyond its creators. Born out of the Great Depression, formed during World War II, and expanded during the Cold War, the national security state established a set of interests and expectations to Americans who viewed them as intractable to American political culture after the 1950s. Trying to extricate the U.S. from a war economy meant breaking the social compact between the national security state and its range of defenders, benefactors, and exponents, an increasingly difficult task as it grew larger. To fight communism, the Cold War created federal benefits that many Americans at the national and local level did not want to part with after 1945.

\(^9^2\) This argument therefore challenges the notion that American conservatism was exclusively a “postwar” phenomenon. See also Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009); Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in its First Age of Terror* (Oxford University Press, 2009);

The connections that militarization established between the citizenry and the state would ultimately be fateful in the realignment of American politics during the 1960s.
Chapter Two: The Politics of Nuclear Détente

In December 1963, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara announced significant cuts to U.S. defense spending, a decision that led to the closing of military bases and thousands unemployed in defense plants across the Gunbelt. McNamara and President Lyndon Johnson had no designs for a large-scale reduction of U.S. military forces, as the defense cuts were “purely related to obtaining the maximum defense at the lowest possible cost, and had no relationship whatsoever to changing the strength of our defense forces.” Instead, the Johnson administration sought to revamp and streamline the American military to restore efficiency to the defense budget. Democratic Senator from South Dakota, George McGovern, welcomed McNamara’s announcement, having proposed plans for defense conversion only months before.\(^1\) Opponents of the defense cuts, however, felt McNamara’s actions jeopardized U.S. national security, and were sure to result in the United States losing the Cold War. The Soviet Union and global communism were the primary threats to the United States, and military superiority was the only means to prevent a communist attack. Movement conservatives like Phyllis Schlafly, moreover, wondered whether McNamara desired universal disarmament of nuclear weapons. To Schlafly, the Secretary of Defense was the personification of liberalism run amok. In addition to cancelling needed defense installations without having “authorized or developed a single new strategic

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weapon system,” McNamara accepted the notion that the arms race was obsolete, placing the United States on a dangerous precedent.²

This chapter examines the reaction to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations’ attempts to achieve what I have called a nuclear détente. Movement conservatives, leaders of the American military, defense communities, and sectors of American business aligned to prevent defense reductions and restrictions on the use of nuclear weapons after the Cold War was transformed in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1962—and for the first significant time since the 1940s—American policymakers advocated a serious reduction in military forces and nuclear weapons. Democratic designs for reducing the size of the military establishment signaled a crisis for those dependent upon or supportive of the national security state. Moreover, congressional Republicans, who up until this time believed they could use Cold War military spending as an instrument to weaken the welfare state, thought the shift in America’s defenses reflected a change in budget priorities that imperiled American security. Republicans such as Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen argued in 1961 that “with so many crises in faraway places, emphasis will have to be on guns” during the Cold War, and sought to find “ways the domestic budget and so-called welfare items can be trimmed in view of the delicate international situation.”³ When McNamara announced defense cuts and proposals for disarmament in the early 1960s, he ignited fears among the right that federal monies would be directed exclusively to social programs at the expense of fighting communism.

Like the political right, defense companies also distrusted military cuts. Defense contractors expressed their hostility toward McNamara and Kennedy’s defense policies within organizations such as the pro-business group Southern States Industrial Council (SSIC), formed

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in 1933. The SSIC and similar organizations offered a vehicle for financing activism and lobbying efforts among the defense industry without overtly exposing them as opponents of the federal government—for fear their overt criticism would impair their potential for future defense contracts. Defense executives also enlisted the help of activists and politicians to promote their cause, holding venues for speakers who supported a larger defense budget.

The interdependency between national security, economic, and foreign policy concerns stimulated hawkish sentiments among the defense workforce as well. While the defense budget had declined steadily since the Korean War, the defense cuts enacted under the Kennedy administration were an abrupt departure in U.S. defense policy that jarred the attention and financial circumstances of defense communities. While the libertarian right and Democrats like McGovern welcomed the cuts, new precedents in American defense policy left Cold War workers anxious about the future of their job security and willing to vote for candidates on both sides of the political aisle who promised more spending on defense. Politicians like Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater for instance, noted Gunbelt residents’ concerns over America’s defense policy and courted residents of Cold War communities for their votes. But while some Gunbelt voters decided to support Goldwater, the Arizonian failed to attract widespread backing for his policies outside of the Sunbelt defense economy.

The revolt against a nuclear détente in the 1960s therefore had its origins in the political and economic structures that militarization created in the 1940s and 1950s. The Cold War established organizational networks in defense communities that allowed collaboration between diverse actors with a specific interest toward increasing the defense budget as a deterrent to communist aggression. In proving this point, I focus on the creation of “Cold War seminars” (or national security seminars) organized and led by anti-communist activists to generate support for
U.S. foreign policy among ordinary Americans. Organizers of Cold War seminars blurred the lines between local and international politics. Financed by hidden connections between the Department of Defense, the United States military, and private corporations, attendees of Cold War seminars embraced the position that it took not only a strong military to defeat communism, but communities of ordinary citizens willing to preserve the American “way of life.” To residents of the Sunbelt, where many of these seminars were held, this meant that the struggle against communism abroad also meant maintaining the class and racial boundaries of the suburbs. Indeed, the politics of place, space, and national security interacted in Sunbelt defense communities that facilitated a hawkish worldview among its residents.

The reaction to Kennedy’s (and Eisenhower’s) defense and foreign policies during this time also laid the foundation for collaboration between factions of a “Cold War coalition” headed into the latter half of the 1960s. National security seminars provided the organizational context for early challenges to the new era of defense after the Cuban Missile Crisis, but the campaign against a nuclear détente continued into the mid-1960s. The activism of the Cold War coalition led to an unusual merger between ideology and economic interests that unfolded in fights against the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT), government spending on social programs (rather than on defense), and general efforts by the Kennedy and Johnson administration to reduce the numbers of nuclear weapons in the United States and the Soviet Union. As the various strands of the national security state came together in the 1960s to counter Kennedy’s challenge to the Cold War status quo, it led to the creation of a coalition organized around safeguarding the

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militarization of the Cold War, one that would come to remake American politics in the twentieth century.

**Cold War Seminars and the National Security State**

Before the years of the Kennedy presidency, President Dwight Eisenhower took gradual steps to drawback the wartime economy that dominated American political culture during the Korean War. Eisenhower was never comfortable with runaway defense budgets, and steadily reduced them beginning around 1955. Defense spending was at a record high fifteen percent of G.D.P. when Eisenhower took office. By the time he left the presidency that number was down near ten percent. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) noted how the drop in the defense budget had constrained the opportunities for growth among defense contractors. While “total defense spending appears to have leveled off at a fairly high plateau,” there remained “specific industries” that have been hurt by the “extent of emphasis, and funds provided for aircraft, nuclear weapons, guided missiles, and related special items,” to the point that it has “brought about a significant increase in competition for certain defense contracts.” Even then, there was little guarantee that the contracts would be profitable, considering the vast competition and the possibility that even the “least impact of unanticipated costs may well throw a modest profit into a loss.”

While defense spending did decrease during Eisenhower’s presidency, the Cold War economy remained strong in many regions of the country. Suburban areas in Southern California

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6 Bulletin No. 13, July 18, 1956, GO-GR, box 194, series XII (Vada Horsch Subject Files), National Association of Manufacturers Papers (NAM papers), Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware.
grew to be the prime centers for producing weapons. Los Angeles, in the words of political scientist Ann Markusen, became the “aerospace capital of the world” in the 1950s. Defense firms such as Boeing, Convair, Lockheed, and Northrop all saw production and profits skyrocket. Much of these gains were due to the Air Force’s demand for greater production of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), long-range missiles capable of carrying multiple nuclear warheads to targets. The increase in the number of ICBMs intensified the relationship between military, industry, and the growth of the postwar suburbs, as Americans flocked to California from the South and Midwest in search of high-paying, technically specialized jobs in defense plants.⁷

The growth of the Gunbelt during Eisenhower’s presidency continued to make Americans reliant on the defense economy. Eisenhower’s skepticism of the military-industrial complex was restrained by the jobs created by the defense economy in local areas. In Long Island, 12,000 machinists rallied to oppose defense cuts enacted in the 1950s, asking local and national politicians to bring the defense budget back to Korean War levels. Staring at unemployment, the Long Island Conference of Machinists requested that Congress raise the debt ceiling in order to approve “further appropriations for defense needs,” and urged Eisenhower to “repair the damage already done to the national preparedness program and the well-being of the American people.”⁸ And while Eisenhower hoped to trim America’s reliance on defense spending through production of ICBMs rather than heavy weaponry, the missile program still made “the country tied to defense spending.”⁹ The Soviet launch of the unmanned Sputnik satellite into the Earth’s atmosphere in 1957 further derailed reductions to defense, as the event

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unnerved Americans who up until this point believed that the United States led the world in technological developments. *Sputnik* encouraged policy makers and the public to take further steps to increase defense expenditures for innovative projects that would outpace the gains the Soviets had made in space exploration. It also revived the demand for more military spending as the threat of Soviet Union appeared more urgent. Indeed, defense spending increased in 1958, fueling much welcomed growth in Cold War communities.\(^{10}\)

In response to climate of the Cold War following *Sputnik*, John Kennedy ran for the presidency in 1960 as a Cold Warrior. On the campaign trail, Kennedy claimed that Eisenhower had allowed the formation of a “missile gap,” between the superpowers and accused the former World War II general of lacking diligence in the fight against communism. In order to close this missile gap, the United States needed to dig deeper into its pockets to pay for new weapons programs. Kennedy made sure he took this message to states where defense spending determined the futures of local communities. When Kennedy became President, he made good on his campaign promises and vastly increased military spending for innovative military weapons and furthered the space race between the Soviet Union. The American public’s demand to “catch up” to the Soviet Union in space technology aligned with Kennedy’s desire to increase spending for research and development (R&D) in aeronautics and defense. In announcing his plan to place an American on the moon by the end of the 1960s, Kennedy argued that if the United States was going to “win the battle that is now going on around the world between freedom and tyranny,” it must increase spending upwards to nine billion dollars over course of the decade. Kennedy

\(^{10}\) Ibid.
called not only for vast amounts of federal monies for the space program, but also for the creation of new missiles such as the Rover rocket and communications and weather satellites.\textsuperscript{11}

But Kennedy’s opponents worried he had not spent enough on defense to prevent communist expansion. Some of the opposition to Kennedy’s defense policies was political grandstanding, as Republicans criticized the defense policies of a Democratic president. But hawkish voices from both parties felt that Kennedy was simply ignorant of Soviet intentions toward the United States. These individuals feared that if Kennedy remained in office, Americans were in danger of losing interest in fighting the Cold War. It was therefore up to them to educate the American public on the threat of global communism. Cold War hawks took advantage of policies enacted by the federal government that encouraged public education programs as weapons against communism. In a memorandum in 1958, the National Security Council instructed military officials to launch efforts to educate the public about the evils of communism and the benefits of American democracy and capitalism. The NSC directive suggested that high-ranking military officers communicate the message that each American was a one-person army in the fight against communism. James S. Russell, Vice Chief of Naval Operations referred to the 1958 NSC document when he sent a memo to all personnel under his command requesting “ideas which the Navy could use in its day-by-day operations to further U.S. cold war efforts.” Russell was afraid that “since the cold war is the responsibility of all, it may, in fact, become the responsibility of none,” and thus sought to enlist naval personnel to “make a greater contribution toward the achievement of U.S. cold war objectives.”

objectives included portraying a positive image of the United States “in our association of people of foreign lands” and making sure that even low-level members of the Navy convey “useful ideas” to their superiors on how best to fight the Cold War against the “Sino-Soviet bloc.”

Federal policies that promoted public awareness of the global communist threat bankrolled the formation of “Cold War seminars” across the country. Led by members of the military, private business, and government, and financed by the Department of Defense and pro-business groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, these seminars sought to inform seemingly apolitical Americans to the urgent threat of communism. The institutional structure of militarization provided the basis for Cold War seminars, as the Department of Defense paid for the speakers, venues, and organizational logistics to hold the conferences. Meeting organizers relied upon federal dollars to finance their Cold War activism, as the seminars aimed to mobilize grassroots efforts to convert Americans to the cause of anti-communism.

A number of these Cold War seminars were held in locales in the Sunbelt and in parts of the Midwest that relied on defense spending. In 1961, at least fourteen cities convened “National Security” seminars, including Orlando, Las Vegas, Vallejo, El Paso, and Casper, Wyoming. Jointly sponsored by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and local chapters of the Chamber of Commerce, the organizers could boast that since 1948, 224 seminars were held in 126 cities; and consequently, approximately 24,800 certificates were given to civilians for completing the course. Cold War seminars were advertised to participants as a valuable resource for educating the average citizen on the global threat of communism. Like the

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1958 NSC directive, the seminars emphasized that the Cold War was a household issue that one needed to confront on a daily basis. It was up to the average citizen, regardless of political affiliation, to inform themselves in the ways he or she could protect national security. Comparing appropriations for defense to buying insurance, seminar promoters complained that few Americans were knowledgeable about national defense issues, but no one “would think of buying an insurance policy without reading its terms… yet today the American taxpayer pays 75 cents out of every dollar for our national life insurance…the national security structure.” The promise of the postwar suburban American dream was dependent upon the international context of the Cold War. “How secure is your future…your family’s… your investments?…Think again!...It is only as secure as the position of the United States…and today our position is being challenged by the rapidly rising might of the Soviet Union and her allies and captive states,” read the press release for one seminar. Americans must realize that free-market capitalism is at stake as the “Soviet economic challenge is potentially more dangerous to the United States than the Russian military threat. They have declared a war to the finish between their system and the free enterprise system.” Attendees left seminars prepared to defend “the interrelationship of the economic factors with the political, scientific, psychological, and military factors” of the Cold War.13

The seminars also professed to be non-partisan, as the organizers and speakers were a mixture of Southern Democrats and Republican defense hawks. One typical Cold War seminar occurred in Little Rock, Arkansas, where the segregationist Governor Orval Faubus was the keynote speaker. Faubus’ key theme was the need for vigilance against internal communists seeking to subvert America’s Cold War battle against communism. Fearful that Faubus’ speech

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13 Sample Form—Initial Release in National Security Seminar Publicity Folder, GRR, Box 385, National Security Seminar Folder; Blank Form: National Security Seminar: Radio and TV Spot Announcements, GRR, Box 385, National Security Seminar Folder.
would be compared to the red-baiting tactics employed by Senator Joseph McCarthy years earlier, Colonel Williams Boaz—a scheduled speaker for a Cold War seminar in Vallejo—claimed that the seminars were “not a scare program” and had the approval of President Kennedy and former President Eisenhower. Boaz said that the seminars were merely educational, and organized to highlight the “relationship between the national economy and the military power necessary to America’s security in the face of perilous world conditions.”

The El Paso Chamber of Commerce also directed and financed its own “National Security Seminar” in 1961. The periodical *El Paso Today*—an organ of the city Chamber of Commerce—claimed that over 1,000 military and civilian personnel registered for the seminar that included in attendance “civic leaders, teachers, clergymen and women from El Paso.” It was clear from the numbers of people present that “El Pasoans are smashing records in showing their interest in the important issues of the Cold War struggle between Freedom and Communism.” General Albert T. Wilson told the audience that the “search for security transcends all other aims in our national life. Security must be foremost in our minds until the threat of communism is contained.” Following its conclusion, organizers praised the seminar as “the most effective and important single effort our government has undertaken to weld a strong and united military-civilian team for national defense and survival.”

Accounts of the seminars held in other cities echoed those in El Paso and Vallejo. In Minneapolis, the Twin Cities Citizens Council for American Ideals held a Cold War workshop in April 1961 comprised of “businessmen, educators, clergymen, civic leaders, newsmen, students,

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youth leaders, and law enforcement officers at the United States Naval air station, World-Chamberlain Field.” The workshop featured speeches on fighting against emotions such as “internal demoralization, political apathy, [and] spiritual bankruptcy” that the organizers felt characterized the broader public’s outlook on the Cold War. Walter Mooney, a design engineer from Chattanooga, said that the seminar he attended provided an invaluable service to him and his fellow participants as it was the only program of its kind were one could “obtain such a concise factual representation of the struggle to come between the free world and the masters of the Kremlin.” Local Minneapolis resident George Paluska said that the seminar explained “many of the problems and reasons” for conditions in Africa and the “riots on that continent.” He only wished that more civil servants were there, including educators and religious leaders, for those individuals had “the ability and chance to pass along this information to hundreds.”

The popularity of Cold War seminars indicated the insidious ways militarization shaped the political culture of the United States following the Korean War. Cold War seminars reinforced the public’s relationship to American military power, encouraging “ordinary” Americans to participate in the making of foreign policy, but they also provided opportunities for collaboration among anti-communist activists and high-ranking members of the American military that shaped the public’s support for the national security state. The economic and political structures of the American defense apparatus erected public forums to solidify a cultural consensus in support of America’s Cold War objectives, allowing military personnel to function as partisan mobilizers of public opinion. Moreover, business elites and members of the military enlisted the taxpayer-financed national security state to promote a specific worldview that

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16Letter from John McKnight to Marsh Wattson, April 27, 1961, announcement attached to letter, GRR Box 381, Military—Anti Communist Propaganda for Public Folder; “What Others Have Said” GRR, Box 385, National Security Seminar Publicity Folder; “Seminar Praised,” Herald Review GRR, Box 385, National Security Seminar Publicity Folder.
reduced the international conflict of the Cold War to a classic struggle between the forces of good and evil, one that could only be won by military superiority. The promotion of this worldview by participants of Cold War seminars consequently led more Americans to champion higher defense spending and a larger military presence abroad to eradicate global communism.

In addition to the Cold War seminars, right-wing activists held community events on military bases across the Sunbelt to organize themselves against communist subversion. At these meetings, participants often conflated the fight against the Soviet Union with their hostility to liberalism. On February 15, 1961, Marion Miller and Paul Miller spoke on the communist threat at the Officers Wives Club luncheon at the Pacific Missile Range in Point Mugu, California. Marion was regarded as a hero within right-wing circles after she infiltrated communist organizations as an informant for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.). Point Mugu was under the authority of Rear Admiral J.P. Monroe, who once arranged a viewing at the missile range of the John Birch Society movie “Communism on the Map” to local audiences. Monroe said that the Office Wives Club in Point Mugu had invited the Millers to “help in our education about the Communist threat.” Organizers of the luncheon encouraged members of the Officers Wives Club to invite guests, and emphasized in patriarchal terms “HUSBANDS will be especially welcome.” When the local Ventura County Democratic Control Committee discovered Monroe’s involvement in spreading right-wing ideologies, Monroe agreed to stop showing “Communism on the Map” to non-military personnel, but said that the film would continue to be shown to members of the Navy under his command.17

17 Zoom Memorandum 16 Jan 61, GRR, Box 381, Military—Anti-Communist Propaganda for Public folder; Pacific Missile Range Officer’s Wives’ Luncheon announcement, GRR, Box 381, Military—Anti-Communist Propaganda for Public folder; Open Letter from Ventura County Democratic Control Committee GRR, Box 381, Military—Anti-Communist Propaganda for Public folder.
Such activism, financed in part by the federal government, went under the public radar until early 1961 when the Edwin Walker case captivated the nation’s attention. The Walker case shocked the American public into realizing the extent of the Cold War seminars. Major General Edwin A. Walker had gone from leading the 101st Airborne Division during the Little Rock crisis (a position he abhorred having been a lifelong segregationist) to the 24th Infantry in West Germany. It was in West Germany that Walker told men under his command that former Secretary of State Dean Acheson and President Harry S. Truman—among other Democrats—were in fact communists who wanted to Sovietize the federal government. Walker even tried to convince his soldiers not to vote for Kennedy in the 1960 election. After the allegations were reported in the media, Walker was investigated by the Department of Defense, which found him guilty of indoctrinating soldiers under his command with propaganda published by the John Birch Society. Walker resigned his post after the publication of the Defense Department’s report and turned the incident into a cause célèbre. His most outspoken supporters, including Senators Strom Thurmond and John Tower, William F. Buckley (and his wife), and the Reverend Billy James Hargis, claimed that Walker had been a victim of “military muzzling” by the Kennedy Administration and was simply speaking the truth about American liberals and their sponsorship of global communism. Walker’s supporters also included thousands of Americans who wrote letters and attended rallies in his defense. One woman from Indiana stated that the Walker case added weight to her opinion “that what masquerades as liberalism and a New Frontier is [not] progression, but an effort to take us back into Medieval days.”  

The Walker case encouraged media outlets to investigate the extent the American military and Department of Defense played in the Cold War workshops. In a series of articles

18 For the Walker case and conservatives’ uproar over “military muzzlings,” see Crespino, “Strom Thurmond’s Sunbelt”; Schoenwald, A Time for Choosing, chp. 4; Perlstein, Before the Storm, 147-148. The Indiana woman is quoted in Schoenwald, A Time for Choosing, 119.
published in August 1961, the Washington Post reported on the role of military officials in the Cold War seminars. The paper argued that the true aim of the Cold War seminars was to portray Kennedy’s domestic policies and New Deal programs as essentially communist. The Minneapolis Morning Tribune editorialized that the seminars purposely exaggerated the threat of communism in order to attack liberalism: “Under the guise of alerting the country to communism, some of the right radicals have taken advantage of military help to attack the income tax, social security, and the civil rights guaranteed by the first 10 amendments to the constitution.” The military’s involvement in the seminars was reprehensible, and action was needed by the federal government to stop further Cold War seminars from taking place.19

Much of the activities conducted in Cold War seminars in the wake of the Walker scandal were also detailed by Arkansas Democratic Senator William J. Fulbright in a 1961 memorandum to Secretary McNamara. The Fulbright memorandum, as it came to be known, elucidated the military’s efforts to disseminate right-wing propaganda to rank-and-file military men, and contributed to the Defense Department’s decision to forbid military involvement in Cold War workshops. Fulbright intended his memorandum to be confidential, but published the memo in the Congressional Record after Walker’s supporters targeted the Arkansas senator for General Walker’s public downfall. Fulbright made clear that the seminars were not presenting objective information or diverse viewpoints on national security issues, but that their “thesis of the nature of the Communist threat often is developed by equating social legislation with socialism, and the latter with communism.” This premise was used to portray a great deal “of the administration’s domestic legislative program, including continuation of the graduated income tax, expansion of

social security (particularly medical care under social security), Federal aid to education, etc…as steps toward communism.” Fulbright documented the role of the national security state in financing the organizers of Cold War seminars and their attempts to influence foreign policy. Citing a number of right-wing organizations and their connections to policy makers within Washington, D.C., Fulbright suggested that the “relationships between the Foreign Policy Research Institute, the Institute for American Strategy, the Richardson Foundation, the National War College, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff must be reexamined.” To counter the power of the military, and prevent further cases like Edwin Walker, the senator proposed the seminars be placed “under civilian control.”

Fulbright’s memo drew national criticism from an array of people who lauded Walker as a modern day Cassandra unjustly persecuted for warning Americans about the lurking threat of communism. Support for Walker only increased after the Fulbright memo. A Pennsylvania woman wrote to her local newspaper to say that Walker’s “only crime—one only—had been his open and realistic opposition to communism, expressed in an effort to teach the troops in his command the nature of the enemy we face. Make no mistake, if this could happen to General Walker, it could happen to us; to you and to me, our parents, and our children and our neighbors.” Republican Representative Edgar Hiestand, who represented the 21st congressional district in Southern California, rushed to defend Walker and the John Birch Society, asking, “Since when it is it wrong to advance the cause of Americanism?” Protests erupted in Hiestand’s district six months later organized by Dr. Fred Schwarz and his Anti-Communist Crusade, who used the Walker case to pillory liberalism and its design to “Substitute Surrender for Victory” in the Cold War. The Fulbright memo led to an acrimonious conflict between Thurmond and

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20 Congressional Record—Senate, August 2, 1961, 14433-14438. For the impact of Fulbright’s memo on the Defense Department, see Crespino, “Strom Thurmond’s Sunbelt,” 70.
Fulbright as Thurmond decided to hold Senate investigations into the “military muzzlings.” Fulbright was also personally derided by anti-communist conservatives as “the darling of the one-world-welfare state conspirators” and as “the red-wing Senator from Arkansas.”

Fulbright did not treat his critics on the far right with kid gloves. While he thought his opponents were outlandish and extreme, he was aware of the effectiveness in which they used Walker and national security issues to arouse attention to right-wing causes. In August 1961, at the height of the controversy over the Fulbright memo, Fulbright forcibly responded to these critics at the National War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces—which had sponsored the Cold War seminars—where he denounced “radicals of the right,” for their cynicism toward the New Deal state and their simplistic outlook toward the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Fulbright alluded to a contradiction among the anti-communist right: their persistent appeal to increase defense spending belied their argument that internal communists were subverting American democracy and were thus the premier enemy of the United States. If this was so, Fulbright believed the United States “would be wasting billions of dollars on the armed forces themselves, funds which instead should be transferred to the FBI to fight internal subversion.” Anti-statists employed a slippery slope in believing that government spending on any significant scale would lead to a communist state. Social progress and federal programs such as “the creation of the TVA, or the Arkansas River development program, is not, in my opinion, a step toward communism.”

Fulbright garnered a number of supporters from the public and private sector and sparked a national discussion about the proper role of the military in American society. The Fulbright memo also relaunched the discussion begun by Eisenhower several months earlier when the President warned Americans during his Farewell Address to guard against the “unwarranted influence” of the military-industrial complex. National commentators worried that the preponderance of American military officials “with extreme ‘right-wing,’ anti-democratic views” is enough “to make one wonder whether anything in a military career encourages this kind of divorce from socio-political reality.”

Walker’s extremism, critics claimed, was symptomatic of a larger problem that derived from the presence of the postwar military establishment.

Concerns about the undue influence of the military in public life would temporarily subside after the Department of Defense announced it would not support future Cold War seminars. But the overwhelming criticism of the Cold War seminars after the Walker case did not prevent prospective ones from being organized and attended by anti-communist activists—and being financed by federal institutions. While the federal government renounced its involvement in the seminars, other private individuals and organizations with military credentials continued to organize Cold War seminars in a more inconspicuous fashion. In 1963, a four-day Cold War Education Conference was held in Tampa, Florida that was organized by groups such as the American Security Council, the American Legion, the Cold War Council, the Institute for American Strategy, Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, Office of Civil Defense, and Project Alert. The Governor of Florida, Ferris Bryant, was the leader of the conference that registered over 400 individuals including teachers, congressional representatives, “corporate representatives,” and “professional patriots.” An entire day of the conference was even dedicated

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to “the subject of class-room teaching of anti-communism.” Activists, corporate leaders, and military officials involved in the national security state stepped in to take control of the seminars in the absence of overt federal involvement. Cold War seminars continued to take place at federally funded institutions and were attended by paid military personnel, but without the notoriety and scrutiny they had received only months earlier. This enabled anti-communists to spread their message about the need for a tough defense posture without occupying newspaper headlines. As late as 1974, Frank Barnett, president of the National Strategy Information Center (NSIC), a group that had close ties to William Buckley, Jr. and other conservative intellectuals and activists, was organizing Cold War seminars at the National War College. Barnett even received a letter of appreciation from the Defense Department praising his recent presentation at the “Defense Strategy Seminar” and his “coverage of the principal issues involved in the mobilization of human and intellectual resources to support our national security objectives.” The letter also thanked Barnett “for your contributions to the College over the years.”

The private-public connections between business and the military, and the financial and institutional support from sectors of the federal government, provided anti-communist hawks with an advantage to influence both domestic and foreign policy headed into the mid-1960s. Furthermore, national security politics gave defense communities opportunities to use their connections to the military to campaign for greater defense spending, as well as organize larger numbers of Americans to their side with the aid of federal dollars. The militarization of the Cold War provided the structure for organizing and mobilizing individuals who were opposed to the

very state that financed their activism. Following the Cuban Missile Crisis, cuts in the United States defense budget further indicated to these activists that the Soviet threat had become less of a concern to the public. To change these circumstances, Cold Warriors used the power and influence of the national security state to prevent a drawdown in the defense posture of the United States.

The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Cold War Thaw

Warnings about the threat of international communism by participants in national security seminars clashed with the normative consensus toward the Cold War after 1962. Changes to the Cold War environment were largely a result of heightened public concern over the use of nuclear weapons. Since the late 1950s, the looming threat of nuclear warfare and the acceleration of the arms race spurred activists on the left to work to ban the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) was formed in 1957 wanting “a permanent end to nuclear tests” as well as “comprehensive arms control.” SANE was among a number of groups established during this time whose purpose was to eradicate nuclear weapons. The movement to abolish nuclear weapons was global in scope, as France, England, Australia, and West Germany all had significant anti-nuclear movements. Organizations such as the World Council of Peace were at the forefront of the international call for disarmament, helping to convene the World Congress for General Disarmament held in Moscow in 1962.

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26 Historian Joseph Crespino makes a similar point. In exploring the career of Strom Thurmond, Crespino argues that Thurmond’s involvement in the Walker scandal and his support for a more expansive foreign policy allowed the South Carolina senator to transform his reputation from Dixiecrat segregationist to acceptable Sunbelt politician. See Crespino, “Strom Thurmond’s Sunbelt.”
“Disarmament—general, complete and controlled, including the destruction of nuclear weapons—is the most urgent need of our time,” the Council claimed.\textsuperscript{27}

The Cuban Missile Crisis legitimized the concerns expressed by anti-nuclear activists over the escalation of nuclear weapons. The Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 offered the first significant challenge to the arms race and the viability of nuclear weapons to preserve what historian John Lewis Gaddis has entitled the “long peace.”\textsuperscript{28} After Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev decided in 1962 to transport to Cuba missiles capable of launching nuclear weapons, it made very real the possibility that the two superpowers could kill a significant portion of the world’s population over miscommunication and hubris. Nuclear war was fatefuly avoided when a secret deal was arranged between Kennedy and Khrushchev—Kennedy would remove American missiles in Turkey the following year if Khrushchev took Soviet missiles out of Cuba. After the crisis was resolved, the world breathed a collective sigh of relief as it stepped backed from the brink of nuclear war.

Many anti-communist activists were not satisfied with the Kennedy administration’s resolution of the crisis. These activists criticized the Kennedy administration for what they saw as its willingness to capitulate to Soviet intimidation. Groups such as The Committee for the Monroe Doctrine (CMD), headed by retired Captain Edward V. Rickenbacker, were formed weeks after the conclusion of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The organization derived its name from the belief that Kennedy had “invented a Monroe Doctrine in reverse” by bargaining with Khrushchev over the missiles. Rickenbacker, along with \textit{National Review} editor William F.


Buckley, Jr., formed the Committee on the Monroe Doctrine to express their dissatisfaction with what they felt was Kennedy’s decision to abandon Cuba to the communists. CMD members believed the crisis was far from over, as did activists who circulated bumper stickers in 1962 with the slogan, “Those Missiles are Still in Cuba,” to convey their suspicions that the missiles had not been removed from the island. The CMD also believed that communism would spread to other parts of Latin America after 1962. Charles Edison told fellow CMD members that the “tentacles of Communist subversion and sabotage have spread to every nation in Latin America” as communists have been “aided and abetted by all too many Americas—in government and out—who believe that the way to stop Communism in Latin America is through shoveling ten’s [sic] of millions of our taxpayer’s dollars into illusionary projects and schemes.”29

The Committee on the Monroe Doctrine waged a significant grassroots campaign to mobilize public opposition to the Kennedy administration’s foreign policy after the Cuban Missile Crisis. Rickenbacker enlisted Richard Viguerie for his help in spreading the CMD’s views. Viguerie was at that point an upstart political fundraiser and direct-mail strategist whose skills with a computer would later prove valuable in contributing to Republican victories in the 1978 midterm elections and Ronald Reagan’s presidential campaign in 1980. Viguerie and Rickenbacker launched a mass-mailing campaign to sway CMD members to obtain congressional support for its foreign policy ideology. Rickenbacker sent blank petition forms to CMD members urging them to “enlist the cooperation of your community to make this nation-wide petition campaign a success.” John Franklin Hendon of Birmingham, Alabama sent one such petition to his Congressman, Homer Thornberry, after he collected over 50 signatures on

the form, many of which were from Birmingham, but others from Texas, Florida, and North Carolina. Members of the CMD claimed that one million signatures were sent to Congress by 1963 because of their direct mail petitions.  

Some individuals used the outcome of the Cuban Missile Crisis to argue that liberals had mismanaged foreign policy due to their preoccupation with civil rights and other domestic reforms. One woman from suburban Pennsylvania was furious that the United States, “while fanatically employing military force and violence” to carry out the “un-constitutional Supreme Court decision” in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), “ignored the Monroe doctrine, and allowed arms and ammunition to pour into Cuba from the Kremlin, in ships we ‘loaned’ them.” Young members of the group National Association of Americans for Goldwater viewed the Kennedy administration as a collection of “welfare whiz-kids” that were in office “peddling their frosted over fertilizer under the appealing title, “New Fronteer” [*sic*].  

These criticisms led to arguments that the Kennedy administration needed to spend more on defense rather than social programs. One member of the National Association of Manufacturers, Joseph Borda, said it was “becoming more apparent every day” to him that federal money for social reform programs were “to come from a gradual cutback on expenditures on defense and from a hoped-for increase in revenues from an expanded economy.”  

While often resorting to hyperbolic rhetoric to express their concerns over the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the CMD and its followers highlighted a very real problem faced by

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30 See attached petition to letter from John Franklin Henden to Homer Thornberry, March 25, 1963, GRR, Box 84, Committee for the Monroe Doctrine folder (1 of 2); Letter from Helen Conover to George Cheesley, August 6, 1963, Box 9, C Folder, Marvin Liebman Papers, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University, Stanford, California.


32 Minutes of the Meeting of the NAM Government Economy Committee, December 1, 1964, Govt. Economy Committee Minutes, 1964 folder, Box 24, Series I, National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware (hereinafter as NAM papers).
American policymakers. During the last months of his life, President Kennedy and members of his national security team were alarmed by their inability to verify that the Soviets had removed the entire arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles shipped to Cuba under Operation Anadyr. Kennedy also worried about the remaining Soviet troops in Cuba, receiving only the vague assurance from Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin that all Soviet personnel would be evacuated in due time.\textsuperscript{33} Despite their misgivings about the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Kennedy administration sought to make sure such an event could not occur again. McNamara and Kennedy reached the conclusion after October 1962 that a foreign policy based on the deterrence of nuclear warfare was irrational and unrealistic. Kennedy’s national security advisors operated on the presumption that nuclear weapons were irrelevant within the changing context of the Cold War. The only means to deter nuclear war was through international agreements that limited the proliferation of nuclear weapons. White House officials did not arrive at this decision easily, but they reasoned that there were few options. Even after communist China tested its first atomic bomb in 1964, McNamara and Lyndon Johnson insisted that nonproliferation and disarmament were the best means to preserve peace.\textsuperscript{34}

Policymakers like McNamara therefore decided that the creation of new weapons programs in preparation for an all-out war against the Soviet Union would waste federal dollars. The U.S. and the Soviet Union had achieved nuclear parity, McNamara argued, and allocating more monies to build conventional military weapons was not going to change these circumstances. It did not matter if the Americans had the Nike-Zeus missile and the Soviets did


not. In the end, if war between the superpowers did come, it would surely come in the form of a nuclear war, and both countries would succumb to its consequences. Working from this premise, McNamara sought to drastically reduce defense expenditures and overhaul U.S. foreign policy by squashing plans to fund extraneous weapons programs.\textsuperscript{35} The Kennedy administration’s desire to trim down America’s nuclear arsenal had broad public support throughout the world by late 1962. Allies of the United States such as Great Britain responded to the Cuban Missile Crisis by trying to place pressure on Kennedy to push further for nuclear disarmament. Presidential speechwriter and Kennedy advisor Ted Sorensen claimed that Kennedy expressed “a desire to influence neutral and ‘world opinion’” on nuclear disarmament, and the international pressure on Kennedy made him propose concrete plans for nuclear nonproliferation.\textsuperscript{36}

As the Kennedy administration made disarmament a serious proposition, national security activists in the Sunbelt South utilized the connections they made in the early 1960s within Cold War seminars to rollback attempts to achieve a nuclear détente. The federal government’s investment in defense had led to vast economic growth in the Sunbelt, and few Southerners wanted to return to a time when the region ranked last in per capita income, capital investment, and real estate values.\textsuperscript{37} The political economy of the Cold War ensured that the South would continue to experience rapid rates of industrial development for decades to come. The presence of the defense industry in strengthening the economic vitality of the Sunbelt also


\textsuperscript{36} Wittner, \textit{Resisting the Bomb}, 406.

helped conservatives explain away the role of factors such as white racism in swinging Southerners behind the G.O.P. It allowed Barry Goldwater as a presidential candidate to argue that his popularity in the South had nothing to do with his opposition to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Southerners were growing increasingly conservative, Goldwater argued, because they “have roots in the new industrialization of a part of the country which from its earliest settlement has existed in an agricultural economy and society. They are related to the growing importance of business activity and concern for the interests of the business community.” Sunbelt conservatism was “primarily an economic conservatism stemming from the growth in business activity.”

According to Goldwater, southerners had come to terms with “the fact that integration is coming and it is not an overriding issue with them.” As historian Bruce Schulman has argued, federal investment in the defense industry in the South also served its residents by “maintaining the separation between military spending, which it approved, and social spending, which it reviled.”

