

**“The Vision Thing”: George H.W. Bush and the Battle For
American Conservatism 1988-1992**

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Advised by Professor Maris Vinovskis

For my Grandfather, who financed this project (and my education).

For my beautiful Bryana, who encouraged me every step of the way.

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INTRODUCTION

On January 20th, 1993, William Jefferson Clinton, a young governor from Arkansas, assumed the mantle of the presidency. Clinton's opponent and incumbent president, George Herbert Walker Bush, silently departed Washington D.C. to return to his life as a private citizen. George H.W. Bush ended his nearly four decades of public service not with a bang, but with a whimper. He quietly lost an election that by all accounts should have been his to win, given his astronomically high approval ratings following the Gulf War. The years of Bush's presidency spanned a pivotal moment in world history, with the final dissolution of the Soviet Union as well as German unification occurring during Bush's tenure. Bush, long an overlooked president, needs to be reexamined to firmly situate his agency in these events.

Bush's tenure in office occurred in a world increasingly defined by change. With American victory in the Cold War, a triumph of capitalism seemed to have occurred, and America prevailed as the lone superpower on the planet. The first test of this role came with the Gulf War, a conflict seen largely as Bush's crowning achievement in office. This war saw unprecedented international cooperation to facilitate the defeat of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Bush's presidency therefore occupied a very triumphant period in American history that began in the Cold War and ended with a 'new world order', as Bush termed it. On the international stage, President Bush demonstrated the United State's both the full yield of American power, in addition to his mastery of matters of foreign policy.

Domestically, however, things appeared very differently. An economic recession that began under his predecessor, Reagan, greeted Bush upon taking office. This downturn, although meekly improving at the time of the 1992 election, remained at the forefront of the minds of the American public. What should have been years of triumph celebrating the end of fifty years of Cold War with the Soviet Union remained defined by the financial difficulties plaguing the nation. It is in this historical context that Bush operated in office.

However, Bush's actions in office are only part of the story. Before entering the Oval Office, and indeed throughout his Presidency, Bush engendered hostility from many conservatives who viewed him as a weak substitute for the powerful conservative Ronald Reagan. The skepticism many American conservatives possessed surrounded Bush's presidency in a fierce ideological debate that questioned his every move. The conservative media, and their critiques of Bush, fit into the story of the Bush presidency just as much as the conclusion of the Cold War, and needs equal examination. The enormous consequences of the right-wing discontent Bush generated also merits examination, especially given the consequences it had on Bush's reelection (discussed in Chapter Three). However, these enquiries also raise important questions about Bush's political campaigns and presidency.

How did a man with over forty years of political experience lose an election to a young upstart, especially after this same man undertook the role of successor to one of the most popular presidents in recent history? How did a man that many saw

as presiding over the end of the Cold War, a President who once achieved the highest approval rating in history at almost ninety percent during the Gulf War, lose the election to a relatively unknown southern Politician? Bush's path, from Vice President of the United States to his defeat in 1992 needs to be re-assessed in order to find the answer to these questions.

Additionally, I analyze the role did the conservative media performed in Bush's defeat. Powerful magazines, such as *National Review*, play an important part in the formation of opinion within the Republican Party. In answering how they shaped right-wing opinion throughout Bush's Presidency, we discover the vital role they played in the 1992 election. Finally, the single largest factor attributed to Bush's defeat remains the economy. But is the economy the *only* reason Bush lost, given the complexities of American politics? Or are there other major factors in Bush losing the 1992 campaign? These queries have no simple answer, and must be analyzed from the context of the complex ideological and political forces working throughout this period of time (1988-1992).

This era of history, roughly spanning Bush's term in office, proved absolutely key in the creation of the modern world order. In it, a system of governance that dominated, at its height, nearly half of the world for over forty years collapsed, ushering in a new global era. In addition to the massive amounts of political and economic change this wrought, ideologies all over the world needed to adapt to a system that no longer contained a superpower-communist foe. American conservatism by no means escaped this change.

In addition to the transformations it caused American conservatives, the Cold War's end brought about a flurry of diplomatic crises in quick succession. President Bush, not only battling his base domestically, needed to manage a reasoned response to the ruin of America's strongest enemy, an enemy with more nuclear weapons than any other country on earth. With the collapse of the Soviet Union came the disintegration of their sphere influence, forcing President Bush to use American diplomatic influence to guide the continent of Europe through the many transitions democracy that occurred in this period. Bush faced a challenging ideological fragmentation within his own constituency at the same time as an equally difficult ideological failure abroad.

Bush became only the fifth president in the twentieth century to lose a second term, with economic recession shouldering the blame for this outcome. The perception at the time of the election maintained that the recession lacked a clear ending, with economic pessimism dominating the minds of voters. The economic recession, however, while a powerful force working against Bush's reelection, was not the only one. This thesis, acknowledging that political events are far more nuanced than simply having a single cause, will argue that a multitude of factors coalesced to cause the defeat of George H.W. Bush In 1992.

Historical scholarship on this period of political history paints a narrative of a unified conservative movement, of single mind in ending the Cold War and maintaining Reagan's legacy through supporting Bush. I aim to challenge this view, demonstrating that conservative opinion remained far from supportive of Bush at

any given time in his presidency. Rather than being a monolithic movement dominated by principles of God and the free-market, I will show the varied ideological stances conservatives adopted from 1988-1992. Further, I will demonstrate that while unified in their opposition to Bush, conservative ideology began to fragment and adopt opinions increasingly disparate from one another.

Throughout this thesis, I utilize articles and opinion pieces from *The Wall Street Journal* and *National Review* to demonstrate conservative opinions about Bush, and later, his challengers in the 1992 election. I chose these two examples of print media as they represent both mainstream conservative thinking, and typical conservative establishment views. Using these primary sources will demonstrate both the diversity of opinions as well as the hostility towards George H.W. Bush, illustrating the influence conservative media had on Bush's candidacies and presidency.

This thesis is *not* a history of the election campaigns of 1988 and 1992, nor a history on Bush's presidency. Talented historians have written much about these topics with more experience in dealing with these key periods of time. While important, Michael Dukakis and William Clinton (Bush's election opponents) did not belong to the Republican Party, nor did they hold conservative beliefs, and thus represent actors outside the purview of the questions asked. The examination of Bush's oversight of the end of the Cold War and its effect on American conservatism, as well as conservative discontent with Bush's governance is a puzzle that needs solving in and of itself. While Dukakis and Clinton played a large role in Bush's

victories and defeats, these actors lie outside the set parameters used in the formation of this thesis.

The first chapter of this thesis sets the stage for the next two. In it, I describe the inner, ideological turmoil within the Republican Party and American conservatism in the context of the 1988 presidential election. Chapter One utilizes opinions from conservative periodicals such as *The Wall Street Journal* and the *National Review* to demonstrate the opposition Bush encountered to his candidacy and ideological moderation. I argue that Bush's campaign, having to win the support of hostile factions within the G.O.P., campaigned farther to the right than would have been characteristic of Bush. Conservative skepticism caused Bush to undergo ideological purity tests, such as the infamous 'Read my lips, no new taxes' pledge, resulting in Bush issuing promises that proved impossible to uphold. This perceived failure to deliver on his promises caused a further weakening of conservative support within Bush's base. These events, coupled with President Bush's actions during the collapse of the Soviet Union, led to a severe fragmentation with American conservatives that ultimately manifested itself in the 1992 election.

In Chapter Two, I wish to demonstrate the achievements the Bush administration accomplished during the end of the Cold War. I will not argue that Bush caused the end of the Cold War, as some contend Reagan did. However, I will argue that Bush's restraint, foreign policy experience and pragmatism guided him in making decisions that greatly facilitated a peaceful conclusion to the Cold War. I focus on this key series of events, rather than the Gulf War or other major aspects of

the Bush presidency because this led to the fragmentation of the Republican Party I describe in Chapter Three. Without a Communist threat uniting the diverse aspects of American conservatives, Bush's voting base fragmented, with many eventually supporting Ross Perot's candidacy. Therefore, it is due to Bush's smooth steering of America through the end of the Cold War that his base found itself unable to unite around a man with suspicious conservative credentials, especially when viable alternatives (Perot and Patrick Buchanan in the Republican primary) existed.