Any talk of defense cuts therefore deeply disturbed Sunbelt politicians like Strom Thurmond. Known for his outspoken support for racial segregation in addition to greater military spending, Thurmond was not reticent to tell leaders of the defense industry that his state relied on the Cold War for its continued prosperity. “Defense business means better employment, bigger payrolls, and general economic improvement,” Thurmond said, and it was his political obligation to ensure that his constituents were “not discriminated against in the awards of government

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contracts.” South Carolina’s reliance on the defense industry was therefore tied to Thurmond’s and other Southern politicians’ political futures. The economics of the Cold War also played a strong role in the development of postwar southern nationalism. Sunbelt conservatives combined their opposition to liberalism with their ardent anti-communism when they railed against McNamara’s nuclear détente throughout the 1960s. Thurmond and other Republicans insisted that liberals failed to comprehend that the weapons their constituents built did not exacerbate tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, but averted communist aggression.39

Another oft-cited critique of Kennedy’s handling of foreign affairs and national defense after the Cuban Missile Crisis was that the federal government was not spending enough money on the right programs. Paul Heilman, a businessman and Cuban exile, told the Coconut Grove Rotary Club in Coconut Grove, Florida on May 29, 1963 about the need to be educated about the nature of communism because the greatest threat is “our own apathy” to the communist menace.” He went on to add that “unless the leaders of our nation develop a will to win, a resolute plan to defend to our interest against that International Communism, unless we take a stand, all other items in anyone’s plan fall flat.” Adding to America’s vulnerability, said Heilman, was the Kennedy administration’s willingness to run up deficits for aid to the United Nations and the Peace Corps, two organizations that he felt did not deter the spread of communism. The only way to defeat the communists was to redirect federal expenditures away

from these programs and develop “a policy of strength and firmness” based on military preparedness.\footnote{Letter to Southern States Industrial Council Members from Thurman Sensing, July 15, 1963, attached speech “Cuba,” GRR, Box 302, Southern States Industrial Council Folder.}

Defense companies had perhaps the most to lose from a decline in the defense budget. Groups such as the Southern States Industrial Council (SSIC) that were comprised of various southern manufacturers—many of which also received defense contracts—helped to finance efforts to expand American military forces and prevent defense cuts in the 1960s. Formed in the 1930s as a reaction to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, the SSIC billed itself as the “The Voice of the Conservative South” and argued for decreases in corporate tax rates, less government regulation, and a foreign policy that relied on military power. While the SSIC represented southern business, it also solicited funds from corporate executives in the North. The leading contributor to the SSIC was Pierre S. du Pont III of the chemical manufacturer E.I. du Pont de Nemours Co. based in Wilmington, Delaware. Pierre du Pont was the single largest donor to the SSIC. (Between 1958 and 1964, he gave the organization a total of $21,000.) An earlier generation in the du Pont family had founded the American Liberty League, an organization created in 1934 to overturn Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal. Du Pont III’s father, along with his uncle Irénée and grandfather Lammont, spent thousands of dollars to promote free-market capitalism at the same time making millions through defense contracts during and after World War II.\footnote{“A ‘Voice’ Guides Conservative South,” \textit{Norfolk Virginian Pilot}, August 2, 1964, GRR, Box 302, Southern States Industrial Council Folder; Kim Phillips-Fein, \textit{Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan} (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 12-23.} McNamara’s cuts to the defense budget would hurt companies like DuPont as well as Southern manufacturers. The SSIC also opposed reductions in defense on anti-communist grounds. In announcing their disfavor to the “recently established United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency” the SSIC said that the organization, “will either prove
utterly futile and a waste of taxpayers’ money or it will impair in some degree this Nation’s security. In either contingency, this manifestation of governmental schizophrenia should be abolished.“42

Other pro-business groups, afraid of a decline in profits if McNamara’s plans for the military budget went forward, joined the chorus of forces opposing a drawdown of military forces. Organizations such as NAM and the Chamber of Commerce included members of the defense industry who feared a drawdown in the Cold War. Beginning in the 1960s, these defense executives collaborated with grassroots activists and former military officers (many of whom received jobs for defense companies following their retirement), to pursue efforts for more defense spending. These individuals converged in NAM and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as groups with names such as the American Security Council (ASC), the National Security Industrial Association (NSIA), the National Strategy Committee, and the National Strategy Information Center (NSIC). These organizations were led by executives from companies that received numerous defense contracts including Motorola, Inc. and General Electric, Co. and recruited individuals like William F. Buckley, Jr. to attend conferences on the dangers of “relax[ing] our posture of readiness” for the sake of détente.43

Similar lobbying groups came out in force to oppose the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty that prohibited the atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons. Stanley Andrews, a former advisor to the Senate defense hawk and Ohio Democrat Frank Lausche, created the group Americans for National Security because he thought American taxpayer dollars were wasted on the Senate

Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. To Andrews, the agency was “being used as a tool of rash and fuzzy-brained pacifists in the State Department to unilaterally disarm the United States.” Andrews told the Senate in hearings over the Limited Test Ban Treaty that the treaty would “enhance the opportunities which the Kremlin is seeking to achieve its ultimate design for world domination.” By denying the passage of the LTBT, the Senate would “put a block in the way of communism’s supreme objective—world domination.” The euphemistic sounding Americans for National Security was an organizational offshoot of the Liberty Lobby, a notoriously racist organization that believed the federal government should stop financing federal education and civil rights reform and redirect its attention toward building a strong national defense. Other groups such as the Citizens Congressional Committee, headed by its Legislative Secretary Charles W. Winegarner, tried to rally Democratic and Republican conservative members of Congress against the “Treason Treaty.” Winegarner stated in an issue of *The Cross and the Flag*—a magazine affiliated with the Christian Nationalist Crusade—that he had the support of over “50 Ambassadors or Legation representatives” for his anti-disarmament agenda.

Cold War Democrats in Washington, D.C. also fought aggressively to defeat the treaty. Through their control of the Senate Preparedness Investigating Committee (PIS)—a committee organized with the purpose of increasing military spending—Democratic Senator John Stennis from Mississippi and Thurmond held hearings where men like the hawkish Gen. Curtis Lemay, who had close ties to the ASC, testified against the treaty. But the Limited Test Ban Treaty was approved in September 1963 by a Senate vote of 80-19, after being backed by considerable public support. The Limited Test Ban Treaty was unable to achieve a sustained détente between the Soviet Union and the United States during the 1960s, but it was a milestone in the Cold War.

As the new era in the Cold War altered the habits of defense spending in the United States, the local dependents of the Cold War economy feared the consequences to their bottom lines. Those Americans with economic connections to the Cold War felt anxiety over the thaw in tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, as they renewed political pressure for defense cuts. Clients of the military-industrial complex thought about the Cold War in parochial terms: a nuclear détente with the Soviets threatened their jobs and class status. While residents of defense communities welcomed the easing of nuclear tensions, when the environment of the Cold War compromised their economic status, they joined with other members of the Cold War coalition in opposition to the changes made by the Kennedy administration to America’s defense policy after the Cuban Missile Crisis. The collective concerns over international issues moved the political sympathies of defense workers and executives to support policies and politicians that ensured the United States’ reliance on militarization.

Indeed, the test ban and the settlement of the Cuban Missile Crisis were significant issues that recruited grassroots activists and members of the defense industry to Barry Goldwater’s
1964 presidential candidacy. The SSIC and other organizations that fought against the Limited Test Ban Treaty were part of the financial backbone of the Goldwater campaign.\textsuperscript{45} The conservative business consultant F. Clifton White, who advised many defense companies in the 1950s through the Richardson Foundation, used the treaty as an issue to solicit donations to a redesigned Draft Goldwater committee. An executive at Weyerhaeuser Co, a company with ties to the defense industry, expressed interest in donating to the F. Clifton White committee because he felt liberals’ abandonment of the free market and states’ rights would have repercussions for American’s vulnerability in the world. If liberals remained in charge, their domestic policies “move us inevitably toward less and less freedom and make us vulnerable to the development of ignorance and stupidity among our people, thus further weakening our national alertness and discernment so that we shall become easy marks for dictatorship and will ultimately lose spirit and fight and become a defeatable [\textit{sic}] nation.” While he did “not believe in a strong federal power, subsidizing weaker and weaker and less and less effective state governments,” the U.S. government must provide security to Americans through “a powerful well-organized military adequately backed with the best possible research and development activities and receptive to innovations which will keep them in a position of leadership.” Indeed, Goldwater’s supporters often reflected on the connections between local and international politics in backing the Republican’s foreign policy. One Goldwaterite implied that the 1964 Republican National Convention should be viewed as another conflict in the Cold War, as the winner of “The 1964 Battle of San Francisco” would determine the course of international events for at least another four years.\textsuperscript{46}


Goldwater’s aggressive outlook on the role of the U.S. in the world also resonated with some defense workers in the Gunbelt. Areas such as Southern California, where the defense industry dominated the economy, were rife with electoral potential for the Goldwater campaign. The *Orange County Industrial News* maintained the position in 1961 that “that there will be no agreements on disarmament or on limitation of nuclear weapons.” Southern California continued to benefit enormously from defense contracts in the early 1960s, but remained opposed to federal taxation and intervention in local race relations. Defense workers were present in the crowds at rallies held by figures such as Billy James Hargis of the Christian Crusade and General Walker. On their “Operation Midnight Ride” tour across the country, Hargis and Walker regularly lambasted plans of disarmament and the U.N.’s control of U.S. foreign policy.47

California residents were not alone in suffering from the consequences of defense cutbacks in the early 1960s. Boeing workers in Washington State were rumored to be supporting Goldwater as early as 1963 due to job losses from defense cuts. *Time* magazine argued that “Boeing’s loss of the TFX fighter-aircraft contract and the state’s loss of shipyard work to the East have irked both management and labor,” and the combination of these factors “could be just enough to tip the state to Goldwater.” Indeed, Goldwater sought access to traditional Democratic voters through the politics of the Cold War—as well as the politics of race and class. Democrats like Henry Jackson were on equal footing with Goldwater when he argued that the TFX was vital to U.S. national security and jobs in his home state of Washington. In the days leading up to the

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election, Goldwater made an appearance in nearby Oregon to speak to Boeing workers where he praised their efforts in contributing to American air power in previous conflicts, and vowed they “will be doing so again,” pledging to allocate more federal dollars to building new bomber aircraft. 48

Defense cuts also imperiled the eastern coast of the Gunbelt. When cuts were implemented to the defense budget, Long Islanders turned to the federal government to bail them out in times of trouble. In 1962, the Department of Defense eliminated production of the F-105D fighter plane in favor of a more modern model. The F-105D was made by Republic Aviation Corp., one of the leading military contractors in the nation (before being bought out by Fairchild Industries) and a major employer in Nassau and Suffolk counties in New York. The editors of Newsday wrote an open letter to President Kennedy on February 8, 1962 complaining that the cancellation of this one plane would potentially result in layoffs to 13,000 Republic employees, roughly 72 percent of the company’s workforce, and 40 percent of people employed in the airline industry in Nassau and Suffolk counties. The editors argued that the federal government “has an obligation to provide Republic with other contracts” in order to prevent job losses at Republic plants. While the paper upheld “the doctrine that national security is more important than any local economy” it also noted that “even before World War II, the government has encouraged Republic and similar defense plants to expand to the point where all of them represent a crucially important source of employment.” The Cold War economy established a relationship between suburbanites and the state to the extent that defense communities like

Nassau County felt that the federal government “has a responsibility to these people that extends beyond emergency help.”

As the editorial from *Newsday* made clear, the business of the Cold War was bipartisan—it touched everyone in communities that relied heavily on defense contracts from the federal government. When layoffs occurred, they not only affected those who worked at the plant, but restaurants, retail stores and small businesses that relied on these workers to patronize these establishments. Non-union defense workers suffered the most from the layoffs. Because of the industry’s reliance on government contracts for profits, defense work was unpredictable and constantly subject to employment instability and fluctuations in profits. Unorganized workers therefore had no recourse when they lost their jobs. Several attempts by major unions such as the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) to organize workers employed at Grumman in the 1960s failed as the company managed to prevent unionization through welfare capitalism. Companies such as Boeing also fed workers a steady diet of “right to work” propaganda to marginalize the power of unions. Corporations such as General Electric (the second largest defense contractor in the nation in the 1960s) and business groups such as NAM were also at the forefront of anti-union campaigns in the 1950s.

Unable to organize to prevent job cuts, defense workers in the Gunbelt became disillusioned by the federal government’s inability to offer protections against layoffs. The anti-labor rhetoric propounded by corporate executives and Republican politicians like Goldwater

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49 In 1962, there were 32,800 total workers employed in the aircraft and parts industry located in Nassau and Suffolk counties. Republic Aviation alone employed 18,000 workers. I thank Tim Keogh for pointing me toward this statistical information. See William K. Kaiser, Charles E. Stonier, and Raymond V. DiScala, *The Development of the Aerospace Industry on Long Island* (Hempstead, N.Y.: Hofstra University, 1968); “An Open Letter to President Kennedy,” *Newsday*, February 8, 1962.

since the 1950s created fissures among workers and their relationship to the New Deal state.\textsuperscript{51} The federal government, therefore, became the scapegoat for the problems plaguing the defense industry. One Grumman Corporation employee complained that his “Senators and Representatives” failed to secure defense jobs to residents of Long Island. This same employee did not blame the company for the layoffs but politicians in Washington, D.C. “I don’t think they are doing everything they can to bring defense work to this area,” he exclaimed.\textsuperscript{52} While critical of defense corporations for committing layoffs, one Republic Aviation employee, after losing his job in 1964, suggested he was more likely to vote for Goldwater. The Democrats “better look out in November,” he warned. One resident of Seattle, M.C. (Chuck) Snyder, said that layoffs at the Boeing plant made him feel he could not rely on the federal government anymore. “We can’t sit here and demand economy in the federal budget everywhere but in our own backyards,” Snyder said.\textsuperscript{53}

Union leadership of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), which represented defense workers, also stymied further defense cuts. The president of the AFL-CIO, George Meany, was a constant thorn in the side of the right for being an advocate of better wages and benefits for labor, but he was also a dedicated Cold Warrior who saw eye-to-eye with Republicans on national defense. While Meany and the AFL-CIO supported a policy of limited disarmament and the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty, the union lobbied for more defense contracts as well. The \textit{Washington Post} noted Meany’s position on disarmament with surprise, as the leadership of the “AFL-CIO has been in the forefront of those

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complaining that the Nation’s defense are inadequate, that increased military spending is of first priority.” Andrew J. Biemiller, director of the AFL-CIO Department of Legislation acknowledged that disarmament was a worthy goal, but disarmament without federal attention to the repercussions to labor would not be tolerated. Biemiller reaffirmed this position in testimony to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. While criticizing the arms race and its potential to place the world “on the brink of its own destruction” Biemiller said “that disarmament on a unilateral basis, or without fully effective controls, would amount to national suicide.” The failure of the AFL-CIO’s leadership to endorse complete disarmament further inhibited support for a nuclear détente.55

In response to the restructuring of the Cold War economy during the Kennedy administration—and the anger defense cuts engendered from local defense communities and politicians—Congress attempted to redirect labor toward non-defense work during the 1960s. In 1964, George McGovern proposed the establishment of the National Economic Conversion Commission to manage the impact the declining defense budget would have on transitioning defense-based communities to non-military work. The Senate Committee on Commerce chaired by Washington Senator Warren Magnuson held hearings on the National Economic Conversion Commission at a time when the Civil Rights Act took up a majority of the Senate’s time and attention. Magnuson, like Senator Jackson, was an avid supporter of Boeing and defense


spending. His support for defense labor in Washington State made conversion more urgent, as the number of military contracts for his constituents had declined since 1961. In opening the Senate hearings on the NECC, Magnuson commented that “roughly 50 percent of the total Federal Budget and about 9 percent of our working force is directed toward the national defense effort” and its future was therefore of grave concern to Americans.\(^56\)

Efforts to reemploy jobless defense workers were of no avail as the NECC folded after initial hearings. The collapse of the NECC proved moot once Vietnam injected stimulus into the defense economy. But before the Americanization of the Vietnam War, President Johnson worked to reduce Cold War tensions by establishing the Gilpatric Committee: Johnson’s contribution to continue the efforts of Kennedy to achieve nuclear nonproliferation. Phyllis Schlafly and Chester Ward of the ASC mounted one of the most visible challenges to the Gilpatric committee. In books with such titles as *The Betrayers* and *Strike From Space*, Phyllis Schlafly and Chester Ward of the ASC argued that liberals had undermined the military superiority of the United States by seeking a reduction in nuclear arms. Schlafly and Ward argued that any form of détente with the Soviets spelled the end of the United States, because the Soviet Union would use détente to buildup its forces to carry out its long-term goal of destroying capitalism. Any reduction to America’s military arsenal would be ineffective as the only “two great guarantees of peace are the power of God and United States military strength.” The “Gilpatric policy of refusing to engage in a military space race with Russia,” the two authors wrote, had left the United States behind the Soviets in space technology. Schlafly and Ward also criticized Johnson for letting “the big money and the huge national effort go to prestige projects” like sending a man to the moon, while merely “crumbs are left for military space programs

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which could insure our survival and our freedom, as well as peace on earth.” Arizona banker and dedicated Goldwater supporter Frank Cullen Brophy echoed Schlafly and Ward, believing that sending a man to the moon was akin to putting “the American taxpayer” through a “long roll in the lunar pork barrel.” While *National Review* editor Frank S. Meyer was critical of Schlafly’s and Ward’s bombastic style and reductionist thinking, he nevertheless agreed “that what they are fundamentally getting at is frightening.”

The varied supporters of the national security state therefore offered a barrier to disarmament and the rethinking of America’s defense priorities in the 1960s, but one that was inconsistent in its accomplishments. While unable to prevent defense cuts in their entirety, the relationship between ideology and interests in this Cold War coalition created a collective challenge to the new foreign policy order that ensured the unremitting presence of militarization in Americans’ lives. The overarching commonality between skilled labor unions, corporate executives, blue-collar defense workers, and right-wing activists in the 1960s was their connection to the national defense structure and the influence the defense apparatus had on molding their personal and public views toward the proper role of the federal state. Together, these elements of the national security state sought to pressure congressional officials and other figures in power to ensure the defense economy fulfilled their respective agendas and enhanced their overall welfare. Collaboration among national security activists in the 1960s thereby foreshadowed the challenges proponents of disarmament and defense cuts would face when trying to undo the advantages the national security state provided to individuals across the political landscape.

Conclusion

The international consensus on nuclear weapons and the reorganization of America’s defense posture to meet the new context of global affairs, prevented national security activists from stopping McNamara and other officials from closing bases and cancelling defense projects. These factors also minimized the effectiveness of the Cold War coalition in making foreign policy in the first half of the 1960s. After President Johnson’s election, his critics predicted a bleak future for the United States. The SSIC anticipated increased government regulation, an expanded welfare state, and “support of the Negro Revolution.” In terms of foreign policy, the SSIC forecasted continued “accommodations with Russia and China” as well as “[u]nilateral disarmament and U.S. adherence to a world government,” which amounted to “Fabian socialism” coming to the country. Johnson’s War on Poverty and the Great Society were also of priority to Americans before 1965. But passage of Great Society legislation, Human Events exclaimed, distracted Americans from the Cold War. The magazine posited that “the Soviets have been making great strides forward” in military capabilities throughout the 1960s because the federal government “has been focusing on social welfare programs.”

 Even after 1965, Lyndon Johnson’s preoccupation with the Vietnam War failed to stymy the prospects of disarmament, as Johnson played a pivotal role in leading up to the ratification of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

Defense industry executives and members of the military who had allied with Sunbelt activists in opposition to the Kennedy administration were placated by the uptick in military spending generated by the war, and toned down their opposition to Johnson’s foreign policy.

As opinion turned against the war in Vietnam, however, business executives were increasingly under attack by the New Left and congressional liberals who sought to weaken the power of the imperial presidency and the military-industrial complex. Defense companies in NAM were so frustrated by the public’s perception of the defense industry as warmongers that by 1969 they had concluded it was time to wage a public relations campaign against the left rather than just lobbying for more defense contracts.  

These setbacks did not sway national defense hawks from their opinions on military spending. Often during the 1960s and 1970s, Republican policymakers would point to the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis to legitimize their argument that the United States needed to spend more on defense. Robert McNamara and his efforts to reduce the defense budget offered up a straw man for military weakness. Melvin Laird to Casper Weinberger, Secretaries of Defense under Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan respectively, claimed that the Cuban Missile Crisis and McNamara had put the United States on the path to ruin. McNamara’s reductions to military forces, they argued, established a dangerous precedent for the United States that led to military inferiority. Individuals from Anthony Harrigan of the ASC, to Phyllis Schlafly, to Chamber of Commerce President Arch Booth would also single out McNamara and the Cuban Missile Crisis as examples of U.S. perfidy to Soviet communism.

In the final analysis, the campaign against Kennedy’s national defense policies united grassroots activists, defense executives, Democratic and Republican hawks, and military personnel to form a powerful coalition in support of the national security state that was particular

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at 2010 Society of Historians of Americans Foreign Relations annual meeting, Madison, Wisconsin. Paper in author’s possession.

Looking Back at the 88th Congress—Looking Ahead to the 89th Congress, 12/1/64,” GRR Box 302, Southern States Industrial Council Folder; “Memo from John A. Stuart, April 15, 1969,” Series I Box 98, NAM papers.

to American politics. While this bloc of Cold Warriors were not successful in achieving favorable results in the first half of the 1960s, they continued to realign the contours of American political culture with their quest for larger defense budgets. The money and interests of the defense industry provided advocates of militarization with significant financial and organizational momentum to attack changes to the Cold War state after the Cuban Missile Crisis. Right-wing members of the Cold War coalition also hoped to divert the federal government away from domestic programs and toward military spending. In making these arguments, politicians, corporate executives, and workers who depended upon the defense economy incorporated anti-communism into their material justification for a strong military, claiming the federal government had to reorganize its priorities in an era still threatened by the Soviets and their allies.
Chapter Three: Vietnam and the Culture of Anti-Militarism

In 1970, William R. Wilson, Vice-President of Public Relations for Lockheed Aircraft Corp., wrote an article in *NAM Reports*, the official magazine of the National Association of Manufacturers, where he conveyed his concerns over the status of American foreign policy and the reputation of the private defense industry. In the article, which he entitled “How to Get Rid of a Complex,” Wilson stated he had grown tired of what he felt were the thoughtless attacks against the defense industry by congressional liberals and the New Left. As a self-described “member of the industrial side of the military-industrial complex,” Wilson believed the defense industry’s image as war profiteers was misleading. The criticism levied on the national security state, Wilson argued, threatened the military strength of the United States and was therefore responsible for a decline in American military power that left the nation vulnerable to an onslaught by communist aggressors. Alluding to the Vietnam War, Wilson claimed that the liberal critics of the national security state wished that the United States could simply “point our magic wand at the…Communist turmoil in Southeast Asia,” and therefore be able to rid ourselves of the military-industrial complex. Wilson urged his colleagues to fight the “scorn form the new left activists” and defend the reputation of private industry for what he claimed was its important role in protecting the United States from communism.¹

During the late 1960s, opposition to American involvement in Vietnam created a culture of anti-militarism in the United States that lasted until the mid-1970s. The lessons of Vietnam were palpable to the American people: U.S. Cold War foreign policy produced an endless and

¹William R. Wilson, “How to Get Rid of a Complex,” NAM Reports, February 16, 1970, Box 37, Military Industrial Complex Folder, National Association of Manufacturers Records, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware, hereinafter cited as NAM papers.
meaningless conflict that resulted in the deaths of thousands of Americans and Vietnamese. The U.S. overcommitted itself to the cause of fighting communism and needed to reexamine how it conducted the Cold War to better adhere to its democratic principles. Vietnam made Americans reluctant to use military force to resolve international conflicts and stimulated criticism of the military establishment and its deleterious effects on the conduct of domestic and foreign policy. Moreover, by 1971, the New Left and the broader anti-war movement succeeded in altering the structure and discourse of the Cold War. Congress responded to this culture of anti-militarism with demands for defense cuts, military restraint, and rhetoric that called for a rethinking of American foreign policy. Indeed, the failed war in Vietnam generated interest in slashing defense expenditures and drawing down America’s military to an extent unseen prior to World War II, as critics of the defense establishment, or anti-militarists, waged a collective struggle against the commanding power of the national security state.²

After the coordinated ambush on American military installations and major cities in South Vietnam by the Vietnamese insurgency during the Tet Offensive in January 1968, opinion polls showed that a near majority of Americans were opposed to the Vietnam War. A Gallup Poll conducted in March of 1968 claimed that 49 percent of Americans felt “the United States was wrong to become involved militarily in Vietnam.” This number only increased during the 1970s. By 1971, 61 percent of Americans agreed the war was a disastrous blunder, while polls also showed that Americans were less likely to classify themselves as “hawks” on the war, as forty

² Throughout this chapter, I refer to the group of individuals who sought to reduce or eliminate the national security state and defense expenditures as “anti-militarists.” I define this term in the introduction, but to reiterate, I apply the label of anti-militarist to a range of individuals. These include members of Congress as diverse as George S. McGovern, John Sherman Cooper, and Stuart Symington (after 1968). The term anti-militarists also denotes members of the New Left, peace activists, and the broader anti-war movement. While anti-militarists in Congress and the New Left cannot be compared in terms of tactics, strategy, and, political ideology, they shared a desire for reorganizing America’s military commitments abroad and cutting the defense budget.
two percent of the public saw themselves as “doves.” As the conduct of the American military abroad faced scrutiny by Congress and swaths of the American electorate, so too did the role of the American government. For the first time since World War II, a majority of Americans raised concerns about how the United States’ role in the world affected their lives at home. More Americans suggested in the 1970s that the United States must scale back its role in the world, and federal monies spent on defense should be shifted to social welfare programs. Civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Stokely Carmichael highlighted the relationship between Vietnam and the decline of the Great Society in justifying their antiwar positions. In publicly announcing his opposition to the Vietnam War, King told an audience at Riverside Church in Harlem on April 4, 1967 that he “knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So, I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.”

To marginalize the New Left and the anti-militarists, defense hawks—within and outside of government—sought to exploit the entrenched institutions of the Cold War state to protect their ideological and economic interests. Defense company executives, local politicians, military hawks, and assorted national security activists continued their crusade to keep military spending high. But in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they did so under a more hostile political climate. This coalition of Cold Warriors found their previous strategies ineffective due to the public criticism of the Vietnam War and U.S. foreign policy. In response, they adopted new ones.

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Defense companies, rather than functioning as the organizational backdrop for pro-Cold War activism, launched attempts to defend their industry to the public, castigating their infamous image as the “military-industrial complex.” The industry also actively courted defenders of militarization, including right-wing politicians and activists. As they had in their campaign against defense cuts and nuclear disarmament in the 1960s, the right willingly joined forces with the national security state to promote a hawkish defense policy. The symbiotic relationship between the defense industry and its multiple defenders on the right lent both greater opportunities to spread their message to more sectors of the American public.

But while they found collaboration and agreement on Cold War foreign policy among business, labor, and national security elites, the pro-war right remained embattled during the Vietnam War. By 1968, movement conservatives were one of the last remaining political constituencies who unequivocally supported the war. They had quarreled with President Lyndon Johnson over his policy of gradual escalation, but believed that the war was a moral cause that the United States needed to fight and win. Despite the public consensus against Vietnam, the activist right continued their support for the war and for a more stringent policy toward the communist powers. Even the election of a Republican president in 1968 proved unfavorable to the pro-war right. President Richard Nixon had little patience for right-wing activists, finding them a nuisance and a constraint in his efforts toward opening diplomatic and economic relations with China, ending the Vietnam War, and establishing arms agreements with the Soviet Union. Nixon and his National Security Advisor (and later Secretary of State) Henry Kissinger sought to cajole and prod the right in supporting the administrations’ foreign and domestic policy, but to no avail. After a number of activist conservatives suspended their support for Nixon in 1971, Nixon and Kissinger attempted to appease the right by meeting with leading figures like Ronald
Reagan and William F. Buckley on a regular basis. When Gerald Ford was appointed president after Nixon resigned in August 1974 due to the Watergate scandal, clashes among conservatives and the White House only intensified. The tensions between the activist right and the Republican establishment culminated in Ronald Reagan’s decision to challenge Ford for the Republican presidential nomination in 1976, further accentuating and expanding the split within the Republican Party between its conservative and moderate wings.5

Vietnam also raised dilemmas for Cold War Democrats. In defending the defense economy from cuts, the American mission in Vietnam, and the greater fight against communism, conservatives found allies in Cold War Democrats like Senators Hubert Humphrey and Henry Jackson. Labor unions such as the AFL-CIO were in company with conservative Republicans on defense spending. The AFL-CIO and their right-wing adversaries agreed over the need to preserve defense jobs—albeit for much different reasons. On foreign policy issues, therefore, conservatives’ positions often echoed those of their liberal opponents. At odds with the anti-war and anti-defense positions of their party, Cold War Democrats contributed to the tensions among the left. Indeed, foreign policy played a significant role in the creation of organizations such as the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM) and the Committee on the President Danger (CPD) that had both Republicans and Democrats as members. The CDM and the CPD found their genesis in Cold War Democrats’ disassociation with the anti-militarist wing of their party. The growing gulf between members of the Democratic Party stemmed from lingering tensions

over the direction of American foreign policy that would continue to affect the Party in the remainder of the twentieth century.

The backlash against the war in Vietnam offered the real possibility that the postwar state created to fight communism would be remade in ways that would benefit the social welfare of Americans. This did not happen. While the eradication of the military-industrial complex was difficult to conceive, the late 1960s were a critical time in postwar American politics that restricted the power of the military and defense corporations to an extent unseen prior to World War II. The collapse of the American economy in the early 1970s prevented efforts by the left to drawn down the national security state to any significance. Moreover, a number of structural forces aligned in the early 1970s that frustrated the agenda of anti-militarists. Declines in productivity and wages at the end of the “American century” strengthened arguments made by defense hawks that military spending was needed to supply Americans with jobs at a time when they appeared to be dwindling.

The Lockheed Loan crisis in 1971 exemplified how the fate of anti-militarism was ultimately determined by local politics. After some poor investments in costly technological prototypes, Lockheed requested several hundred million dollars in federal loan guarantees to prevent the company from going bankrupt. The potential collapse of Lockheed led its workers (and the communities that depended on the defense contractor) to petition and lobby their local, state, and national leaders to keep the company solvent. Companies had received bailouts and federal loan guarantees before, but the size of the loan and the reasons for Lockheed’s request ignited opposition among left-wing anti-militarists and right-wing deficit hawks who fought together to stop federal financing of the private corporation. When the debate over the Lockheed bailout was over, however, the aftermath revealed the severe limitations anti-militarists
confronted when trying to undue the ways militarization affected the lives of Americans since the 1930s.

**Vietnam, the New Left, and the Rise of Anti-Militarism**

In February 1965, President Lyndon Johnson made the fateful decision to send American marines to Vietnam, thus expanding a protracted conflict whose origins lied as far back as World War II. Johnson felt trapped by twenty years of American commitment toward Vietnam, but reasoned that if the United States did not confront communism in the region, U.S. credibility around the world would be jeopardized. Johnson therefore made a series of decisions in 1964 that made the escalation of the Vietnam War nearly a *fait accompli*. Even prior to the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the President was predisposed to favor escalation rather than alternative courses of action. Once Johnson made the decision to Americanize the war, however, the President realized that escalation was not a panacea. Johnson predicted that American firepower, particularly the bombing campaign of Operation Rolling Thunder, would overwhelm the Vietnamese communists. He was wrong. What Johnson hoped would be a quick war dragged on for weeks, then months, and eventually years. Even early on the war, Johnson sensed that a resolution to the conflict was far from his reach. “[T]here ain’t no daylight in Vietnam,” Johnson told his longtime friend and Senate colleague Richard Russell in March of 1965, “the more bombs you drop, the more nations you scare, the more people you make mad.”

When Johnson widened the war, a group of radicals dubbed the New Left gained attention as its most vocal opposition. Comprised of students, clergy, and social activists, the

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6 President Johnson and Richard Russell, 12:05 p.m., 06 March 1965, Tape WH6503.04, Citation # 7207, Lyndon B. Johnson Recordings. For Johnson’s decision-making in the months leading up to the Americanization of the war, see Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1999). Logevall claims that as early as June 1964, if Johnson was given the choice “between withdrawal and escalation, he would choose escalation,” *Choosing War*, p. 161.
origins of the New Left lied in the anti-nuclear movement, Beat culture, and the civil rights movement of the 1950s. The New Left rallied against the “corporate liberalism” of the Democratic Party and its inattention to those Americans left behind during the postwar economic boom. The New Left also criticized the direction American foreign policy had undertaken since World War II, arguing that American intervention abroad was imperialist in its design and outcomes.\(^7\) While the New Left remained fractured by a multiplicity of interests and ideas, its members were joined by the common desire to end the Cold War. Following the civil rights revolution, the New Left also sought to achieve social justice for minorities, women, and the poor. This goal, they believed, was impossible if the U.S. was entrenched in a Cold War with the Soviet Union.

The New Left and its critique of postwar American hegemony obtained greater attention by the media, policymakers, and the public after 1965. What started as a fringe movement gathered momentum in the second half of the 1960s as the Vietnam War dragged on and protests against the war grew. Antiwar demonstrations broke out almost immediately after President Lyndon Johnson sent American marines to Vietnam. College campuses erupted in protest as students energetically spoke out and demonstrated against the war. In addition to colleges and universities, the New Left and the antiwar movement took the fight against the war into the streets in major American cities. After 1967, the antiwar movement galvanized larger numbers of Americans upset over the rising troop levels in Vietnam, the persistence of the draft, and mounting casualties. In the spring of that year, antiwar activists under the banner of the National Mobilization Committee Against the War marched in New York and San Francisco to show support for an American withdrawal from Vietnam. Over 30,000 antiwar activists gathered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in the March on the Pentagon in October, hoping in the words

of antiwar activist Abbie Hoffman to “levitate” the Pentagon. Hoffman’s promise to raise the Pentagon was a stunt, but one that attracted considerable media attention.

The March on the Pentagon lent further momentum to the antiwar movement. Antiwar protesters obtained greater support from leading public figures such as Senator William Fulbright who conducted congressional hearings on the war from 1966 to 1971, some of which were televised. Antiwar South Dakota Senator George S. McGovern spoke at the National Mobilization march, despite objections by members of his staff. The antiwar movement also garnered assistance from leading intellectuals during the late 1960s. Throughout 1968, as young men of the group New England Resistance burned their draft cards in public in Boston, famed pediatrician Benjamin Spock, Martin Luther King, Jr., and MIT professor Noam Chomsky all signed the “Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority” as a sign of solidarity with indicted draft resisters.

Most Americans did not support the tactics of the antiwar left, but they did support its message after January 1968 when the Tet Offensive discredited the claims of President Johnson and his advisors that the United States was winning the war. By the spring of 1968, the Vietnam War was lost in the eyes of the public. Undersecretary of the Air Force Townshend Hoopes admitted to Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford that the war was “eroding the moral fibre of the nation, demoralizing its politics, and paralyzing its foreign policy.” Once Americans saw footage of the Tet offensive broadcast into their homes, the war ended President Johnson’s political career, as he bowed out of the 1968 presidential race after barely defeating antiwar candidate and Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy in the New Hampshire primary. The popularity of

McCarthy’s anti-war platform sent the very clear message that Americans had enough of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{10}

But the public turn against the war did not resolve the nation’s underlying compulsion toward imperialism, argued members of the New Left. Ending the war was not a final solution, as only a demilitarization of the Cold War insured the U.S. against future Vietnams. Vietnam could not be disaggregated from the broader context of the Cold War, as the conflict was a corollary of a “significantly militarized” society, wrote Tom Hayden of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), one that resolved international tensions through armed conflict. Since 1945, the decision to go to war was “the property of the military and industrial arms race machine, with the politicians assuming a ratifying role instead of a determining one.” The Cold War was a noose around America’s neck that diverted resources for social reform toward American imperialism. Only by eliminating the arms race and the tensions between the two superpowers could the United States achieve racial, gender, and economic equality.\textsuperscript{11}

In making their case against the militarized nature of the Cold War, the New Left appropriated the ideas and writings of thinkers like the sociologist C. Wright Mills. Before succumbing to a premature death in 1961, Mills authored works such as \textit{The Power Elite} and \textit{The Causes of World War III} in the 1950s that singled out a “military elite” as having a growing influence in the conduct of American politics. Mills envisaged the concept of the “military-industrial complex” long before the term was spoken by Dwight Eisenhower in 1961. Mills argued that a cadre of military figures and corporate elites threatened the sanctity and security of the American republic for their ability to undermine the wishes of the electorate through the


possession of unprecedented economic and political power. Mills posited that the Cold War gave birth to an intrinsic relationship between the military and the economy that leeched the United States of its financial resources and democratic values. Corporations came to rely upon military leadership for ensuring profits, and the military thereupon depended on corporations for employment. “Without an industrial economy, the modern army, as in America, could not exist; it is an army of machines. Professional economists usually consider military institutions as parasitic upon the means of production. Now, however, such institutions have come to shape much of the economic life of the United States.”

Mills’ writings took on greater salience after 1968 as it seemed to many Americans that defense corporations were the primary benefactors of the Vietnam War.

This attack on corporate militarism was not simply conspiratorial posturing. Anti-militarists had sufficient empirical evidence to base their argument that corporations had profited substantially from the war. During the early years of the Vietnam conflict, defense spending increased to 9 percent of GDP in 1966 from 7 percent in 1964, and private industry saw significant gains from this uptick in military expenditures. George Cline Smith, an economist based in the firm MacKay-Shields Economic Inc. told defense executives in September 1965 it was hard to believe that only months earlier, business was concerned that a steep recession loomed on the horizon. An economic downturn was improbable now as the Vietnam War had alleviated these worries. Cline stated that the primary impact of the war “has been the sharp shift toward optimism over the business outlook.” Indeed, “the war in Vietnam has given the defense industries a badly needed stimulus,” economists at Northeastern University concluded. While

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rising inflation and interest rates were long-term preoccupations, it was clear that the war had a “stimulative effect.” The increase in military spending due to the Vietnam War provided the national security state with what they had wanted for years. Executives of defense companies had long complained that cuts to military spending since the Cuban Missile Crisis imperiled American interests abroad and at home and had wounded them financially. Vietnam seemed to offer a solution to their concerns as profits continued to rise for many defense companies in the 1960s. The Grumman Corporation in Nassau County, Long Island attained substantial profits in its 9-month earnings balance sheets due to Vietnam. During the first year of the Vietnam War, Grumman employed 31,600 workers, only 3,400 shy of the 35,000 employees hired by the company during World War II.

Antiwar groups therefore targeted leading defense contractors throughout the country as sites for protests. The organization Women’s Strike for Peace demonstrated outside the corporate headquarters of Dow Chemical, the maker of napalm. The labor union the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE) protested at a General Electric plant because the corporation took a significant sum of money from the government for defense contracts. SDS members and student radicals “occupied” buildings of Columbia University demanding the school cease funding departments that conducted research for the military.

As the New Left disparaged the “military-industrial complex,” the term resurfaced in American culture for the first time since the Edwin Walker scandal and the public controversy over the military’s involvement in Cold War seminars. Books on the subject of the military-

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14 See chapter two of this dissertation.
industrial complex proliferated in the late 1960s and early 1970s. With titles such as *The Economy of Death* and *The War Business*, these books revivified debates over the relevance of the “military-industrial complex” in American life. The running theme in these works was that Vietnam was proof that Eisenhower’s warning against the power of a permanent military establishment went unheeded throughout the 1960s, and now that Americans have witnessed its dangers, they were prepared to eradicate it. In a review of John Kenneth Galbraith’s 1969 book, *How to Control the Military*, the *New York Times* noted that the book sounded the alarm against the bloated largesse of the Pentagon, but that Galbraith’s work was premised on the belief that Americans “have escaped the cold-war psychosis; the American people are ready to prune the military industrial complex.” In addition to the publication of books and number of newspaper articles, magazines such as *The Atlantic* and *Time* dedicated space to articles on the military-industrial complex in 1969.17

Television stations also released programs on the subject. Of the most popular was the documentary *The Selling of the Pentagon*, which CBS aired in February 1971 to great controversy. *The Selling of the Pentagon* discussed the lengths military personnel had gone to promote the Vietnam War. The documentary revealed how employees of the Department of Defense, with taxpayer money, made speeches across the country equating patriotism with militarism to try to ramp up public support for the war. While groups such as the American Security Council (ASC), and policy makers such as Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird cited flaws with the film, *The Selling of the Pentagon* went on to win a number of awards, including

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an Emmy. Trying to lure ratings for its own network, ABC aired a documentary one year later entitled *Arms and Security: How Much is Enough?* that centered on critics of defense spending who argued the military-industrial complex had perpetuated the arms race.¹⁸

The international catastrophe of Vietnam generated a broad public questioning of the economics of war and its consequences for American society that was new to the postwar era. Challenges to the defense industry and the wider military-industrial complex expanded the antiwar movement’s critique of American military power beyond the campus and the streets and into the homes of Americans, as the heightened attention to the size and effects of the military state—and the corporate powers that gave it life—mobilized opposition against a culture of militarism in the United States. Vietnam therefore revived and popularized the critiques of the U.S. foreign policy made by the Cold War left since the years of Henry Wallace. The public scrutiny of the military-industrial complex eventually forced policy makers to rethink and reevaluate the need for new weapons programs and more defense spending during the latter half of the Vietnam War.

Indeed, the culture of anti-militarism and the critique of the military-industrial complex pervaded the halls of Congress as well. Congress took new measures to limit the imperial presidency by defunding expensive military projects. The main target of anti-militarists in Congress was the anti-ballistic missile defense system (ABM) proposed by President Richard Nixon in 1969. Plans to build an ABM were not new. The project to construct a missile defense shield dated to the 1950s and went through several forms and name changes. But up until Nixon, an ABM system was never more than an item on the wish list of defense hawks. Many in

Congress viewed the ABM project as overwrought with problems, including its potential expense and technological feasibility. Nixon himself was unenthusiastic about his ABM program entitled Safeguard. From the ABM’s inception, Nixon expressed worries over whether it was even possible to create such a missile defense shield. In the end, however, these concerns were irrelevant to the President. Nixon believed that the ABM was useful in negotiations with the Soviets—whether it could be built or not. The ABM could be used as leverage to cajole the Soviets into accepting the demands of the U.S. when both countries met at the bargaining table over the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I). The ABM also offered the Nixon administration an opportunity to neutralize right-wing objections that it was too soft on communism.  

Congress once more reacted negatively to proposals for an ABM. Much of the criticism of the ABM was contextualized within the outcome of the Vietnam War. The policy of gradual escalation that characterized the Vietnam War was employed as a metaphor in viewing the potential cost of the ABM. As William Miller, an assistant to the anti-war Republican and Kentucky Senator John Sherman Cooper, wrote, “the Vietnam experience shows that a ‘commitment’ to a massive ABM system will involve a further draining of energy both intellectual as physical.” Anti-militarists in Congress had suspicions about the costs and the strategic necessity of the ABM. The ABM was seen as an offspring of the military-industrial complex that had led the country into war. Anti-nuclear activists also contributed in pressuring Congress to kill the ABM. Groups like SANE opposed the ABM for fear that it would intensify the arms race. The anti-ABM campaign was both national and local, as residents in Grenville,

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Illinois passed a resolution stating their opposition to the presence of any ABM sites in their town.21

Whereas Democrats and moderate Republicans had at least some criticism of the ABM, the missile defense system had sweeping support among Cold War hawks. The nation must put cost aside in order to protect American lives from Soviet aggression, supporters of the ABM argued in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as they claimed the Soviet Union had overtaken the U.S. in military superiority and a missile defense shield was the country’s last line of defense. The ASC came out in force to support the ABM. Comprised of current and former members of the military-industrial complex who lobbied Congress and the White House for further defense spending since World War II, the ASC warned Americans that the Soviet Union maintained the upper hand in the arms race because of its planned economy. The ASC was consistent in believing that U.S. was perpetually behind the Soviet Union in the arms race, and that Congress and the President needed to authorize the production of a missile shield to deter a nuclear war. Nixon’s announcement of the ABM gave the ASC an opportunity to push for increased defense spending. In a 1969 report entitled “The ABM and the Changed Strategic Military Balance” and published in booklet form, the ASC argued that it was indisputable “that the Soviet’s military objective is strategic superiority because they have passed ‘parity’ and are still building” up their nuclear arsenal. Using various graphs and charts that indicated that the U.S. was behind the Soviet Union in numbers of bombers, civil defense, and military expenditures, the ASC argued that the Soviet threat continued to loom large, and thus the ABM provided “the American people

a seamless garment of security in an age of acute danger.” The ABM was far from perfect, but it was “a method of deterrence which will save lives.”

The right-wing media stood steadfast behind Nixon’s plan for an ABM as well. *Human Events* and *National Review*, the two main literary organs of the right, published several favorable articles on the ABM. *National Review* even felt that the ABM did not go far enough in its capability to protect the U.S. from the Soviets. Editors of the magazine worried that the ABM could “be overwhelmed by a sufficiently large number of warheads and/or decoys arriving in a short enough time interval.” Despite the shortcomings of the program, the magazine agreed the ABM was “a practical system for shooting down hostile H-bombs.”

The ABM also received support from longtime Cold Warriors such as Paul Nitze, the co-author of NSC-68. As Deputy Secretary of Defense under President Johnson, Nitze defended American policy in Vietnam and lobbied Johnson to increase defense spending. Now in May 1969, Nitze helped form the Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy (CMPDP) to counteract attempts to defeat the ABM. The CMPDP recruited members from the public and the private sector, including leaders within the defense industry. General Electric executive Daniel J. Fink wrote to former Secretary of State Dean Acheson (also a member of CMPDP and Nitze’s former employer in the State Department) wanting to join the Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy and fight for the ABM. Fink claimed that his pro-ABM stance had nothing to with him being an employee for the third largest defense contractor in the nation that had a financial stake in the ABM. Indeed, Fink was concerned that his support for the ABM would be ineffective since he was part of the “self-serving element of the “military industrial complex.”

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24 Ibid.
His concerns did not prevent him, however, from writing to Senator John Stennis his opinion that the ABM was necessary to deter Soviet capabilities in the event of a nuclear strike.\textsuperscript{25}

Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz, staffers for Senator Henry Jackson, wrote policy papers on behalf of the CMPDP to push the ABM through Congress. They faulted Democratic senators like Maine’s Edmund Muskie for relying on anti-ABM scientists to justify their positions that Safeguard will not work, that it was superfluous, and it would renew the arms race with the Soviet Union. Pearle and Wolfowitz rejected Muskie’s contention that the U.S. “ought to convince the Soviets that we are interested in stabilizing the arms race.” This can only be achieved through the ABM because it “acts to insure stability” by strengthening U.S. capabilities to strike first during a nuclear war.\textsuperscript{26}

Much to the chagrin of its backers, however, the ABM never saw the light of day in Congress. Missouri Democratic Senator Stuart Symington, a once vociferous Cold Warrior turned skeptic of greater military spending, led the campaign in the Senate against the ABM. Symington and anti-militarists in Congress were not persuaded by claims that the ABM was vital to national security. The Cooper-Hart amendment, sponsored by Senators John Sherman Cooper and Philip Hart in 1968, aimed to stop the ABM in its tracks. The amendment polarized Congress into two warring camps, ones that did not necessarily break down along party lines. The anti-ABM coalition contained anti-militarist, antiwar members of Congress, but also some budget hawks who were against spending for costly defense and technological projects. The proceeding fight over Cooper-Hart between proponents and critics of the ABM was unprecedented, and the sizeable opposition to the ABM generally stunned its backers. ABM

\textsuperscript{25} Letter from Daniel J. Fink to Dean Acheson, June 20, 1969, Paul H. Nitze Papers, Box 74, Folder 10, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter cited as PHNP); Letter from Daniel J. Fink to John C. Stennis, May 5, 1969, PHNP.

\textsuperscript{26} Memo from Richard Pearle and Paul Wolfowitz to Dorothy Fosdick, Re: Remarks on Senator Muskie’s Speech to the Senate, Friday August 1, August 4, 1969, Box 74, Folder 10, PHNP.
supporter Henry Jackson resorted to threatening his colleagues who failed to fall in line with the ABM, going so far as to warn Senator Mike Gravel that “[i]f you vote against the ABM, it’s going to cause you problems around here.” While the anti-militarists lost the first significant battle over the ABM in a 51-49 vote against the ratification of the Cooper-Hart amendment, as a significant minority, they prevented the ABM from going forward.

Additional Pentagon projects such as the Supersonic Transport Plane (SST) and the C5-A met the same fate as the ABM. SST proponents hailed the plane as a vital contribution to American economic and military power. The plane promised to break the sound barrier, cutting travel time from Paris to New York down to a few hours. The SST was far superior to the Soviet equivalent of the supersonic plane, the Tupolev Tu-144, making the SST an important contribution to U.S. supremacy in the fields of technology and weapons development. The SST was also billed as a solution to joblessness in the defense industry. Corporate backers of the SST promised that a majority of the expenditures for the plane would be spent in areas whose percentage of unemployment exceeded the national rate. Representatives from Boeing (who won the contract to build the plane) claimed “that the minor economic stimulus of the SST prototype program would be preferable to the cost of temporary, avoidable dislocations and the resulting lack of stability” for defense workers. Furthermore, at a time when issues regarding balance of payments dominated discussions over American economic policy and relations with Japan and Europe, sales of possible SSTs would reverse the deficits. A memorandum to George S. Moore, a Boeing executive, argued that the SST would generate jobs, dominate world aviation

27 Johnson, Congress and the Cold War, 148-157.
28 “The SST Prototype Program and Near Term Inflationary Pressure, Box 1, Boeing 1969-1970 Folder, Crawford H Greenewalt papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware (hereinafter cited as CHG HML). For the Nixon administration’s concerns over balance of payments in the early 1970s, see Stein, Pivotal Decade, 43-47.
markets, and lead to more efficient air travel. More importantly, it would provide an additional 50,000 jobs to skilled white-collar workers who were presently unemployed.\(^{29}\)

Anti-militarists, however, were alarmed by the prospective cost of the SST, passenger safety, and the negative atmospheric impact the plane would have upon the environment. Individuals opposed to the SST represented a diverse group of men and women, including environmentalists, consumer advocates, and scientists. In December 1970, with a final roll call vote of 52-51, the United States Senate voted against additional appropriations for the SST. The death knell to the SST came in March 1971 when the House finally voted to terminate all funding for the project. The House vote made certain that the SST would not be flying in American skies. After the SST was rejected, Barry Goldwater criticized the vote as a victory for the antiwar left. Rather than blame nonpartisan scientific experts and government officials who felt the SST was cost prohibitive and detrimental to the environment, Goldwater impugned liberal Democrats who he felt were on a crusade to weaken American might. Goldwater argued that the “same people who found it easy to understand the reaction of the liberal doves to the War in Vietnam found their attitude on the SST.”\(^{30}\)

The C5-A plane was felled by the rising surge of anti-militarism in the United States as well. The C5-A was designed in the mid-1950s by the Lockheed Corporation to transport planes and other large equipment to battlegrounds like Vietnam, but was plagued by cost overruns and poor construction. When it rolled off assembly lines, the C5-A proved to be a symbol of that war. With a 223-foot wingspan and a six-story tail wing, the C5-A could only be contained in a space about the size of a football stadium. The plane’s grandiose size did not equate to functionality. After several dozen planes proved deficient due to cracks in their wings—and anti-spending

\(^{29}\) Memorandum to George S. Moore from Robert E. Lewis, “Re: Economic Advantages of the SST,” Box 1, Boeing 1969-1970 Folder, CHG HML.

\(^{30}\) Congressional Record, June 10, 1971, Box 38, Soviet Threat 1971 Folder, NAM papers.
hawks in Congress such as Wisconsin Democrat William Proxmire protested—future production of the plane was cancelled. The C5-A also had a fair number of proponents from both sides of the aisle. Democrats and Republicans defended the C5-A to preserve the jobs that depended upon production of the plane. Senators Herman Talmadge from Georgia and Alan Cranston from California, Democrats at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, were outraged that the federal government was willing to put thousands out of work in their states that relied upon the C5-A for employment.³¹

The jobs argument, however, did not succeed in saving expensive military projects like the C5-A plane or the SST. By 1971, anti-militarists had gained the upper hand in Congress and looked to be presiding over a new era in the Cold War. The Vietnam War tainted the respectability of the defense establishment to the extent that a new consensus on U.S. foreign policy began to take shape, one that rebuked the pervasive presence of the Cold War military in American political culture. Defense programs once deemed vital to the health of national security were now attacked as expensive, anachronistic, and unnecessary. Marred by disrepute and financial setbacks, the defense industry went on the offensive in the late 1960s to repair its image and grow their profit margins.

**The Defense Lobby Fights Back**

When Richard Nixon won election over Democratic challenger Hubert Humphrey in November 1968, he did so at a time of uncertainty and unrest over Vietnam. Discussion of Vietnam had radically changed since the previous presidential campaign. The debate was no longer over what course of action the U.S. would take in Southeast Asia, but how the country

would extricate itself from the conflict. The war was the primary issue on voters’ minds during the election, as a Gallup poll taken in August claimed that 52 percent of Americans believed it was the overriding issue in the campaign. Ever the consummate politician, Nixon realized that voters wanted a definitive conclusion to the Vietnam War, and told the American public that he had a “secret plan” to end the conflict he would reveal once elected.

In articulating his views on the Vietnam War, Nixon transformed his reputation from Cold Warrior to peacemaker during the campaign. Prior to his second run for the presidency, Nixon had credentials as an ardent anti-communist. As a California representative in the 1950s, Nixon investigated and targeted suspected communists like Alger Hiss. When he was Vice President under Dwight Eisenhower, Nixon was arguably best known for his “Kitchen debate” with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, where Nixon proudly touted the virtues of capitalism over communism. Nixon was also a hawk during the early years of the conflict in Vietnam, having urged President Johnson to adopt a tougher approach to prosecuting the war. Indeed, in December 1965, Nixon wrote in *Reader’s Digest* that the United States must be resolute in winning the war and there should be no attempt at negotiation with the North Vietnamese. “There can be no substitute for victory when the objective is the defeat of communist aggression,” Nixon wrote. In 1968, however, Nixon shed his hawkish past and portrayed himself as the man who would bring “peace with honor” in Vietnam. Nixon waged a presidential campaign that united suburbanites in the Sunbelt and moderate, Rockefeller Republicans in the Northeast on his claim that he would end the war in

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Vietnam and restore “law and order” in the United States, a coded message that appealed to opponents of the civil rights movement.\(^\text{34}\)

When Nixon took office in January 1969, Americans were hopeful that he would uphold his campaign promise to end the war and achieving a lasting peace. Antiwar liberals in Congress even withheld criticism of Nixon in early 1969, waiting for the President to stay true to his word that he would bring American troops back home. The armistice between Nixon and Congress was short lived, however, as the President expanded the war into Cambodia in March 1969 through Operation Menu, a secret aerial campaign intended to disrupt communist supply routes from North to South Vietnam. When Operation Menu failed, Nixon then sent ground troops into the country, an event that Nixon made public on a televised address to the nation in May 1970. The announcement of the Cambodia operation propelled antiwar activists out into the streets again, with deadly consequences. Four students were killed and eight were wounded at Kent State University on May 3\(^{rd}\) after the Ohio National Guard opened fire on peaceful student protesters. The shock of Kent State led to further antiwar demonstrations, as the Cambodia operation revitalized calls for an immediate evacuation of American troops from Southeast Asia.

The American intervention in Cambodia provoked further criticism of the national security state. The Nixon administration was all too aware of the negative public perception of the military and defense apparatus in the early 1970s. Henry Kissinger wrote in his memoirs that he and the President felt confronted by an anti-defense climate that (to him) indicated the revival of American isolationism. Faced with the crisis of Vietnam, one that upended the Cold War consensus, Kissinger concluded that Americans in the early 1970s aimed to retreat from international affairs and divest the country of its responsibilities as leader of the free world.

Demands for defense reductions and foreign policy retrenchment were “symptomatic of the bitter and destructive mood of the period and of the substantial breakdown of national consensus,” according to Kissinger.35 “The passionate critique of the war in Vietnam spread to an attack of the defense establishment as a whole,” Kissinger wrote, as more Americans believed the Cold War military apparatus should be dismantled to pay for social programs. Intellectuals too had embraced the idea that the “military-industrial complex” had finally succeeded in capturing a “disproportionate influence on American life.” 36

As critiques of the military-industrial complex reached their apex in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the defense lobby sought to wage a campaign to dispel the negative image of their industry and its role in perpetuating the Vietnam War. After the 1967 protest against Dow Chemical, the defense industry was compelled to change its image as militaristic warmongers. While they did not expect to convince the “Weathermen of SDS” of their viewpoint, defense contractors hoped to engage critics who claimed the defense industry was an inherently destructive force in American life, and that “society is in the grips of the Military Industrial Complex.” 37 In 1969, the National Defense Committee of the National Association of Manufacturers launched a public relations campaign to overturn Americans’ negative perceptions of the defense industry. In a pamphlet entitled “What Eisenhower Really Said about the Military-Industrial Complex,” NAM argued that Eisenhower was misquoted in his 1961 Farewell Address where he warned Americans about the threat the military-industrial complex

37 “How Should Business Respond to its Critics?” Speeches 1971 Folder, Box 39, Charles B. McCoy papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware (hereinafter cited as CBM HML)
posed to American democracy.\textsuperscript{38} NAM felt that it was “ironic” that liberals and the New Left referenced Eisenhower in making their case against Vietnam and for spending on expensive weapons systems such as the ABM. While Eisenhower did warn the country about the military-industrial complex, NAM argued that he made more statements supporting the need for a strong defense against the threat of communism.\textsuperscript{39}

The makeshift public relations effort organized by the defense industry indicated just how ill-prepared the national security state was in facing such extensive negative criticism. During the early 1960s, as was the case for much of the Cold War, defense contractors focused on winning contracts and maintaining a close relationship with Congress and the Department of Defense. Executives did not think long term in their financial projections, working from contract to contract without applying proper attention to the politics surrounding their business.\textsuperscript{40} Defense companies had no coordinated infrastructure for lobbying, and in fact, prided itself on not having one. Up until the late 1950s, the industry saw the Pentagon and Congress on its side, and there existed little need to engage in hostilities with either the executive or the legislative branch. Open insubordination to the acting presidential administration and Congress would be consequential for contract procurement. The industry relied on the presumption that it could maintain seamless connections with the federal government without complication.


\textsuperscript{40} The impact of the shortsightedness within the defense industry can be seen in the cycles of booms and busts, layoffs and hiring, that took place within the industry since the late 1950s. See Michael Brenes, “Disarming the Devil: The Conservative Campaign Against a Nuclear Détente in the 1960s,” in Daniel K. Williams and Laura Jane Gifford, eds., \textit{The Right Side of the Sixties: Reexamining Conservatism’s Decade of Transformation} (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).
The main organization that represented the defense industry in the early 1960s was the Council of Defense and Space Industry Associations (CODSIA). Formed in 1965, CODSIA was dedicated solely to matters of procurement. The membership of CODSIA was a list of who’s who in the defense business as the organization included United Aircraft, General Electric, Lockheed, and Texas Instruments among others. It also included organizations such as NAM and the National Security Industrial Association (NSIA), which contained representatives from defense companies throughout the country who were ardent proponents of greater military spending. The role of CODSIA changed, however, after the Vietnam War. Several defense corporations broke with CODSIA in the late 1960s for its unwillingness to confront critics of the national security state, once the industry’s focus began to shift from procurement to public relations. Both NAM and the NSIA resigned from CODSIA in 1969 with an eye toward changing “the current climate of public opinion regarding national defense affairs” after CODSIA refused to do so. Some members of CODSIA were concerned that dropping out of the organization would be counterproductive. Apprehension about resigning from CODSIA stemmed from the fear that NAM would sacrifice a close relationship with the White House and their allies in Congress to go after anti-militarist lawmakers. These hesitations, however, were dismissed as insignificant to CODSIA’s defectors.41

Utilizing its vast financial resources, and the support of organizations like NAM and NSIA, the defense industry tried to sway policy makers to their side. Defense contractors targeted Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, Deputy Defense David Packard, Assistant Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, and Admiral of the Navy Elmo Zumwalt. Each one of these men had voiced concern over the culture of anti-militarism among the public and in Congress. Laird

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garnered particular attention because of his position and influence on Capitol Hill. A former representative from Wisconsin, Laird had close connections to many in Congress and used them to great advantage. Laird obtained much of what he wanted in the defense budget, but continued to request more. Vast sums were needed to restore American superiority, Laird argued, which he believed had been squandered because of the Vietnam War. During the early 1970s, NAM sent Laird letters praising his call for an increase in the defense budget to fight Soviet communism.

Daniel Z. Henkin, an aide to Laird, even spoke at a NAM conference, flippantly claiming to represent the “Commander in Chief of the Military Industrial Complex.” At the conference, Henkin called for a federal program that would silence “critics aiming for the front pages of major newspapers,” rehabilitate the image of the military, and stress the vital contribution enrolled service members were making to the safety of the American people. Laird himself gave speeches to defense contractors keeping them abreast of administration policies. In 1970, Laird told executives of the electronics industry that his demand for $80 billion dollars in defense was an “austere, rockbottom, barebones budget.” Even so, critics assailed his defense budget. Laird then called for greater coordination between defense companies and the government in ensuring American prosperity in the face of lean times and unrelenting criticism.

The defense industry also looked for allies among conservative Republicans in Congress. In a speech delivered before defense industry executives at NAM’s 75th annual Congress of American Industry meeting, Arizona Senator and 1964 Republican candidate Barry Goldwater told those present at the meeting that the overwhelming condemnation of American military

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power was “carefully timed by the critics of American defense to coincide with an understandable disenchantment and irritation on the part of the American public with the long, dirty, frustrating war in Indochina.” Goldwater said he did “not have to explain to this group the nature of the liberal assault which has been made over the past two years against the portions of American industry which contribute so materially to the American defense establishment.” He warned those in attendance that “the tremendous hue and cry about the so-called Military-Industrial Complex” has further contributed to American capitulation in the face of a Soviet military resurgence.\textsuperscript{44} Goldwater’s colleague, South Carolina Republican Strom Thurmond spoke at a 1967 NAM meeting for its National Defense Committee, where was warmly announced as a strong supporter of the Vietnam War and “military preparedness.” NAM members said Thurmond had also played an important role in the 1960s denouncing the “muzzling of military officers in their anti-communist statements,” and was instrumental in “troop education programs and cold-war seminars for reservists and the public.”\textsuperscript{45}

Denigration of the New Left and the anti-war movement also came from right-wing activists who had ties to the defense industry. Representing the National Security Industrial Conference (NSIC), Frank Barnett, warned the University of South Carolina graduating class of 1970 about the New Left and its call for an immediate American withdrawal from Vietnam. Along with the internal threat of the New Left, the greatest external threat remained global communism. Barnett critiqued the direction of American foreign policy in the 1960s, stating that the United States had allocated its resources to “social inventions that range from Head Start to

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\textsuperscript{44}“An Address by Hon. Barry Goldwater before the 75\textsuperscript{th} Congress of American Industry, December 4, 1970,” Goldwater, November 1970 Folder, Box 38 Series IV, NAM papers. \\
\textsuperscript{45}Introductory Remarks—Senator Thurmond,” Spring Conference, May 11, 1967—Speeches Folder, Box 39, Series IV, NAM papers.
\end{flushright}
the Peace Corps,” and had not been attentive to the Soviets, which he claimed outmatched the U.S. in “strategic weapons, and, by 1972, may even be ahead.”

In addition to working with White House officials, conservative politicians, and grassroots activists, defense industry executives also took it upon themselves to change popular opinion through public speeches and newspaper articles. Defense executives denounced critics of American defense policy in the early 1970s. Edward G. Uhl, president of Fairchild Industries and chairman of NAM’s National Defense Committee, echoed conservative sentiments when he commented that the “Soviet buildup” of its military arsenal “has been completely over-balanced by the unpopularity of the war in South Vietnam.” The war was merely the excuse liberal doves needed to implement their long-term goal of reducing the size of the military, Uhl argued, as he was sure the left would reduce the military status of the United States to that of “a second or third rate nation.”

Defense executives also tried to distance themselves from involvement in the Vietnam War. These executives argued that the failed war in Vietnam adversely affected the prestige of American military power and had made the United States a weaker nation. Charles B. McCoy, president of the chemical manufacturer Du Pont, gave an address to the annual business meeting of the Manufacturing Chemists Association in 1970 were he said that the “Vietnam war is tearing at the whole fabric of our social and political and economic life.” After anti-war demonstrations increased throughout college campuses following the invasion of Cambodia, McCoy said he realized the extent to which Vietnam had polarized the nation. McCoy went on to say that the war had not only led to numerous American deaths, but endangered the health of the American republic. It was “hard to see how we can apply adequate resources to domestic needs,

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47 “An Interview with NAM’s Defense Chairman,” Series IV, Box 36, National Defense Folder, NAM papers.
and restore a feeling of national unity and confidence, until we reach a settlement of this conflict in Southeast Asia,” McCoy said. Quotes from McCoy’s address appeared in editorials in newspapers such as The Hartford Times and Press-Gazette of Green Bay that likewise favored withdrawal from Vietnam. The Daily News Record, however, noted McCoy’s address with disbelief, a reaction that elicited a letter from DuPont executive Samuel Lenher. Lenher criticized the paper for acting as if McCoy’s comments on peace in Vietnam “were surprising, presumably because Du Pont is thought to benefit from war-related sales.” Lenher added that his company would “prosper only as the country prospers, and the waste of war with its terrible social and economic effects is extremely costly to us, as a Company and as individuals.”

Whether disavowing their image as warmongers, denouncing their left-wing critics, or wrapping themselves in patriotic statements, the defense lobby had difficulty convincing the public that they were a virtuous economic enterprise. Defense executives gained allies in power in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but not enough to overturn the culture of anti-militarism in the United States. As long as the conflict raged in Vietnam, defense companies had a hard time convincing a skeptical public they did not profit from war. Vietnam was a cancer that ate away at public confidence in the military and defense structure, making the pro-war factions within the defense industry a besieged minority. Where the defense industry failed in their lobbying campaign, other elements of the Cold War coalition conducted their own efforts to convince policymakers (and the public) that the United States must maintain its overwhelming military power as long as the Cold War existed.

“Defense is the key issue”

With the military—and its corporate connections—in disrepute, as well as the reigning foundations of Cold War foreign policy, the Nixon administration was pressured to rethink how the United States fought the Cold War. The antiwar movement and the New Left placed limitations and constraints on the actions of policymakers following Vietnam. Once in office, the Nixon administration operated under the perception that the American people had revolted against the Cold War order and longed for a new foreign policy strategy. 49 Nixon’s solution to dealing with these post-Vietnam constraints was through détente with the Soviet Union and China. As a grand strategy, détente accepted the limits placed on U.S. foreign policy due to the conflict in Southeast Asia, and the reality that it was impossible for the Cold War to carry on as it had been since the late 1940s. The main architect of détente, Henry Kissinger, avoided assigning value judgments to foreign regimes, as he preferred not to conduct relations with countries based on their internal characteristics. What mattered to Kissinger was whether countries had the best interests of the United States in mind, not their governing ideology, no matter who repressive or undemocratic. Nixon and Kissinger avoided direct intervention in the developing world, preferring to offer indirect assistance through arms sales and economic aid to allied countries in Africa and Asia. 50 The increase in arms sales helped keep the defense industry in business during the Nixon years and circumvented the “military-industrial complex” argument prevalent in New Left circles, as they funded internal rather than external conflicts. Détente served domestic ends as well. Détente would mute those voices on the Left who had called for a reduction in the arms race and better diplomatic relations with the Soviets. The goals of détente were therefore


The Nixon administration foresaw diplomacy with the Soviet Union and China as providing the basis for détente. Triangular diplomacy, the White House predicted, would widen the Sino-Soviet split that had its origins in the mid-1950s following the death of Joseph Stalin. Nixon hoped that a friendlier relationship with China and the Soviet Union would cause both countries to compete for aid and attention from the United States. Détente was also a possible path to peace in Vietnam, as Nixon and Kissinger felt it could force the communist superpowers to place pressure on the North Vietnamese to end the war. To achieve this, in 1969, Nixon began making plans to be the first President to visit the People’s Republic of China, and thereby “open” the country to a better economic and diplomatic relationship with the U.S. At the same time, Kissinger created a secret backchannel to Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin to conduct negotiations for reducing nuclear weapons.\footnote{\textit{Hanhimaki, The Flawed Architect}, 32-38.} These policies, the Nixon administration hoped, would allow the U.S. to pursue the policy ofcontainment under different terms.

It was to no surprise of Nixon that when his grand strategy of détente was made public, it angered the conservative element within the Republican Party. Negotiations with the Soviet Union and China were anathema to conservatives’ received wisdom about the reasons for the Cold War. The New Right failed to see the subtleties of superpower détente, and saw only incongruities. \textit{National Review} writer James Burnham could not understand why Nixon and Kissinger still perceived the Soviet Union to be an enemy, but pursued negotiations with the
country nonetheless. To Burnham, the Nixon administration seemed schizophrenic in its relations with the Soviet Union. On one hand, Nixon encouraged reductions in intercontinental ballistics missiles (ICBMs) through SALT I, arguing that Mutual Assured Destruction (M.A.D.) was antiquated, and nuclear escalation and brinkmanship must come to an end. But on the other, the administration campaigned for an ABM whose logic was situated on the basis that the Soviet Union had sufficient and credible nuclear power that deterrence was still needed. Furthermore, Kissinger’s willingness to separate communist ideology from state behavior was evidence of cognitive dissonance. Conservatives still believed that foreign policy decisions made by the Kremlin emanated from the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, and Vietnam had not changed this. The same was true of any communist power. The Soviets were still an expansionist empire and the only way to deal with them was through a show of force.53

But movement conservatives failed to see their views toward the Soviet Union and communist countries represented in the decisions of White House policy makers. Their disagreement with Nixon over the need for a stronger defense budget contributed to their gradual falling out with the President. Discontent among movement conservatives (at least among the leadership) toward the administration, finally came to a head in the summer of 1971. The President’s planned trip to China was the breaking point for conservatives. On August 10, National Review announced it was suspending support for Nixon, citing as causes increased government spending, higher inflation rates, and unchecked Soviet expansionism. Published as “A Declaration,” the statement singled out national defense as the issue that that pushed conservatives to public dissent. “And above all,” the document’s authors wrote, Nixon’s “failure to call public attention to the deteriorated American military position, in conventional and strategic arms, which deterioration, in the absence of immediate and heroic countermeasures, can

lead to the loss of our deterrent capability, the satellization of friendly governments near and far, and all that this implies.”

A week earlier, William Buckley published an op-ed in the *New York Times* to coincide with the *National Review* declaration. Buckley’s article began by posing the question to fellow conservatives whether Nixon was “one of us,” a question which Buckley answered with typical verbosity and sanctimoniousness. Buckley wrote that Nixon was never a true conservative, but a pragmatic politician who failed to possess the willingness or capability to repeal New Deal programs and “dismantle the welfare state.” Buckley was more critical, however, of Nixon’s foreign policy. Buckley warned Nixon that he was on precarious ground with conservatives because of his China policy. Nixon had time to prove to Buckley that he had not accepted the premise that the communist powers were interested in world peace. But if Nixon did embrace this proposition, as Buckley implied many of his fellow conservatives already believed, the activist right would bow out of the 1972 election.

Nixon knew the suspension of conservative support for his administration was coming. In a meeting with Kissinger and his Chief of Staff H.R. Halderman, on July 28th, Halderman noted that the President was ruffled because “Bill Buckley and his troops, plus the other *Human Events* types met on Monday and decided to issue a statement of nonsupport of the P.” Nixon was stunned that Buckley and his cohorts would go so far as to repudiate his administration. With an eye toward re-election in 1972, Nixon would rest easier if he knew he had conservatives’ support, realizing it played a role in his election in 1968. Nixon said this much to Buckley in 1967 as Nixon prepared to run again for the Presidency. Referring to his loss to Pat Brown for governor of California, Nixon privately told Buckley, “I found out in 1962 that you can’t win an

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55 William F. Buckley, “Say it Isn’t So, Mr. President,” *New York Times*, August 1, 1971
Nixon cared enough about pressure from the right in 1971 that he ordered Henry Kissinger to play the role of unofficial ambassador to the activist right. Indeed, Kissinger often met with leading conservatives to assuage their concerns after the August declaration.

Two days after the National Review statement was released, Kissinger personally met with some of its signers. Present at the meeting were Allan Ryskind and William Rusher, editors of Human Events and National Review respectively, and representatives from the ASC, Young Americans for Freedom (Y.A.F.), and the American Conservative Union (ACU). New York State was well-represented in the meeting, as Dan Mahoney from the New York Conservative Party and Bill Schneider, a defense expert and a staff member of New York's Conservative Senator James Buckley also attended the meeting. Kissinger wanted the meeting to remain off the record because he had “never spoken with this degree of candor before” and therefore insisted that “none of these matters can appear either directly or indirectly in print.” Kissinger began by reiterating what he felt were the obstacles the administration faced. Kissinger told the men in the room that “this Administration came to office at the end of a period of substantial collapse of foreign policy theory” which resulted in “vicious isolationism” and an “extreme attack on general principles of authority, and in particular, on the Defense establishment—the military.” The Cuban Missile Crisis, Kissinger said, led to the cancellation of new weapons programs and a subsequent deterioration in military superiority, an argument that Kissinger knew would appeal to the right. “This erosion of power was compounded by a domestic crisis arising from the existence of the Vietnam War,” and Kissinger urged the men in the room to have sympathy for the President. The National Security Advisor defended SALT, played up Nixon’s support of the ABM, and portrayed the Congress as the real enemies of defense spending, not the

57 Buckley, “Say it Isn’t So, Mr. President.”
White House. The President has “implemented the maximum Defense budget possible, without raising taxes in a[n] election year.” Nixon had too many enemies on the left, and he could not afford them on the right. “This administration, gentlemen, is the loneliest administration imaginable,” said Kissinger.58

But Kissinger’s passionate defense of the Administration did not win over his guests. “Defense is the key issue here,” said Bill Schneider. The President had to make a concerted effort to convince the American people that military superiority “was the *sina* [sic] *qua non*” issue in American politics. If the President was willing to do this he “would chase Senator Proxmire up the road.” Dan Mahoney told Kissinger that Nixon was a deep disappointment, and was disturbed that “in the current intellectual and political context that the White House can see itself clear to take the minimum now on the Defense issue.” The sole means of reversing course and “to turn the Establishment and the nation is with Presidential leadership,” and the President had thoroughly failed in this task. Stan Evans acknowledged Kissinger’s candor, but said that his “prior opinion still holds,” regarding Nixon’s foreign policy. Exasperated, Kissinger replied that conservatives were far too critical of Nixon. Kissinger concluded the meeting saying, “I just hope you will stop yelling at us, and start yelling at our enemies.”59

Unable to make headway among this group of activists, the Nixon administration courted more favorable right-wing Republicans. In 1971, Kissinger and Nixon zeroed in on Governor of California Ronald Reagan as a leading conservative they needed to win over. Nixon realized Reagan had substantial influence among the right, as the Governor’s name was tossed around as

58 Memorandum of Conversation, August 12, 1971, Box 1025, Folder 32, Presidential/HAK Memcons, Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, California, (hereinafter cited as RMNPL).
59 Ibid. Despite exclusively blaming Congress for defense cuts, Nixon did take some measures to reduce the defense budget, but in the words of H.R. Halderman, “in the right ways.” In a meeting between Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and Halderman on July 23, 1971, Nixon lobbed “violent blasts at officers’ clubs, Air Force excesses, and so forth,” and urged Kissinger to “really shake the trees” of the military because “never has a country spent more for less on defense than does America.” Nixon went on to say he wanted a 5 percent cut in the defense budget and a 25 percent cut in the intelligence budget for the coming fiscal year. See Halderman, *Halderman Diaries*, 330.
a possible presidential nominee in 1968. Reagan was an unlikely candidate to many mainstream Republicans in 1968, his lack of experience being his primary weakness, but Nixon knew that Reagan could sway the hearts and minds of dedicated conservatives. Reagan kept an amenable relationship with Nixon, keeping the President updated on the “conservative rebellion” toward his administration because of national defense. To further coax Reagan’s support, Nixon sent Reagan on diplomatic tours of Europe and Southeast Asia, knowing that the Governor wanted to expand his knowledge of foreign affairs. Kissinger also made Reagan privy to classified reports that showed progress in Vietnam and sent Reagan regular briefings on foreign policy matters.

Reagan’s inclusion in the memos helped Nixon keep Reagan in line as well. Rumors circulated in the spring of 1971 that YAF was interested in launching a Draft Reagan campaign to challenge Nixon for the 1972 Republican primary. When Reagan heard of the effort, he immediately requested YAF to stop such activities. Upset over Nixon’s policy toward Vietnam, YAF hoped Reagan would offer an alternative to withdrawal and Vietnamization. But Reagan wanted no part of this. Reagan told the National Chairman of YAF Ron Docksai, that it was his “privilege as a Governor to receive in-depth briefings on the war and the international situation. As a result, I’m in full support of the President’s Vietnamization policy.” Vietnam was handled ably by Nixon, Reagan said, who realized that Vietnam “fits into the gigantic chess game called the cold war” and had “all the facts necessary” to make informative and high-stakes decisions. If Docksai persisted with a Draft Reagan effort it would “only divide and destroy our chance to go forward.” “We cannot afford division,” warned Reagan.