I conclude my thesis with Chapter 3 with a study of the three major conservative candidates for office in the 1992 election. I analyze Bush, his Republican primary challenger Patrick Buchanan and general election opponent Ross Perot. In this chapter, I argue that Buchanan galvanized discontent against a president who always faced scrutiny from his conservative supporters, which in turn led to the success of Ross Perot's campaign. Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate the opinions of the conservative media, using examples from *The Wall Street Journal* and the *National Review* to demonstrate the suspicious and often hostile opinions they possessed of Bush's candidacy. By analyzing the conservative opinions that coalesced around the Perot and Buchanan candidacies, I will demonstrate the ideological fragmentation that occurred in the Republican Party in the 1992 election.

Therefore, my thesis challenges the prevailing wisdom that Bush lost his re-election campaign due solely to the economy. While perhaps the single largest factor in Bush's defeat, the economic recession that occurred with George Bush in office

needed to work in tandem with the conservative discontent to derail his reelection. In analyzing the opinions of members of the conservative media between 1988 and 1992, I demonstrate the ideological fragmentation that occurred during Bush's presidency. Using the example of Bush's pragmatic leadership during the fall of the Soviet Union, I aim to show that a conservative revolt occurred against the President despite his successes (in addition to demonstrating his important contributions to ending the Cold War). Without anti-communism binding them together, conservative factions split to fight for the soul of the Republican Party, greatly aiding in Bush's defeat.

George H.W. Bush is not a forgettable president. Indeed, given his success in quietly letting the Soviet collapse run its course, he should be re-examined as a major component in the end of the Cold War. However, with the collapse of Communism, coupled with the inability of Bush to keep his (politically-motivated) conservative promises from the 1988 election, a splintering of American conservatism occurred. A poor economy, coupled with this conservative fragmentation, caused President Bush to lose the 1992 election.

CHAPTER 1: THE CLASH OF LEGACIES

The election of 1988 contained an epic internal struggle within the Republican Party, with lasting implications to the present day. Occurring immediately following the presidency of Ronald Reagan, this election tested the perseverance of both American conservatism and Reagan's legacy. The eventual winner, Reagan's Vice President George H.W. Bush, faced severe, and often underreported resistance to his succeeding the popular conservative president. This opposition manifested itself in all realms of policy, and ultimately created a two-front ideological conflict between the conservative press and Bush. The election of 1988 saw a deftly managed run for the presidency by George Bush, who attempted both to adopt Reagan's legacy while fighting off charges that he sought to undermine it. Indeed, Bush's candidacy in the 1988 election ignited an ideological conflict that would eventually split asunder American conservatism during Bush's presidency.

In his report on the election of 1988, political scientist Gerald Pomper wrote that, "It may well be that (...) the legacy of Ronald Reagan, along with others, will mark the administration of George Bush."¹ Reagan cast a long shadow over Bush's actions, forcing the Vice-President to adhere to his predecessor's policies in his

¹ Pomper, Gerald, Walter D. Burnham, Barbara G. Farah, Marjorie R. Hershey, and Ethel Klein. *The Election of 1988: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1989. 16

campaign. Bush and Dukakis operated in an environment completely shaped by Reagan's tenure in office, necessitating Bush campaign on the administration's successes and failures. This did not necessarily work to Bush's disadvantages, however. Pomper writes, "the magnitude in the change of the rhetorical high ground of politics that unfolded during the Reagan years is merely hinted at by George Bush's success in marginalizing the opposition with the 'L word' and by inviting the public to 'Read my lips. No new taxes.'"² Reagan defined the conditions, images and rhetoric of the 1988 presidential election, which handed Bush an incredible advantage in the general election campaign.

Reagan constrained the ideological field in which Bush and Dukakis operated, forcing each candidate to eschew any New Deal-style programs based on governmental solutions. Pomper writes, "The immediate political significance (of Reagan's policies) was that presidential candidates were severely restricted in their programmatic appeals. No expensive new programs could be advanced, no candidates would suggest new taxes, and even the once extravagant Democrats focused on the budget deficit."³ This created the perception that the 1988 election did not contribute new ideas or a new candidate, but rather that "the election was a

² Pomper, Gerald, Walter D. Burnham, Barbara G. Farah, Marjorie R. Hershey, and Ethel Klein. *The Election of 1988: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1989. 26

³ Pomper, Gerald, Walter D. Burnham, Barbara G. Farah, Marjorie R. Hershey, and Ethel Klein. *The Election of 1988: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1989. 35

referendum on Reagan's policies."⁴ Bush therefore operated in an ideologically constrained environment, having to appeal to Reaganist policies to secure his base. Reagan's legacy extended beyond ideology, however, and gave Bush considerable challenges in his establishing himself as a conservative candidate.

Indeed, Reagan represented a source of animosity to Bush's campaign team. Although Bush campaigned as the natural successor to the 'Great Communicator', his inner circle privately viewed Reagan as amateurish. John Brady demonstrates, writes in Atwater's biography that, "He (Atwater) told the vice president that he could not expect to win as just another Reagan. He had to develop some *ideas*."⁵ Bush's campaign staff remained frustrated in never being able to portray Bush as conservative, and always having to strive to achieve Reaganesque appeal. Bob Schieffer writes, "What truly irritated Bush's friends was that he was so many things the old actor (Reagan) only pretended to be. Reagan had played war heroes in the movies, but at nineteen, Bush had been the youngest American pilot to see combat in World War II, [...] Reagan became the standard-bearer of the free enterprise system by extolling it on the dinner circuit. Bush, on the other hand, had started his own business and had met a real payroll for many years before going into politics. [...] Reagan preached strong family values, but his own family life was full of discord

⁴ Pomper, Gerald, Walter D. Burnham, Barbara G. Farah, Marjorie R. Hershey, and Ethel Klein. *The Election of 1988: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1989. 109

⁵ Brady, John. *Bad Boy: The Life and Politics of Lee Atwater*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1997. 147

and neglect. Bush was an authentic family man.”⁶ Bush presented many of the attributes Reagan wished to convey during his presidency, even having a stronger case for his authenticity than Reagan. That Reagan, rather than Bush, seemed to be the epitome of American conservatism left Bush little room to make the case for his own ideological credentials.

Therefore, Reagan’s legacy remained a challenge that plagued Bush and almost lost him the presidential nomination. Immediately, the conservative press noticed what most disturbed them about a Bush Presidency. Gerald Sein and Alan Murray write, “[...] But his interest in reducing government interference in the economy lacks the ideological fervor expressed by President Reagan. Unlike the president, Mr. Bush asserts: ‘I don't hate government.’”⁷ This led to a crisis of ideology that alienated many Republican’s from Bush’s promised platform. Jeffrey Birnbaum of the *Wall Street Journal* states, “Arguably, of course, anything will be better than the little the Bush campaign has been saying so far. A young Republican running for Congress this year says he recently looked at the campaign's position papers for ideas, but couldn't use a single one of them. ‘I either didn't agree with them or they were so basic I'd be embarrassed to run on them,’ says this articulate Reaganite.”⁸ David Shirbman of the *Wall Street Journal* takes these views to an

⁶ Schieffer, Bob, and Gary P. Gates. *The Acting President*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989. 341

⁷ Seib, Gerald F., and Alan Murray. "Facing Reality - Bush-Dukakis Division On Economic Policies May Narrow in Practice - Federal Deficits Are Likely To Override Philosophies; Avoiding Talk of Tax Rise - Half Full or Half Empty?" *The Wall Street Journal*, September 6, 1988.

⁸ Birnbaum, Jeffery H. "Bush's Secretary Of State to Be James Baker - President-Elect

extreme, stating, "Conservatives realize the impending nomination of Vice President George Bush means they have suffered a setback, but now they are engaged in a bitter dispute over whether their movement would suffer more if Mr. Bush wins in November or if he loses."⁹ Throughout the election of 1988, Bush lived in the shadow of his predecessor, suffering constant comparisons and criticisms in reference to his mentor's legacy.

However, the differences between Bush and Reagan also supplied Bush with considerable advantages. Bush, as a technocrat, provided some relief from the grandiose rhetoric of the Reagan administration. Even conservatives reflected this sentiment; *The Wall Street Journal* writes, "this town senses a presidency in transition from ideology to management. It finds that reassuring. 'Bush will be an on-hands president,' predicts Frank Jordan, a retired veterinarian and the current Republican county chairman. 'You and I both know that Reagan wasn't.'"¹⁰ That Bush represented a safe change to competent management is further emphasized by John Sununu's faith in Bush's managerial abilities, reflected in a *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece; "But he envisions Mr. Bush adopting a different approach to the presidency than Mr. Reagan's. 'He has a different style than Reagan, one that has two apparently contradictory pieces,'" Mr. Sununu says. "He'll bring good people in

Also Names Transition Chiefs, Vows To Work With Congress." *The Wall Street Journal*, November 10, 1988.

⁹ Shribman, David. "Campaign '88: GOP's Right Wing, Bitter Over Bush's Triumph, Debates Whether to Support Him in November." *The Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 1988.

¹⁰ Farney, Dennis. "The Inauguration (A Special Report): Essay - From the Heartland: Kansans Are Optimistic About Bush But Say He's No Dwight Eisenhower." *The Wall Street Journal*, January 20, 1989.

and delegate more responsibility to them. But he'll also give himself more involvement and responsibility."¹¹ Clearly, Bush's ability as a leader gave him a positive image in the minds of key conservative opinion-makers.

In the realm of foreign policy, Bush actually exceeded conservative desires as a competent leader. The conservative *Wall Street Journal* emphasized Bush's foreign policy credibility from the perspective of foreign heads-of-state, arguing, "To foreign leaders, Mr. Bush's national-security experience stands in stark contrast to the inexperience -- and, some thought, naiveté -- of Presidents Reagan and Carter when they came into office."¹² Considering the dismissive attitude toward foreign opinion that many conservatives possess, it is a significant endorsement for a conservative newspaper like *The Wall Street Journal* to call attention to the opinions of extra-national dignitaries. Conservative judgment of Bush, while remaining hostile throughout the election, did acknowledge his achievements in managerial and foreign policy issues. Bush's departure from Reagan, far from resting solely on ideology, extended into campaign tactics as well.

Key differences existed between Bush and Reagan's electoral strategy, and it is these differences that contributed to Bush's victory. Bush needed to campaign differently from Reagan, given the differences in their candidacies. It is through this

¹¹ Shribman, David. "Sununu, Bush's Likely Choice as Chief of Staff, Would Bring Fervent Conservative Views to Post." *The Wall Street Journal*, November 17, 1988.

¹² Seib, Gerald F., and Michel McQueen. "First Hurrah: President Bush Gets Respect for Abilities But Low Expectations - Poll Shows Americans Doubt He Will Keep Promises On Taxes and the Deficit - Foreign Policy Opportunities." *The Wall Street Journal*, January 20, 1989.

necessity that Bush reached out to demographic groups that had otherwise been ignored by Republicans in past elections. Bush departed from Reagan in his attempt to win the support of traditionally Democratic voting blocs.

Bush began by campaigning to retain the support of 'Reagan Democrats' (blue-collar or middle class Democrats attracted by Ronald Reagan's small government message) that the previous administration courted away from the Democratic Party. Writing on the importance of this demographic group, *National Review* writer John MacLaughlin states, "The question tormenting George Bush's campaign strategists is whether their candidate can walk the tightrope Reagan walked in the 1980 and 1984 and attract New deal defectors along with traditional Republicans and conservative independents."¹³ MacLaughlin calls attention to the importance of Reagan Democrats, as well as the inadequacy of the Republican base to win the election on their own. Bush recognized this, campaigning for Reagan Democrats to mold the campaign environment on his own terms. Pomper states, "By reinforcing Reagan Democrats' concerns about liberalism, the ads forced Dukakis to react to Bush's initiatives rather than set his own agenda."¹⁴ He further elaborates, stating, "But while Republicans expected to hold on to most partisan identifiers, they also coveted some Democrats who might be persuaded to break from party ranks, as they had done in 1980 and 1984. The challenge for the Democrats was to hold on to

¹³ MacLaughlin, John. "From Washington straight, Bush on the Tightrope." *National Review*, June 10, 1988, 24.

¹⁴ Pomper, Gerald, Walter D. Burnham, Barbara G. Farah, Marjorie R. Hershey, and Ethel Klein. *The Election of 1988: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1989. 87

their supporters and minimize the defection.”¹⁵ Bush’s exertions to hold the support of Reagan Democrats worked in tandem with his attempts at making inroads with new constituencies.

Bush’s efforts extended to African-American voters in his quest for Republican conversions. This stands in contrast to Reagan, who largely ignored the African-American community as potential Republicans. *The Wall Street Journal* noticed the utility of this strategy, in which contributors Joseph Boyce and George Smith wrote, “Last month, Mr. Bush continued the theme in an address before several thousand members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at the group's national convention in Washington. In a warmly received speech that seemingly sought to distance him from Reagan administration civil-rights policies, Mr. Bush outlined what he called a ‘positive civil-rights agenda,’ and promised to have “minority men and women of excellence as full-scale partners’ during his presidency. One winning line from that speech: “Whenever racism rears its ugly head -- Howard Beach, Forsyth County, wherever -- we must be there to cut it off.”¹⁶ That *The Wall Street Journal* acknowledged the utility of Bush’s outreach to African-American voters, a demographic group previously seen as irredeemably Democratic, demonstrates a tacit acknowledgement of Bush’s campaign acumen. Bush’s outreach shows not only his departure from his predecessor’s electoral

¹⁵ Pomper, Gerald, Walter D. Burnham, Barbara G. Farah, Marjorie R. Hershey, and Ethel Klein. *The Election of 1988: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1989. 108

¹⁶ Boyce, Joseph N., and George Smith. "Campaign '88: Bush, Departing From Reagan Strategy, Is Aggressively Courting Black Voters." *The Wall Street Journal*, August 10, 1988.

strategy, but also his success in tempering the criticism of the conservative print-media. Ultimately, Bush did not attract enough African-Americans to cause a party realignment, rendering the effort negligible for the 1988 campaign. Bush's attempt to create a bigger tent in the Republican Party, while sound campaign strategy, also caused concern amongst his ideological kinsmen. His campaign pragmatism seemed to highlight his moderation, with the conservative media showing distaste for many of his overtures.

Bush, therefore, immediately ran into conservative criticism during his campaign. *The Wall Street Journal* noticed his defection from Reagan's brand of conservatism, stating, "Notably absent are people from the far ends of the political spectrum. Mr. Bush hasn't turned to the hard-line conservatives who populated Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign and early administration."¹⁷ Although they created inroads amongst groups that otherwise voted Democrat, Bush possessed a significant challenge in rallying his base. *National Review* writes on the problems Bush posed to their efforts, stating, "George Bush is never going to rouse conservatives the way Ronald Reagan did in 1980, and he'd be unwise to try. On the other hand, with so many of them tempted to sit this election out, he needs to convince them, without histrionics or implausible pledges, that there are important stakes in the Bush-Dukakis race."¹⁸ While Bush may have been effective at reaching out to new demographic groups for the GOP, his base viewed him as a traitor to the

¹⁷ Seib, Gerald F. "Bush, Dukakis Camps Both Get Advice From Foreign-Policy Middle Roaders." *The Wall Street Journal*, September 26, 1988.