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Despite the attention he paid to conservative leaders, Nixon seemed to brush them off as inconsequential to the success of his presidency. At the July 28th meeting, Nixon expressed agitation but not extensive worry over the defection of conservative intellectuals. “The P is not too concerned” about the National Review declaration, noted Halderman at the time. Halderman wrote that Nixon wanted “answers communicated to [conservatives], but he makes the point that we don’t need to worry too much about the right-wing nuts on this.” Indeed, the Chief of Staff told his boss that there was no “conservative revolt” to his administration with the exception of “about 300 people.”

Nixon barked at Halderman to tell Henry Kissinger to “get off his ass” and speak to William F. Buckley, Jr. about the Declaration, but Buckley was the only conservative that mattered to Nixon, as all others were simply “doctrinaire rightists.” And while Nixon sent Reagan around to foreign countries as a spokesperson for his foreign policy, the President did not think highly of him. Nixon thought Reagan was “a man of limited mental capacity [who] simply doesn’t know what the Christ is going on in the foreign arena.” Kissinger too thought Reagan was “a decent guy,” but “his brains, are negligible.” The former Hollywood star was more style than substance as he had “an actor’s approach to foreign policy,” Kissinger told the President.

Nixon and Kissinger’s negative perception of Reagan made the White House carefully regulate their dealings with him. Reagan’s diplomatic voyages were meticulously orchestrated by Kissinger who designed “a list of countries where a Reagan visit would do no harm.” The reports Reagan issued from his trips abroad were scrutinized not for their policy suggestions, but for their errors. Indeed, much of Reagan’s advice on foreign affairs was ignored. When Reagan

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63 Halderman, Halderman Diaries, 332; Richard Nixon and H.R. Halderman, 28 July 1971, Tape 549b, Nixon Recordings, Miller Center for Public Affairs.
65 Memorandum for Helmut Sonnenfeldt from James T. Hackett, February 17, 1972, Box 830, NSC Names Files, Gov. Reagan [Jun 69 –Nov 73] folder, RMNPL.
requested to speak to the National Press Club about being “mad as hell about the expulsion of Taiwan,” from the United Nations after returning from Asia in the fall of 1971, his request was denied. A Reagan speech on Taiwan was “not helpful in anyway,” Alexander Haig told Gordon Strachan of the NSC. When Reagan called Nixon to suggest that the United States remove itself from the U.N. as an act of protest, Nixon nervously laughed at his suggestion, called the U.N. vote on Taiwan regrettable, and humored Reagan by telling him he would “give some thought to the whole thing.” But when Nixon and Secretary of State William Rogers refused to cancel U.S. contributions to the U.N., Reagan grew incensed. Nixon decided to let U.N. ambassador George H.W. Bush abstains from U.N. activities for a few days, but this was merely a gesture to show discontent, as Nixon wanted the whole episode to blow over as soon as possible. Halderman noted that Kissinger sought to calm Reagan down, and “keep [him] from jumping off the reservation,” as the National Security Adviser called Reagan the next day to “try to get him straightened out.” In the end, Reagan relented in his positions on the U.N. in order to maintain his connections to the administration.

The revolt against Nixon was counterproductive, as it divided rather than unified the political right. Not all Republicans disavowed Nixon and his policies. Right-wing senators like Barry Goldwater and James Buckley saw no political gain in retreating from Nixon. Goldwater had reservations about much of détente, including SALT, but decided to back Nixon’s trip to China after meeting with Kissinger, telling his supporters that “this is not 1960; it is 1972,” and

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there was no longer a unified communist bloc. James Buckley had “the highest respect for the leaders of the conservative movement” that felt aggrieved by the Nixon administration, but said he was “not prepared to join them in a declaration of nonsupport.” Buckley was loyal to Nixon, and since becoming a Senator, he claimed he “occupied a position from which I have been able to gain a better appreciation of the political constraints within which the President is required to operate.” Moreover, right-wing activists’ disenchantment with Nixon did not derail détente. After Taiwan was rejected from the United Nations, William Rusher called Nixon’s Special Assistant Pat Buchanan to say he had abandoned Nixon. “I am just phoning to say goodbye,” Rusher said. But Buchanan was not fazed. “Yeah? Where’re we going?,” Buchanan replied.

What bothered Nixon more than the right’s opinion of his presidency were the political attitudes of the American worker. Indeed, the activist right, like the defense lobby, made little headway in changing the culture of anti-militarism. The “silent majority,” as Nixon dubbed working Americans in 1969, had more sway in the perceptions and decisions of Nixon’s political thinking than right-wing intellectuals. Nixon saw the future of his reelection prospects—and the Republican Party—in those suburban Americans disenchanted with New Deal liberalism and the cultural left. A combination of defense cuts and poor economic conditions in the 1970s gave Nixon the ability to reach out to Cold War workers at a time when many felt that the Democratic Party had abandoned their interests in their shift to anti-militarism. When the news surfaced in the spring of 1971 that the Lockheed Corporation verged on the precipice of bankruptcy, Nixon

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68 Memo from J.H Lehan to Henry Kissinger, February 29, 1972, NSC Names Files, Box 816, Barry Goldwater folder, RMNPL; “Remarks by Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona Prepared for Insertion in the Senate Record of March 1, 1972,” ibid.
69 Statement of Senator James L. Buckley, Sunday, August 1, 1971, Box 13, Public Relations Folder, James L. Buckley Papers, University Archives, St. Augustine’s Hall, St. John’s University, Jamaica, New York (hereinafter cited as JLB).
70 Rusher, The Rise of the Right, 244.
worked to win over its workforce by offering federal protection to the company’s loans. When the controversy over the Lockheed loan crisis subsided, the resolution to the crisis would demonstrate the problems national anti-militarists confronted in trying to eliminate benefits the defense economy provided to local areas.

**Cold War Bailout**

By 1971, the popularity of the defense establishment had suffered immensely due to the culture of anti-militarism. The winding down of the Vietnam War and the scrutiny of the military-industrial complex meant that the defense budget declined from ten percent of G.D.P. to seven percent. The public relations campaign by the defense industry had failed to make significant inroads into the public’s and Congress’ opposition to militarism and support for détente. Cuts to the defense budget, however, also meant job losses to employees in the defense industry, as those in the industry worried that the end of the Vietnam conflict “contributed to a slowing of the economy.” Since 1968, 2.3 million overall jobs were cut in the defense industries, with the private workforce in defense declining from 3.6 million to 2.3 million in three years. In addition to the drop in employment due to the end of the Vietnam War, corporations had begun to outsource defense jobs in the late 1960s, hastening the process of deindustrialization in the United States. While Massachusetts Democratic senator Ted Kennedy led efforts in Congress to pass legislation to aid out-of-work engineers and scientists employed in the technology fields, many feared it would only provide short-term assistance. Officials in Washington, D.C. knew that the elimination of defense programs such as the SST affected the political allegiances of “so

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many scientists and engineers out of work in key electoral states like California, Florida and Texas,” which would then influence the coming election year.\textsuperscript{73}

One of the states hit hardest by the drop in the defense budget was California. Governor Ronald Reagan was desperate for the federal government to maintain the solvency of the aerospace industry in the area, which had remade the region after World War II by spurring high-paying jobs, upper-class suburbs, and a significant base of tax revenue for the state. While Reagan professed to be committed to the free-market, his anti-statist ideology was qualified by his larger need to keep defense jobs in his state. Nixon advisor Harry Dent noted that Reagan in 1970 had “a very strong desire to personally talk to the President about his interest in another Air Force contract for California,” and had tried repeatedly to contact the President over “getting the Freedom-Fighter contract for Northrop Aviation in California.”\textsuperscript{74} Reagan also hoped to get the B-1 bomber contract—even while an organization entitled the National Campaign to Stop the B-1 Bomber mounted a campaign to squash it. When entreaties to Nixon did not make sufficient headway, Reagan wrote to Kissinger in June reiterating his plea for additional defense contracts. Without the contract for Northrop Aviation, Reagan feared cuts to businesses and job losses, including his own as governor. “Without this ‘building block’ \textit{seven plants} in the L.A.-Long Beach area will close,” Reagan warned, as Southern California contained “35% of the states [sic] manufacturing and our unemployment is already far above the national average.” Reagan emphasized that “the socio-economic elements (and for that matter the political) weigh heavily in Californias [sic] favor.” Referring to the self-immolation of Buddhist monks in protest of the Vietnam War, Reagan crudely joked that if California did not receive a fresh infusion of money

\textsuperscript{73} “Nixon’s Former SST Promoter Turns to the Job of Solving Society’s Woes Through Technology” December 14, 1971, \textit{Wall Street Journal}, Series IV, Box 36, National Defense folder, NAM papers.
\textsuperscript{74} Memo on Telephone Call to Ronald Reagan, June 22, 1970, Box 830, NSC Names Files, Gov. Reagan [Jun 69 – Nov 73] folder RMNPL
from the Pentagon, “it isn’t that important—but I have a yellow Monks robe and a can of gasoline if it doesn’t go through.”

Unemployment in the defense industry provided a backdrop to the heated debates over the proposal to bailout the Lockheed Corporation in 1971. Founded in 1912 and based in Burbank, California, Lockheed had been a major employer and industrial force in Southern California since World War II. In the 1960s, however, Lockheed had mismanaged government funds and overspent on expensive and unwarranted defense projects. Among these programs were the C5-A plane and the L-1011 Tri-Star airliner, a civilian aircraft whose costs per plane engine had doubled. Lockheed had partnered with the British company Rolls-Royce in building the L-1011 engine, but Rolls Royce went bankrupt in February 1971, leaving Lockheed holding the deficit for the engines. In response, the company laid off 9,200 employees working on the L-1011. By May 1971, the banks reeling from the fallout of Lockheed’s bad investments promised they would not allocate additional credit to the company if the federal government did not guarantee the funds. If the government refused to back billions in loans that Lockheed wanted to keep production of the L-1011 (and the company) going, it was expected that Lockheed would default, declare bankruptcy, and liquidate its operations, leaving its 90,000 workers across the country unemployed.

Few were more concerned with the future of Lockheed than Richard Nixon. Unlike the controversy over the SST, the C5-A, or the ABM, the discussion over the Lockheed loan guarantee was not about whether to fund a potentially unnecessary project, but to save a large corporation that employed tens of thousands. The debate over the Lockheed bailout centered on whether to save preexisting jobs, not creating new ones—a far more heated topic. At a time when

76 Hartung, Prophets of War, 104-105.
the United States had witnessed the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, was experiencing increased competition from overseas markets, and rising inflation and unemployment rates, the Nixon administration believed it could not afford to allow an additional economic catastrophe, and rushed to save Lockheed.\textsuperscript{77} Lockheed was not any ordinary company, Nixon said, but one of the largest employers in the defense industry, and “one of the Nation’s great companies.” Lockheed offered “an enormous employment lift to this part of the country,” and Nixon was determined “to see to it that southern California—after taking the disappointment of not getting the SST, which would, of course, have brought many, many jobs to this part of the country—that California does not have the additional jolt of losing Lockheed.”\textsuperscript{78}

The chief proponent of the bailout in the House of Representatives was California Representative Barry Goldwater Jr., the son of the conservative icon. Goldwater, Jr. was an unequivocal supporter of the loan guarantees, as Lockheed’s headquarters was in his district. In the Senate, the conservative Republican from Texas John Tower emerged as the main advocate of the bailout. In the abstract, both Tower and Goldwater, Jr. were free-market, anti-regulation conservatives who normally fumed at the prospect of government intervention in the economy. But the Cold War defense economy did not enter into their concept of the free-market. In the minds of Goldwater and Tower, Lockheed and similar companies were exceptions to the laissez-faire rule.

While the supporters of the bailout were numerable, the anti-loan guarantee forces were just as large, and thought to be insurmountable. Anti-militarists in Congress, New Left activists, and Lockheed’s competitors were staunchly opposed to the loan guarantees, even while noting that the employment situation in the defense industry was a difficult one. Senator William

\textsuperscript{77} For the economic context of the Lockheed loan debate, see Stein, \textit{Pivotal Decade}, chp. 2.
\textsuperscript{78} The President’s News Conference, May 1, 1971, \textit{Public Papers of the President of the United States, Richard Nixon}, \url{http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=2995&st=lockheed&st1=#axzz1g3jK0F6l}. 
Proxmire resumed the role he maintained in the SST and C5-A battle as chief deficit hawk in the Senate. Joining Proxmire and the Democrats were conservative senators like James Buckley and Barry Goldwater, Sr., who stood stalwart against the Lockheed bailout citing what they believed was its unconstitutional interference in the free market. Also in the anti-bailout mix were representatives from Rockwell, Boeing, and General Electric. All three lobbied to defeat the loan guarantees knowing it would hurt a strong competitor in the aerospace industry. Indeed, the Nixon administration had difficulty finding another aerospace company to support the loan guarantees during the summer of 1971.\footnote{Memorandum for John D. Ehrlichman, June 21, 1971, White House Central Files—Subject Files—Business/Economics, Box 36 Ex B E 4-1 Aerospace [1971-1974] Folder 2 of 3, RMNPL.}

Once the legislation was put forward, California residents engaged in a massive media effort to convince Congress to pass it. As \textit{Time} magazine noted, white-collar and blue-collar employees of the aerospace industry served “as amateur lobbyists” in pressing for the legislation, some of whom had been out of work because of the SST vote. Defense workers published ads in newspapers and urged Americans to boycott Wisconsin beer and cheese as an affront to Proxmire. Members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) launched a lobbying campaign that would see over 500,000 letters written to members of Congress and eventually spend $55,000 to support the bailout.\footnote{“The Lockheed Bailout Battle,” \textit{Time}, August 9, 1971; Hartung, \textit{Prophets of War}, 109.}

Grassroots supporters of the Lockheed bailout also cited national security and the Cold War as the reasons for the federal government to step in and rescue the company. The city of Campbell, California also adopted a resolution on behalf of the proposed loan guarantees. Campbell was “one of fifteen incorporated cities in Santa Clara County which is the home of Lockheed,” and the company should be saved as the “concentration of development skill, technology and scientific talent…must be considered of fundamental importance to both this
nation and to the entire Free World.” Keeping Lockheed afloat meant not only saving jobs, local tax revenues, and a suburban community whose future rested on the company’s success, but maintaining the security of the United States and its allies.\textsuperscript{81} The \textit{Marietta Daily Journal} likewise urged citizens of Cobb County, Georgia to support the proposed federal loan guarantee prevent the Lockheed Corporation from going bankrupt. The article requested that residents “come into any of the three Cobb Federal offices…and sign the resolution to tell Congress and the nation Cobb County is behind Lockheed.” County members were also encouraged to write letters to their congressional representatives and to relevant committee members to convince them that Lockheed needed to stay in business because “Lockheed-Georgia has been a business citizen of Cobb County for 20 years, contributing substantially to our economy.” Not only was Lockheed vital to keeping skilled, middle-class jobs in suburban Georgia, but the company served the interests of American foreign policy in keeping the nation safe from communism. Indeed, the loss of Lockheed would mean “irreparable harm” to the state of U.S. “National security.”\textsuperscript{82}

Facing pressure from their constituents, Governor Ronald Reagan and his Lieutenant governor Ed Reinecke were concerned that the loan guarantee would not make it through Congress. When the loan guarantee was up for debate in the House, Reinecke asked for a meeting with Nixon over the layoffs in the aerospace industry and the possible “re-employment of California engineers and scientists.” Nixon refused to meet with Reinecke, offering the excuse that his schedule did not accommodate his request, but Chapin reassured Reinecke that Nixon

\textsuperscript{81} Resolution No. 3145, White House Central Files—Subject Files—Business/Economics, Box 36 Ex B E 4-1 Aerospace [1971-1974] Folder 2 of 3, RMNPL.

shared his concerns over aerospace unemployment in the state. Ever the political opportunist, Nixon sought to use the Lockheed crisis to gain favor from the company’s workers and the labor unions that represented them. Deputy Assistant to the President Dwight L. Chapin wrote to Haldeman that because “the Administration is on the line regarding this loan, we might as well milk it for what it is worth in Southern California.” Hoping to add additional members to Nixon’s Republican “New Majority,” Chapin proposed that the President, “drive up to Los Angeles via the Freeway and stop at one of the Aerospace plants.” Nixon should then engage in conversation with the workers and “assure them that he was going to see that they keep their jobs and that their friends are rehired.”

The fight over the Lockheed bailout ensued over the course of the summer and pitted members of Congress against one another. Congress heard testimony by Lockheed CEO Daniel Haughton that the loan guarantees were needed to employ the over 30,000 workers “in 35 states” working on the L-1011, figures which included the various subcontractors working on the plane. Democrat Alan Cranston, like he did over the C5-A controversy, defended Lockheed for responding to the “call to arms to help equip the nation for national defense,” saying that the United States relied on the weapons Lockheed built during the Cold War, “for national defense and security.” Cranston’s anti-militarist colleagues argued that monies were better spent on public infrastructure projects, and that by passing the bailout legislation, the government would be funding Lockheed’s irresponsibility. The pro and anti-bailout factions continued to war with

83 Letter to Edward Reinecke from Dwight L. Chapin, July 15, 1971, White House Central Files—Subject Files—Business/Economics, Box 36 Ex B E 4-1 Aerospace [1971-1974], RMNPL; Memorandum for Dwight Chapin from Stephen Bull, July 12, 1971, White House Central Files—Subject Files—Business/Economics, Box 36 Ex B E 4-1 Aerospace [1971-1974], RMNPL.
one another throughout June. By the end of July, there was still no clear sign that the legislation would pass.85

After heated debate and compromise, the House passed the legislation on the bailout, after the amount of the loan guarantees was reduced to $250 million dollars. The Senate then finally agreed to vote on the legislation on August 2, 1971. Nixon dedicated hours of his day before the Senate vote to obtain last minute support for the loan guarantee, telling potential converts that the legislation was crucial to his presidency. Nixon called Republicans Barry Goldwater, Sr., Caleb Boggs, Carl Curtis, and George Aiken to see if he could sway them to his side, claiming he had spoke to Reagan who was anxious for Congress to approve the bailout, and that if it were defeated, Republicans’ chances in California the following presidential election were imperiled. Nixon recited this argument to the four senators, stating that only the unemployment number in Washington rivaled the figure of 9 percent unemployment in California, and with “the SST being knocked out,” a failure to pass the loan guarantees would adversely affect “the situation of ’72.” Nixon had limited success in convincing the Congressmen. Goldwater refused to budge, saying the issue was a “matter of principle.” If the federal government guaranteed loans “for Lockheed, we’re going to have to do it for everybody,” Goldwater said. Aiken and Curtis were noncommittal. Curtis said he would “see what [he] can do” for Lockheed, while Aiken said there was “hardly anyone up our way in the Northeast...that wants it,” and would receive federal help from the legislation. If it was not discriminatory and encompassed the entire defense industry, Aiken would support it, but not if it benefited Lockheed alone. “I’ve got five G.E. plants within a stone’s throw of me,” which Aiken implied

85 Hartung, Prophets of War, 108-113.
would also like to receive federal assistance. Hoping it would seal Aiken’s vote, Nixon told the Senator to “let me know whenever we can do something” for those plants in his state.  

Aiken balked in supporting the bill, but his vote was not needed. The legislation passed in the Senate by one vote and Lockheed received the $250 million in loans backed by the federal government. Both its liberal and conservative opponents were wounded, as Proxmire told James Buckley that the “loan guarantee loss was a heartbreaker,” but thought “the razor-thin margin of one vote makes it clear that this should be no easy, quick precedent in the future.” But the Lockheed bailout did set a precedent in the defense communities it affected. The passage of the loan guarantees saved Lockheed but hurt its workers. Less than half of Lockheed’s workforce affected by the layoffs in February returned to work. The same unemployed workers who sided with Lockheed in support of the bailout legislation therefore still found themselves without a job. Indeed, unemployment continued to plague Southern California and much of the Gunbelt. After the Senate vote, the Nixon administration still wondered how “to absorb the 2 million people that we’ve released from the defense industries.”

Seven months after the loan guarantees were approved, Goldwater Jr. wrote to Nixon advisor Clark Macgregor that residents of southern California continued to express unease “with the status of the aerospace/defense industry employment situation.” Goldwater Jr. acknowledged that Nixon had helped defense workers in his district in the past, but he now said that it was simply not enough and his help was not received well by voters. “My constituents see their taxes rise, and at the same time, watch the mounting unemployment problem among their families and

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87 Letter to James Buckley from William Proxmire, August 3, 1971, Box 4, JLB.  
88 Halderman, Halderman Diaries, 344.
friends. The President’s efforts on the Lockheed loan guarantee are not forgotten, but more needs to be done,” Goldwater wrote.\footnote{Letter to Clark Macgregor from Barry M. Goldwater, Jr., March 30, 1972, White House Central Files—Subject Files—Business/Economics, Box 36 Ex B E 4-1 Aerospace [1971-1974], Folder 3 of 3, RMNPL.} Ted Antonich, a photography studio owner from Canoga Park, California, wrote to Goldwater saying this much. Antonich was not a conservative ideologue. Antonich favored a more stringent clamp down on crime and drug use in California, but supported Nixon’s China visit and sought the government’s help in limiting inflation through wage and price controls. But the most important local issue to him was national defense and federal spending in the aerospace industry. “What this valley and state needs are Aerospace and National defense contracts which will put people to work,” Antonich wrote. The high unemployment levels in the defense industry, which affected the entire region of Southern California, translated to a loss of revenue for Antonich’s business. “In fact if something doesn’t happen soon to boost the employment situation I’ll either have to go bankrupt or go on welfare, neither of which I want to do,” Antonich said. “There must be some way to put people to work so that we can hold our heads up again and look the landlord in the eye as well as our other creditors, which I can’t do now.” Antonich concluded his letter demanding Goldwater to “get your ass in gear and do something about it.”\footnote{Letter and Informational Survey to Barry Goldwater from Ted Antonich, February 1972, White House Central Files—Subject Files—Business/Economics, Box 36 Ex B E 4-1 Aerospace [1971-1974], Folder 3 of 3, RMNPL.}

In hindsight, the loan guarantees were a short-term response that disproportionately benefited company executives. Donald Douglas, Sr., chairman of McDonnell Douglas deviated from the bloc of defense companies against the bailout to offer his full support to Lockheed. To Douglas, Lockheed deserved the federal government’s help because he felt the company faced hard times due to the “unreasonable wage demands from labor unions that have forced and are
forcing aerospace companies out of business.”  

The resolution of the Lockheed crisis gave Douglas and his colleagues the opportunity to limit the power of labor, which they felt was the real problem, not careless spending. In January 1972, Phase II of Nixon’s New Economic Program, part of the President’s response to rising inflation rates, allowed the appointed federal Pay Board to cap wage increases in the aerospace industry at 8.3 percent, the figure executives had wanted, rather than the 12 percent that labor wrestled out of the early negotiations with employers. Lockheed employee Robert Englander, who ran the company’s research laboratory, best summed up the feelings of the company’s workers when he said, “The Nixon Pay Board has hurt my pocketbook. First they cut my wages 17 cents from last year’s raise and now they are dragging their feet in approving our raises for this year. Meanwhile prices keep going up and interest rates remain sky high.”

These reductions in workers’ pay came at the same time Lockheed executives enriched themselves with pension increases. To some Americans, it appeared that the largest beneficiaries of the loan guarantees were Lockheed executives and the bankers who financed the corporation’s malfeasance. Hal Troeger from Grand Marais, Michigan complained to the *Chicago Tribune* about “the parade of bankers now pleading the Lockheed cause before congressional committees,” as he pondered “if their concern is jobs for aircraft workers or jobs for bankers.”

The government’s decision to back Lockheed’s loans ultimately angered Americans who believed the federal state was operating against their interests. Indeed, the Lockheed bailout created fissures within the electorate later exploited by Republican political candidates. Defense

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91 Memorandum for Peter M. Flanigan, June 21, 1971, White House Central Files—Subject Files—Business/Economics, Box 36 Ex B E 4-1 Aerospace [1971-1974], RMNPL.
communities in Long Island, New York and Seattle, Washington, who had also felt the financial pinch of post-Vietnam cutbacks, felt the loan guarantees were unfair to exclude other defense workers. In Farmingdale, N.Y., the home of Grumman, the impact was felt the hardest. Daniel J. D’Addario, a Farmingdale subcontractor that depended on business from Grumman, believed the economic downturn in his community was a consequence of the federal government turning its back on the Cold War. Long Islanders like D’Addario concluded that anti-Vietnam liberals were the reason why the American dream promised to suburbanites was evaporating in the early 1970s, not Nixon’s policies. “The elected officials have chosen to be expedient, hacking at the defense budget—not welfare where there are 14-million votes,” he said. D’Addario saw both his output and workforce cut in half. In Seattle, home of Boeing, unemployment climbed to 15 percent, while Nixon denied the city additional federal funds for anti-poverty programs, forcing residents to rely on local charities and foreign aid for feeding the hungry. After Japan shipped one thousand pounds of rice and other foodstuffs to feed unemployed aerospace workers in the city, Democratic Senator Warren Magnuson—who had supported aid to Lockheed in June before voting against the loan guarantees in August—exclaimed, “This administration can see great humanity in providing a $250 million loan for a hungry Lockheed Corp., but can’t see spending another dime on hungry human beings.”

Even with sizeable criticism of the military-industrial complex in the early 1970s, the Lockheed Loan crisis exposed the lasting grip the Cold War economy still had on Americans who derived economic benefits from the national security state. Lobbying by the defense industry and right-wing activism on behalf of greater defense spending defused but did not obstruct the political climate hostile to the military-industrial complex. It took a broader set of

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interests and actors to bring anti-militarism in Congress to a grinding halt. The bailout provoked the full weight of the Cold War coalition as executives from Lockheed, their workers, labor unions, community activists, and political representatives from California and other states where Lockheed plants and headquarters were located, collectively pressured Congress to back the loans. The battle over the bailout was divisive, but interests ultimately trumped principles. Ideological opposition to anti-militarism had limits; the political economy of the Cold War revealed this in very stark terms. Indeed, the outcome of the Lockheed bailout indicated the persistence of the national security state—and its economic connections—in the face of its strongest challenge to date.

**Conclusion**

Despite the failure of the Lockheed bailout to achieve its intended results—and unemployment, deindustrialization, and globalization eroding the fortunes of labor in the early 1970s—Nixon did not receive much blame. Nixon and the Republican Party emerged from the Lockheed crisis relatively unscathed. *Time* magazine stated that Nixon had “brought joy to Burbank California” through the loan guarantee legislation, and that so far, the lagging economy did not reflect poorly on Nixon’s reelection bid. Taking the pulse of the nation in 1971, political editor Norton Kay wrote that in terms of how the public discusses politics, Nixon “is seldom blamed or mentioned. People talk about government as an abstraction rather than about Nixon as a person. They seem disillusioned with the System rather than with a party or an individual.” It was not Nixon, but the “government” that was the enemy.\(^{95}\)

Moreover, the Lockheed bailout exposed the limitations faced by anti-militarists and anti-statist ideologues in making federal policy. The combination of a pro-growth and national

security discourse offered enough weight to counteract anti-militarism and anti-statism in Congress. The unlikely bloc of anti-militarist Democrats and free-market conservatives upset over the intrusiveness of the federal government in market functions, failed in their challenge to the national security state. Figures on Capital Hill found that governing from the basis of ideology was difficult when faced with the structure of federal government and its vested interests. As the country crawled further into the economic doldrums of the 1970s, anti-militarists and anti-statists in power abandoned their respective ideologies to save the jobs and federal benefits militarization provided to their constituents. While Cold War workers were able to pressure their political representatives to support legislation like the Lockheed loan guarantees, their power was limited in strengthening the social compact between labor and the state. Victims of the international dynamics of the Cold War, defense workers rallied to save their jobs in the summer of 1971 only to resume the same struggle throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s, once plant closures and job losses became endemic to their industry.

By 1972, America’s future was in doubt both at home and abroad. Fissures between Democrats over foreign policy, structural changes in the Cold War economy, a continued war in Vietnam, and the instability of détente coalesced into a volatile poison to which the anti-militarists had no antidote. These issues spelled disaster on the horizon to the Cold War communities. Defense workers regularly feared they would lose their jobs in the 1970s—while inflation eroded their earnings. These conditions left Cold War workers feeling subject to forces that were seemingly beyond their control. The precarious condition of the Cold War economy sent many of its dependents to go searching for political figures who promised to keep the spigot of federal defense dollars flowing to their communities, even though the international and
domestic environment of the Cold War did not require significant and sustained military spending.
Chapter Four: Making Foreign Policy at the Grassroots

On June 28, 1976, Ronald Reagan wrote to Southern Chairmen’s Association member Clark Reed to explain his stance on the issues affecting his challenge to incumbent President Gerald Ford. What at first looked to be a hopeless cause for Reagan was shaping up to be a battle that the former California governor could win. Reagan told Reed he opposed mandatory school busing (which he said should be settled by “local communities”), a national health insurance program, and the Humphrey-Hawkins bill. Reagan also took the opportunity to take stock of how his campaign had evolved since the previous November, noting that the months of “campaigning has convinced me as well of something I didn’t know when I began: the American people are ready to halt the retreat of the last several years that has gone under the name of détente.” Public opposition to détente—and more broadly, Ford’s foreign policy—jumpstarted Reagan’s campaign after defeats in a number of early primary elections. Reagan did not intend to make foreign affairs the cornerstone of his candidacy, but refocused his attention to the Cold War after he found audiences responded enthusiastically to his call for expanding America’s global reach to fight communism. Americans wanted to refight the Cold War, Reagan concluded, as they had demonstrated their belief that the “best guarantee for peace—the guarantee our Soviet adversaries understand—is military strength.”

As Reagan hinted in his letter, grassroots activism in 1976 provided the context for his campaign’s focus on national defense and foreign affairs. These grassroots activists were a diverse group. Eastern European immigrants upset over the Helsinki Accords and the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaties (SALT), defense workers and military personnel who lost their jobs to

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1 Letter to Clarke Reed from Ronald Reagan, June 28, 1976, Box 4, Folder 5, Jaquelin H. Hume Papers, Hoover Institution on War, Peace, and Revolution, Stanford University, Stanford, California (hereinafter cited as JHH papers.) Letter to Jaquelin H. Hume from Ronald Reagan, July 9, 1976, Ibid.
budget cutbacks, anti-Castro Cuban-Americans, and Southern Democrats angered over American involvement in Southern Africa, all gravitated toward Reagan in 1976 to expand American military might. This anti-détente coalition feared the repercussions these events would have to American military power at a time when the United States appeared to be losing its superpower credibility at home and abroad.

While recent historians have noted that the recruiting of new groups of Americans within the 1970s Republican coalition propelled Reagan to power in 1980, partisan mobilization alone did not make made Reagan’s campaign. Structural changes in the 1970s enabled grassroots agency, influencing partisan politics and the domestic dimensions of the Cold War. The end of the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, and the decline of the American economy created a heady and combustive political and cultural atmosphere in the United States that formed the context for foreign policy debates in the mid-1970s. Reagan’s supporters also exploited changes to campaign finance law and tectonic shifts in American electoral politics (particularly the increasing advantage special interests and activists exerted over the party system), creating the rightward shift in U.S. foreign policy.

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3 Historians who addressed this issue have concluded that public interest in foreign policy issues such as the Panama Canal were a result of post-Vietnam insecurities. Citing the thoughts of Reagan’s campaign manager in Florida, David Keene, Adam Clymer has written that the Panama Canal treaties aroused anger among Republicans because they “were frustrated with the complexities of America’s place in the world... and this issue seemed simple and clear.” While anxiety about global affairs following Vietnam certainly did play a role in conservatives’ support for Reagan, it was less determinative in driving the political realignment of the Republican Party (and international politics) to the right than other factors. See Adam Clymer, Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch: The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 26. A similar line is repeated by Reagan advisor Peter Hannaford in Klarman, Right Star Rising, 167. For works that emphasize the changes to American political economy in the 1970s in contributing to conservative politics, rather than grassroots mobilization, see Jefferson Cowie, Stayin’ Alive: the 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class (New York: New Press, 2010); Judith Stein, Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the 1970s (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Thomas Borstelmann, The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Equality (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
The remaking of the American political system in the 1970s affected public attitudes toward U.S. foreign policy on a national, as well as local, level, and these changing attitudes collided during the 1976 Republican primary. The various factors that created the conditions for a more hawkish approach to foreign policy making in the 1970s in turn shaped Reagan’s first run for the presidency. Voters’ distrust of détente, and their general interest in adopting more hard-line national defense policies, convinced the former California governor that the country would embrace an interventionist, aggressive, and uncompromising foreign policy agenda were he elected. Reagan promulgated a Manichean anti-communist ideology throughout much of his life, but was restrained on his critique of American foreign policy during the early months of the primary election. He took a cautious stance against détente throughout 1975, stating that he was not opposed to détente in principle, but to détente as conceived, practiced, and advocated by President Ford. Reagan even promoted the policy goals of détente as an envoy to Europe and Asia during the years of the Nixon administration. But after winning Sunbelt states like North Carolina and Texas on a more hard-line foreign policy stance, Reagan was able to capture voters in other areas of the country, expanding the reach of the anti-détente coalition.

Rather than viewing Reagan’s unequivocal opposition to détente in 1976 as a forgone conclusion, this chapter suggests his foreign policy agenda changed over time, due to increasing public criticism over American relations with the Soviet Union and communist superpowers within American political culture. Only after Reagan was convinced that voters had repudiated détente did he commit to a hard-line foreign policy. While Reagan was a conservative ideologue, he was also a politician willing to modify his political agenda to attract and maintain public support. As anti-militarists assumed greater prominence in the Democratic Party, the politics of the Cold War garnered new constituencies for Reagan and other Republicans in 1976, including
Democratic voters in the Northwest, Midwest, and the South who relied upon the defense industry which the Democrats wanted to scale back. National defense and foreign policy matters transcended party lines and sectional differences, solidifying the conservative base of the Republican Party, but also attracting moderate voters to Reagan’s campaign and his vision for the country, thus enabling the political realignment of the 1970s to take shape. As the political climate changed to favor Reagan’s hawkish policies, so did Reagan.

Indeed, Reagan drew constituencies away from the Democratic Party in areas where national defense issues and the Cold War economy shaped local politics. As détente threatened the financial stability of Cold War communities that voted for Democrats prior to 1972, these communities began to lean Republican once the Democratic Party abandoned Cold War liberalism. While anti-militarist Democrats continued to represent Cold War communities in the 1970s, they frequently modulated their opposition to a large defense budget with support for defense programs that benefited their constituents, leading to ambivalence between Cold War workers and frustration among the anti-militarist public. Moreover, local communities dependent upon the Cold War witnessed two interrelated factors that scared them in the 1970s: a drop in the defense budget and economic decline. Post-Vietnam Democrats offered long-term conversion to civilian work to replace the defense economy, but these proposals had little appeal to workers who saw their job security disappear in the early 1970s. As defense plants and military bases closed due to the resolution to the Vietnam War, Cold War communities argued that defense employment was needed immediately to ameliorate the economic crisis. Conversion would have to wait.

The collapse of the Democratic Party after George McGovern’s presidential campaign in 1972 was also a catalyst for the Democratic decline in Cold War communities. McGovern’s
failure to adequately address how the demilitarization of the Cold War could be accomplished without massive job layoffs—a topic he covered with great eloquence in his early Senate career—meant defense industry employees and union bosses that represented them did not openly support the presidential candidate in 1972. After McGovern lost the election, the Democratic Party splintered into various constituencies. The New Deal coalition broke down on class lines, as the cultural left and working-class were perceived to be at ideological odds with one another. These fissures contributed to the creation of what political scientist Bruce Miroff has called an “identity crisis” within the Democratic Party.4

The diverse political coalition that changed Reagan’s campaign strategy in 1976 reflected the breakdown of U.S.-Soviet détente well before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, making further negotiations between the U.S. and Soviet Union difficult. Without widespread public legitimacy, future diplomatic agreements between the United States and communist powers were elusive.5 But Reagan’s 1976 primary campaign also offers insight into the limitations and obstacles faced by American conservatives in the 1970s. As historians Meg Jacobs and Julian Zelizer have shown, Reagan’s approach to governing—his designs for deregulation, reducing taxes, limiting social welfare benefits—were not always well received by the public in the 1980s.6 The limits of Reagan’s conservative ideology, however, were on full display well before his presidency. Reagan was confronted in 1976 with the fact that Americans liked the New Deal and Great Society programs that conservatives wanted to cut. Americans

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favored a reduction in the size of the federal government as long as it did not threaten programs from which they benefited. Part of the story of Reagan’s rise to the presidency is how national defense and foreign policy allowed Reagan and his supporters to respond to this disconnect between the public’s reliance on federal programs and their antagonism toward big-government. National defense politics offered a solution to resolving this dilemma.