¹⁸ Anonymous. "The Issue of '88." *National Review*, July 8, 1988, 13.

Reagan legacy. This birthed a problem that would fully manifest in the 1992 election, much to Bush's disadvantage.

The Republican Primary saw challengers to the Vice-President hammer away at Bush on his perceived moderation, while discounting his foreign policy experience. Bush's challengers, Senator Robert Dole of Kansas and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp, as well as evangelical preacher Patrick Robertson, Bush' most vociferous opponent, use Bush's moderation to argue against his electability in the general election. *The Wall Street Journal* contributor David Shribman writing on Pat Robertson, states, "But Mr. Robertson surprised party leaders in Iowa, and his strength remains one of the unknown elements here. His argument that Americans are 'tired of giving this country away to communism' has much appeal in a state where Mr. Bush is regarded as, in the words of former Gov. Meldrim Thomson, "an ultra-liberal one-worlder."¹⁹ Robertson represented the Republican Right's ideal candidate, as opposed to the candidate most likely to win. John Brady writes in (Bush's campaign advisor) Lee Atwater's biography, *Bad Boy*, "To some Reaganites, a candidate like Robertson was more consistent with conservative principles than the wily George Bush would ever be. As a result, there was no unified effort behind Bush, despite the perception that he was the heir to the Reagan legacy. Bush may have been the incumbent candidate, but he was not a

¹⁹ Shribman, David. "Campaign '88: Bush, After Defeat in Iowa, Now Faces Possibility of Loss in New Hampshire." *The Wall Street Journal*, February 12, 1988.

popular one. His support was a mile long and an inch deep.”²⁰ Beginning in the primary, Bush’s opponents painted him as a moderate or even liberal, and used this critique to argue against his electability. This condemnation, however, paled in comparison to the criticism he would face in the primary over the issue of *Iran-Contra*.

The scandal, in which members of Reagan’s administration secured funds from weapons sales to Iran to fund right-wing militias (or ‘freedom-fighters, in Reagan’s terms) proved to be the biggest blight on Reagan’s presidential legacy. Although never directly implicated, Reagan’s advisors and cabinet began to look to the public as the real power behind the throne, implicating Bush. Although a seasoned handler of extra-national issues, Bush’s role in the scandal led many to doubt his ability to run a clean presidency, and offended many Republican voters. According to Pomper, “His (Bush’s) role in the *Iran-Contra* scandal was suspicious but not yet clear.”²¹ Not only did Bush have much to answer for, he also faced a conservative base both confused and angry at his avoidance of the issue.

The importance of *Iran-Contra* immediately presented itself to conservatives as an issue that needed addressing. John MacLaughlin, writing in *National Review* recognized the problem *Iran-Contra* posed, stating, ““In a resume contest, Bush beats Dukakis easily- but he has to get voters to look at his resume rather than at the

²⁰ Brady, John. *Bad Boy: The Life and Politics of Lee Atwater*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1997. 162

²¹ Pomper, Gerald, Walter D. Burnham, Barbara G. Farah, Marjorie R. Hershey, and Ethel Klein. *The Election of 1988: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1989. 77

Iran-Contra headlines."²² Republicans viewed this scandal as potentially damning, and an issue that could lose the election. They desired an uncontroversial candidate, one who possessed a record bereft of such a glaring flaw. Ronald Shafer of the *Wall Street Journal* highlights the vulnerability Bush had on the issues going into the Republican primary, arguing, " Bush's role in the Iran-Contra affair will be a top target in the Des Moines Register debate in Iowa tonight as GOP presidential hopefuls try to gain ground. Dole, an aide says, expects "to really bear down on Bush on the Iran thing."²³ Dole continually pressed Bush on Iran-Contra, as David Shribman demonstrated when he states in the *Wall Street Journal*, "Mr. Dole, meanwhile, called on Mr. Bush to answer questions about his role in the affair and accused Mr. Bush of blaming the press for his political difficulties. 'Why doesn't he release what we want to know about Iran-Contra?' Mr. Dole snapped shortly before leaving the state this weekend. Mr. Bush is expected to be questioned under oath today by prosecutors in the office of the independent counsel investigating the Iran-Contra affair."²⁴ Wanting to secure Reagan's legacy, conservatives in the GOP needed a candidate they could present to the American people as scandal free, thus enhancing the chances of retaining the White House.

Amongst conservative voters, Iran-Contra remained an embarrassment not because it represented an illegal act, but because Bush did not offer *enough* of a

²² McLaughlin, John. "Parlaying the Summit." *National Review*, July 8, 1988, 21.

²³ Shafer, Ronald G. "A Special Weekly Report From The Wall Street Journal's Capital Bureau." *The Wall Street Journal*, January 8, 1988.

²⁴ Shribman, David. "Bush, Dole Butt Heads a Little Harder As Top Contenders Hone Tough Images." *The Wall Street Journal*, January 11, 1988.

defense of the Reagan administration's conduct. *National Review* argues, "But in the Contra-aid vote of February 3, there were 12 Republicans who voted against their President; if five of those votes had gone the other way, the Administration would have won. Eight of those 12 Republicans have endorsed George Bush. (...) Revealing facts, these."²⁵ This contradictory critique of Bush's conduct of the Iran-Contra affair highlights the split in the Republican party between right-wingers that desired a conservative candidate in the style of Reagan, or those conservatives that desired a pragmatist with a better chance of winning the general election.

Ultimately, Iran-Contra played little role in the voters' decision to elect Bush. Schieffer writes, "(As the Republican primaries ended) People had made up their minds about Iran-*Contra*. Some were uneasy about it and some were not. But whatever they felt, it did not seem to be hurting Bush in any significant way."²⁶ Bush managed to sate the desires of conservatives within his party by reaffirming his foreign policy experience, reversing the Iran-Contra controversy as an attack by the media.

Bush even used the controversy of Iran-Contra to not only play down the less than savory aspects of the scandal, but also dispel his image as a weak leader. Schieffer recounting Bush's contentious interview with journalist Dan Rather, writes, "He (Atwater) had watched the whole episode on television and was delighted. Bush had stood his ground and slugged it out. Finally, Atwater thought,

²⁵ Anonymous. "Bush and the Contras." *National Review*, March 4, 1988, 19.

²⁶ Schieffer, Bob, and Gary P. Gates. *The Acting President*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989. 342

we are on the road to putting this wimp business behind us."²⁷ Iran-Contra could have potentially ended Bush's run for the White House, with even conservatives critical of his role in the scandal (whether in his distance from or proximity to the affair itself). Bush used it as an opportunity to dispel his image as a 'wimp', and firmly establish his candidacy as one of foreign policy expertise.

Bush therefore represented a candidate whom Republicans needed to settle on. A feeling of disappointment quickly set into the Republican Party once Bush secured the G.O.P. nomination. This lack of trust among movement conservatives represented a significant handicap to Bush winning the Presidency, as he sorely needed his base to turn out and support his campaign. As the *Wall Street Journal's* columnist David Shirbman wrote, "above all, the ascendancy of Mr. Bush stands as a symbol of the failure of the conservative movement to build on the momentum of the Reagan revolution. Says Rep. Weber: 'The nomination of George Bush and perhaps his election isn't a disaster -- he's not hopeless -- but we're beginning to recognize that the sort of aggressive conservatism we've been pushing doesn't have any leadership or any visibility anymore."²⁸ Despite resigning themselves to an ideological disappointment, American conservatives still gifted significant effort to Bush's campaign in 1988.