**The Democratic Party and the Transformation of Cold War Politics**

President Richard Nixon finally aimed to realize his goal of creating a Republican “New Majority” as he prepared to run for re-election in 1972. Nixon hoped to wed blue-collar labor, blacks, and white ethnic groups to his base of white suburbanites that got him elected in 1968, thus splintering the traditional Democratic coalition. Standing in his way was South Dakota Democratic Senator George S. McGovern. A dark-horse contender, McGovern was thought to be too far to the left of his party to be elected. Indeed, few political pundits gave McGovern more than cursory attention in the early months of the race, as the Senator was given a 200-to-1 chance to win the nomination. McGovern overcame these odds by expertly tapping into the culture of anti-militarism that pervaded the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s. McGovern’s anti-Vietnam background quickly distinguished him from the field of leading Democratic candidates including Edmund Muskie, Hubert Humphrey, and Henry “Scoop” Jackson. Jackson in particular experienced a barrage of attacks from his Washington state constituents over Vietnam. Since the Americanization of the war in 1965, Washingtonians urged Jackson to renege

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7 For the odds in Las Vegas against McGovern, see Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive*, 96.
on his support for the war, arguing that the United States could not rely solely on its military power to remedy global conflicts.\(^8\)

In addition to the predominance of antiwar politics within the Party, McGovern rose to the front of the Democratic pack by taking advantage of new delegate rules instituted by the Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection, more popularly known as the McGovern-Fraser commission. Created in 1968 following the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and headed by McGovern and Democratic representative Donald Fraser of Minnesota, the McGovern-Fraser commission did nothing short of remake the structure of the Democratic Party. The purpose of the commission was to unite the reformers and regulars within the Democratic Party, making it more inclusive of new constituents while redistributing power away from the party elites (labor leaders, senior Congressmen, and state bosses) who dominated the procedures for selecting the party’s presidential candidate. In doing so, the McGovern-Fraser commission abolished rules and regulations that placed restrictions on public influence on primary elections, including the selection and composition of delegates. The McGovern-Fraser commission also embraced the civil rights revolutions of the 1960s and mandated that delegates consist of minorities, women, and young people relative to their state populations.\(^9\)

Indeed, McGovern’s core supporters were not the Democratic elites who dominated conventions in the past, but young activists assembled from the antiwar left. Students, civil rights figures, women’s liberationists, and members of Ralph Nader’s consumer movement (“Nader’s Raiders”) coalesced around the candidate, attracted to his antiwar position and his detachment from the Democratic Party machine. The ratification of the twenty-sixth amendment in 1971, which

\(^8\) Letter to Henry Jackson, December 21, 1965, Accession 3560-4, Box 161, folder 17, Henry M. Jackson Papers, Special Collections Library, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington; Letter to Henry Jackson, October 15, 1969, Accession 3560-4, Box 184, folder 1, HMJP.

\(^9\) For the impact of the McGovern-Fraser reforms, see Miroff, *The Liberals’ Moment*, 19-23.
lowered the minimum voting age to 18, also helped bring young voters to McGovern. The administrative composition of the McGovern campaign was therefore unprecedented in terms of its age, racial and gender diversity. While tensions existed between the activists and McGovern, this conglomeration of left-wing support supplanted the need for the Democratic candidate to cater to labor bosses and the machine politics of the 1960s associated with men like Chicago mayor Richard Daley—who was tossed from the convention floor. By July, McGovern had sealed the Democratic nomination, shocking the political punditry and the party regulars.

The surprise success of the McGovern campaign represented the political apotheosis of the antiwar movement. The transformation of American politics and the revolution in the Democratic Party came at a price, however, as McGovern’s nomination opened fissures within the Party. These rifts were not entirely McGovern’s fault. Cold War liberals and Southern Democrats were horrified by McGovern’s anti-militarist agenda. Instead of rallying to McGovern’s side after he received the nomination, his former opponents preferred to watch his candidacy implode. Henry Jackson incorrectly portrayed McGovern as being in favor of “Amnesty, Acid [and] Abortion,” and when he won the nomination, Jackson gave him an endorsement that was less than enthusiastic.¹⁰ Labor unions such as the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) had little respect for McGovern either. They despised his opposition to the Vietnam War and his role in party reforms. They also hated McGovern’s call for massive defense cuts. Cutting the defense budget was a priority for McGovern, one that was a close second to ending the Vietnam War. The Nixon campaign noted there was “strong support for the idea that we need to spend a large portion of our recourses on our own domestic problems” and a significant number “of voters are in favor of cutting the

¹⁰ Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail ’72* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 185; Letter to Henry Jackson, October 10, 1972, folder, 30, Box 33, Accession No. 3560-12, HMJP.
defense budget.” Even though national defense was low on the list of voters’ priorities, McGovern made it a salient topic of discussion.\(^{11}\) McGovern proposed cutting nearly 87 billion dollars from the defense budget in 1972 and transferring the monies saved to social welfare programs.\(^{12}\) Dismantling the Cold War state angered the AFL-CIO who since the 1940s believed that increases in defense spending not only prevented the spread of communism but provided economic security to American workers.\(^{13}\) After the July convention, McGovern faced his own insurgency in the form of AFL-CIO President George Meany.

More problematic for McGovern was his difficulty relating to the traditional constituency of the Democratic Party and postwar liberalism: union workers. McGovern’s anti-militarism was more a liability than strength in winning skilled defense labor over to his side. McGovern saw his glowing pro-labor record in the Senate overshadowed by the difficulties he faced in explaining how he would transition the defense economy to peacetime status. Talk of demilitarizing the Cold War was not merely election year posturing on the part of McGovern; he cared deeply about reducing the size of the military-industrial complex. Since his election to the Senate in 1962, McGovern was a leading voice for defense cuts on Capitol Hill and curtailing military expenditures in favor of spending on domestic programs. Shortly after taking office, he proposed a National Economic Conversion Commission that would divert workers in defense to peacetime jobs. Under McGovern’s plan, scientists and engineers in defense would be reemployed to serve civilian purposes including working on solutions to “water pollution, air


pollution” and building public works projects. Contrary to his anti-business image, McGovern thought defense companies should receive government funds to aid them in the transition process. “I believe the Federal Government has a clear obligation to these companies, communities, and individuals that have become dependent on our defense budget for their income, and that we must create the necessary governmental machinery to prevent changes in our Defense Establishment from resulting in an inevitable loss of employment and income,” McGovern said in 1964.

In 1972, however, McGovern failed to articulate his ideas on reconversion in a convincing manner. In response to one worker’s concern that “whenever the war is over, then there’ll be more layoffs,” the South Dakota senator stated that if the United States “had to depend on war, we’re in sad shape in this country,” and talked vaguely about full employment and reinvesting defense dollars into environmental and housing programs. The subject of defense conversion was not mentioned. Attacks on McGovern’s defense budget ensued during the months up to the election. The National Review claimed McGovern’s defense cuts reduced American military forces without heeding threats from the Soviets, making his defense budget “the first step down the rather short road to a Carthaginian peace for the United States.” The cuts would also mean reductions in military pensions. Members of McGovern’s own party eviscerated his defense budget as well. McGovern’s chief Democratic rival, Hubert Humphrey, pounced on proposals for defense reductions, stating they were examples of McGovern’s detachment from the problems faced by American workers. Trying to scare aerospace employees

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14 United States Senate, Committee on Commerce, Hearings, National Economic Conversion Commission, 88th Congress, 2nd session, May 25 and June 22 1964, 43.
15 Ibid., 39.
in California into voting for him during the Democratic primaries, Humphrey implied that if McGovern were elected, further job losses would ensue. When McGovern criticized Humphrey’s endorsement of the Lockheed bailout, his campaign stuck back by saying, “When we talk about Lockheed and the space shuttle, we’re really saying: who was really concerned about the working-man in California?” The group Democrats for Nixon used Humphrey’s critique of McGovern’s defense budget in a provocative television commercial against the Democratic nominee. The ad quoted Humphrey’s claim that McGovern’s defense policies were “cutting into the very security of this country.” The leader of Democrats for Nixon, former Nixon Treasury Secretary John Connolly, believed Democrats had largely defected to Nixon because of McGovern’s plans for “large cutbacks in defense spending.”

Even though McGovern’s campaign provided evidence that defense cuts meant net job increases in the future, not job losses, his message on defense failed to gain traction due to the hostility he faced within his own party and from the right. On top of this criticism, McGovern also sabotaged his defense-cutting strategy by being specific about the military installations he would eliminate, thus angering those workers in defense communities who faced job losses. McGovern was bold enough to tell defense workers in central Florida that he would do away with the space shuttle program, cutting Cold War jobs that depended upon sending men into space. As journalist Hunter S. Thompson imagined, “This is not the kind of thing people want to hear in a general election year—not if you happen to be an unemployed anti-gravity systems engineer with a deadhead mortgage on a house near Orlando.”

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McGovern’s missteps, combined with the attacks on his defense policies, hamstrung the candidate. In the months leading up to the elections, workers in the Cold War economy admitted to being unenthusiastic about McGovern. While a fair number of unions supported McGovern’s defense budget and his recipe for ending the military-industrial complex, including the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Communication Workers of America (CWA), members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), which was affiliated with the AFL-CIO, did not. In September, *The New York Times* went to Burbank, California and interviewed employees whose jobs were rescued by the Lockheed bailout one year earlier to ask them their thoughts on the election. The newspaper found that few supported Nixon, but not many more liked McGovern. *Times* reporter Philip Shabecoff wrote that those “who work in and around the Lockheed plant here have very few good things to say about George McGovern,” especially on economic issues. “Nixon has tried to kill us off, but we’ve got nothing from McGovern for nine years but a lot of talk,” said Gerald Sklarsky, president of local Lodge 727. Some workers were going to vote for Nixon, others McGovern, saying that the President failed to “do something for us working around here,” even though he was from their home state. Their union, the IAM, endorsed McGovern, but the decision inspired neither celebration “or howls of outrage.” The overwhelming sentiment among the workers was apathy. As Sklarsky told the *Times*, “I’m going to sit this election out. I can’t say either one of them [Nixon or McGovern] has done us any good.”

Workers like Sklarsky knew that job security remained tenuous in a period of deindustrialization and economic decline. Like many Americans, defense workers were opposed to the Vietnam War, but the Paris Peace Accords left them concerned about their jobs. Patricia Ash made bombs at the Crane Naval Ammunition Depot in Crane, Indiana for $3.84 an hour and

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20 “Among Lockheed Workers, a Nixon Backer is Rare,” *New York Times*, September 16, 1972,
wanted to keep her job after the war was over. Ash said a “cease-fire worries me” as it would surely lead to layoffs within the plant. While she would “just as soon have a cease-fire, like anyone would,” since she had a young son who could potentially be sent to fight in Vietnam, she also said she would “hate to lose my job.” Ash was, like many workers in her situation, irresolute toward future job prospects. She tried to convince herself that when the Vietnam War ended and she lost her job, she “could always find another one, I guess.”

Compounding McGovern’s troubled relations with defense labor was that to many McGovern supporters, defense workers contributed to the culture of militarization—and therefore were part of the problem, not the solution. The anti-war movement that supported McGovern felt Vietnam was a product of the “military-industrial-labor complex… [that] is locking itself into the structure of our country.” McGovern’s base also consisted of middle-class activists who saw little distinction between union workers and the labor bosses responsible for the old ways of doing business in the Democratic Party. The Democrats (and soon the Republicans) were morphing into a Party that was more attentive to the ideological predispositions of elite activists who saw political bargaining, patronage, and quid-pro-quo exchanges as thwarting the participation of the masses. As the Democratic Party catered more to upper-class suburbanites than its working-class base—and further embraced defense cuts rather than defense increases—Cold War workers searched for a new political home.

Without the support of a unified labor movement, and with the Nixon campaign dividing the Democratic base along cultural and racial lines, McGovern lost the 1972 election in a

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landslide. He captured one state (Massachusetts) and the District of Columbia. As historian Jefferson Cowie has pointed out, McGovern managed to obtain a significant portion of the labor vote and lower income voters, even more so than white-collar workers and college educated Americans. But so too did Richard Nixon. While Democrats picked up a number of seats in Congress in 1972, Nixon exercised a clear mandate. The President captured the economic and cultural anxieties of the American voter better than McGovern in 1972. Nixon’s Republican majority was closer to completion after the results of the 1972 election were in.  

Nixon’s triumph was short-lived, however, once the Watergate scandal unfolded in 1973 and into 1974. The Watergate crisis overshadowed the midterm elections in 1974, leading to huge Democratic gains in Congress. Democrats picked up forty-three seats in the House and gained four in the Senate. These new Democrats hailed from wealthy Sunbelt suburbs and Northern districts once held by liberal Republicans. Wallace Democrats were now replaced by Sunbelt moderates. Without Watergate, few of these Democrats stood a chance of being elected in 1974. The freshmen class rode the anti-Washington fervor straight into Capitol Hill, promising to tackle the corruption and cronyism that they told Americans was so cancerous to lawmaking. Having come from upper-class, wealthy districts, these Democrats were a new breed of liberals who little resembled their New Deal predecessors. As the former McGovern campaign manager and newly elected Democratic Senator Gary Hart said about his colleagues, “we’re not just a bunch of little Humphreys.” Many held moderate views on economic issues and liberal views on foreign policy. These so-called “Watergate Babies” were progenies of interest groups and identity politics; they were concerned about environmentalism, consumers’ rights, and reducing the inflation rate, and felt little connection to the traditional base of the Democratic Party.

24 Cowie, Stayin’ Alive, 122.
including labor and labor unions. Kenneth Young of the AFL-CIO lamented that “the freshmen Democrat today is likely to be an upper-income type, and that causes some problems with economic issues. It’s not that they don’t vote what they perceive to be working class concerns, but I think a lot of them are more concerned with inflation than with unemployment.”

In regards to fighting the Cold War, Watergate Babies favored restrictions on American conduct abroad, and wanted a leaner defense budget. Many opposed the Vietnam War and wanted to avoid the mistakes made by Cold War liberals—who they held responsible for Vietnam.

The political economy of the Cold War, however, interfered in the Watergate Babies’ attempts to reduce America’s military posture. As Sunbelt Democrats, the new legislators came from districts and states that relied heavily on defense spending and leaned Republican prior to Watergate. The new Congressmen wanted to withdraw America’s presence overseas but keep Pentagon funds flowing to defense contractors and military bases in their districts. Incoming Democrats therefore found themselves trying to separate their anti-militarism from their relationship to the political economy of the Cold War, with little success. Representative Philip Hayes was among the Democrats elected in 1974, representing the 8th district in Southern Indiana that had been held by Republican Roger Zion for the last eight years. Hayes opposed defense increases but felt pressured to prevent the Defense Department from closing a local naval munitions depot in his district, leaving several hundred Indianans unemployed. Hayes admitted that anti-militarism in defense communities only went so far as he faced “strong pressure to maintain what is euphemistically called a ‘strong national defense position’ as are other members who have military bases and defense contractors in their areas.”

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26 Quoted in Cowie, Stayin’ Alive, 236.
27 For the upper-class backgrounds of the 1974 Democrats, See Cowie, Stayin’ Alive, 235-236; Hayes quoted in Robert David Johnson, Congress and the Cold War (New York, Oxford University Press, 2005), 212.
The shifting regional and socioeconomic makeup of the Democratic Party after 1974 created a problem: how could liberals curtail defense expenditures without angering their constituents who approved of the jobs they engendered at home? This dilemma led to a moderation and evolving centrism within the party. Post-Watergate Democrats had few good answers to Americans’ dependency on militarization, leaving them exposed to right-wing political candidates who claimed they were “weak” on foreign policy in future elections. Post-1974 Democrats were caught between the politics of the Cold War in local areas and their national commitment to reducing America’s military presence abroad, creating opportunities for the right in an age of anxiety over the direction of national defense policy.

Creating a Foreign Policy Constituency

After Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned on October 10, 1973, Richard Nixon appointed Michigan Representative Gerald Ford as his replacement. Nixon’s own resignation in August 1974 then left the presidency to Ford, who became the first unelected executive in the nation’s history. Ford was also the fourth president to inherit the war in Vietnam, which would end in April 1975, but not before an acrimonious debate with Congress over funding of the South Vietnamese regime. In terms of dealing with American’s chief rival, the Soviet Union, Ford vowed to continue Nixon’s policy of détente and leaned on Secretary of State and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger for guidance in managing foreign affairs.\(^{28}\) Once in office, however, Ford found that in a post-Vietnam, post-Watergate America, détente had difficulty withstanding attacks on its legitimacy. Détente had its share of detractors for years, but now those critiques resonated with a wider audience. After 1974, Ford and Kissinger confronted charges from the left and right that détente neglected human rights and appeased communism.

The passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and the fall of South Vietnam made Americans question whether the means of détente served appropriate ends. Détente also seemed to be tainted with the politics of Watergate. The secretive nature of Kissinger’s diplomacy, his backdoor channels and negotiations with foreign leaders, made Americans wonder what Kissinger was up to and whether he had the country’s best interests at heart. No longer was Kissinger “Super K,” but instead a cagey and devious diplomat whose policies would lead to Soviet hegemony. Kissinger tried to dismiss the vitriol, but détente continued to unravel during the second half of the 1970s.²⁹

One of the first domestic challenges to détente involved the visit to the United States by the writer and Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn. In his book, The Gulag Archipelago, Solzhenitsyn chronicled his eight-year detention in a Soviet labor camp, and after its publication in 1973, he was deported from the Soviet Union. The book was received well in the United States, and the right (and Cold War liberals) lauded Solzhenitsyn for his outspoken criticism of the Soviet regime. North Carolina Republican Senator Jesse Helms hoped to bring Solzhenitsyn to the United States in March 1974, after he wrote to the author that he was a “citizen of the world” who was poised “on the threshold of a new phase in your struggle for truth and freedom in your own native land and in the entire world.”³⁰ Solzhenitsyn declined the offer in 1974, but he did make a visit to the United States in June 1975. After arriving, Solzhenitsyn met with his most ardent admirers in Congress including Helms, Strom Thurmond, and Henry Jackson. Solzhenitsyn then spoke to members of the AFL-CIO, where he demanded a “true détente”

³⁰ Letter to Alexander Solzhenitsyn from Jesse Helms, March 1, 1974, Box 2, James L. Buckley Papers, University Archives, St. Augustine’s Hall, St. John’s University, Jamaica, New York.
between the United States and the Soviet Union that was not “based on smiles, not on verbal concessions, but…based on a firm foundation.” Détente, as enacted by Kissinger, was leading the United States “down a false road,” Solzhenitsyn said, that would inevitably lead to American weakness in the eyes of the world. He urged America to “try to slow down the process of concessions and help the process of liberation,” of those suffering under communism.  

Helms and Thurmond requested that Ford meet with Solzhenitsyn, but Ford refused. Kissinger discouraged Ford from meeting with the recent Nobel Prize winner, believing it would imperil détente. Other prominent members of Ford’s staff disagreed; Deputy Chief of Staff Richard Cheney fired off a memo on July 8, 1975 to Chief of Staff Donald Rumsfeld expressing his anger over Ford’s refusal to meet with Solzhenitsyn. Détente could not conceal the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union still perceived each other as enemies, Cheney wrote, and it was “important that we not contribute any more to the illusion that all of a sudden we’re bosom buddies with the Russians.” On July 7, 1975, Helms declared on the floor of the Senate that Ford’s decision not to meet with such a “dedicated exponent of freedom” was a shameful moment for the nation. The rebuff of Solzhenitsyn proved that détente was a “deceitful device,” that would allow the Soviets to continue to “throttle and enslave countless millions of people all over the world.” The Solzhenitsyn affair also angered his admirers within the conservative movement. William F. Buckley, writing in the National Review, commented “that the conservative right has embraced” Solzhenitsyn for “his tactical and strategic intuitions about the futility of the policy of détente.” Buckley even felt compelled to “salute the leaders of the AFL-

33 William A. Link, Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008), 142-143.
CIO” for inviting him to speak. Ford’s staff also received complaints from voters for his handling of Solzhenitsyn. One letter writer, Carol Hummel, said she was “deeply disappointed in the treatment that Ford and the Congress gave to one great Russian citizen, Alexandr Solzhenitsyn.”

Ford was in trouble again only weeks after the Solzhenitsyn incident, when he signed the Helsinki Accords on August 1, 1975. Ford had anticipated the domestic reaction to the Helsinki Accords would be mild at best, since they represented the stated goals of détente: freer trade relations, concern for human rights, and recognition of sovereign countries to regulate domestic affairs. To certain people in Eastern Europe, and the United States, this last provision amounted to the U.S. accepting past and possibly future Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe. Kissinger, never enthusiastic about the Helsinki Accords, failed to understand this argument and was baffled by the subsequent controversy over Helsinki. The agreements did not endorse the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe, but codified the boundaries of the Soviet Union that existed since the 1940s, Kissinger argued. He told Ford to disregard criticism of his participation in the negotiations, as the accords were favorable to “the interests of the Baltic-American community.” Ford did not intend to surrender Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union, and any suggestion otherwise was absurd.

Americans of Eastern European descent felt differently. The Polish-American Congress warned Ford that he confronted a growing number of “meetings, demonstrations and petitions”

among Eastern European immigrants in opposition to the Helsinki Conference. One protest was held in Ford’s home city of Grand Rapids, Michigan in July 1975. Western Michigan University student Silins Gunlis led two hundred Baltic Americans in a demonstration against the Helsinki Accords. Gunlis said that he and those in attendance were “asking people to stand up and say that the Helsinki Pact is morally wrong.” Protesters carried signs with slogans such as “There Are No Small Countries,” and after the protest disbanded, activists went around the city with a petition seeking “U.S. recognition of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania,” which WMU student Ruta Ozols said she had no trouble getting people to sign. With seemingly no end in sight to the protests, national and local politicians tried to convince Ford to rethink his commitment to the treaty.37

Democratic congressman Charles Bennett told Ford that he was approached by a number of constituents on the “proposed agreement to recognize the boundaries of Russian domination in Europe” and felt the treaty was “not an asset” for the United States. A local Republican leader from Tulsa, Frank A. Wallace, wrote to Ford that he was “getting weary of trying to defend your administration and its actions” to local residents and wondered how the President could champion the “aspirations of all peoples for self-determination and liberty” and at the same time authorize the Helsinki pact.38

To some Americans, the conduct of the United States abroad was evidence of the overreach of the federal government at home. In the South, U.S. policy toward Rhodesia was compared to desegregated busing in public schools. Occupied by white minority rule since 1965,
Rhodesia exhibited the dying gasps of western colonialism in Africa. As a bloody civil war raged between the ruling whites and black nationalists in the early 1970s, President Nixon remained unconcerned with the status of Rhodesia. Nixon’s indifference angered Southern Democrats in Congress, who sympathized with the white regime led by Ian Smith and worked to gain international recognition of the country. Southern Democrats rallied to obtain passage of the Byrd Amendment in 1971 (sponsored by Virginia segregationist Harry Byrd) that allowed shipments of chrome ore to the United States from Rhodesia, defying U.N. sanctions against trading with the white minority government. But after the collapse of Portuguese control over Mozambique and Angola between 1974 and 1975, Kissinger recognized that white rule in Rhodesia was untenable. Touring the country in 1976, Kissinger said that U.S. sponsorship of the black nationalists in Rhodesia was in the interest of “racial justice.” White Southerners were incensed over the change in relations. Memphis resident Leslie Birchfield wrote to Ford that he would not vote for the President unless he “fires Henry Kissinger” over his policy toward Rhodesia. “The way I see it,” said Birchfield, “our role in southern Africa duplicates the role of the Federal Government in bludgeoning of the Southern people into accepting School Integration against its will. The same evil effects will come in southern Africa as has already come to our public school system.”

Workers in the Cold War economy also situated domestic issues within the context of American foreign policy. As they did in the 1960s, defense workers ridiculed cuts in the defense budget as signs of military weakness. When the economy worsened in the 1970s, these workers held steadfast to their jobs—and the foreign policy that employed them. Californians dependent

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40 Letter to Gerald Ford from Leslie Birchfield, September 29, 1976, folder: “Correspondence—Topics—Kissinger, Henry,” Box B81, President Ford Committee papers, GRFL.
on the defense industry complained to their senators and representatives in 1975 about the lagging aerospace industry, as California Congressman William Ketchum wrote to Ford that “if the Nation is to benefit from a broad mobilization base” and raise employment levels, then more contracts were needed. Those affected by cuts felt betrayed by the federal government. As the government spent less on defense following the Vietnam War, the impact was felt broadly among suburban communities buttressed by federal defense dollars. Trimming the military budget hurt not only builders of missiles, but textile companies that relied on selling material to the military, as well as the restaurants and coffee shops that served lunch to suburban defense workers.41

The criticism of defense cuts under Ford added to the compilation of public grievances toward détente. The series of foreign policy crises—both large and small—during the early months of the Ford administration, made détente subject to voracious attacks from a range of critics. Americans were never enthusiastic about negotiating with their communist enemies during the Cold War—détente was a necessary reality in the era of Vietnam. But a critical mass of Americans now deemed détente contrary to U.S. interests at home and abroad.42 Members of an anti-détente coalition were disenchanted with both political parties on national defense issues. As jobs were lost to cuts in defense spending and the U.S. seemingly bowed to Soviet demands on the world stage, the mainstream wings of both parties continued to advocate for demilitarization (on the Democratic side) and continued rapprochement (from the Republicans).


This was unacceptable to Americans with personal connections to the Cold War who wrote letters and marched in protests against the policy of détente.

By late 1975, the Ford’s staff feared that defense cuts and foreign policy crises collectively jeopardized his support from ethnic groups and Sunbelt suburbanites who were pivotal to his re-election in 1976. Grassroots leaders thought Ford was now undoing Nixon’s efforts, as they had “worked very hard during the last decade to cement the allegiance of many East European ethnic groups to the Republican Party,” and feared that Ford might lose these voters due to “negative coverage in the American ethnic press for his participation in the [Helsinki] conference.” Ford had not done enough to reach out to various ethnic groups “who feel no identity” with the President and his policies.43 Internal polling by Ford’s staff in December 1975 showed that the public had shifted rightward on foreign policy, as Americans professed to be more conservative on foreign policy than Ford or Congress, and were less inclined to favor future diplomatic consultation with the Soviet Union.44 Détente had led to the deterioration of American military power, and this disturbed many Americans who wanted to revert to the Cold War status quo. Heading into an election year, opponents of détente wanted a new direction in foreign policy, and Ronald Reagan wanted to be at its helm.

Ronald Reagan, the Cold War, and the 1976 Republican Primary

Reagan contemplated running for president even before his second term as governor of California expired in January 1975. In the days after Nixon’s resignation, Reagan met with a

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43 Thomas Sugrue and John Skrentny, “The White Ethnic Strategy,” in Schulman and Zelizer, eds., Rightward Bound, 171-192; Cowie, Stayin’ Alive, chp. 3.; Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger, October 6, 1975, folder: IT 104 CSCE 1129/75, IT Box 14, WHCF, GRFL; Letter to John Marsh from Rita Hauser, January 9, 1976, folder: Notes to Dick Cheney, Box 17, Richard Cheney Files, GRFL.

44 On a scale of 1 to 7, 1 being most amenable to reaching agreements with the Soviet Union and 7 absolutely opposed, Americans ranked themselves at 3.9, Congress at 3.3, and Ford at 2.9. See U.S. National Study Nov./Dec 1975, page 42, folder: U.S. National Study Nov./Dec 1975 (1), Box 52, Robert Teeter Papers, GRFL.
cadre of political operatives, including former Nixon staff member John Sears and Reagan’s press secretary Lyn Nofziger, to determine the viability of a presidential run. They told Reagan that Ford was unpopular and vulnerable. He was an unelected, moderate President, marred by the legacy of Watergate and an economic recession, and would have difficulty maintaining credibility within the Republican Party. Reagan agreed, whereupon his advisors soon formed the committee Citizens for Reagan, headed by the Republican Senator from Nevada, Paul Laxalt. While Citizens for Reagan began to raise money and coordinate an infrastructure for a Reagan presidential campaign, Reagan made sure to keep himself in the public eye, waiting to see if a primary candidacy was still in the works. He wrote a syndicated newspaper column, gave a regular radio address, and made speeches across the country touting his philosophies on government spending, taxes, and foreign affairs.

Ford’s advisors knew there were rumblings over a Reagan campaign in 1975, but were unconcerned. Internal polling showed voters believed Ford to be the better person to tackle inflation and the economy. Reagan’s strength was in foreign policy, but the Ford campaign predicted that foreign affairs would not be a factor. “Only in some areas of foreign policy does Reagan beat Ford, and foreign policy is a distant fourth among voter concerns this year,” they wrote. They saw no scenario where Reagan would defeat Ford.\textsuperscript{45} Members of Reagan’s staff realized too that Ford had the upper hand. Political history and the incumbency were on Ford’s side. “No one since the Civil War has successfully challenged an incumbent president for the nomination and gone on to win the general election,” wrote Reagan fundraiser Jaquelin H. Hume in an internal memorandum. If Reagan lost, he “and all his supporters will be persona non grata

\textsuperscript{45} “President Ford: Ten Reasons Why He Should Carry the GOP Banner in November,” folder: Advocates—General,” Box 32, Ron Nessen Papers, GRFL; Memorandum for the President from Richard Cheney, October 23, 1975, folder: Polling, Box 17, Richard Cheney Files, GRFL.
with the [Ford] administration. Since this will include most conservatives, this can seriously reduce conservative influence.”

On November 20, 1975, Reagan officially announced his candidacy. Dennis Dunn, Chairman of the King County Republican Central Committee in Seattle, typified conservative thinking in his hope that the primary campaign would revolve around foreign policy. “It may well prove to be that Ford’s most serious blunder was the inexcusably crude fashion (and politically dumb) in which he treated Alexandr Solzhenitsyn. I doubt that anything in recent years has enraged the true American conservative anymore than this most recent display of the Rockefeller-Kissinger type of mindless gaucherie.” But Reagan largely ignored the sentiments of individuals like Dunn. Reagan had discussed foreign policy issues repeatedly in his radio addresses and in speeches to groups such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, where in August, he called the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam a tragedy, and claimed the Ford administration had not done enough to confront the threat of communism.

But in the early days of the campaign, Reagan largely ran on a platform of reducing the size of the federal government, not foreign affairs. While the Ford campaign believed foreign policy was Reagan’s strength, big-government appeared to be the most salient issue to Reagan’s more ideologically conservative advisors such as the ACU’s Jeffrey Bell. In his first speech as a presidential candidate, Reagan said he was running to change the corruption and cronyism in Washington D.C. that originated from the “root” of America’s problems: government largesse.

The economy was also an overriding concern for Reagan. In the summer and fall of 1975, polls

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46 Memo dated 7-28-75, folder 12, Box 8, JHH papers.
showed that Americans were overwhelmingly distraught by rising taxes, inflation, and unemployment. In states like Wisconsin, Reagan was told by advisors that domestic issues were of the utmost interest to voters, where anxiety over high taxes meant, “[t]axpayer groups have been springing up like weeds,” while “national security and the social issues are less important” than the economy.\footnote{Letter to John Sears from Mike Kelly, May 29, 1975, Wisconsin folder, Box 5, CFR papers.}  

In September 1975, Reagan put forward a specific plan to stimulate the economy by reducing government spending. In a speech in Chicago, Reagan proposed to transfer federal expenditures for areas such as housing, health care, public education, welfare, and transportation to state governments, while most areas of defense spending, the second largest budget item behind entitlements, would be untouched.\footnote{Jules Witcover, \textit{Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency, 1972-1976} (New York: Viking, 1977), 373; Memorandum for Bo Callaway, December 30, 1975, folder: “Marik File, Reagan, Ronald,” Box B2, President Ford Committee Records, GRFL.} Reagan claimed his program would ultimately reduce the federal budget by ninety billion dollars, giving local governments more control and streamlining government services to Americans who deserved them. Once Reagan announced his candidacy, however, his redistribution plan did not stand up to scrutiny. Office of Management and Budget James T. Lynn analyst wrote that it “[w]ould, by necessity, result either in a significant increase in the tax burden on the American people, or in a radical reduction in the transferred programs which would leave recipient groups worse off than they are now.”\footnote{Memorandum for the President from James T. Lynn, November 4, 1975, folder: “Ronald Reagan,” Box 19, Richard Cheney Files, GRFL.} A preponderant number of first-in-the-nation-primary New Hampshire voters relied on government benefits, and worried about insinuations that local taxes needed to be raised and government benefits slashed to pay for Reagan’s program.\footnote{Stein, \textit{Pivotal Decade}, 145.}
When he lost the Iowa primary in February, Reagan tried to distance himself from the ninety billion dollar program. In press conferences, Reagan avoided discussion of the plan’s details, albeit unsuccessfully. When questioned by reporters about how he chose the government programs to cut, Reagan said he “never did pay any attention to that list. That was just some stuff the economists gave me.” The “ninety billion dollar gaffe” plagued Reagan’s campaign in New Hampshire, where he lost to Ford. Moreover, the American economy began to recover in late January after a prolonged recession. Increases in consumer spending and stock market prices discredited Reagan’s claim that Ford had mismanaged the economy and made domestic issues less resilient as the weeks went on.

After falling in Iowa and New Hampshire, Reagan lost the next four primaries: Massachusetts, Vermont, Florida, and Illinois. After Illinois went to Ford, journalists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak felt the President had all but sealed the nomination. Even Reagan’s advisors, groping for a coherent campaign strategy, cautiously urged the former governor to reconsider continuing in the race after May. If Reagan did not win the next primary in North Carolina, his quest for the White House was over. To win North Carolina, Reagan had to assemble a new coalition of supporters on issues other than big-government. Attacks on federal programs would not be enough to carry Reagan into the White House. David Keene, in a memorandum to Reagan, noted that building a coalition in North Carolina meant attracting white-collar suburbanites from urban areas in the Piedmont region, “disaffected Wallacite Democrats” from the eastern part of the state, and voters in the western mountains who occupied

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54 “Reagan Disparages Own Funds List as ‘Some Stuff the Economists Gave Me,’” Los Angeles Times, January 28, 1976, folder: “Mark File, Reagan, Ronald,” Box B2, President Ford Committee Records, GRFL.
57 Witcover, Marathon, 410-411.
the base of the Party since the Civil War. Keene recommended to Reagan that they put a campaign together that wedded the “sectional and social” factions within the North Carolina Republican Party between the metropolitan suburbs and the rural areas of the state. In 1968, Nixon captured a significant portion of the vote in Raleigh (from which Jesse Helms emerged as a senatorial candidate) and dominated in the surrounding suburbs of Charlotte. Reagan had to repeat Nixon’s performance and court conservative voters in the counties that elected Helms.58

In North Carolina, Reagan received much needed help by well-coordinated, well-funded grassroots activists hoping to revive his chances of victory. One resident of Charlotte wrote to Paul Laxalt—even before Reagan announced his candidacy—that she was eager to volunteer for the Governor, as she “will work day and night for Regan [sic]. I can type, answer, the phone, get out mail or whatever I can do to help,” because Ronald Reagan was “the only one I think could help the U.S. now.”59 Financially backing these grassroots activists was the political machine that elected Helms to the Senate in 1972. Helms defeated the Democratic nominee, Representative Nick Galifianakis, by uniting the western base of the Republican Party with the traditionally Democratic eastern part of the state, where he attracted former followers of Democratic presidential candidate George Wallace, known for linking his sympathies for racial segregation with hostility toward the federal government. Helms’ election in 1972 led to the creation of the North Carolina Congressional Club, an organization that wielded money and influence on behalf of Helms and the collection of right-wing groups and individuals that backed his Senate campaign. Helms’ close advisor and avid Reagan enthusiast, Tom Ellis, ensured the Reagan campaign had the full patronage of the North Carolina Congressional Club, which used

its money and members to mobilize campaign workers, gather crowds for Reagan’s speeches, and assemble a media presence for Reagan on local television stations throughout the state.\(^6^0\)

The issue that made North Carolinians gravitate toward Reagan was not big-government or the economy, but national defense. National defense issues enticed defense workers near Greensboro, who were employed by Western Electric to build the anti-ballistic missile system (ABM). They also attracted voters in the eastern part of the state, which since 1969 “produced a larger percentage of volunteers for the Army and other military services than any other part of the country.” National defense also interested voters near Camp Lejeune and Fort Bragg Army base in the southern part of the state, which voted overwhelmingly for Nixon in 1972 because of McGovern’s proposals to cut military spending. National defense in North Carolina—as in many Sunbelt states— was intrinsically connected to other economic and social issues that were dependent upon military spending. American military superiority, the fate of the Panama Canal, and the inadequacies of détente were issues that voters throughout the state were vested in for ideological, personal, and material reasons.\(^6^1\)

Sunbelt voters’ interest in Cold War politics was first recognized by the Reagan campaign during the Florida primary. On March 4\(^{th}\), Reagan gave his first major speech on national defense, sounding like Solzhenitsyn when he said “all our smiles, concessions, and toasts of détente have not brought genuine peace any closer,” and that Ford had “shown neither the vision nor the leadership necessary to halt and reverse the diplomatic and military decline of the United States.” Requests for the text of the Florida speech poured into Citizens for Reagan. Unemployed aerospace workers and Cuban-Americans angry over the President’s policies


toward Castro liked the speech. Out of fifty Republicans polled by the Reagan campaign, twenty-eight supported Reagan, and of that number, twenty said they liked Reagan for his opposition to Castro and his call for a stronger defense. After the Florida primary, David Keene geared the campaign toward an “attack strategy” against Ford, believing that the “Reagan attacks on détente” helped the campaign to build energy with the Republican electorate.  

Campaign manager John Sears and the rest of his staff did not anticipate the sizeable response to Reagan’s address on national defense in Florida. The Reagan campaign’s polling company, Decision Making Information (DMI), had not extensively polled voters on foreign affairs in early primary states such as New Hampshire and Illinois. Reagan was also cautious on foreign policy in New Hampshire. Reagan claimed he was not opposed to détente entirely, but to a détente that failed to take into account the history of Soviet aggression toward the United States. Détente established a foundation to pursue peace with the Soviet Union, and the United States “should continue to do so,” Reagan said, while remaining skeptical of Soviet intentions.  

In a February speech at the Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire, Reagan was sufficiently critical of détente, but not dogmatic. “We are told that Détente is our best hope for a

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62 The Right Report, March 10, 1976, folder: “Campaign—General File,” Box 32, Ron Nessen papers, GRFL; Statement by Ronald Reagan, March 4, 1976, Correspondence—File Copies folder, Box 7, CFR papers; Letter to Reagan supporter, undated, ibid; Memorandum for Governor Reagan from David Keene, October 29, 1975, Florida folder, Box 4, CFR papers; Notes on yellow legal pad, “Dade—Lou Conde,” Florida (1) folder, Box 30, CFR papers. Florida’s importance to Reagan’s candidacy is also emphasized in Link, Righteous Warrior, 156; Memorandum from Wayne Valis, March 10, 1976, campaign-general file, Box 32, Ron Nessen Papers, GRFL.

63 See polling results in “A Survey of Republican Voters in the State of Illinois For the Citizens of Reagan December 1975,” Box 179b, Series IV, Richard Wirthlin Files, Ronald Reagan 1980 Presidential Campaign Files, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California, (hereinafter cited as RRPL; “A Panel Survey of Republican Voters in New Hampshire, January 1976,” Box 179c, ibid. When Republican voters were polled in Illinois, only two percent of respondents said that a new direction in foreign affairs was the most important issue; in New Hampshire, that number was six percent. Only seven percent of voters in Illinois claimed foreign policy was the most important issue in the election, compared to thirty eight percent, which said economic issues were their priority. In New Hampshire, the ratio was forty one percent to thirteen percent of voters who believed the economy outweighed foreign policy. Taken prior to the economic recovery, these polls partly help explain why Reagan did not emphasize foreign policy until Florida. Furthermore, New Hampshire and Illinois had less of a connection to the military and national defense spending than did later primary states in the South and West.

64 Shirley, Reagan’s Revolution, 91-92.
lasting peace. Hope it may offer, but only so long as we have no illusions about it,” Reagan told the audience. He went on to claim that, “Détente, if it is a one-way street, will fail. As a two way street it may succeed.”

Reagan also glossed over his background as a proponent of détente during the Nixon administration. Hoping to bolster his image among conservative Republicans, Nixon sent Reagan on a tour of Southeast Asian nations in October 1971, where Reagan offered “very helpful explanations of the Nixon Doctrine” to Southeast Asian leaders skeptical of the President’s efforts toward “opening” China to the United States. Eight months later, Reagan was sent as an envoy to Europe—after Nixon and Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev signed the SALT treaty—to assure Western European leaders that the U.S. would continue working to reduce tensions with the East through negotiation and diplomacy. Together with his muddled positions on foreign affairs during the beginning of the primary, Reagan’s role within the Nixon administration indicates that he lacked a grand strategy prior to 1976, and was unprepared to respond to voters’ concerns with national defense and American foreign policy.

Various independent right-wing groups also helped the campaign’s shift to national defense. Reagan received much needed help from the Supreme Court with its January 1976 ruling in *Buckley v. Valeo*, which allowed unlimited contributions to independent organizations that lobbied on behalf of political candidates. The court’s decision gave rise to the proliferation

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of Political Action Committees (PACs) that supplemented funds from Citizens for Reagan, which often had trouble paying its creditors.\textsuperscript{69} With money flowing from independent groups such as the American Conservative Union (ACU) and the Conservative Victory Fund, movement conservatives bought time on radio and television airwaves emphasizing Reagan’s hard-line stance on national defense. The ACU began placing ads in approximately ten local newspapers in Florida; by North Carolina, that number had grown to thirty-three. A major focal point of the radio advertisements for Reagan was his opposition to the Panama Canal treaties that ceded control of the waterway to General Omar Torrijos. Over eight hundred radio commercials were sponsored by the ACU that criticized the Panama Canal Treaties and blamed Secretary of State Henry Kissinger for coddling the Soviets. The ads also announced that “Ford stands for continued drift with the liberal policies of big government and détente” while Reagan was the embodiment of “new initiatives in freedom based on limited government, personal liberty, and peace through strength.”\textsuperscript{70} The theme of the ACU ads also supplemented the attacks levied on Ford by Helms, who equated federal welfare programs with the Panama Canal treaties, implying that the federal government was transferring its resources to socialistic projects at the expense of national security.\textsuperscript{71}

On March 23\textsuperscript{rd}, Reagan defeated Ford in North Carolina by six percentage points. In Guilford county, where Greensboro and hundreds of defense workers were located, Reagan won by 418 votes. In Onslow County, home of Camp Lejeune, Reagan beat Ford by a 640-319 margin. In the four counties that occupied Fort Bragg, Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, and Moore,

\textsuperscript{69} See the past due invoices in the Presidential Campaign 1976 Financial Statements folder, Box 9, CFR papers.
Reagan won the first three and lost Moore. Reagan also took the entire eastern coast of North Carolina except for Dare County, where Ford prevailed with merely five votes. Bruce Wagner, in charge of advertising for the Ford campaign, noted that national defense had won the election for Reagan, lamenting “this effective change in campaign tactic” that allowed Reagan “to seize the campaign momentum that had previously belonged to President Ford.” Wagner wrote to Ford campaign manager Rogers Morton that Reagan’s use of media to promote his ideas on national defense was the reason for Ford’s defeat. Wagner argued that, “Ronald Reagan has demonstrated his ability to revitalize his campaign with a series of highly personalized half-hour television addresses,” which highlighted Reagan’s differences with Ford on national defense policy. Campaign worker Peter Kaye was also upset that Ford had not used television effectively as Reagan. He believed the campaign should have made an extended television commercial prior to the North Carolina primary to counter Reagan’s assertions. Reagan now had the upper hand as “[t]he issue is defense and détente,” wrote Kaye.

After North Carolina, Reagan became focused on promoting a hawkish image to Republican primary voters opposed to the current direction of American foreign policy. The challenge for Reagan’s advisors was to avoid comparisons to Goldwater’s presidential campaign in 1964, when Goldwater was portrayed as irresponsible and reckless in his foreign policy to the extent that it would imperil global security. In selling Reagan’s image abroad as a diplomat and statesman, the campaign had to confront the “notion spawned by some in [the] U.S. press that

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72 For elections results by county in North Carolina, see Department of the Secretary of State, North Carolina Manual, 1977 (North Carolina Historical Commission: Raleigh, 1977), 723-724. The numbers for Reagan’s victories in the three counties where Fort Bragg is located were the following: Cumberland, 1,963-1225, Harnett, 822-508, and Hoke, 76-43. Reagan lost Moore with a count of 1,587 to 1,286. Reagan therefore won the Fort Bragg area with a total number of 4,448 to 3,062.

73 Ibid.

74 Shirley, Reagan’s Revolution, 167; Memorandum to Rogers Morton from Bruce Wagner, April 7, 1976, Folder: “Hughes Subject File Advertising—Primary Campaign (1),” Box B4, President Ford Committee Records, GRFL; Memorandum to Bruce Wagner from Peter Kaye, April 8, 1976, ibid.
RR is a warmonger, bomb-thrower and recklessly belligerent,” impressions that marred Goldwater in 1964.\textsuperscript{75} Goldwater’s endorsement of Ford exacerbated the perception of Reagan as an extremist on foreign policy. In explaining his decision to support Ford, Goldwater said he saw little difference between Ford and Reagan on substantive issues and believed a change in leadership would delay austerity reforms and hurt the Republican Party in the long term. He thought it unnecessary to “finally come so close to achieving what we set out to achieve three elections ago [in 1964] and risk it all now over a hair-splitting debate within the party about which of two genuine and bona fide conservative candidates is the more conservative.”\textsuperscript{76}

While careful to avoid a repeat of 1964, the campaign pressed on with Reagan’s focus on national defense, as debates over the direction of national defense and U.S. foreign policy emerged as the core issues in the primary. Seeing the success national defense played in turning North Carolina to Reagan, his supporters and campaign staff replicated the strategy in the next major primary state, Texas. Before the Texas primary, Citizens for Reagan enlisted the Houston-based advertising and public relations firm Chamberlain-Frandolig, Inc. for their help in assessing a profile of the typical Texas voter. The report claimed there was no other state “more critical to the Reagan campaign than Texas” where Reagan had the potential to extract “latent conservative support” from voters who “can be generated through effective utilization of key issues and organization to give the Governor a resounding victory.” But Reagan first had to overcome Texans’ suspicions toward Reagan’s social security policy following the catastrophe of the ninety billion redistribution plan. The “misinterpretation” of Reagan’s policy on social security was “continuing to erode his support among the generally conservative senior citizens,

\textsuperscript{75} Memorandum from Peter Hannaford to John Sears, June 18, 1976, Box 37, 1976 Campaign—Project “Emissary” [foreign policy strategy] folder, 1980 Presidential Campaign Files, Series I: Hannaford/California Headquarters, Subseries C, General Campaign Files, RRPL.

\textsuperscript{76} Letter from Barry Goldwater, June 29, 1976, Box 9, Barry Goldwater, Letter announcing support for GRF 6/29/76 folder, CFR papers.
where his appeal could be the strongest.” Reagan had to clarify his commitment to social security, but also draw attention to other issues affecting Texans and Americans nationwide. Among these were national defense. The report recommended that Reagan gear his tough defense posture to workers in Houston, San Antonio, and Corpus Christi, people who had lost their jobs to base closures and military cuts. Moreover, a “[m]ajor policy address on national defense posture/local base closures should be in San Antonio before as many retired officers as can be brought in and aired Statewide.” The agency also suggested Reagan promote his opposition to the Panama Canal Treaty in the Gulf Port, which presumably would suffer economically if the U.S. renounced its oversight of the canal.77

The subject of national defense—more than other policy issues—overcame Texans’ anxieties that Reagan would eliminate federal programs like Social Security. Indeed, Reagan’s national defense policy appealed to residents of a state who received eight percent of total federal defense expenditures. Texans were a product of the Sunbelt South: a population who “generally opposes high federal spending on domestic programs and supports generous outlays for military and space spending.”78 Where Reagan began his speeches in the early primaries by focusing on government bureaucracy, he now made “the decline in U.S. military power” his opening concern in Texas.79 Reagan continued to give half-hour televised addresses on national defense that were financed by individual donors who purchased airtime for the campaign. A sole donor, “Mr.

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77 Capturing Texas: THE MOST CRITICAL STATE for Governor Reagan, March 15, 1976, Texas folder, Box 31, CFR papers.
78 Texas also received ten percent of all funds spent on the space program. Barone, et. al., The Almanac of American Politics, 1976, 813.
McAllister,” gave enough money to buy a “1/2 hour of TV time to show Reagan’s stock 1/2 hour talk.”

Reagan’s momentum in Texas resulted from the campaign’s ability to resourcefully organize and collaborate with the grassroots anti-détente, Cold War coalition in ways he did not prior to North Carolina. The Reagan campaign established a reciprocal and symbiotic relationship with their supporters in Texas, using their concerns on national defense as opportunities for building a broader constituency. Reagan framed foreign policy and national defense issues in Texas to appeal to the widest group of voters possible, forming associations and relationships between the sinking economy at home (particularly in Cold War communities) and the weakening of American military power abroad. Texans’ distrust of détente had obviously predated the Reagan campaign in 1976, but Reagan managed to congeal the suspicion, if not outright antagonism toward détente by emerging as an insurgent candidate who would reverse the foreign policy consensus on détente among Democrats and Republicans. Throughout the Texas primary, Reagan reminded voters that their decision on Election Day could alter America’s Cold War foreign policy and its bearing on defense spending at home.

Indeed, Reagan’s national defense policies united voters throughout the state. In cities on the Gulf of Mexico, Reagan played up his message that the Panama Canal treaties were a giveaway to the communists, which ACU chairman M. Stanton Evans said was treated as a “local issue there.” Reagan criticized Kissinger’s tour of Rhodesia in San Antonio, a city that had the “heaviest concentration of active & retired military,” and confirmed his approval for the Byrd Amendment. In doing so, the New York Times noted that Reagan was addressing “George

80 Memorandum to Roger Morton and Stu Spencer, April 28, 1976, folder: “Hughes Subject File—Reagan Campaign (2),” Box B8, President Ford Committee Records, GRFL; Memorandum from Fred Slight, April 9, 1976, ibid.
Wallace Democrats, whose support he has actively sought.”

In April 1976, just as the contest between Reagan and Ford grew heated, Ford was accused of transferring military installations to Texas in order to win votes in the Lone Star state. Moreover, less than two weeks away from the primary, rumors also surfaced that Ford had decided to wait after the Texas primary to decide on whether to announce a plan to increase the size of the Navy by 600 ships. If Reagan won Texas based upon his criticism of U.S. military weakness, the Department of Defense would then announce the rebuilding and expansion of the naval fleet. Ford tried to refute Reagan’s charges that he allowed the deterioration of the United States to “a position of military inferiority” as “preposterous” and said Reagan had zealously resorted to focusing on national defense “because a grab bag of other issues has been tried and failed.” Ford’s attempts to defend his record on foreign policy demonstrated to the Times “that Mr. Reagan had turned it [national defense] into the focal point of the May 1 Republican primary in Texas.” As Ford crisscrossed the state of Texas, “from Central to West Texas to the Panhandle,” the President was met with voters’ questions “about national defense, the Panama Canal, and détente.”

On May 1, Texas Republicans voted for Reagan over Ford nearly two to one. After Reagan won Texas, major media outlets reported on how foreign policy issues such as the “arms race” engendered success for conservative Republicans like Reagan. The New York Times noted that the focus in the Republican primary after May 1976 was on “whether the United States is No. 1 in military power.” The Times compared Reagan’s comments on the supposed weakness of...


the United States to Kennedy’s 1960 campaign where he blamed Eisenhower for a “missile gap” between the United States and the Soviet Union. 85 *Time* magazine too observed that “national security was one of Reagan’s big winners” in Texas where “Reagan attacked Ford for cutting back on military bases…while continuing to subsidize the United Nations.” Reagan’s win on national defense issues, the magazine posited, would force Ford to modify his positions on U.S. foreign policy and possibly even “dump Kissinger.” 86 That same month, Ford received returned donation letters with the words “I will not support you in any way until you get rid of Henry Kissenger [sic],” scrawled on them. Other critics of Ford asked the President to “kick Kissinger out on his Dead End.” In response, Ford’s campaign staff felt they were “in trouble,” as Ford had lost “what has traditionally been the exclusive province of an incumbent president… foreign policy.” 87 Barry Goldwater wrote to Ford on May 7, six days after his loss in Texas, advising him “to be more punchy” in his speeches but not to get into a sparring match with Reagan over the issues, telling him outright that he was “not going to get the Reagan vote. These are the same people who got me the nomination [in 1964] and they will never swerve.” Rather than trying to convert Reagan voters, Ford should target “middle America.” Goldwater concluded by telling Ford to “get off Panama” and focus on other issues. 88

In post-Texas primaries, Reagan’s attention to Cold War politics generated new public criticism of Ford’s national defense policy. The campaign’s victory in Texas reinforced public criticism of détente, but also made the electorate more attentive to foreign policy issues—and willing to vote for Reagan because of them. Rather than reacting to preexisting discontents over

87 Letter to President Ford from Lloyd Kinda, folder: “Correspondence—Topics—Kissinger, Henry,” Box B1, President Ford Committee Records, GRFL; Letter to President Ford from Paul Woodworth, ibid; Memorandum to Rogers Morton from Peter Dailey, May 14, 1976, Folder: “Hughes Subject File Advertising—Primary Campaign (1),” Box B4, President Ford Committee Records, GRFL.
88 Letter to Gerald Ford from Barry Goldwater, May 7, 1976, “PL (Exec.), 6/1-30/76 folder, Box 3, White House Central Files Subject File, GRFL.
the direction of American foreign policy, Reagan’s win in Texas allowed him to broaden his grassroots anti-détente coalition. Reagan won the next three primaries: Georgia and Indiana on May 4th, and Nebraska on May 11th. In Indiana, where Reagan received a third of his votes from Democratic crossovers, the “questions of détente, defense spending, and above all, the role of the United States vis-à-vis the rest of the world were among Reagan’s best levers.”

By the time of the California primary in June, more voters admitted to be voting for—or against—Reagan because of his stance on national defense and foreign affairs. Anne Nixon, chairperson of the Monterey Citizens for Reagan chapter, solicited donations for Reagan by touting Reagan’s stance on national defense and criticizing Ford’s handling of U.S.-Soviet relations and American policy in Vietnam, Greece, and Angola. Nixon told Californians that while Ford was a “nice guy” who reduced the tide of Democratic spending in Washington, Reagan was the only man who “understands the national peril from without” and was an “articulate campaigner for Americanism.”

Reagan overwhelmingly won his home state, beating Ford by thirty percentage points and setting the stage for a showdown over Republican delegates at the Republican National Convention in Kansas City. In the days leading up to the convention, Reagan’s base reiterated that the way to beat Ford was to maintain his attacks on the President’s national defense and foreign policy. Grassroots activists sent Reagan their advice and checks for donations in small amounts of five, ten, or twenty five dollars. William Haggerty from Canonsburg, Pennsylvania

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90 “Under Pressure from Reagan, Ford Flip- Flops on Issues” San Francisco Examiner, May 10, 1976, Georgia Folder, Box 30, CFR papers; “...Ford on Shaky Ground,” New York Times, June 10, 1976; Letter from Anne Nixon, April 15, 1975, box 12, folder 11, JHH papers. For the influence of foreign policy in the California primary, see California Poll Tracking, May 24-27, 1976, Series IV, Richard Wirthlin Files, Box 180, RRPL. By California, foreign policy was ranked the third most important issue with fourteen percent of voters saying it was the most important issue, just behind “economic improvement” (18 percent) and “less government control” (16 percent). Reagan was also preferred over Ford by a thirty three percent margin to “improve foreign policy,” the same figure that Californians preferred Reagan for his ability to “reduce government control.”
was a “registered Democrat,” and told Reagan that “the way to win the number of needed
delegates” was to play up the threat of the Soviet Union. Grace and Lee Wooster were “retired
registered Democrats” who found that claims that there was “no difference” between Ford and
Reagan were untrue, and enclosed an article from the conservative magazine the *Christian
Crusade Weekly* that suggested Ford and Kissinger had allowed the Soviets to expand their
military power. Florence Daige of Attleboro, Massachusetts told Reagan that he “alone can save
our country and Panama Canal. We need [a] leader who will build this country up to Number 1
and say no to the Russians, [and] open our defense plants to give our men work.” One person
wrote to Reagan’s wife Nancy that Reagan should introduce into the Republican platform a
demand for the resignation of Henry Kissinger, believing the Secretary of State’s conduct to “be
enough to defeat Gerald Ford.”

While Reagan had the support of his grassroots base at the outset of the convention, he
lost a portion of it after he chose Pennsylvania Senator Richard Schweiker as his vice
presidential nominee. Schweiker was a liberal Republican with strong ties to labor, but fell in
line with Reagan’s positions on defense. Reagan felt Schweiker would lure Ford voters to
Reagan. Reagan had captured the foreign policy hawks that disliked Ford for his defense of
détente, but thought the selection of Schweiker could attract moderate voters who preferred the
President’s economic policies but not his foreign policy. For many of Reagan’s most dedicated
supporters, however, men like Schweiker represented what was wrong with the Northeast wing
of the Republican Party. One Reagan voter who professed to be an “independent-leaning-toward-
Democrat,” claimed Reagan “blew it” by picking Schweiker “just like Wallace did when he

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91 Letter to Ronald Reagan from William Haggerty, August 16, 1976, Correspondence Received at the Convention
collection, Box 7, CFR papers; Telegram to Ronald Reagan from Florence Daige, August 14, 1976, ibid.; Letter to
Nancy Reagan, undated, ibid.; Letter to Ronald Reagan from Grace and Lee Wooster, July 7, 1976, Correspondence,
Miscellaneous folder, Box 7, CFR papers.
picked Curtis LeMay” in 1968. He was contemplating donating “a few dollars to your campaign till this Schweiker came on” the ticket. Most of Reagan’s top advisors and aides, including Helms and the Representative from Ohio, John Ashbrook, privately disapproved of Reagan’s choice, believing Schweiker to have failed the test of being a true conservative. But others favored the choice of Schweiker. Reverend Salvator Franco from New Hyde Park, New York, praised Reagan’s pick for vice-president as “Schweiker is for prayer in school, against busing and gun control, against abortion on demand and thinks détente has been a one-way street.” Franco said the “people in Nassau County [are] anxious to support Reagan Schweiker ticket.”

Events on the convention floor also hurt Reagan. The Mississippi delegation made the surprise move of shifting delegates to Ford, despite the state voting for Reagan in its primary. The bleeding of Reagan supporters due to the falling out over Schweiker and the Mississippi delegation meant the end of Reagan’s candidacy. After all the votes were counted, Ford had 1187 delegates, while Reagan had 1070. Reagan conceded to Ford, but not before his supporters inserted a “morality in foreign policy plank” into the Republican Party platform. While it did not call for Kissinger’s resignation, it did criticize détente and the Helsinki Accords and praised Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Furthermore, as historian John Lewis Gaddis argues, Reagan’s forced Ford “to disassociate himself symbolically, if not in substance, from the entire concept of détente” during the campaign. After the Florida primary, Ford used the term “peace through strength,” rather than détente, a slogan later used in alluding to Reagan’s foreign policy.

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92 Letter to Ronald Reagan from Fred Martin, August 19, 1976, Post Convention Correspondence Folder, Box 7, CFR papers; Telegram to Ronald Reagan from Reverend Salvator Franco, August 15, 1976, Correspondence Received at the Convention folder, Box 7, CFR papers. For Helms’ and Ashbrook’s reaction to the selection of Schweiker, see Shirley, Reagan’s Revolution, 275.

Through his appeal to Republicans and crossover Democrats on détente and national defense, Reagan’s 1976 campaign aided the process of political realignment in the 1970s. Structural forces aligned for Reagan at a convenient time. Economic anxiety, the end of the Vietnam War, public antipathy toward the political system, schisms among Democrats on the defense budget, and various international events aroused activism among local voters and constituencies in favor of higher military spending. National defense enabled Reagan to build a coalition that outweighed specific concerns about spending on government programs, the size of the federal state, or social issues. Indeed, Reagan’s focus on national defense spending allowed him to reach into a grab bag of issues related to the subject: American internationalism, federal spending priorities, the role of the federal government, and the condition of the American economy to name a few. Reagan’s general message on the need for higher defense spending had currency among hard-line conservative Republicans, but Sunbelt Democrats and moderate anti-communist Republicans as well, allowing Reagan to elide his early reputation as an anti-government zealot. The Reagan coalition’s bold statement in support of the “remilitarization” of the Cold War placed demands upon policymakers—Democrats and Republicans alike—to renew a foreign policy that refused concessions with communist powers and expanded American military power.

The Domestic Origins of the “Second Cold War”

Reagan attributed his defeat in 1976 to Ford’s influence in Northern states and the power moderate Republicans still held within the Party. Reagan told former President Richard Nixon that the reason he was defeated in Kansas City was New York Republican Nelson Rockefeller’s
influence in a few “North East states where the party structure controlled the vote.” While Ford defeated Reagan in the primary election, he lost in the general election against Democrat Jimmy Carter. Americans wanted someone removed from the mainstream of American politics, and Carter delivered. A former Governor of Georgia, Carter promoted his background as a Washington outsider on the campaign trail and vowed to change the culture of policy making in Washington, D.C., making it more transparent. Carter was unlike previous postwar Democratic candidates since the advent of the New Deal. In some ways, Carter sounded similar to Reagan as Carter favored the deregulation of business and supply-side economics. Expanding government programs was not the solution to economic deprivation, Carter felt. In this sense, Carter was the first post-New Deal president. In his first State of the Union Address, Carter told Congress and the American people that Americans “need to realize that there is a limit to the role and function of government. Government cannot solve our problems” as it was unable to “eliminate poverty or provide a bountiful economy.” In his foreign policy, Carter was dedicated to arms control and nuclear disarmament and talked about cutting the defense budget. Carter also made human rights an obligation of his foreign policy agenda. Carter had, in his words, “studied the record of abuses in different nations as reported by Amnesty International, the United Nations, and other organizations,” and expected that human rights issues would “cut across our relations with the Soviet Union and other totalitarian governments.” Carter aimed to combine his human rights agenda with détente, diverging U.S. foreign policy from the dispassionate realism that

94 Letter to Richard Nixon from Ronald Reagan, August 27, 1976, Box 1, Post-Presidential Correspondence with Ronald Reagan, RNL.
characterized Kissinger’s diplomacy while rebuilding Americans’ interest in accommodations with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{97}

Carter discovered, however, that by pursuing rapprochement with the Soviets, he would reunite the diverse factions within the anti-détente coalition against his administration. The combination of changes to the international political system and the affects the coalition of national security activists had on the political landscape after 1976 set in motion a conglomeration of forces that Carter was forced to confront at the outset of, and indeed, throughout his administration. Moreover, new groups and individuals emerged in the second half of the 1970s that questioned America’s post-Vietnam foreign policy, expanding the size of the anti-détente coalition. After Reagan united the grassroots opposition to détente during his campaign, the critiques of American foreign policy in the era of détente did not fade out, but lingered among the political culture of the times. Carter had to deal with the consequences.

Carter’s opponents on foreign policy came from both the Cold War left and the right. Organizations such as the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) compiled Cold War hawks from both parties whose “objective [was] to alert the nation to the growing threat posed by the Soviet drive for world domination.”\textsuperscript{98} The CPD was the product of the 1975 CIA report entitled Team B, which countered the Ford Administration’s official claim that détente created a lasting peace. In addition to these national security elites, Christian evangelicals like Pat Robertson, Tim LaHaye, and Jerry Falwell gave Carter greater problems. Carter did not anticipate criticism from evangelical Christians after his election in 1976. Evangelicals had largely backed Carter’s election, believing his claim to be a “born-again” Christian meant he wanted to repeal abortion, mandate school prayer in public schools, and put a halt to the gay rights movement. Leading

\textsuperscript{98} Washington Report, November 23, 1976, Media Reaction Reports folder, Box 18, Committee on the Present Danger Records, Hoover Institution on War, Peace, and Revolution, Stanford University, Stanford, California.
evangelicals soon discovered, however, that Carter’s Christianity did not mean using the state to dictate human behavior. Religious worship was a private matter to Carter that should not be politicized in the public sphere.

Carter further antagonized the opponents of détente by spending what little political capital he had in his first year in office on the ratification of the Panama Canal treaties. After Carter signed the treaties on September 7, 1977, evangelicals’ honeymoon with Carter was over. Evangelical Christians were fiercely anti-communist and viewed a strong national defense as important as busing or abortion. Carter was either for increasing American military power or an appeaser of communism. Signing the Panama Canal treaties convinced evangelicals that Carter was the latter. In the following months, evangelicals led by the Reverend John Gimminex of Virginia Beach, held “Washington For Jesus” rallies at the capital to ban abortion and “double the defense budget.”

Carter met with evangelical leaders such as Oral Roberts and Jerry Falwell only once, and the meeting did not go well.

Those members of Congress who supported the Panama Canal treaties also faced trouble, as the 1978 midterm elections unseated Republicans and Democrats who voted for the treaties. Whereas the 1976 election saw the gradual emergence of PACs, by 1978 they came to dominate electoral politics. Among right-wing PACs, the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) spent the largest amount of money during the 1978 election. NCPAC spent a total of $2,842,851 during the midterm elections, two hundred thousand of which went directly to anti-Treaty candidates. Right-wing PACs also steered money and attention to key states that

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99 Memo to Alonzo McDonald, April 23, 1980, folder: Memos-Bob Maddox Weekly Reports, Box 107, Office of Anne Wexler Special Assistant to the President, Robert L. Maddox’s Subject Files, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia (JCL).
100 For Carter’s impressions of the meeting held on January 22, 1980, see Jimmy Carter, White House Diary (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 394.
101 “Selected Political Action Committee Activity in 1977-1978 Election Cycle,” Subject File, Box 1, Campaign Finance folder, Adam Clymer papers, JCL.
voted for Reagan in 1976, hoping to remove from office the Democrats and Republicans who voted for the Panama Canal treaties. NCPAC, Citizens for the Republic, and the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, also targeted candidates who in their view failed to possess the attributes that qualified them as “conservative.”

The controversy over the Panama Canal Treaty primarily ousted Sunbelt Democrats and Watergate Babies from Congress. In states like Texas, 79 percent of the public were still opposed to the treaty, with little separation between Democrats and Republicans. Little-known right-wing Republican Gordon Humphrey was successful in defeating Tom McIntyre for a senate seat in New Hampshire in 1978 largely by stressing his opposition to turning over the Panama Canal. In an editorial, the Manchester Union Leader said the fight over the canal, “was a critical battle between the Liberal Establishment and the American people, and for that reason” it was the “pivotal issue of 1978, whose repercussions one way or the other will affect the lives of us all, not only here in the United States but, for that matter, on a worldwide scale.” NCPAC and the Conservative Caucus also attacked McIntyre over his support of the Panama Canal Treaties, claiming his voting record threatened the security of the United States. In other Senate races between Dick Clark (D) and Roger Jepsen (R) in Iowa, and William Hathaway (D) and Bill Cohen (R) in Maine, the Canal issue played a secondary role in the defeat of the Democratic candidates. As historian Adam Clymer has written, the Panama Canal treaties “served as a lightning rod as conservatives tried to take over the Republican Party” in the 1970s.

102 80 percent of Democrats and 86 percent of Republicans favored the U.S. retaining the canal. See “Confidential Survey Conducted for The Committee of Americans for the Canal Treaties, February 1978,” Statewide Survey in Texas on Attitudes Toward the Panama Canal Treaty folder, Box 11, George D. Moffett papers, JCL.
104 Clymer, Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch, 108-114.
105 Ibid., 117.
But the Panama Canal was hardly the only contentious foreign policy issue during Carter’s administration. Carter also tried to quell opposition to the second round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II) with the Soviets. Particularly discomforting was the opposition toward SALT II among white ethnic Americans who Republicans actively courted in the 1970s. The debate over SALT II among American immigrants from the Soviet bloc took place in the midst of lingering concerns over the Helsinki accords that affected “Eastern Europeans who come from countries totally dominated by the Soviet Union.” Republican congressman from Illinois and chairman of the ACU, Philip Crane, created a group called Alliance for Freedom that planned to defeat SALT II and was “composed heavily of Eastern European ethnics.”

Americans from Eastern Europe decent living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (a key state for Carter in 1980) attended a breakfast with Carter administration members who tried to convince them on the merits of the arms talks noting that “their deep distrust of the Soviet Union is having serious doubts in supporting SALT II.” The Carter administration noted that Greek-Americans were upset over Carter’s handling of American relations with Cyprus and Polish-Americans were concerned over “U.S. Policy toward Russia and communist country.” This particularly troubled the Carter campaign as they felt that one “major factor contributing to Ford’s losing the 1976 election was his statement that Poland is a free country.”

In addition to trying to woo ethnic groups, Carter’s staff also tried to build a coalition of Republicans and Democrats around his proposal for a strong, but leaner defense budget.

Presidential Assistant Anne Wexler believed that Carter’s defense budget required the


Memorandum for Anne Wexler from Vicki Mongiardo, June 6, 1979, Carter Presidential Papers—Staff Offices Ethnic Affairs, Aiello, Ethnic Leaders—Pennsylvania Area SALT II 6/79 folder, Box 50, JCL.

“involvement of the good government groups and conservative religious groups” which she said “have more influence with the Republicans and Southern Members.” In addition to these groups, Wexler believed the defense budget needed support from the AFL-CIO and business if Carter wanted to avoid alienating two very large constituencies. But the AFL-CIO continued to fight the Cold War during the Carter administration. Carter had poor relations with labor during much of his presidency, but the AFL-CIO resisted large defense cuts and opposed the Transfer Amendment in 1979, which would reallocate a portion of defense spending to domestic programs. Referring to the California initiative that placed a cap on property taxes, the union said the Transfer Amendment was like “applying the Proposition 13 meat-ax” to defense at a time when there was a “consensus that the Soviet Union has been engaged in a massive military buildup.”

A bipartisan coalition on defense was impossible considering the mounting critiques against Carter’s leadership on foreign policy. Growing opposition to Carter among the anti-détente coalition made the President adopt a new strategy toward national defense. From national security elites like Jeanne Kirkpatrick who attacked the foundations of Carter’s human rights policy for not favoring dictatorships friendly to U.S. interests, to the growing cadre of religious fundamentalists led by Falwell, Pat Robertson and Oral Roberts who believed Carter abandoned the world to communism, the President had little chance or opportunity to achieve what his advisors wanted. Moreover, the reluctance of labor, business, white Southerners, and ethnic groups to support détente painted Carter into a corner on national defense policy. After 1978, Carter shifted to the right on foreign policy and national defense. The President’s talk of

\footnote{Memorandum from Anne Wexler, June 19, 1980, Correspondence, 6/80 [2] folder, Box 83, JCL; Statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council on Transfer Amendment, RG98-002, Box 10, folder 7, Vertical Files, 1882-1990, George M. Meany Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland. For Carter’s troubled relationship with labor see Cowie, \textit{Stayin’ Alive}, 281-296; Stein, \textit{Pivotal Decade}, 185-190.}
defense cuts changed to requests for defense increases, as Carter announced the building of the MX missile (which he earlier opposed), and increased funding for the Trident II nuclear submarine program.¹¹⁰

Carter’s vacillation on détente and defense weakened his re-election campaign. When he ran against Carter in 1980, Reagan continued the campaign rhetoric he used against détente in 1976. Now the context had changed. Unrest over high oil prices, stagflation, the Iran-Hostage crisis, the invasion of Afghanistan made Carter’s reelection uncertain at best. While the 1980 campaign was mostly about economic issues, those Americans who were Reagan supporters in 1976 because of his foreign policy fell behind the candidate again in 1980 on his domestic policy. Reagan campaigned on the basis that Carter’s failures were symptomatic of the bankruptcy of liberalism. Reagan also linked domestic and foreign policy together, something he had done well in 1976. In touring states like Virginia, Reagan lured military workers in Norfolk, promising pay increases and a more muscular foreign policy.¹¹¹ Anne Wexler recommended that Carter focus his campaign against Reagan on similar grounds, writing that Carter should run on the theme of “Rebuilding America’s Strength,” which eerily echoed Reagan’s “peace through strength” platform in 1976. Wexler said that Carter should point out to voters that he “reversed the decline in real defense spending to rebuild our military strength.” The slogan “Rebuilding America’s Strength” also encompassed Carter’s policies toward the economy, employment, and energy, as the President was “rebuilding our country’s strength in the world—both militarily and morally—and rebuilding our economic strength.”¹¹²


¹¹² Memorandum to Anne Wexler from Al From, September 16, 1980, Campaign 1980 Correspondence Memos Clippings [2] folder, Box 7, Office of Anne Wexler, Special Assistant to the President, Anne Wexler’s Subject files, JCL.
No campaign theme, no matter how clever, could make the 1980 election go Carter’s way. The evolution of Cold War politics since 1972 partly made Reagan’s rise to power as it contributed to the shift in the electorate that had been taking place since the early 1970s. The realignment of the parties, grassroots mobilization against détente, and the failed response by Democrats to structural issues in the Cold War economy during the 1970s—all of which came to a head in the 1980 election—made Reagan’s victory possible. Reagan’s win over Carter elated his right-wing followers who believed they finally had one of their own in the White House. The 1980 election was to them, proof that the American public had repudiated liberalism. But the election of Ronald Reagan, however transformative for the United States, would not be the panacea that many conservatives imagined.

Conclusion

The groundswell of grassroots support for a hard-line national defense and foreign policy convinced Reagan that the American people would support a more strident approach to dealing with the Soviet Union. This was exactly the course Reagan took the United States on during his first administration, as Reagan approved massive increases in defense spending and the creation of programs like Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). The origins of the “Second Cold War,” as historians have characterized the period of the first Reagan administration, therefore rest not with Reagan or his advisors, but with Reagan’s 1976 campaign. The realignment of the Republican Party around foreign policy issues in the 1970s provided the political context for the “Second Cold War,” and set the early groundwork for a renewed confrontation with the Soviet Union.

The remilitarization of American foreign policy in the 1970s was also a product of the Cold War defense economy erected in the 1940s. The Reagan campaign exploited the structures
of militarization to obtain his most significant victories in Gunbelt and Sunbelt states dependent upon Cold War military spending for economic and social resources. Threatened by defense cutbacks, and fearing further retrenchment in foreign policy would lead to base closures, a loss of jobs, and a reduction of federal benefits provided by defense spending, Reagan exploited national defense issues in local areas to rise to national prominence. With the Democratic Party disjointed on the subject of national defense following the 1972 McGovern campaign, Reagan offered a clear alternative to détente and demilitarization that more Americans were willing to accept in the mid-1970s. To the proponents of a higher defense budget, international events such as the Panama Canal Treaty, the civil war in Rhodesia, and the Helsinki Accords reflected the loss of military superiority in America’s defense establishment that would then imperil national morale, but also the job security of Gunbelt Americans who depended upon the Cold War. The diverse anti-détente coalition that formed around Reagan—and which Reagan organized, cultivated, and strengthened—thereby remade American foreign policy during the second half of the 1970s.
In 1984, President Ronald Reagan was reelected over former Vice President Walter Mondale with an astonishing 525 electoral votes, a new record. The Republican Party—and the conservatives within it—felt the 1984 election was a mandate for the administration’s policies. But the election complicated as much as empowered Reagan’s legacy. Reagan’s victory rekindled a contentious debate over whether the President’s policies actually fulfilled the intentions of the “Reagan Revolution,” as some Republicans protested the growth of the federal government during Reagan’s first term. Particularly disturbing to Republicans (and some Democrats) was Reagan’s inability, or ostensible unwillingness, to curb the federal deficit.

Reducing government expenditures was once a priority for Reagan. In his first term, Reagan promised economic growth and deficit reduction through tax cuts, but now into his second, his pledge seemed illusory. The deficit more than doubled between 1981 and 1984, from $79 to $184 billion, and by 1982, Reagan was compelled to authorize tax increases to lower the deficit.

In addition to his tax policies—that critics said favored the wealthiest Americans—Reagan’s vast increases in defense spending also contributed to the federal debt. New York representative Jack Kemp, Chairman of the House Republican Conference and co-architect of the 1981 tax reform bill, tried to neutralize congressional and public criticism that defense spending enlarged the deficit. In a bulletin to House Republicans, Kemp dismissed such accusations as “simply at odds with the facts.” Kemp further urged his colleagues to disregard arguments “that defense spending is a huge portion of the budget”; national security spending did not create a “terrible burden on the economy.” There was, as Kemp saw it, “no inherent contradiction between economic expansion and a strong national defense.” Republicans’ decisions on national defense spending should not be guided by the “country’s fiscal condition,
but on our perception of the threat faced by the U.S. in the world... If Republicans want to
become America’s new majority party, they must be committed to national defense as they are to
balanced budgets.”¹

Kemp’s comment reflected how the remilitarization of the Cold War shaped the
Republican Party’s approach to governance and policy making in the 1980s. As president—at
least during his first term—Reagan presumed the conservative critique of American foreign
policy since Vietnam was correct: the United States lagged behind Soviet military capability,
waivered in dealing with communism abroad, and was too reluctant to exercise military
predominance to threaten and defeat America’s global enemies. In response to what he believed
was a decade of neglect of America’s military, Reagan raised defense spending thirty-five
percent during his time in office. No deficit was too large to Reagan if it prevented a Soviet
invasion.²

Defense monies under Reagan’s administration went toward a wide variety of programs.
Much of defense spending under Reagan went to research and development in expensive projects
like the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and Cold War interventions in Central America and
elsewhere in the developing world. Like presidents before him, Reagan relied on American
military might to deter potential threats from communist countries. As a policy, “containment”
was rejected, but not the means used by prior policymakers to deter communist expansion:
exorbitant defense spending. New international threats from the Soviet Union and its allies
seemingly demanded a return to the arms and technology race—communism once again
appeared to be marching toward the West. Reagan responded to the new international context of

¹ Special Report House Republican Conference, “Are Deficits More Important than Defense?” folder 6, Box 122,
² On the Reagan defense buildup, see Frances Fitzgerald, Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the
End of the Cold War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000); Daniel Wirls, Buildup: The Politics of Defense in the
the Cold War with a mission to “rollback” communism by placing the United States in a position of military dominance over the Soviet Union.