Therefore, Bush's perceived lack of conservative credentials remained his biggest challenge throughout the 1988 election, and not the rival candidate Michael

²⁷ Schieffer, Bob, and Gary P. Gates. *The Acting President*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989. 351

²⁸ Ibid.

Dukakis. While appealing to moderates and independents, Bush's alienation of conservatives within his party meant constant efforts to retain their conditional support. Having to rally the base around a man of pragmatic and tempered sentiments after they indulged in the conservative golden age of Reagan proved to be the biggest obstacle Bush underwent. Bob Schieffer writes, "Like Atwater, Bush recognized he was weakest where Reagan had always been strongest: among the ultraconservatives in the party."²⁹ Having to commit time and resources to retaining these ultraconservatives meant Bush fought a two-front war throughout 1988.

However, no matter the overtures Bush made to the right wing of the Republican Party, they still perceived him as the reincarnation of Nelson Rockefeller and East-coast Republican liberalism. Suspicion constantly surrounded him even after given firm pronouncements on key issues like taxation. Robert Novak wrote in *National Review*, "Bush does seem rock hard in his embrace of the Reaganite anti-tax position. But while the words are correct the music is off-key."³⁰ One year of campaigning could not cause the Republican base to forget a lifetime of moderation, and seemed to conservatives to be mere pandering. Pomper elaborates, stating, "He

²⁹ Schieffer, Bob, and Gary P. Gates. *The Acting President*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989. 319

³⁰ Novak, Robert. "The Reagan Coalition." *National Review*, August 5, 1988, 37-38.

claimed to be a true conservative, yet as recently as 1980 he campaigned as a relative moderate. In a word, he did not seem authentic.”³¹

This moderation could prove fatal in the realm of social issues, where ironclad commitments to conservative policy, such as opposition to abortion, remain a necessity for any Republican campaigner. The Reagan era began the ascendancy of the evangelical right, a group more diametrically opposed to the social positions Bush historically possessed than any other within in the G.O.P. David Shribman of *The Wall Street Journal* describes the antipathy many evangelicals possessed towards Bush, writing, “Although TV evangelist Jerry Falwell has long been a Bush supporter, many on the religious right view Mr. Bush with skepticism, if not contempt. Gary Jarmin, a political consultant to Christian Voice, a New Right organization, says that many conservatives ‘have been fighting the George Bushes all their lives’ and aren't moved to assist him now.”³² Where the Christian Right began, however, the conservative print-media exacerbated to galvanize antipathy to the Vice President’s campaign.

The conservative media delighted in highlighting the Vice President’s comparatively liberal stance on the issue of women’s rights and abortion as well (he maintained a pro-choice stance throughout much of his life). *The Wall Street Journal*

³¹ Pomper, Gerald, Walter D. Burnham, Barbara G. Farah, Marjorie R. Hershey, and Ethel Klein. *The Election of 1988: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1989. 77

³² Shribman, David. "Campaign '88: GOP's Right Wing, Bitter Over Bush's Triumph, Debates Whether to Support Him in November." *The Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 1988.

writes, “and some right-to-life activists argue that their compatriots are being used by Mr. Bush, who has changed his position over the years, and getting little in return. ‘They want to believe all these things about Bush,’ says Mary Drumm, an Erie mother of eight who is a trustee of the Youth Pro-Life Coalition. ‘I’m not convinced of his commitment.’”³³ The *National Review* contributed to this anti-Bush sentiment, writing, “Before an annual convention of the National federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, a yup-scale group which chanted ‘E-R-A, E-R-A’ as he left the room. Surely there are conservative women’s groups he could have spoken to? Surely there are. But probably no one on the Bush staff has ever heard of them.”³⁴ Given Bush’s long identification as ‘pro-choice’, it might justifiably have been hard for conservative activists such as Mary Drumm to not perceive Bush’s new pro-life stance as anything but a politically calculated move. However, this skepticism has its roots in perception of Bush as a Manchurian liberal candidate, and proved to be yet another manifestation of the campaign’s difficulty of rallying the base.

Even the business community, the section of the Party Bush seemed most aligned with, had significant reservation about a Bush Presidency. They preferred Reagan, long a warrior against government regulation, to Bush, who corporate leaders regarded as simply another big-government official. *The Wall Street Journal* states, “While a Dukakis administration would be likely to impose more new

³³ Shribman, David. "Campaign '88: 'Pro-Life' Group in Erie, Pa., Mobilizes For Bush With Fervor of a Crusade." *The Wall Street Journal*, October 18, 1988.

³⁴ Anonymous. "Bush at Bat." *National Review*, August 19, 1988, 14-15.

regulations than a Bush administration, Mr. Penner, the Republican economist, says: 'I would expect that even by the end of a Bush administration, there would be more regulatory costs than there are today.'³⁵ This continues the theme of skepticism and distrust that conservatives within the Republican Party possessed about the Vice-President. This suspicion did not persist solely with the social conservatives within the G.O.P., but also resonated with economic conservatives.

Business leaders did not even believe Bush's rhetoric on taxation. Alan Murray of *The Wall Street Journal* writes, "Unlike (businessman) Mr. Mettler however, most of the executives seemed confident that the vice president would change his tune on taxes quickly if elected. 'I get concerned when I hear him say 'Read my lips, no new taxes,' but I can't believe he means it,' said George Keller, chairman of Chevron Corp."³⁶ Past proclamations like this continued to haunt Bush throughout his campaign. His statements against Reagan's economic plans in the 1980 Republican presidential primary caused conservative journalist like Alan Murray of *The Wall Street Journal* to write, "proponents of supply-side economics, which Mr. Bush termed 'voodoo' in his 1980 presidential campaign, are largely absent from the vice president's team of economic counselors, which is led by a small group of mainstream academics, politicians and businessmen."³⁷ Although closely aligned, at least in temperament, with the business-wing of the Republican

³⁵ Murray, Alan. "Top Corporate Leaders Support Bush But Don't Believe His Vows on Taxes." *The Wall Street Journal*, October 11, 1988.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Murray, Alan. "The Supply Side Is in Short Supply On Bush's Team of Economic Advisers." *The Wall Street Journal*, May 23, 1988.

Party, Bush found no shelter from critique with Republican businessmen. This caused any overtures he made, such as his 'no new taxes' pledge, to be regarded as politically expedient statements, rather than firm declarations of already established opinions.

Foreign policy, long the domain that Bush dominated with his vast amounts of experience, remained a point of concern with the Republican Party's right wing. Although quick to praise the impressive resume Bush possessed, they viewed his return to realpolitik of the Kissingerian School (a pragmatic foreign policy) to be a betrayal of Reagan-style principals that stressed the importance of articulating ideological goals and the spread of democracy. Bush caused major concern for conservatives pertaining to the continuation of the Strategic Defense Initiative (a space based missile defense system proposed by President Reagan.). William F. Buckley, long the 'godfather' of American conservatism, writes in an article of *National Review*, "But then George Bush, in his (Republican Primary) acceptance speech, was rather stepfatherly in his treatment of SDI, referring only generally to our determination to continue to refine our defense technology. That caught the attention of (and disappointed) those who believed strongly in SDI."³⁸ Buckley continues in his critique, writing, "So then Mr. Bush said, in the same interview in which he spoke of 'research' without speaking of 'testing,' that he feared that SDI would be 'very expensive.' He gave the enemies of the system the two arguments

³⁸Buckley, William F. "The Supply Side Is in Short Supply On Bush's Team of Economic Advisers." *National Review*, September 30, 1988, 64.

they most frequently use (SDI is too expensive and we should research not test). Those, combined with Mr. Bush's implied suggestion that the workability of SDI is problematic, have the effect of sinking official approval of the program."³⁹ Bush's seemingly ambivalent stance on SDI only served to reinforce the right-wing perception that he wished to secretly betray Reagan's legacy. This undermined the sole area of political experience he obtained through years of service, foreign policy, and severely weakened his already limited appeal among the Republican Party's right wing.