The Reagan defense buildup was also an extension of the administration’s domestic policy. Indeed, Reagan and his fellow Republicans saw the defense economy as an antidote to domestic economic pressures in a post-industrial age. Under Reagan, Republican and conservative policy makers reified Democratic uses for the national security state that dated back to the 1940s. In allocating defense contracts, Republicans in Congress and the Reagan administration embraced a unique form of defense Keynesianism to ameliorate and stimulate employment. The economic contributions of the defense program were implied more than outright acknowledged by the Reagan administration, as few administration officials admitted to be quasi-Keynesians. But Reagan knew SDI had an important role to play in the American economy. In the President’s speeches on SDI and the defense buildup, Reagan promoted the missile defense system as a check to Soviet power, but also frequently touted the economic growth and good-paying jobs SDI brought to Americans.

High-tech areas in the western region of the Gunbelt benefited the most from investment in the missile defense shield. SDI remained an experimental and untested program, which meant most of the jobs for SDI went to skilled engineers, mathematicians, and physicists. Rather than production of current defense products—that required a manufacturing base—Reagan’s weapons systems were developmental and required no major investment in industry. With an eye toward defeating the Soviets in a nonexistent race for military predominance, Reagan’s defense policy meant investment in new programs, not preexisting weapons of war, which resulted in a loss of jobs for many unskilled Cold War workers. As historian Judith Stein has written, Reagan’s economic policies promoted “nontradable sectors like real estate, financial services, and
defense,” which resulted in “hobbling tradable manufacturing and agriculture.” The defense buildup, in essence, exacerbated the problems of deindustrialization, promoting the fortunes of the skilled workforce and the shift to what Stein has called the “Age of Inequality.”

Indeed, Reagan had little interest in the details—and economics—of military contracting, but his defense policies had a profound role in the remaking of American politics. The economic effects of the Reagan defense buildup reinforced Americans’ impressions that the federal state had failed them. Defense spending under Reagan offered temporary growth to some Cold War communities, but did not benefit the entire Gunbelt. The unequal distribution of contracts and disproportionate investment in Cold War communities during the Reagan years meant that those contractors that profited the least from the defense buildup merged with bigger defense companies, or drastically downsized. These policies all meant unemployment on some scale. When the Cold War ended, drastic cutbacks in defense further ensued. Defense spending was reduced by over a hundred billion dollars after Reagan’s presidency. As a percentage of G.D.P., defense was cut by more than half from 1987 to 2000. And the defense jobs lost to peace were not replaced by better ones. Like other regions affected by plant closures, the service economy often replaced the defense economy in communities hardest hit by the demise of the Cold War.

The downturn in defense most affected working-class defense employees, as many found themselves displaced or underemployed after 1991—skilled workers had more mobility and better opportunities than their working-class counterparts. Anti-militarists on the left (from within and outside of the Democratic Party) continued to sell defense conversion to ameliorate the situation in defense employment, but there were few buyers. Defense companies were

resistant to conversion, and their workers feared being dislocated or unemployed in the transition to non-defense work—before being laid off.

The impact of the Cold War on local communities was not a result of organizational victories on the right, despite scholars having viewed Reagan’s presidency as either a triumph or revival of conservatism. Certainly, by the 1980s, the political right had wider public acceptance than they had in previous decades. In the years before Reagan's election, the right took better advantage of changes to the political system, economy, and federal government. In addition to a more aggressive foreign policy, high on the list of demands among Reagan’s backers were economic programs that promoted the market over state intervention. Pro-family activists including Christian evangelicals and gay rights opponents also reframed partisan identities based on cultural issues, promoting “traditional” values to an electorate that was skeptical of government intervention on matters related to the family. 

Democrats remained disorganized on these issues in the 1980s. The failure of the Carter administration to tackle stagflation, unemployment, and the reengagement with the Soviet Union appeared to demonstrate the Democrats’ inability to address the larger structural problems that confronted the country.

Rather than examining the years of the Reagan administration as the apotheosis of the “conservative movement”—a problematic term—it is better to view the age of Reagan as a period that altered public perceptions on the role of government, but at the same time failed to leave modern conservatism in victorious repose. Reagan thought Americans had become more conservative on foreign policy and national defense during the 1970s. This was not entirely true.

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The 1970s and 1980s were more favorable to conservative policies, but the American people had not “become conservative.” Polls showed that a majority of Americans favored the Reagan defense buildup, but there was also significant popular support for the nuclear freeze movement that captivated the sympathies of a significant portion of the American public. Moreover, activist conservatives and their political brethren were disenchanted with Reagan’s foreign policy throughout his second term. The Cold War right was appalled by Reagan’s diplomacy with Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev. To right-wing defense hawks, any compromise with the Soviet Union would lead to communist victory and the depletion of America’s power in the world. The United States must conduct its foreign policy with this truism at the center, and those individuals unwilling to recognize the legitimate existential threat the Soviets posed to American national security should simply be overridden. The nuclear freeze movement, however, and conflicts between conservative and moderate Republicans over the fiscal costs of increased military spending, prevented the Reagan defense buildup from growing beyond its proportions. Reagan’s attempt to implement a universal policy of “peace through strength” was one of his biggest challenges. It was also one of his greatest failures.  

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Budgets, Bombs, and the Nuclear Freeze Movement

Throughout his presidency, massive defense spending was the linchpin in Ronald Reagan’s Cold War strategy. Reagan thought heightened defense spending would browbeat the Soviet Union into a position of strategic subservience. Accepting the popular opinion that détente had done near irreversible damage to American foreign policy, Reagan hoped to repair American might through defense increases larger even than those requested by military officials and defense corporations that profited from his policies. To some extent, massive defense spending unnerved the business community. Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldridge, for example, reported meetings and “conversations with hundreds of businessmen, representing businesses of all sizes in finance and industry” in which the overwhelming consensus was that the resulting deficit was impeding economic growth. Anxiety over the deficit made “either continuing higher interest rates or inflation, or both, all too possible.” Baldridge, however, declared cuts to defense spending off-limits. Believing the deficit should only be tamed by cutting “the rest of government outside Defense as much as we can,” he recommended increases in defense—though not to exceed five percent, as it was unclear whether the defense industry can “spend that large an increase efficiently.” A rise of eight percent would mean a backlog of defense orders since the United States defense industrial base had diminished since the 1960s, and would not be able to handle the work requests from the Pentagon.⁷

David Stockman at the Office of Management and Budget and “Cap” Weinberger at the Department of Defense, the two men and organizations that worked closely on Reagan’s first defense budget, vied over the specifics. Stockman was an heir to the libertarian, Robert Taft wing of the Republican Party. Stockman was also an anti-government ideologue who felt, as

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⁷ Letter to the President from Malcolm Baldridge, September 4, 1981, [Defense Budget meeting 09/09/1981 (2) Box 2], Richard G. Darman Files, Series I, Subject Files, RRPL.
head of the OMB, it was his job to begin “abruptly severing the umbilical cords of dependency that ran from Washington to every nook and cranny of the nation.”

The “dependency” that Stockman referred to was the American welfare state, which Stockman believed drained the coffers of the federal government as Americans demanded more services from federal institutions. Defense, however, did not enter into this paradigm. Stockman admitted to be a “‘big budget’ proponent on defense,” having been swayed by Jack Kemp and the journalist George Will, as well as the Iranian hostage crisis from 1979-1981, on the need for a large defense budget. Stockman believed in higher defense budgets “with the zeal of the convert” and in the early days of a Reagan presidency hammered out an agreement with Weinberger of a real defense increase of seven percent, equaling a defense budget of 1.46 trillion dollars over five years.

But Stockman was surprised by this figure when he redid the calculations after his meetings with Weinberger. Stockman favored large defense budgets, but a defense budget that high was excessive to the point that it would prevent the administration from considerably shrinking the size of the federal deficit. Stockman was suddenly distraught over Weinberger’s indifference to the long-term costs of defense spending to the budget and the fate of the “Reagan Revolution.” By then, however, it was too late. The proposed figures were released and there was “squealing with delight throughout the military-industrial complex.”

Internal tensions over the specific figures aside, the consensus within the administration was that defense increases nearing hundreds of billions of dollars were needed to reverse the presumptive “weakness” of the United States’ nuclear and conventional military arsenal relative to the Soviet Union.

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Reagan received plentiful advice prior to the last significant meeting over the defense budget on September 9, 1981. Martin Anderson of the Office of Policy Development, classified in Stockman's memoirs as “a flinty anti-spender on everything,” gave Reagan strident suggestions reminiscent of Cold War liberals in the 1950s. “National defense and economic policy are inseparable,” Anderson said. The President must choose “between having a balanced budget, a strong economy, and significant, continuing increases in defense spending or having an unbalanced budget, a weak economy, and an eventual forced reduction in future defense spending.” Murray Weidenbaum, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors concurred, stating that the President had the full support of the American public behind his defense policy, and that it too would serve the interests of America’s domestic economy. “A strong national defense rests on two essential bases: a healthy national economy, and solid, widespread public support for defense expenditures.” Reagan had both.\(^\text{10}\) Reagan’s advisors also told him to be mindful of his right-wing base that wanted more defense spending. Elizabeth Dole reminded him that “[c]onservative organizations, as well as veterans and military groups” would demand defense expenditures at the present level and expect him to push for a balanced budget solely through cuts in social services.\(^\text{11}\) It was Reagan’s job to calibrate his defense policy between the hawks that supported him in the campaigns and the broader public’s vision.

Weinberger came prepared on September 9th to win over the President without Stockman getting in his way again. The OMB wanted to cut defense outlays by thirty billion dollars for the remaining years of Reagan’s first administration, but the Defense Secretary fought vigorously

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\(^\text{10}\) Stockman, *The Triumph of Politics*, 107; Memorandum for the President from Martin Anderson, September 8, 1981, folder: Defense Budget Meeting 9/09/1981, Box 2 Richard G Darman Files, Series I, Subject File, RRPL; Memorandum to the President from Murray L. Weidenbaum, September 8, 1981, ibid.

\(^\text{11}\) Memorandum for the President from Elizabeth Dole, September 8, 1981, ibid.
against cuts. Weinberger warned that the OMB’s proposal would “create the worst of all worlds” since it would undermine foreign policy by “caus[ing] us to fall further behind the Soviets” and not solve the deficit problem. In loaded terms, Weinberger argued that the obsession over the deficit must be discounted when considering requests for defense increases. If the OMB budget went forward, the United States would have to suspend or cancel the use of Titan II rockets, 18 naval ships, and two Air Force squadrons. Defense cuts would also mean the loss of 135,000 jobs in defense employment that would “spread through [the] economy,” eventually leaving 200,000 Americans without work. And what if the President might “have to call on [the] military to protect national interests” in his first term? The United States could not carry out “the current foreign policy commitment” with its present defense capabilities. The results of the 1980 election spoke for themselves, Weinberger said. The American people wanted the United States to spend more on defense.

The September 9th meeting determined how the Reagan administration would handle defense budget politics in the 1980s. Stockman tried to get Reagan to cut the projected 1982 budget by twenty billion dollars, down from an original thirty billion dollars. After Weinberger’s presentation, however, Reagan felt it was impossible to go with Stockman’s figure. He decided instead on a $13 billion cut over three years, a paltry sum. (Overall, defense would make up 7.5 percent of GDP.) Stockman's cuts “were based on pragmatism, not principle,” he said, but in the end, “the President and Weinberger had decided to stick with principle.” Stockman was wounded by the defeat, but publically defended the increases he aimed to prevent behind closed

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12 Briefing Memorandum for the President from Richard G. Darman and Craig L. Fuller, folder: Defense budget meeting 9/09/1981 (1) Box 2 Richard G. Darman Files, Series I Subject File, RRPL.
14 Ibid.
15 Stockman, The Triumph of Politics, 297.
doors in order to appear a faithful cabinet member. When, two years later, the Reagan administration asked for a defense budget of $247 billion for FY 1984, Stockman was one of the leading administration officials coaxing reticent senators to approve the increases.\textsuperscript{16}

Reagan also faced opposition from Congress on his defense budget. Republicans and Democrats in Congress regularly rejected Reagan’s defense budget when it was presented to them. By Reagan’s second term, Congress was openly disturbed by the administration’s hubris on defense spending—and Reagan’s initial refusals to trim defense costs. When asked to reduce figures in the defense budget, Reagan officials eliminated projected pay increases for Defense Department employees, rather than touch existing programs. This prompted Republican senator John Chafee from Rhode Island to comment that “defense has to bear its fair share” in budget cuts. Kansas Republican Bob Dole echoed Chafee, saying, “If the President wants budget restraint we’ve got to have defense included.” The Reagan administration knew opposition to its yearly defense figures was forthcoming, and often used large defense budgets as advantage over their Democratic opponents to cut social spending. When confronted with defense budget figures for the fiscal year 1985, House Speaker and Massachusetts Democrat Tip O’Neill said that if Reagan “is willing to reduce the growth of defense spending then he will find that we will be helpful in nondefense areas.”\textsuperscript{17}

While congressional Republicans and Democrats scored victories in getting Reagan to prune the defense budget during his first term, they were modest accomplishments. Over Congress’ objections, Reagan announced plans for building new missile and nuclear technologies, including the neutron bomb, the MX missile, and medium range Pershing II missiles. The administration's strategy was to ask for astronomical increases and then rail


against suggested, incremental cuts. This approach to defense spending had, in fact, been taken by every administration since Truman. The difference in each case was the international context. Reagan’s defense increases inflamed tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, igniting a "second Cold War" and erasing efforts at détente begun by Kennedy in 1963. With “peace through strength,” the administration retrigged the arms race, even while discarding the premises behind Mutual Assured Destruction (M.A.D.).

Those who wanted to roll back communism through a massive defense buildup welcomed Reagan’s early proposals on defense. The Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) was among the groups that searched for Reagan supporters among business elites and liberals disenchanted over the Democratic Party’s anti-militarism in the 1970s. The CPD reached out to the U.S. Industrial Council (formerly the Southern States Industrial Council), the Council on Foreign Relations, the Chicago Committee, the Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs, and the National Strategy Information Center, hoping they would open their wallets to help the CPD lobby Reagan and Congress on defense.\(^1\) The working relationship between the CPD and Reagan came immediately. One month after Reagan’s first speech on SDI, advisors Lyn Nofziger and Frank Carlucci wrote to the CPD under the auspices of the “American Foundation,” requesting “help in communicating the need for a strong national defense to the American people.” Nofziger and Carlucci sought to embark upon “a nationwide communications campaign that will emphasize the necessity as well as the many rewards of a strong defense effort” to the public.\(^2\) In addition to “neoconservative” groups like the CPD, the Reagan administration also looked to capture support for its national defense policy among evangelicals.

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\(^{1}\) See “Board of Directors List,” Lists/Present Danger/Prospective Members/ Contributors folder, Box 18, Committee on the Present Danger Papers, Hoover Institution on War, Peace, and Revolution, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

\(^{2}\) Letter to Charles Tryoler, April 12, 1983, Box 35, CPD papers.
A National Association of Evangelicals/Gallup poll conducted in 1983 revealed that 61 percent of evangelical respondents favored “Reagan’s handling of the nuclear arms situation.” Fifty-four percent of evangelicals agreed “that America’s falling behind in the arms race would increase the danger of nuclear war more than a continuation of the arms race.”

If Reagan’s defense buildup catalyzed his base, it also motivated opposition among the left. Anti-nuclear activists concerned about the buildup of nuclear weapons coalesced in a nuclear freeze movement in response to Reagan's re-launching of the Cold War. Eventually an international phenomenon, the nuclear freeze movement took to the streets at home to protest the escalation of nuclear weapons. Across the country, ordinary Americans mobilized by the thousands in favor of abolition. Collecting petitions outside supermarkets in New England, organizing pro-freeze workshops and seminars in the Midwest, filming commercials in favor of the freeze even in the pro-defense Sunbelt, nuclear freeze activists expanded the movement to a global scale. One grassroots supporter of the freeze campaign, E.B. Mullen from Schenectady, wrote Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Allen in March 1981 to complain about his recent speech to the Conservative Political Action Committee that criticized the movement. Mullen noted that Allen could easily “deride ‘wholly minded’ liberals” in favor of the freeze, but it would not detract the push for disarmament since many Americans were not “ready to accompany you to the nuclear incinerator.”

An estimated 500,000 to 1 million Americans gathered in Central Park to demonstrate against the arms race the following summer. The freeze

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20 NAE/Gallup Poll on Evangelicals Views about the Nuclear Arms Race, folder: Nuclear Freeze (1 of 16), OA9079, Morton Blackwell Files, Series I, RRPL. In polls, evangelicals supported “pursuing increased nuclear disarmament treaties with the Soviets” by 72 percent. See Axel Schafer, Piety and Public Funding: Evangelicals and the State in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 165.
22 On the grassroots, see Martin, The Other Eighties, 9-14
movement dominated headlines in the early years of Reagan’s presidency, making nuclear
diplomacy a constant household topic of debate. Even members of the evangelical right were
skeptical about the use of nuclear weapons. Seventy-seven percent of evangelicals thought a
“bilateral” freeze agreement was a good idea, provided there were equitable stipulations for
drawdown on both sides.\(^{24}\)

With freeze popularity at levels not seen since the 1960s, a right-wing, anti-freeze
movement formed to counter its success. It, too, reached global dimensions. Students for Peace
and Security (SPS), based in Boston and London, worked to dampen the success of the
“freezniks” among the young through counter-protests “to the ban-the-bomb crowd.” Melanie
Sturm, an undergraduate at Tufts, explained part of the appeal. Strum joined SPS because she
feared the freeze movement was “emboldening the Soviets to continue an aggressive foreign
policy.”\(^{25}\) SPS was not the lone anti-freeze organization. The London-based companion to SPS,
Coalition for Peace through Security (CPTS), received $10,000 from the Heritage Foundation for
making their “top priority” the defeat of the freeze movement. CPTS distributed pamphlets to
coincide with anti-nuclear protests and enlisted members of the American military and national
security elites, like Midge Decter of the CPD, to make statements against the freeze.\(^{26}\) Such
groups also gave important support to Reagan from the other side of the Atlantic. When the
President planned to meet with the British Prime Minister in June 1982, the Campaign for
Nuclear Disarmament (CND) planned a “Reception Committee” to show that British citizens
“want[ed] peace, not nuclear holocaust,” and to protest meddling in Central America, “Reagan’s

\(^{24}\) NAE/Gallup Poll on Evangelicals Views about the Nuclear Arms Race, folder: Nuclear Freeze (1 of 16), OA9079, Morton Blackwell Files, Series I, RRPL.


other red carpet.” Among a coalition of supporters, however, the local organization, Peace with Freedom (PWF), countered with the argument that “unilateral…disarmament by Britain or any Nuclear weapons/freeze that would give the Soviet Union a permanent built-in advantage over the United States.” Not unlike American evangelicals later on, however, PWF inevitably wanted to “see an end to the nuclear arms race”; disarmament was off the table so long as it was not multilateral.

Defense communities paid close attention to the freeze campaign as well. Silverdale, Washington high school teacher David Rawls wrote to the Committee on the Present Danger on November 8, 1982, asking to be placed on the organization’s mailing list and for other information for a class he was teaching on “Nuclear Age Decisions.” Rawls thought the CPD literature would stimulate debate on nuclear weapons, especially since “our community is home of the Trident missile system and the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.” In Washington, Connecticut, locals clashed over a resolution to support the freeze, passed in April only to be voted down in June, after residents circulated anti-freeze pamphlets portraying activists (including one local Reverend) as Soviet spies. Michel Craig, who led the grassroots campaign, summed up his feelings by saying, “If you wish to vote for the Brezhnev, Kennedy freeze, I recommend you also vote to have Washington, Conn., renamed Marx, Moscow, or Misinformed.”

The limits of waging a second Cold War were substantial considering Reagan's sizeable victory over Carter. Harangued by nuclear freeze activists, criticized by Congress, scrutinized by

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28 Peace with Freedom Petition, ibid.
29 Letter from David Rawls to Committee on the Present Danger, November 8, 1982, Nuclear Freeze folder, Box 18 CPDP.
the American people, the defense buildup Reagan said would save America from Soviet aggression was not as popular as he originally planned. Making policy from the White House meant having to answer and conform to preexisting structures of governance and catering to multiple constituents with competing and contradictory interests. Formulating a program of “peace through strength” that responded to the various concerns of his constituents was a Sisyphean task for Reagan.

**SDI and the Remaking of the Suburban West**

The nuclear freeze movement muddied assumptions that the public wanted more defense spending, but Reagan continued to press on with “peace through strength,” feeling the activists did not represent the public sentiment at large. The nuclear freeze made the announcement of SDI more problematic than Reagan and his supporters wanted, however. SDI was the fulfillment of a decades-old dream to build a missile defense shield around the United States, using a system of satellites to deploy lasers intercepting Soviet missiles in the event of a nuclear war. A corollary to “peace through strength,” SDI emphasized the need for new weapons and technology to counter the Soviet Union. The program was grounded in more fantasy than science, and dubbed “Star Wars” by critics, after the popular 1979 movie. To its skeptics, SDI seemed just as implausible as the movie’s plotline. Some members of the administration such as Richard Perle embraced the term; others thought it hindered the program even before its initial stages of research and development. John Lenczowski of the National Security Council recommended alternative nicknames for SDI, proposing substitutes for “Star Wars” such as “SHIELD” or “Sky Wall” or “Guardian System,” any name that signaled “that the SDI is the
functional equivalent of building a wall around your city to keep out the invaders.”  

Robert McFarlane like the idea, but other appellations failed to have the traction as the catchy “Star Wars.”

SDI was not a practical deterrent, but it was a useful tool in Reagan’s diplomatic arsenal when it came time to negotiate treaties with the USSR in 1986. Reagan officials dismissed suggestions that SDI would be a bargaining chip, but the President privately hoped SDI would cajole the Soviets into supporting arms agreements favorable to the U.S., as Nixon had tried to do with the anti-ballistic missile system (ABM).  

When Reagan met with Gorbachev in Reykjavik to discuss the reduction of nuclear weapons, SDI was used to force the Soviets to accommodate American proposals for a nuclear arms treaty. Gorbachev refused. Before agreeing to universal cuts in nuclear weapons, he demanded Reagan relegate SDI to a research and development stage, not an active program. Reagan stonewalled, declaring SDI non-negotiable.

At the time, Americans largely supported Reagan’s position. The Reagan administration promoted SDI as a defensive response to Soviet rearmament in the months before the summit. According to the administration, this was “the proper strategic context,” of the international situation with the Soviets. The selling of SDI accompanied impressions of a Soviet Union diligently expanding its military and nuclear programs. SDI was therefore a “deterrent” mechanism to counter Soviet expansionism, Reagan officials claimed. This image was accepted

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32 Untitled Handwritten Notes on Speech to Martin Marietta Employees, folder: Denver SDI 11/24/1987 (6), Box 355, White House Office of Speechwriting files: Research Office, RRPL.

by a public concerned over renewed tensions between the two powers. Local and national polls taken years before the Reykjavik summit showed increased support for missile defense following the public relations campaign. Sixty-eight percent of Americans believed Reagan should not compromise over SDI; only 20 percent thought it was beneficial for the interests of nuclear disarmament. In the defense-rich state of California, 70 percent of those polled “clearly supported the President’s ballistic missile defense initiative.” Indeed, public support for SDI was one of the reasons why the administration viewed the missile defense shield as “important” to American foreign policy.

SDI was conceived within the discourse of American national security, but it enhanced the fortunes of the Cold War economy even more than it contributed to American diplomacy. When Congress approved funding for SDI, upper-class suburban areas in the West, many that leaned toward conservative Republicans, benefited most. As the fortunes of SDI’s contractors rose, defense monies went disproportionately to suburbs outside Denver and Washington, D.C., regions with high property values and high incomes. The chief contractor for SDI was Martin Marietta, located in Waterton, a Denver suburb. At the end of the third quarter in 1987, Martin Marietta had net sales of $4.75 billion, and net earnings of $202 million, capital assets of $535 million, employed 11,397 in its Astronautics Group, 1,638 people in its Information & Communications Systems and 1,700 in Data Systems—a total of 14,735 employees. Martin Marietta’s headquarters in Denver also brought a large influx of revenue to the state. The company was withheld $20.6 million in Colorado taxes and paid 7.6 million in local property taxes.

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35 Strategic Defense Initiative Summary (attached to Memorandum for Robert C. McFarlane from Ron Lehman, June 11, 1984), folder: Strategic Defense Initiative 05/16/1984-06/15/1984, Box 106, Executive Secretariat, NSC Subject File, RRPL.
taxes, less than 1 percent but still a significant number from a single source. Martin Marietta’s fantastic financial success was a direct product of Cold War spending. Before the federal government directed the aerospace and defense industry’s expansion into Colorado, cities like Waterton were sparsely populated towns without a driving economic force. Like with many defense communities, these were cities invented by the federal government. National regulations stipulated that defense factories be built in isolated regions away from population centers. This spurred suburban construction to accommodate the influx of defense employees, creating high-tech Cold War defense communities populated by wealthy engineers and scientists. SDI also raised the stock prices of defense contractors. Investors bought up defense stocks in larger numbers during the first half of the 1980, as military stocks, The New York Times reported, were "in vogue."

SDI was a unique defense project, largely research-based rather than production-based. Unlike the manufacturing of Trident missiles or heavy aircraft carriers, large factories were not needed. With deindustrialization taking hold of American cities, even in Cold War communities, and SDI in a perpetual state of experimentation, there was little to manufacture. Political scientist Ann Markusen has argued that SDI represented the “tertiarization of the defense industries,” the

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36 Four components to the corporation included its Astronautics group in Colorado, Electronics & Missiles Group in Orlando, Florida, and its Information Systems Group based in Bethesda. The company’s activities in New Orleans dealt with Manned Space Systems. Martin Marietta also was located at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California and Cape Canaveral. The figures on Martin Marietta are from “General Information,” Denver SDI 11/24/1987 (S) folder, box 355, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (RRPL); “Colorado Property Values and Tax Trends, 1987-2006,” http://www.centerfortaxpolicy.org/reports/Colorado_Property_Values_and_Tax%20_Trends.pdf. Total property taxes collected in Colorado in 1987 were approximately 2.1 billion. Martin Marietta’s total percentage of this share came to 0.0361 percent. Considering that these figures were from one employer, this number is considerable.

37 This point is made in Joshua B. Freeman, American Empire: The Rise of a Global Power, the Democratic Revolution at Home, 1945-2000 (New York: Viking, 2012), 127. This point is also addressed in the first chapter of this dissertation.

age of a “new trend—the development of pure research complexes.”

SDI was indicative of how federal defense spending would function under a conservative President managing a post-industrial economy. SDI ushered in a high-tech and experimental model for defense contracting that was replicated by companies across the nation. In addition to Lockheed, other defense contactors, companies such as Rockwell, based in Southern California, transitioned to high-tech commercial electronics work after orders for its largest plane, the B-1 bomber, were cancelled in 1987. Though the company earned $12.3 billion in revenues, over 18,000 people were laid off. Rockwell CEO Robert Anderson wanted the company to work toward diversification of its industry, the oft-stated, but elusive goal of defense companies since the 1950s. But Rockwell struggled to make up its losses from the B-1 by bidding for future defense contracts. So did Lockheed when the C-5B plane was cancelled. The defense industry was just as dependent upon government contracts in the 1980s as it was in the 1950s.

The transformation in defense was also a corollary of Wall Street's wider, steady capture of the economy. In addition to the expanding defense sector, Reagan provided federal assistance in the form of subsidies, tax cuts, and other “nontradable” changes to the law governing real estate and finance. As Wall Street came to direct the course of economic development in the 1980s, the financial sector came to have greater input in other areas of the economy. As America’s industrial economy deteriorated, investment markets did not respond well to undiversified defense corporations dependent upon federal procurement to manufacture large equipment. After the slight boom in defense stocks faded, downsizing, hostile takeovers, and

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consolidated mergers and acquisitions threatened contractors who had not received an equal portion of funds from the defense buildup.

The decline in defense stocks most affected the Northeastern region of the Gunbelt. Fearing job losses, Jack Kemp wrote to Reagan asking him to prevent the acquisition of Grumman aerospace by LTV Corporation. Kemp was afraid the buyout would “lead to the liquidation of Grumman operations and the resultant loss of hundreds of jobs in New York.” The full weight of federal regulations and laws, including anti-trust laws and violations of federal statues regarding defense contracting, were impediments to any deal, Kemp implied. The preservation of Grumman would “insure the wellbeing of our national defense industrial base” and prevent disastrous “consequences for Grumman employees and shareholders, for New York aerospace workers and the state economy.” LTV dropped its takeover of Grumman in November 1981, but Grumman struggled on, until merging with Northrop in 1994. As major military electronics and defense companies were bought out or went bankrupt, Wall Street predicted the “takeover trend” would continue into the near future."43

SDI was also an issue that mobilized Gunbelt voters to support Reagan in forthcoming elections. During the 1984 campaign, Reagan official Jay Keyworth thought it was a “good idea” to follow Mike Schwartz’s suggestion to enlist local Republican voters to promote SDI. “We have, in the Republican Congressional candidates, a potentially effective grass-roots mechanism for making the case for SDI.”44 The Senate race between Representative Ken Kramer and Democrat Tim Wirth in Colorado put this strategy into action during the 1986 midterm elections. Kramer, an anti-government conservative Republican, ran on his record of promoting SDI in the

44 Memorandum for Jay Keyworth from Mike Schwartz, July 31, 1984, folder: SDI—Strategic Defense Initiative July-December 1984 [07/27/1984-08/16/1984], box 15, George Keyworth files, RRPL.
waning weeks of his campaign. He used SDI to further his image to as a job creator, boasting to a newspaper reporter about his role in getting the National Test Facility to open in Colorado Springs: responsible for developing a large share of the necessary equipment for SDI. Kramer said that the National Test Facility’s arrival was just one significant good to come out of SDI. He claimed SDI would bring 8,000 jobs to Colorado, at a time when the region suffered from persistent economic problems. The Democratic Wirth recognized the salience of SDI, and did not want to center his campaign on his opposition to the missile defense system. As his campaign manager said, “there are a lot of livelihoods riding on S.D.I., and we don’t want to seem anti-job.”

With Election Day nearing, Reagan appeared at a rally for Kramer, praising him for his stance on SDI. Kramer’s supporters cheered while anti-SDI demonstrators confronted Reagan with signs: “Keep Star Wars in the Movie Theaters.” SDI was, Reagan said, “America's insurance policy to protect us from accidents or some madman who might come along, as a Hitler did or a Qadhafi, or just in case the Soviets don't keep their side of a bargain.” Linking anti-government rhetoric to the local and international context of the Cold War, Reagan went on to say that Kramer “has proven crucial in our efforts to cut your taxes and get big government off your backs,” but was also “central in our efforts to rebuild the nation's defenses.” Reagan continued on to a discussion of SDI, saying that Kramer was an early and “strong supporter of our Strategic Defense Initiative. And he helped convince the administration to put the major research center that will be the brains of SDI right here in Colorado.” Kramer understood “our Strategic Defense Initiative will open the door to a new technological age. Just as America's space program created new jobs and industries, SDI could open whole new fields of technology

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and industry, providing jobs for thousands, as Ken said, right here in Colorado and improving the quality of life in America and around the world.”

Even with Reagan’s endorsement, Kramer lost the election. The jobs SDI brought to Colorado could not make up for employment losses in other areas of the state. Considering Colorado voters’ concerns over unemployment and Kramer’s reputation as a right-wing radical, the election was quite close—Wirth won by only 16,455 votes. In the 6th congressional district, home of Waterton and Martin Marietta, Kramer defeated Wirth by a near two to one margin, 104,359 to 53,384 votes. After Kramer’s loss, Reagan continued to turn to Coloradoans employed by SDI to promote his economic and defense policies. Approximately a year later after Kramer’s defeat, Reagan visited the Denver headquarters of Martin Marietta on November 24, 1987 to launch a public relations event for SDI. The NSC prepared drafts of Reagan’s speech to two thousand employees Martin Marietta employees, telling Reagan that he should make clear that SDI is “strengthening deterrence,” and to downplay arms control while emphasizing Soviet efforts to build their own version of SDI. American intelligence showed the Soviets spent 200 billion dollars in their budget “on strategic defense programs over the last 10 years, roughly what they’ve spent on offense,” versus America's $10 billion. Reagan should emphasize this point to workers, the NSC suggested. After Reagan toured the Martin Marietta facility and received updates on the Zenith Star (the program developing chemical lasers to be emitted from space), he took the podium, telling the scientists and engineers, “You are laboring to develop a defensive

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system that will change history. Once you’ve completed your work, the world will never be the same.”

But the election of George H.W. Bush, and the end of the Cold War, meant the end of SDI. Bush told Americans that SDI was unnecessary and the program was retooled and dismantled under Bill Clinton. In the final analysis, SDI accomplished little for American foreign policy, and did more harm than good for Reagan. The weapons system temporarily derailed a rapprochement between the superpowers that would have begun earlier in the decade. SDI was created with the means of foreign policy, but it functioned to serve the domestic ends of an austerity agenda. SDI was an expansive jobs program: a public works agency more than a deterrent to nuclear war. SDI employed the highly educated and affluent to build a missile defense system that had no feasible application to the current foreign policy environment. It reinforced class and regional tensions, steering federal benefits to an overwhelmingly white set of middle and upper-class elites. Forty years earlier, Truman had put unemployed members of the New Deal coalition (union members and the working-class) back to work through defense spending. Reagan now sought to do the same for his conservative constituents. Furthermore, SDI fulfilled the intentions of military Keynesianism, something Cold War Democrats pursued forty years ago. Containment was discarded in favor of “rollback,” but Reagan officials were governing within Cold War Democrats’ parameters of how to fight the Cold War.

SDI also reflected transformations in the political economy of defense. Defense had overwhelmingly benefited middle-class and upper-class Americans, but with the manufacturing base of the defense industry eroded, the Reagan administration provided a capstone to a thirty-

year process of de-industrialization. Industrial areas in the Northeast were largely left out of SDI contracts as specialized and specific localities in the West and Sunbelt took over. This new era for defense was felt with a force in Cold War communities suffering from unemployment. As defense communities mobilized to oppose job losses at the end of the Cold War, Democrats and Republicans in power were faced with the question of what the federal government’s responsibility was—if any—to help Americans who were put out of work by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Soviet communism.

The Political Economy of Peace

On December 8, 1987, Reagan met with Mikhail Gorbachev to sign the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) that eliminated the numbers of intercontinental ballistic missiles that carried nuclear warheads. Few of his supporters suspected Reagan would consider, let alone sign, a nuclear arms treaty with a Soviet head of state before 1987. The road to the INF treaty started at the Reykjavik summit in 1986. Days before the summit, Republican congressional representatives encouraged Reagan to retain suspicion of the Soviet Union and not fall into a discussion of the Soviet’s “arms control agenda” as the only “true cause of East-West tension is not armaments, but the totalitarian philosophy of the Soviet Union.” Where ten years ago Reagan had made the opposition to the Helsinki accords part of his campaign message, now the President praised them, and his supporters told him to mention to Gorbachev the point that the Soviet Union “continues to violate the modest human rights guarantees embodied in Helsinki.” 

Reagan did bring up human rights issues at Reykjavik, but it had little effect on the outcome of the talks. The Reykjavik summit failed to produce a new shift in Soviet-U.S.

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relations, but the meeting allowed Gorbachev and Reagan to develop a bourgeoning friendship and recognition for each other’s desire to reduce nuclear weapons, particularly after the Able Archer disaster. When it was announced that Gorbachev would visit Washington, D.C. to sign the INF treaty, the right was in stunned disbelief, thinking the President had committed treason to their cause. After the INF Treaty was signed, columnist George Will wrote that Reagan revealed his true colors as a follower of détente. Will was puzzled by what had transpired in the last few years because Reagan’s foreign policy “produced much surprise but little delight” among the New Right. As Reagan’s presidency was ending, the time was right “for conservatives to look back with bewilderment and ahead with trepidation.”

As Will’s comments reveal, despite close association with Reagan, the right was never completely satisfied with the President’s decisions, even before his personal diplomacy with Gorbachev. Disagreement first surfaced on a large basis in 1982, after the release of the Reagan budget and the President’s request for tax increases to make up for revenue lost in the 1981 tax cut. After the first hundred days, conservatives mourned the Reagan of the campaign trail. They were satisfied with the rhetoric, but at times upset with the policies themselves. Reagan campaigned on an austerity platform, but he was forced to compromise with Congress on federal spending. The Heritage Foundation complained that in 1982 that "Big Government continue[d] to grow.” Budget cuts were not enough to shrink government; “the big games in town—the Department of Energy and the Department of Education—still are operating full tilt, and success in other areas is primarily limited to cutting back on the size of budget increases.”

Direct-mail strategist Richard Viguerie warned members of the administration that if the right did not get its

52 Letter to William Rusher from Herb Berkowitz, August 17, 1982, folder 3, box 39, WRP.
way, “Our efforts on these cuts will make our Panama Canal treaty fight look small by comparison.”

That same year, members of the American Conservative Union, the Conservative Caucus, and National Defense Council complained that Reagan had not done enough to provide aid and diplomatic recognition to America’s allies, breaking his campaign promises for a more anti-communist foreign policy. The Conservative Caucus, the Eagle Forum, the Moral Majority, and the High Frontier urged Reagan to send needed arms so that Taiwan could prevent capitulation to China. As activist conservatives found the President modulating his foreign policy to political pressures, his luster wore. Richard D. Sellers from Montgomery, Alabama, a member of the Council on National Policy who contemplated running for Senate in 1984, told National Review publisher William Rusher that “Conservatives must start working even harder on these very important national survival issues, since we are losing: the nuclear freeze passed the House, the President’s proposed defense budget increase has been cut in half, and two House committees have voted to cut off covert aid intended to stop Communist expansion in Central America.” Sellers formed the “National Security Association” in Montgomery with the hope of raising $250,000 to make sure that no further steps were taken to counter conservatives’ foreign policy. Sellers wanted to enlist Rusher’s “financial help to reverse the national security defeats we are now suffering.”