Bush found no solace in the financial aspect of defense concerns either. *The Wall Street Journal* highlighted their concern with Bush's platform on defense spending in a financial critique. Seib and Murray write, "He (Bush), proposes granting \$500 million in annual awards to schools with disadvantaged students. He also endorses a proposed multibillion-dollar space program to launch an observation platform to study the environment. On defense, aides suggest that the Vice President would increase spending only enough to match inflation."⁴⁰ Thus, according to conservatives, Bush not only weakened America's defense capabilities, but also used this for governmental interference of the kind usually reserved for the most-scorned liberal. Bush desperately needed to a way to assuage conservative critics, especially given the severe criticisms leveled at him from all areas of policy.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Seib, Gerald F., and Alan Murray. "Facing Reality -- Bush-Dukakis Division On Economic Policies May Narrow in Practice - Federal Deficits Are Likely To Override Philosophies; Avoiding Talk of Tax Rise - Half Full or Half Empty?" *The Wall Street Journal*, September 6, 1988.

The opportunity presented itself in Bush's appointment of people to help with the campaign, in addition to his Vice-Presidential candidate. Bush's appointments gave him the opportunity to reassure the G.O.P. base, demonstrating he would not completely depart from Reagan's policies. The selection of campaign assistants and cabinet members gave Bush the prospect to appoint conservatives to sate the demands of those critical of his moderation. However, despite his best efforts, Bush only managed to exacerbate the critiques of his campaign and ideological inclinations.

Indeed, with the appointment of John Sununu as chief of staff and Dan Quayle as Vice President, Bush allayed some concerns. However, given the amount of concern he already generated in every other field of policy, skepticism persisted about his choice of advisors. *The Wall Street Journal* echoes this concern, with an editorial stating, "There is a general feeling that other than the Chief of Staff, the conservatives have been seated at the end of the bench, leaving Mr. Bush and his establishment friends to take control of the government as a kind of skilled pickup basketball team. The Pragmatists."⁴¹ This apprehension of Bush's staff complimented the idea of Bush as a political insider, too concerned with the narrow interests of the concerns within the beltway.

Bush represented the ultimate Washington insider, having been in government since 1964. This caused considerable consternation among conservatives, who worried that Bush would reverse Washington outsider culture

⁴¹ Editorial. "George Bush, Conservative." *The Wall Street Journal*, January 20, 1989.

that Reagan, in their view, engendered. *National Review* writes "Many movement conservatives are worried about Bush, and their apprehensions center on his allegedly passive personality and his future appointments. They think of him as a charter member of the old-boy network who will surround himself with the sort of feckless pragmatists who led him to defeat in 1980 and who have inexplicably come to dominate the Reagan Administration- the Bakers, in a word."⁴² David Shribman of the *Wall Street Journal* echoes this sentiment, stating, "'This is an administration that represents the quintessential desires of insider Washington,' says Kevin Phillips, the Republican political theorist. 'No one has to change any of the cards in his Rolodex.' But he and the others on the panel worry that the administration that comes into power tomorrow may be too comfortable with the status quo and not versatile enough to respond to crises."⁴³ This insider status only served to enflame the skepticism of Bush as a conservative, given that perceived 'Washington insiders' often served as rhetorical whipping boys of the Republican base.

It is due to this overwhelming lack of conservative support within the Republican Party that Bush began to make drastic decisions to change the perceptions conservatives had of his ideological convictions. Bush needed to extinguish this angst expressed against him, which led him to seek a marketable conservative he could appoint in an influential position within his cabinet. Bush

⁴² Anonymous. "George, Be a King!" *National Review*, April 20, 1988, 14.

⁴³ Shribman, David. "Bush Should Fare Well, Experts Say, Provided Economy, World Are Stable." *The Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 1989.

began to attempt to eliminate the perception he entertained a secret liberal agenda with his bold choice for the position of Vice Presidential.

The selection of Danforth Quayle as Bush's Vice-Presidential nominee remains Bush's boldest maneuver in the 1988 campaign. Many conservatives saw Dan Quayle, the young senator from Indiana, as a future leader of the Republican Party. Although gaffe-prone and labeled as dim by his opponents, Quayle pleased conservative opinion. Quayle, while initially a smart decision based on demographic and electoral calculations, turned out to be one of the few strategic miscalculations of the Bush campaign. However, despite Dan Quayle's gaffes and inexperience, he served to reassure conservative voters of Bush's commitment to their cause, and ultimately, allowed Bush to receive the critical support of the core of the Republican Party.

Merely in terms of campaign strategy, Dan Quayle proved to be a bold choice. Even the Wall Street Journal recognized this, with David Shribman writing, "The selection of the 41-year-old Mr. Quayle is a gamble by Republican strategists who have prided themselves in the past on their single-minded attention to the mathematics of the Electoral College rather than to the wooing of broad demographic categories of voters. The decision reflects anxiety about the dynamics of this election and an effort to add excitement and a look-to-the-future appeal to the GOP ticket."⁴⁴ Indeed, the G.O.P. wished to establish a foundation for future

⁴⁴ Rogers, David, and David Shribman. "Campaign '88 - Getting Tough: Bush Strategists Push A Bare-Knuckle Fight To Overcome Dukakis - Worried About Low

electoral victories, and saw in Dan Quayle both a youthful and regional appeal. Additionally, given this youth aspect, the campaign wished to set a proper image, to dispel the infamous 'wimp' factor plaguing Bush. Alexander Cockburn of the Wall Street journal wrote, "The Republicans seem to be going with manliness this year. This is the simplest way of explaining the selection of young Dan Quayle, who has already been on network TV punching George Bush on the arm in a demonstration of shirt-sleeved virility unmatched since the days of John Lindsay and supermanly JFK himself."⁴⁵ Image had an important role to play in the election, and Bush needed to establish a certain virility to his campaign. Bush needed someone to balance his perceived elderly, 'wimpy' qualities, and thus chose the youthful Dan Quayle for this purpose. Quayle's utility extended beyond calculated image-politics, however, and into the realm of electoral strategy.

Dan Quayle represented the tradition of selection of vice-presidential candidates for regional (and electoral college) purposes. Although Bush depicted Quayle as merely meeting the criteria for a vice-presidential candidate the conservative press saw through this strategy. David Shribman of the Wall Street Journal commented on the Quayle strategy, stating, "Mr. Bush's choice of Sen. Quayle underscores the importance of the Midwest. Despite the senator's opposition to the recent plant-closing bill, his youth and record of support for job-training legislation give the Republicans tools to help counter the Democrats' 'Rust Belt' rhetoric. A

Ratings, They Hope to Shift Focus To Democrat's Failings - Chasing After Ethnic Voters." *The Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 1988.

⁴⁵ Cockburn, Alexander. "Viewpoint: Bush and the Manliness Issue: Old War Stories Never Die." *The Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 1988.

wealthy conservative, Mr. Quayle will be presented as a suburban father who is attractive to women and is at home both in urban, blue-collar wards and in the more rural Bible counties of such states as Ohio, which Gerald Ford lost by only 11,000 votes in 1976."⁴⁶ Bush realized he lacked appeal in areas that Reagan achieved electoral success, and needed to balance the ticket to reflect this reality. As a young, seemingly dynamic conservative from a blue-collar state, Quayle allowed Bush to make inroads into the traditionally Democratic upper-Midwest, while maintaining the support of Reagan Democrats.

However, Quayle achieved other purposes as well. Bush needed a Vice President that served in the same style he did: loyal and quiet. Bob Schieffer explains, stating "The most likely explanation (for Quayle's selection as Vice President), even to many of Bush's friends, was that Bush wanted someone who would be the kind of vice president he had been: quiet, loyal and nonthreatening."⁴⁷ Bush wanted a man that reflected his values in office, if only to allow cohesive White House policy. He needed loyalty above all else once in office, a quality Bush saw in the young senator.

However, Quayle's main advantage came from his ideology. Although he brought the aforementioned advantages to the presidential ticket, Bush's most serious problem came from within his own base. Quayle, a consistent conservative,

⁴⁶ Rogers, David, and David Shribman. "Campaign '88 - Getting Tough: Bush Strategists Push A Bare-Knuckle Fight To Overcome Dukakis - Worried About Low Ratings, They Hope to Shift Focus To Democrat's Failings - Chasing After Ethnic Voters." *The Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 1988.

⁴⁷ Schieffer, Bob, and Gary P. Gates. *The Acting President*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989. 366

added a right-wing veneer to the ticket, allowing Bush to secure support from within his own party. William Rusher of the *National Review* commented on the importance of the selection of a conservative Vice-President, stating, “ Bush’s running-mate must appeal as strongly as possible to the social-conservative members of the GOP coalition. This will not only balance the ticket; it will also help ward off the raid the Democrats are obviously trying to make on this crucial bloc.”⁴⁸ Gerald Pomper concurs, stating, “Indiana Senator Dan Quayle’s function on the Republican ticket was to reassure conservatives, appeal to the Reagan Democrats in the baby-boom generation, and enable George Bush, at the age of sixty-four, to talk about the future.”⁴⁹ Even with all of these advantageous attributes, Quayle brought considerable problems to the Bush campaign as well.

The public received Quayle coldly, and he presented real problems to moderates and independents. Schieffer writes, “Quayle’s first impressions on an electorate to whom he was largely unknown could not have been worse and sent the advisers into emergency damage-control planning sessions.”⁵⁰ Schieffer elaborates, stating, “Asked about his military service, Quayle left open the possibility that he had avoided military duty in Vietnam by using the connections of his wealthy family to gain admission to the Indiana National Guard. ‘Calls were made,’ he told one

⁴⁸ Rusher, William. “How We Can Win.” *National Review*, September 2, 1988, 28-32.

⁴⁹ Pomper, Gerald, Walter D. Burnham, Barbara G. Farah, Marjorie R. Hershey, and Ethel Klein. *The Election of 1988: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1989. 84

⁵⁰ Schieffer, Bob, and Gary P. Gates. *The Acting President*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989. 366

interviewer.”⁵¹ Quayle brought uncertainty and controversy to a ticket that prided itself on patriotism and service to the country. Criticism of Dukakis and his foreign policy quickly shifted to the perception that Quayle failed to serve his country during the Vietnam War.

Although derided as a stupid, undutiful ideologue by some, the reason for Quayle’s Vice Presidential selection did not seek to address these weak points. Rather, Quayle allowed Bush to reinforce his positive traits while de-emphasizing his weaknesses. Pomper writes, “And interestingly enough, Quayle’s weaknesses offered Bush an odd advantage. Quayle made Bush look strong [...] as several commentators noted, Quayle was George Bush’s George Bush”⁵² Ultimately, Danforth Quayle served two primary purposes for George Bush: consolidating support amongst the conservative base of the Republican Party, as well as making Bush look presidential. Quayle’s weaknesses in relation to these important purposes remained secondary. Dan Quayle proved to be Bush’s most visible, and thus most effective, attempt at reconciliation with staunch Reaganites within the Republican Party.

Thus the 1988 election constrained Bush ideologically, and forced him to campaign to the right of his moderate inclinations. Bush’s campaign attempted to fight on two fronts, both against Michael Dukakis and the Democratic Party, as well

⁵¹ Schieffer, Bob, and Gary P. Gates. *The Acting President*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989. 365-366

⁵² Pomper, Gerald, Walter D. Burnham, Barbara G. Farah, Marjorie R. Hershey, and Ethel Klein. *The Election of 1988: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1989. 93

as against the Reagan Republicans who deemed Bush as a moderate, Republican-In-Name-Only. Bush's fiercest attacks came internally, and led the Vice President to exert the greatest effort in reconciling with the hostile conservatives within the G.O.P. This would set the stage for a presidency that returned Bush to his moderate, pragmatic stances, but ultimately led to a split that lost Bush the 1992 presidential election.

Bush won the election, and entered into the presidency with a large amount of ideological limitations. The end of the Cold War reached its apogee immediately upon Bush taking office, and presented him with challenges that belittled the internal dissent and general obstacles of the presidential election. Conservative discontent and criticism did not dissipate once Bush entered the White House, and indeed continued to plague him throughout his handling of the dissolution of European Communism. In the next chapter, Bush enters into a battle for the future of Europe, while fighting criticism of his conduct at home. Although victorious in the 1988 presidential election, he still had yet to undergo a series of diplomatic crises that would test his many years of foreign policy experience, in addition to his standing with the conservative establishment.

Chapter 2: The End of the Cold War and the New European Order

Bush's role in the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact dictatorships as well as the final collapse of the Soviet Union is wildly ignored. Although no single person is responsible for decades of Soviet stagnation and eventual collapse, no other American political leader accomplished what George H.W. Bush did in the final years of the Cold War. Rather than being faced in the present day with a weakened Soviet confederation, or a divided Germany, we have a democratic Europe and separate sovereign nations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. President Bush and his policy of careful deliberation are directly responsible for this reality.

While conducting his foreign policy, Bush dealt with aggressive hardliners from within the Republican Party pushing for more audacious action. The challenges presented from conservatives within the G.O.P. greatly parallel the issues Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, had to address during his time in power. Both leaders offered pragmatic approaches for their country at a time when each nation remained set in an ideological orientation from the previous decade (hard-line Communism at the height of the Cold War for the Soviets, Reaganite Conservatism for the Americans). Bush reversed many of Reagan's policies and dealt with an unhappy constituency in much the same manner Gorbachev did. George H.W. Bush not only deftly guided his country through the end

of the Cold War; he did so with massive opposition from ideological purists within his own party.

Additionally, in recent years, President Ronald Reagan receives most, if not all, of the credit for 'winning' the Cold War. But as Nafatali reminds us, "George Bush entered the White House unsure whether the Cold War was actually coming to an end."¹ The Cold War remained far from over upon Bush's inauguration, and indeed a view amongst conservatives persisted in which the Soviet Union's new reforms served only to initiate a new phase of the Cold War. Sean Wilentz writes in *Age of Reagan*, that, "Cheney initially warned [Bush] that the Soviet Union might become even more of a threat if it used its new connections with the West to obtain [sic] advanced military technology."² The long-enduring conflict with the Soviet Union did not have a clear ending in sight upon Bush becoming President.

Furthermore, although no one man is responsible for decades of Soviet economic decline, it is often understood that Reagan ended the Cold War with his tough rhetoric and increase in military spending. However as this thesis will demonstrate, Reagan's policies such as the focus on arms-treaties and focusing solely on the Soviet Union, while ignoring the Eastern Bloc, proved counterproductive to ending the nearly fifty year conflict. Gorbachev, by departing from his conservative cabinet, deserves most of the credit for the end of the Cold War, where Bush should be credited with allowing Gorbachev to execute *Perestroika*

¹Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007. 66.

² Wilentz, Sean. *The Age of Reagan*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008. 295.

and *Glasnost*. As Tom Wicker writes in his biography of Bush, “Gorbachev had been more nearly the mover and shaker at the time, often unintentionally; Bush had been mostly an interested- though restrained- observer.”³ President Bush’s restraint in allowing the Soviet Union to collapse from within accelerated the process of democratization.