Cold Warriors had reservations about Reagan’s foreign policy throughout his two terms. Democratic and Republican hawks particularly questioned Reagan’s fortitude in dealing with

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53 The Viguerie Company, folder: Conservative Groups (1 of 4), OA9077, Morton Blackwell files, RRPL.
54 Letter to Ronald Reagan from Don Todd, July 2, 1982, F0003-02, file 086784, WHORM, Subject File, RRPL.
nuclear freeze and his commitment to overtaking the Soviet Union in military might. A March 1982 pamphlet published by the Committee on the Present Danger asked, *Is the Reagan Defense Program Adequate?* It was not. “The administration’s defense program is a minimal one. It will not halt the unfavorable trends in the U.S.-Soviet military balance, let alone reverse them.”57 The organization’s members fought over its analysis of the Soviet threat, as disagreements mounted between those members in the administration and those without. Responding to a June 20, 1984 pamphlet critical of Reagan’s defense modernization, Undersecretary of Defense Richard Perle told Charls Walker of the CPD that “the draft gives the Administration too little credit for some of the strategic force improvements we have inaugurated, even granting the fact that some of those forces will not enter the inventory for another few years.”58 The CPD also suffered from self-inflicted wounds in the mid-1980s, as disagreements between the left and right wings of the organization made it difficult for the movement to press forward on defense. According to historian Justin Vaïsse, the main controversy was over “guns and butter” with the “Democrats and trade unionists among them” unwilling “to reduce other public spending (which Reagan had already cut drastically), ...”59 The American Security Council (ASC) jumped at the chance “to capitalize on the strong defense and foreign affairs mandate of this administration,” encouraging Reagan to update America’s defense capabilities by building new technological defense projects instead of competing with the Soviet Union through outdated military equipment. Members of the ASC, Veterans of Foreign Wars, College Republicans, and the Reserve Officers Association recommended the President meet with foreign anti-communist leaders, too, such as the Angola

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57 *Is The Reagan Defense Program Adequate?,* Defense and the Deficit, March 8 1985 folder, Box 171, Committee on the Present Danger papers, Hoover Institution of War, Peace, and Revolution, Stanford University, Stanford, California (CPDP).
59 Ibid.
UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi. Savimbi was treated to lunch by ASC in December 1981 and was a guest of honor at a Heritage Foundation reception. The events were meant to illustrate the lengths Reagan would go to “resisting the expansion of Soviet influence,” evident in the intervention in Grenada and Reagan’s support for the Sandinistas in El Salvador. 60

Reagan did not, however, feel he had to accommodate his right-wing base on all national defense matters. In his second term, Reagan collaborated with Gorbachev to reduce tensions between the two superpowers to the chagrin of his conservative backers. The right’s fears aside, diplomatic negotiations between Reagan and Gorbachev failed to translate to a complete “reversal” of Reagan’s approach to American foreign relations and defense spending. Reagan did not think the INF treaty and the subsequent reduction of nuclear weapons were opportunities to reduce the defense budget. On the contrary, Reagan still wanted increases in the size of the defense budget to be paid for by cutting social programs. International diplomacy between the United States and the Soviet Union did not mean a reevaluation of American budgetary requirements for defense. In budget negotiations on November 30, 1987, one week before the signing of the INF treaty, Reagan said that “our team [went] back to the bargaining table twice for better deals, one time to get a billion dollars more from entitlement spending, another to get revenue increases down to the kind I called for in the budget” which he outlined earlier in the year. The federal deficit, Reagan insisted, was not due to the decline in revenue taken in by federal coffers, as the “cuts in tax rates aren’t part of the deficit problem. They’re part of the solution. Our tax rate cuts haven’t lowered revenues one bit; in fact, just as we predicted, cutting tax rates produced a healthy, expanding, vibrant economy that enlarged tax revenues.” The new

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budget projections left even more for defense “with about $3-1/2 billion more in defense outlays than last year,” as Reagan touted the new defense programs that would lead to advances in military weaponry. Simply because there was talk of arms agreements between the United States and Soviet Union it was no time to be cutting defense programs that “have given us bargaining leverage,” and on top of that, “with negotiated missile reductions coming, we will need even more urgently a strong conventional force to deter the Soviet Union’s massive conventional force.”\textsuperscript{61} Reagan (and a Democratic-controlled Congress) approved a defense budget of $304 billion dollars for the fiscal year 1989, a more than fifty billion dollar increase in the past four years.\textsuperscript{62}

But large defense reductions did occur after the Berlin Wall came crumbling down in 1989. With the Cold War’s end nigh, the companies and workers in defense communities were thrown into a state of panic, concerned for their economic future. Leslie Gelb of \textit{The New York Times} wrote that “with the demise of the Soviet Union, a battle is shaping up for the soul of the nation, and the defense budget now more than ever will be at the center.”\textsuperscript{63} Adding to the stress among the members of the military-industrial complex was that the Reagan years did not mean an automatic boost to all regions in the Gunbelt. Major defense companies like Fairchild Industries in Nassau County, Long Island went bankrupt. By the end of the 1980s, Fairchild’s financial portfolio was so poor that when the company did not win a contract for the T-46A jet, executives made the decision to lay off 2,500 employees. The competition for the T-46A contract went to Cessna Manufacturing Company in Wichita, Kansas (because of the lobbying efforts of Republican Senator Bob Dole) and took the fate of Fairchild with it. By the end of the year,

Fairchild closed its doors. Once again, the failure to diversify left the company dependent upon the Cold War. Without it, the company could not thrive. The loss of Fairchild was a loss for all of Nassau County. It meant declining profits for the various subcontractors to Fairchild, the suppliers of Fairchild’s equipment, and even the closing of restaurants who supplied the workers with their lunches and coffees. Democrat Thomas Downey, who represented Suffolk County and was a leading voice against Reagan’s foreign policy in the House of Representatives, as well as a supporter of arms control and the nuclear freeze movement, nevertheless felt bound to the Cold War interests in his district.\footnote{On Downey, see Robert David Johnson, Congress and the Cold War (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chapter 7. In conducting interviews with Johnson, Downey admitted to his “hypocrisy” toward defense spending. Like many anti-militarist congressional representatives who came out of the 1970s, Downey still had to confront the reality of the military-industrial complex and the demands it exerted on citizens who depended upon it. See Johnson, Congress and the Cold War, 233.} Downey pronounced Fairchild’s collapse as “a human tragedy of the first order. Not only are we losing the manufacturing jobs—jewels in any economy—but we also stand to lose the jobs of all the contractors, vendors, and others who have depended on the factory.” Wall Street fund managers, ever more powerful, believed that companies like Fairchild could not survive with “the current condition of the defense budget” and the “politics involved” of defense contracting.\footnote{“2,500 to Lose Jobs in L.I. Plant as U.S. Ends Jet Contract,” New York Times, March 14, 1987.}

Fairchild was not the only defense contractor in Long Island that endured defense cutbacks. At one point in its history, Grumman employed 36,000 employees; by 1991, it had only 13,000. Shortly before merging with Northrop, Grumman executives touted their diversification efforts, saying that the company’s losses were “not a result of what has happened with perestroika” and predicted no need for mass layoffs down the road. They were wrong. One year after their prediction, Grumman laid off 1,400 workers in Long Island, 1,900 throughout its workforce. The defense economy in Long Island, once employing more than fifty percent of the
area’s work force, by 1988 was responsible for only twenty five percent of the jobs in the region.\textsuperscript{66}

Economists thought a variety of other high-tech areas such as biotechnology would replace the defense economy in Cold War communities. More often, however, the low-wage service industry supplanted the defense economy after the Cold War. The decline of the defense industry in Long Island made tax rates, public school spending and other areas of local government a growing concern to its residents. A drop in defense, combined with the downturn in the stock market after it crashed in 1988 following the Savings and Loan scandals, made Long Island residents search to make up for lost revenue. Rising tax rates, the inability to find “affordable housing,” and cutting “the cost of public education” were now high on the list of concerns among business leaders and residents of the area.\textsuperscript{67} Suburban Long Island’s crippling reliance on the Cold War economy led its residents to search for solutions to the downsizing of defense, with little answers. With jobs disappearing and the local manufacturing base wearing down, the problem of deficits and budgets became more pressing than ever before in the region’s postwar history.

Cold War communities in the Northeast were hit hardest by the end of the Cold War. Job losses in defense at the end of Reagan’s presidency culminated a process of layoffs in the Northeastern Gunbelt that began in the 1970s. In Southern Connecticut as well as Long Island, workers prepared for job losses after 1989. President of UNC Naval Products (based in Montville, Connecticut), Bruce Andrews, told the House committee on Economic Stabilization


that federal help must be provided for his employees who were “veterans of the cold war.” Republican representative (and later governor) of Connecticut, John G. Rowland, worked with UNC employees to get them another contract after they lost one building a Navy reactor to Babcox & Wilcox, based in Lynchburg, Virginia. Rowland appeared to be weary of the impact global peace had on workers in his state as unemployment was “the other side of the peace dividend.” Workers at UNC organized the S.O.S. (Save Our State) Committee that coordinated with “federal officials to help find Government contacts to replace the defense work at UNC and other Connecticut companies.”

The Sunbelt also suffered from the “peace dividend,” although no major companies went out of business. Lockheed Aircraft laid off 7,000 employees in Southern California; McDonnell Douglas did the same to its workers, reducing its ranks by 6,000 employees. Defense companies in the Midwest also felt compelled to lay off employees. Executives at General Dynamics in St. Louis, which made Trident submarines, talked in hushed whispers about peace, calling it “the P-word.” While St. Louis rapidly worked to make up for the losses in defense (at a much better rate than other parts of the Gunbelt), defense workers were resentful at the lack of government help for its workers. Former employees of McDonnell Douglas in St. Louis drew comparisons between unemployed autoworkers with strong unions and themselves, who saw their benefits packages run out after six months. McDonnell Douglas employee Frank Hutson was angry that the government did nothing for defense workers. “If you have car makers that give their employees one, two, three years at 85 percent of their salaries, then I feel that McDonnell Douglas should have done the same thing.” But if the company couldn’t provide comparable

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packages alone, “then the Government should have stepped in and helped.”70 The Governor of Ohio too lamented “the dark side of the peace dividend” as détente meant layoff notices for thousands of Ohioans. Like their colleagues in St. Louis, defense workers in Ohio and California were worried about how a transition to a peacetime economy would occur without disrupting their livelihoods. Southern Californians were skeptical of federal programs that employed them on non-defense projects to build mass transit systems. While “beating swords into plowshares” after the Berlin Wall was “a nice theory” it was “not so easily translated into reality.”71

Cutbacks in defense on a dramatic scale once again made defense workers and their political representatives into citizen lobbyists for the Cold War. The new era of international relations after 1989 offered a crisis in the economic and political fortunes of many Americans, who then fought to maintain the structure of the national security state beyond the Cold War. The local constituents of the Cold War kept militarization a distinct feature of American foreign policy, as they argued that the federal government had a commitment to their financial well-being. Having made them dependent upon the military-industrial complex, the federal government could not discard them and their communities when the international environment did not align with the interests of Cold War workers.

Grassroots activists on the left realized the potential trouble local politics had for scaling back the defense economy. The end of the Cold War made the push for economic conversion of defense communities to non-defense work a primary issue for the anti-Cold War left and nuclear freeze activists. After it was defeated in Congress, the freeze campaign did not retreat, but regrouped to deal with the social effects of the Cold War in local areas. The fall of the Eastern bloc of Soviet states provided momentum for anti-nuclear activists to challenge the need for a

national security state. Instead of protesting in the streets of New York City, the nuclear freeze movement reformed to sever the cord between defense monies and Gunbelt towns. Conversion was the way to disarmament, and congressional representatives should not be “held hostage to continue the arms race as a condition of supplying jobs and money to their constituencies.”

Nuclear freeze activists and anti-militarist liberals worked together to create conversion programs to reemploy workers in the name of peace. Kevin Bean, Chairman of the Economic Conversion Task Force of the Connecticut Campaign for a U.S.-U.S.S.R. Nuclear Arms Freeze, rightly stated that once skilled defense workers were laid off, their high-skilled jobs were replaced by the low-wage service sector. “Low-paying service jobs are the only alternatives for many laid-off defense workers whose skills are mismatched with the limited number of civilian jobs that would pay comparable to their previous jobs in defense facilities.” Bean grounded conversion in the rhetoric of economic efficiency, trying perhaps to win Republican fiscal hawks to his side. Jobs in defense were inherently unstable, and companies needed to stop going from contract to contract to survive, he suggested. The “permanent war economy” he said, cost the nation increases in productivity, interfered in the market economy, and was inefficient in creating jobs compared to the private sector. Globalization and outsourcing contributed to the problem too as defense dollars that went to Connecticut “go right back out to out-of-state-subsidies, vendors in the Sun Belt or the third world and coproduction setups overseas in order to cash in on cheaper labor, tax breaks, and to widen Congressional influence.” If the market did not have to compete with the federally subsidized defense sector, there would be more jobs available for Connecticut’s residents.

The Reagan administration, the military, and defense industry workers resisted conversion to non-defense labor. The Reagan administration seemed to think conversion was unimportant, as it slashed federal funds to the Economic Development Administration, the federal organization responsible for conversion plans. As cuts appeared an inevitable reality, military lobbyists worked overtime on Capitol Hill, pushing for their specific companies and programs to remain in the defense budget. Resistance to conversion came from a range of political groups who would normally be at odds with one another on most domestic and foreign policy issues, but not on defense spending. A coalition of Democrats, Republicans, labor unions, and business interests colluded to stop defense cuts and conversion, wanting to preserve the American defense apparatus for profits and employment, and keep defense communities happy and voting for incumbent candidates. Right-leaning Republican Curt Weldon from Pennsylvania defended the V-22 Osprey helicopter program that employed 600 workers at a Boeing plant under his jurisdiction. To Weldon, the Osprey was “not a pork program. I believe in the technology.” In defending the Osprey, Weldon found company with the United Auto Workers (UAW) who feared that its 8,000 members would be out of work if the Osprey were defunded. When the union’s close association with Boeing and other contractors for the Osprey was pointed out to the UAW’s Dirk Warden, he admitted that the two groups made strange bedfellows. Warden said he did not “want to leave the impression that we’re in lockstep with [Boeing management]. But they can talk to some people we can’t talk to and vice versa.”

Some Republicans in the George H.W. Bush administration also supported reductions to the defense budget. The left wanted to cut drastically the defense budget to meet social needs, but conservative Republicans felt that post-Cold War American foreign policy had to be

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redesigned to fight new threats. American military power was necessary; fighting the Cold War was not. Hawks from the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administration such as Richard Perle, Dick Cheney, and Fred Iklé pushed for reductions in traditional Cold War weapons, arguing that stockpiling nuclear weapons was an anachronistic strategy to deal with an obsolete threat. But as Secretary of Defense under Bush, Cheney vacillated on defense cuts. On June 12, 1991, Cheney testified before Congress to say that more defense cuts would damage America’s strength in the world, but said that specific helicopters and airplanes needed to be scrapped and replaced. Perle was sympathetic to Cheney’s statements on defense and his call for cutting certain defense programs. He departed from character when he said that cuts to America’s nuclear arsenal could be “probably to half the levels now contemplated. We have other requirements for our resources, even within the military, and I do not like to see us buy more than we need.”

Fred Iklé, in the *National Review* of all places, said that the United States could afford to reduce its Cold War arsenal even further than the original estimates offered by the Bush administration. Right-wing libertarians joined the ranks of men like Perle, Cheney, and Iklé. Think tanks like the Heritage Foundation wrote reports with the thesis that the United States could save money by eliminating defense programs that had no purpose, including the C-17 Cargo plane made by McDonnell Douglas. In response to the Heritage Foundation report, McDonnell Douglas promptly cut off its funding to the organization. After giving the Heritage Foundation $30,000 dollars in 1989, the defense contractor refused to give a grant to the organization in 1990.

Politicians like Republican Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania and Democrat Daniel K. Inouye from Hawaii also wanted to keep defense programs in their districts intact. Specter, like his Republican colleague in the House, Curt Weldon, worried about the cancellation of the V-22 Osprey helicopter.

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Specter argued there was “a predisposition against the V-22 and a rather conclusive one on the part of the Department of Defense.”

The financial power of defense industrialists, defense labor, and certain labor unions made the difference in keeping the national security state alive when it was questioned by current and former policy makers in the Reagan and Bush administrations. But opposition to defense cuts was selective among the right. Most movement conservatives were critical of defense cuts to reduce the size of the military, and cautioned hasty responses to the geopolitical consequences of the Soviet Union’s fall—which included the disbanding of the national security state and the Cold War economy. With communism in retreat, the right thought it was time to use the savings on the defense budget for cutting tax rates. Experts in defense within the Heritage Foundation argued that now was a time for the government to reroute taxpayer dollars that would have been used on defense to fund school vouchers or marriage tax credits. The end of the Cold War was another means to restore the market as a solution to what ails the country, for “a peace dividend could fund innovative market solutions to pressing social and economic problems.” After close to fifty years, the right recognized that “today’s Big Government is the result not so much of the New Deal as of the massive power assembled in Washington to wage World War II and the cold war” and are now able to focus on domestic issues. As members of Congress, defense executives, and Cold War workers demanded federal bailouts for a weakened defense industry, activist conservatives saw opportunities for remaking tax and social welfare policy to correspond to the changing dynamics of world politics following the fall of the Soviet empire. The right should welcome the new era in U.S. foreign relations, said Heritage Foundation member Burton Yale Pines, as the “peace dividend” can be important “to conservatives for what it can do for

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their movement.” The end of the Cold War provided opportunities for the right to “demand a
dollar-for-dollar domestic cut for every Pentagon dollar cut” by anti-militarist liberals.\textsuperscript{79}

These conservative proposals for tax cuts, deficit reduction and less government
intervention (on non-defense matters) became more attractive to towns dependent upon the
military economy — even though residents of defense communities still requested more
government involvement in the form of defense contracts. The remaining years of the 1980s
offered Cold War communities pessimism about the role of the federal government and its ability
to come to the aid of Americans in times of economic crisis. The end of the Cold War seemed to
be a reason why the country slipped into a recession in the 1990s, as defense companies had
difficulty selling their products to former markets at home and abroad, affecting the economy as
a whole.\textsuperscript{80} While economists assured Americans that the country would recover, for Americans
in defense communities, any recovery was insufficient if it did not restore the jobs lost to peace.

Conclusion

During his administration from 1981 to 1989, Ronald Reagan affirmed the endurance of
the Cold War state in American political culture and its continued influence on the economic
structure of American foreign policy. Diplomacy with the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold
War during the Reagan-Bush years allowed Republicans to make the federal state an agent of
inequality, as increased defense spending and tax cuts for the wealthy meant gains for upper-
class suburban defense communities—particularly ones located in Republican strongholds.
While Reagan’s policies were a product of his conservative agenda, his administration was far

\textsuperscript{80} “Economy Expected to Absorb Military Spending Cuts,” \textit{New York Times}, April 15, 1990. The article noted that
companies like General Dynamics in 1990 tried “to sell tanks to Egypt—but with the easing of East-West tensions
the overseas market is shrinking.”
from an unconditional victory for the right. Reagan officials confronted detractors and opponents at both the grassroots and leadership levels that curtailed the more motivated right-wing defense hawks within the Reagan administration. While the context of international affairs favored a return to militarism and market forces to fix global strife, anti-militarism existed during the 1980s and was even appropriated by former members of the Reagan and Bush administrations. When confronted with the remains of Cold War liberalism and the political economy of the Cold War, anti-militarism offered Americans a way out of their dependency on the Cold War that was rejected by the elements of the Cold War coalition. Democrats and Republicans in power beholden to the national security state inadvertently condoned Reagan’s foreign policy of “peace through strength” by defending the military programs that others wanted to cut. When congressional anti-militarists were therefore presented with the advantageous moment to drastically abate the growth of the Cold War state after 1989, they fell victim to the same constituent pressures they had been faced with for over forty years, leaving the Cold War coalition in a position to continue influencing American domestic and foreign policy after the Cold War’s demise.

Nevertheless, the limits to Reagan’s defense buildup reveal how the postmortem praise given to Reagan by conservatives obscures the important gains made by the left during the 1980s as well as the contentious and complicated reality of the New Right’s relationship to Reagan. Sycophantic praise for Reagan’s handling of the Cold War following the demise of global communism reinforced the cultural and political justifications for the national security state. In the minds of conservatives, Reagan singlehandedly ended the Cold War through massive military spending—and the right had therefore been correct about the need for a large defense structure. Once “New Democrats” took over the Presidency and the Congress in the 1990s,
however, this image of the Reagan legacy went unchallenged, and Democrats came to view the national security state as an unfortunate material requirement to preserve American military power abroad.

The end of the Cold War also made many Americans in defense communities disenchanted with government. Feeling burdened with high taxes and the increased costs of living after the defense industry downsized, middle-class and blue-collar defense workers believed they had been abandoned by the federal government. Nassau and Suffolk County, Long Island never fully recovered from the peace dividend. The area became a haven for wealthy vacationers and commuters to Manhattan, but the local economy was typical of many post-industrial towns. While the region was touted by the Wall Street Journal as an “unlikely jobs engine,” after the Great Recession of 2008, the paper acknowledged that half of the over 30,000 jobs created in Long Island “were in low-wage industries like retail and restaurants” that catered to tourists. The high paying “manufacturing and defense industry jobs that once defined the island aren’t likely to return after being trimmed during the most recent recession.” Indeed, Northrop Grumman’s workforce in Long Island went from 22,550 workers in the 1980s to 550 in 2013.81

The realization by Long Island officials that the “defense pie is shrinking” after the Cold War meant heightened attention to rising spending and tax rates. In austere times, increases in local and federal taxes created upheaval amongst defense communities unaccustomed to such harsh recessions. Poor economic conditions (unemployment, low wages) made Cold War communities like Nassau and Suffolk County favor proposals for reducing taxes and eliminating the size of government. Indeed, the cuts in the defense brought local Long Island politicians like

Republican county executive Thomas Gulotta of Nassau County to plea with state officials to alleviate the county’s spending obligations, asking New York Governor Mario Cuomo to not “shift more of the burden onto the shoulders of local government, our taxpayers, and our home owners.” State and federal officials had seemingly abandoned the defense community after the Cold War, thus leaving its residents at the mercy of the unemployment line and the impersonal forces of the market. More than the achievements of movement conservatives, the fall of the Cold War economy made Americans who depended on it favor conservative ideas and policies, even while requesting more federal spending on national defense to aid their communities.
Two years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, President Bill Clinton saw an opportunity to eliminate the needless remnants of the Cold War. Clinton viewed military cuts as part of the puzzle of deficit reduction. The Cold War was over, and Clinton reasonably concluded that stockpiles of nuclear weapons, military installations, and high-tech experimental weaponry were not strategically valuable to the United States, but instead, were a burden on the nation’s finances. During the 1992 presidential campaign, Clinton promised to cut George H. W. Bush’s defense budget by sixty billion dollars, and once elected, he ordered the Department of Defense to conduct a comprehensive examination of all defense outlays.\footnote{“Defense Time Bomb,” \textit{New York Times}, January 28, 1994.}

When that review was complete, Clinton proposed a multipronged approach to trimming the Cold War economy, asking for the closure of military bases, the retraining of defense workers to civilian work, and cuts to expensive technological programs favored by conservatives and Republicans, including the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and the B-1 bomber. Far from radical, Clinton’s first defense budget wanted to reduce military expenditures by fourteen billion dollars over the previous year to adjust the United States to the new strategic and international post-Cold War environment. Doing away with the political economy of defense was not on Clinton’s agenda—while opposed to a massive defense budget, he was not anti-defense. But when Clinton’s Secretary of Defense Lee Aspin announced in March a plan to eliminate at least thirty one military bases across the country, members of Congress with military bases in their districts denounced the cuts. Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein was deeply disturbed by the “real problems” posed to defense workers in her state of California who were victims of the cutbacks, which Feinstein said she had “just begun to fight.” Her colleague from South Carolina,
Democrat Ernest F. Hollings, said that the “base closure lists clobbers Charleston” and vowed to wage “a unified front to keep the Navy in South Carolina.” Clinton assured his fellow Democrats in Congress that base closures would not eliminate all positions, and the federal government would provide at least 15 billion dollars in aid money to Cold War communities adversely affected by the changes. Clinton believed the market would adjust to the new defense economy.2 “The private sector is the engine of lasting economic growth in our system, and therefore our plan must help our companies make these transitions, to compete and to win,” Clinton said.3

Clinton’s pro-market rhetoric failed to convince Republicans with military bases in their districts and states to back his defense program. Arizona Republican John McCain said it was “unconscionable” for Clinton to have “politicized the process in this fashion.” Republican Alphonse D’Amato swore he would “fight tooth and nail” to ensure the Staten Island Home Port stayed open.4 As plans for base closures and mergers went forward during the 1990s, Republican from Missouri (and later member of the Heritage Foundation) Senator Jim Talent worked to save civilian Army workers from being relocated from St. Louis to Huntsville, Alabama. In didactical language, Talent claimed that because the federal government was ineffective in both creating jobs and liquidating them, employees in the fields of engineering and aviation had to remain in St. Louis. In Talent’s view, “the problem is that the government doesn’t downsize efficiently either.”5 Free-market ideologues (and those Republicans who were safe from the closure process) split with members of Congress who argued against the realignment of the military bases. Texas Representative Dick Armey, whose district escaped defense cuts and budget

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closures in 1993 believed “the process is never easy for members of Congress with bases in their districts,” but promised that better times would come afterward.⁶

Post-Cold War workers also felt conversion was a distant possibility, that defense cuts would take their jobs without another waiting for them. Diane Lester, a bookkeeper for the Navy, struggled to support her two children on just one income. Lester said that she already “had to talk to my parents about taking in my kids, because I don’t know what I am going to do for income” without federal aid to dislocated defense workers. Lester’s colleagues shared her cynicism. Larry Wagner, a middle-aged mechanic who worked on jet engines near Oakland, distrusted the federal government to provide help. “All we’re going to hear is appeasement—promises that aren’t going to be fulfilled,” said Wagner. The pall of failed attempts at conversion was far too familiar to defense workers. With abounding job losses in an age of austerity, the economic security of defense employees was that more fragile.⁷

Mounting and unrelenting opposition to the base closures overwhelmed Clinton. Eliminating bases rallied defense communities as the administration received complaints from the “bottom up” over the impact the base closings would have on civilian jobs and the financial health of the middle-class in affected areas. Letters from residents residing on or near military bases poured into members of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, asking them to take their hometown off their list. Grassroots lobbyists summoned a variety of reasons lawmakers should save military bases: national security being chief among them. The Cold War was over, but the need for preponderant American power was continual. Miriam M. Mills from Nash, Texas wrote that the Red River Army Depot (RRAD) (Texarkana’s major employer) should stay open because the United States “is not at peace and never will be. The threat will

always be there. The wall may be down but there are still communists and terrorists.” The RRAD has served the country well against its enemies “and never let our military down.”

Residents of New Mexico signed a petition in support of Kirtland Air Force Base saying it had “contributed to our strong deterrent posture throughout the Cold War years and visibly demonstrates its worth during Desert Storm.” Defense communities even argued that the world was less safe without the Soviet Union. One woman who wanted to keep the Long Beach Naval Shipyard in California open “for its military and strategic value” said she did “not feel safe from war in today’s world even if the cold war is over. I remember Pearl Harbor and I pray we have learned a little over the years and do not put all our ships in one area.”

Clinton proceeded with the military base closures, but following the uprising among defense workers and members of the United States military, they were not as extensive as originally planned. Schedules for base closings were put off or delayed after 1995, pleasing the Republican right who called for higher defense spending under the “Contract for America” led by Newt Gingrich. The New York Times reported that delayed base closures “would spare many communities economic turmoil,” but would unnecessarily add to the defense budget as the United States military was “keeping open more bases, depots, shipyards and laboratories than the shrinking post-Cold War military needs.”

Concern for the national deficit, so paramount in the 1992 election, was less important within the debate over national defense spending. When

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McGuire Air Force Base in Wrightstown, New Jersey was taken off the closure list, it was saved from being “a ghost town.” Wrightstown now expected to see rising numbers in its workforce and overall property rates. Marjorie Stine, a retired Air Force sergeant who relocated to Wrightstown after moving from Philadelphia when the naval yard went under in the city, was relieved she no longer had to experience the feeling of “pins and needles waiting for the axe to fall.”

International events also informed the staying power of the Cold War economy. With small-scale “humanitarian” wars breaking out in Somalia and Bosnia, and the administration’s widened effort to target Islamic terrorism in the Middle East, calls for heightened military preparedness came surging back. Republicans now lined up to defend the defense budget believing the “example of Kosovo reminds us that warfare in the 21st century will demand the deployment over greater distances from airfields and ports at home.”

The moment where it seemed possible to begin “dismantling” the political economy of the Cold War was therefore all too brief. The inability of the United States to relinquish its attachments to the Cold War economy contributed to the rise of what historian Andrew Bacevich has called the “new American militarism.” As resistance against defense cuts carried on into the 1990s, a series of foreign policy events fortuitously justified the domestic commitment to the Cold War state. When the Berlin Wall fell and the threat of global war dissipated, policymakers could wield American power without fear of nuclear annihilation, giving the U.S. greater advantage in policing international affairs. The massive military arsenal the United States accumulated throughout the Cold War was now necessary precisely because no nation rivaled the U.S. in its military strength. In a unipolar world, American power presided over global

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conflicts with fewer restraints. The American victory over communism also gave the national security state new symbolism. With the Soviet Union supposedly gone bankrupt trying to outspend the U.S. on defense (as was often repeated by right-wing followers of Reagan), the national security state represented the triumph of good over evil; the global struggle against communism another benchmark in the nation’s ongoing rise to greatness. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 intensified these feelings and fortified the national security state in American culture. The coordinated assault by the terrorist group Al Qaeda on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon awakened Americans to the continued instability of global politics and the numerous and seemingly unpredictable threats the United States still faced after the Cold War. Indeed, the continued existence of the Cold War defense apparatus, combined with the absence of a geopolitical counterpart to American power, has made the military option attractive to policymakers looking to eliminate not only the perpetrators of terrorist acts, but also the overarching ideologies and material conditions that fuel Islamic terrorism.

The ways the United States prosecuted and fought the “War on Terror” during the presidency of George W. Bush prove that while the Cold War is gone, the legacy of militarization during that fifty-year conflict continues to influence the American right. In responding to the 9/11 attacks, Bush outspent Clinton on defense (with an average growth rate of 5.7 each year of his presidency) and expanded the network of federal agencies dealing with foreign policy matters such as the Department of Homeland Security, whose responsibilities included securing America’s borders and warning Americans of impending terrorist attacks. Bush also increased the size of the “surveillance state,” signing the Patriot Act that allowed the federal government greater intrusion and involvement in the privacy of Americans under the auspices of anti-terrorism. Under Bush, like Presidents before him, defense served a military,
international, and social purpose. When he passed the 2002 National Defense Authorization Act, Bush lauded the legislation for establishing a “substantial and well-deserved increase in basic [military] pay” that also provided “improved educational opportunities as an incentive to reenlist, and more resources to improve military housing.” Moreover, the legislation enhanced “job training and education opportunities for military spouses and access for home-schooled children of military families to facilities and programs of Department of Defense dependent schools.”  

Earmarking these programs as “defense” gave Bush and his fellow Republicans the semantic leeway to continue their deficit spending without attention to the ongoing costs to the federal government.

In growing the national defense budget, Bush appealed to a culture of anti-terrorism in the United States, claiming the threat of Al Qaeda was not just a military one, but cultural. Bush was careful not to say the United States was at war with Islam, but he often juxtaposed American values against the nihilist ideologies offered by the terrorists. After 9/11, anti-terrorism became the substitute for anti-communism. As Cold War liberals did in building the national security state in the 1940s, Bush demanded more defense monies and the enhancement of America’s military to defeat another abstract, yet imminent threat to the United States. Indeed, the ominous threat of terrorism informed the run-up to the Iraq War. Couched as another battle within the war against Al Qaeda, Bush faced little dissension from anti-statist Republicans when he sent the United States into war against Saddam Hussein. Republicans also authorized tax cuts along with military spending increases during the years of the Iraq War, enlarging the federal deficit even further. Again, the right found little wrong with Bush’s governance. Human Events praised Bush’s big-government policies, citing former Reagan Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger

who said the 9/11 attacks proved that Clinton was misguided in cutting the military budget, claiming he had weakened U.S. defense capabilities to pursue terrorists. The war on terrorism demonstrated “there is no peace dividend. The world’s remaining superpower cannot run its military on the cheap.”

But national security did not always unify the right. The politics and economics of U.S. foreign policy continue to create strife between the deficit-reducing, government-downsizing purists within the Republican Party and those officials with connections or affinities to the defense economy or the national security state. Libertarian Republicans like Texas representative Ron Paul, for example, have strongly criticized the national security state and American foreign policy in general. In arguing for federal downsizing, Paul has repeatedly said the economic capacity of America’s military must be significantly reduced. Paul has also come out against American intervention in the Middle East, claiming that the United States’ involvement in the region “provides us with an excuse to keep the military-industrial complex active.”

Paul, however, remains a minority in a Republican Party dominated by defense hawks. Indeed, Republicans rushed to defend the defense economy during the showdown over the budget “sequester” in early 2013. The result of the failed budget “supercommittee” negotiations, the “sequester” of 500 billion dollars in military spending threatened defense jobs from Alaska to New Hampshire. In Maine, near the Portsmouth Naval Yard, defense workers did not “care which side caused Washington’s latest crisis,” they worried how to feed their families. Feeling alienated from government, shipyard worker “Butch” Huntley wondered how he was going to pay his wife’s medical bills if he lost his job. "Both sides put us here," complained Huntley, believing “Congress doesn’t look at the individual. They just look at the bottom line.”

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co-workers said he and his family “basically put the American dream on hold” because of the poor economy. Like other Americans, defense workers were angered by the intransigence of congressional ideologues, and placed considerable blame on national politicians for their failure to prevent possible defense cuts. During the “sequester,” anti-statist Republicans were thwarted by the truism that all politics are local, even ones involving national security. In 2013, Republican Representative from Virginia, Scott Rigell, had an eighty percent lifetime voting record from the American Conservative Union, but also had the Newport News Shipyard in his district. When the sequester threatened to layoff a portion of the 21,000 employees at the Newport News that made nuclear aircraft carriers, Rigell joined a minority of House Republicans in breaking with the anti-tax, anti-statist wings of his Party to try to compromise with Democrats and spare the shipyard from cuts. Any budget without revenue increases was not “a wise position and I don’t hold that value,” Rigell now said in order to keep Newport News safe from the budget axe.

The “problem” of Cold War militarism was one that afflicted Democrats and liberals as well. The apocalyptic anti-communist rhetoric employed by Cold War liberals to justify the defense buildup during the early Cold War was fodder for the American right. Indeed, when Cold War Democrats formulated a grand strategy to confront communism through military and economic containment, few imagined the national security state becoming a problem for New Deal liberalism. Dire warnings by the authors of NSC-68 for more defense spending made the appearance of military power limitless. Like economic growth, there were no set boundaries to militarization—increased defense spending was only a positive good for the nation. Cold War

liberals argued that the nation was capable of handling economic militarization without lasting consequences to its democratic foundations. These premises went unchallenged by much of the anti-communist right (save for isolationists like Robert Taft), who invoked the tyranny of the present danger to justify more spending increases, leading to collaborations between Republicans and Democrats on defense spending that continue to resonate within political culture today.

Never satisfied with “enough” military spending, hawkish Republicans used the amorphous and undefined aspects of Cold War strategy as a discursive weapon against those who aimed to cut the defense budget, scale back American intervention, or otherwise reject the bipolar paradigm of the Cold War.

When the Vietnam War and the accompanying culture of anti-militarism in the United States discredited Cold War liberalism, anti-militarists within the New Left and anti-defense liberals in Congress assailed the gratuitous military spending that had gone on under the name of anti-communism, lending rise to claims that liberals had abandoned American security to the communists. As the era of superpower détente fell apart in the mid-1970s, national security activists conflated Cold War politics with Americans’ economic and cultural insecurities over the inadequacy of the federal state. In an increasingly neoliberal age, a unique and diverse Cold War, anti-détente coalition unified longstanding connections and found new constituencies by framing Cold War politics and foreign policy within a discussion of Americans’ antipathy and apathy toward “big-government.”

The class of Democrats elected during the late 1970s and 1980s tried to make foreign policy within this anti-government culture. While opposed to massive defense spending, “New Democrats” were inhibited by the remilitarization of American foreign policy during the Reagan years. While the defense economy seemed less important to most liberals after 1989, Cold War
communities demanded more defense contracts to keep and create jobs in their districts, restricting opportunities for a drawdown in defense. Moreover, as wages declined, productivity fell, prices rose, and job security proved elusive, occupations in the defense economy were justified as integral to lowering the unemployment rate. The political economy of the Cold War was therefore shaken but intact after the Soviet Union fell in 1991.

Indeed, the foreign policy of President Barack Obama reflects the legacy of the Cold War economy on the United States. As a Senator and candidate for office, Obama opposed the Iraq War and argued that the nation should redirect its attention to domestic issues after fighting protracted wars in the Middle East. As President, however, Obama has closely followed the path of his predecessor in conducting the “War on Terrorism.” Obama has expanded the use of unmanned drones to target suspected terrorists and retained a secretive policy making culture within the White House. Obama has also vigorously defended the national security state, arguing against the budget sequester because it would weaken American economic and international security. Obama supported the jobs created by the defense economy, telling shipyard workers in 2013 that their vital “work, along with hundreds of thousands of jobs, are currently in jeopardy because of politics in Washington.” Obama’s policies prove that unless Americans decide to rid themselves of the defense economy, the militarization of the Cold War will continue to have an influence on American political culture for years to come.

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