Indeed, as will be demonstrated, George Bush played a far more effective role in accelerating the end of the Cold War and the democratization of Europe than Reagan, who often enacted policies inimical to America’s position in the Cold War. Bush allowed Gorbachev to dismantle the Soviet system, while applying subtle pressure to further the reforms of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* in a way beneficial to the United States’ geo-political standing. Previous scholars argued that a combination of Reagan and Bush’s policies ended the Cold War. For example, Christopher Maynard writes, “Both Reagan’s grand symbolic gestures *and* Bush’s foreign policy expertise were needed to end the Cold War.”⁴ However, Bush’s policies remained the most efficacious of the events of 1989-1991, with Reagan’s policies actually proving *detrimental* to ending the Cold War.

Upon taking office Bush immediately departed from his predecessor. Though many scholars and pundits view the Bush presidency as ‘Reagan’s third term’, Maynard notes, “Bush did not, however, merely continue on the foreign policy path set by Reagan; he made a fundamental shift in foreign policy regarding the Soviet

³ Wicker, Tom. *George Herbert Walker Bush*. New York: Lipper/Viking, 2004. 136.

⁴ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. XI.

Union.”⁵ . Alfred Sikes demonstrates that “Ronald Reagan’s presidency was indeed a rhetorical presidency’. George Bush had to follow Ronald Reagan, ‘the Great Communicator’, with whom few people could compete.”⁶ Whereas Reagan focused on the power of rhetoric to advance an agenda, Bush adopted the role of technocrat, carefully working behind the scenes to adopt calculated policy. This not only represented a foreign policy shift in itself, but immediately set Bush on the path for a far more efficacious approach to Soviet negotiations.

Upon Reagan’s departure from the White House, Bush immediately changed the dynamics of the Oval Office. Instead of continuing the same path of rhetorical strength coupled with back-door diplomacy, the new President created a new approach to Soviet negotiations. As *Out of the Shadow* explains, “Reagan’s words were of speechwriters, not foreign policy advisors (...) Reagan’s strong rhetoric was never matched by actual policies.”⁷ The Reagan presidency, while playing well to domestic worries about Cold War threats, nevertheless lacked the rigor of foreign policy expertise the Bush Administration turned to by default. Mary Sarotte writes of the incoming Bush Administration in 1989 that, “There was a sense that Reaganite wild-eyed idealism about relations with Russia and nuclear disarmament

⁵ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. X.

⁶ Feldman, Leslie D., and Rosanna Perotti. *Honor and Loyalty: Inside the Politics of the George H.W. Bush White House*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. XVII.

⁷ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 53.

had started to out-strip practical realities, and now the time for sober policymaking had returned.”⁸ In immediately switching policy styles, Bush set the stage for the development of actions that led to the successful conclusion of the Cold War.

This shift is clearly demonstrated with Bush’s choice of Brent Scowcroft as National Security Advisor. This signaled another radical departure from the Reaganite foreign policy of the previous decade, while bringing an experienced realist to the forefront of White House operations. Although a dedicated Cold Warrior, Scowcroft represented a continuation of the Kissingerian School of realist foreign policy abandoned after the Nixon-Ford- Carter administrations in favor of the largely ideological dealings of Reagan and National Security Advisors John Poindexter and Frank Carlucci. Maynard addresses this in *Out of the Shadow*, writing, “This [Bush’s appointment of Reagan critics] can most plainly be seen in Bush’s appointment of Brent Scowcroft as national security advisor, and, since foreign-policy concerns would dominate the Bush administration, it was here that the Bush team made its largest separation from the Reagan agenda.”⁹ Bush’s biographer Nafatali asserts this as well, stating, “In Bush’s choice of Brent Scowcroft as national security adviser, the president-elect signaled a return to the realist foreign policies of the Nixon and Ford years.”¹⁰ The choice of Brent Scowcroft as

⁸ Sarotte, Mary D. 1989: *The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009. 22.

⁹ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 5

¹⁰ Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007. 66

National Security Advisor not only sent a strong statement differentiating Bush from Reagan, but also indicated a complete shift away from Reagan's ideological foreign policy.

Scowcroft, not only transitioned the White House to realpolitik foreign policy, but also assisted George Bush in creating a new dynamic among his advisors. Whereas Reagan allowed for a large amount of autonomy to flesh out policy for his administration, which eventually led to the Iran-Contra Scandal, Bush and Scowcroft used a more involved approach. Maynard notes that, "According to Scowcroft, Bush rarely made major decisions 'without a lot of back and forth with his advisors in order to set things in his own mind'. This was a markedly different process than that which occurred during the Reagan administration. As Colin Powell, who served on both President Reagan's and President Bush's NSC (National Security Council), recalls, Reagan 'relied more on his advisors to shape issues for him' while Bush 'got a little more deeply involved in the shaping of the issues.' And 'wanted to hear more of the in and out, up and down and dialogues over the various issues than President Reagan."¹¹

Bush knew allowing advisors and cabinet too much autonomy could undermine his position in diplomatic negotiations, (perhaps from his involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal) and acted accordingly. As Nafatali writes, "Bush understood that the U.S. government would have to speak with one voice on

¹¹ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 13-14

Gorbachev. Ronald Reagan would occasionally make a tough speech that undermined the diplomatic efforts of his Secretary of State George Shultz. (...) Knowing that Gorbachev and his opponents in Moscow read these speeches – the Soviet leader used to complain to Shultz about Reagan’s hard-line addresses- Bush exercised greater control over the rhetoric of his own administration. Cheney, who remained deeply skeptical of Gorbachev, was not permitted to speak his mind publicly.”¹² Bush both reigned in, but considered the counsel of his advisor, to create an efficient diplomatic operation that worked with outstanding success.

This creation of a close group of policymakers, while allowing for streamlined decision-making, also created unease among the powerful conservative wing of the Republican Party. Sara Diamond writes, “But among the differences between the Reagan and Bush presidencies, it was evident early on that Bush would engage in little outreach within conservative movement circles. Instead he surrounded himself with a tight coterie of policy advisors: James Baker, Brent Scowcroft, John Sununu, all of them fixtures of the Republican Party establishment.”¹³ This seemed to confirm many of the suspicions that Bush persisted into his presidency as a ‘Republican-in-name-only’, which kept dissent within the G.O.P. stoked for the 1992 presidential election.

¹² Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007. 94.

¹³ Diamond, Sara. *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing movements and Political Power in the United States*. New York: Guilford Press. 1995, 277.

However, before George Bush even focused on events overseas (or his intra-party detractors), he needed to re-structure the whole foreign policy apparatus of the presidency. During the Reagan era, the National Security Council languished in favor of foreign policy decisions made by close advisors in a small clique within the White House. Bush immediately set out to rectify this, and created a more efficient apparatus for the formation of security policy. Maynard writes, "Addressing what Zbigniew Brzezinski had referred to as a 'mid-life crisis' for the National Security Council during the Reagan years, Bush had restored the NSC to its former importance by issuing the first National Security Directive of his presidency, NSD 1, which reorganized the NSC."¹⁴ Bush allowed for the NSC to contribute policy making decisions directly to the White House as well as giving it more influence in policy formation. Maynard sums it up by stating, "In the final analysis the NSC during the Bush administration was better qualified, was more stable, had more clearly defined roles, and played a greater part in the decision making process than it had under President Reagan."¹⁵

In addition to relegating more power to the National Security Council, Bush took the bold action of de-emphasizing the role the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency [DCI] played. Bush, having previously been the DCI, knew firsthand how the person in this role could twist foreign policy to suit the agency's needs, which were not always in line with long-term foreign-affairs solutions. It is

¹⁴ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 25

¹⁵ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 14.

because of this Maynard writes, “It was clear that the DCI would provide the president with intelligence information but otherwise have no role in policymaking.”¹⁶ Centralizing power in the White House through his advisors thus allowed Bush to streamline decision-making as well as make sure his actions would not be undercut by advisors acting independently of his administration’s long-term goals.

Turning outward, Bush needed to both send a strong message and allow time for his administration to create a new approach to the Soviet problem. Bush accomplished this by calling for the National Security Review 3. While appearing to the public as a broad review of foreign policy within the government, NSR 3 also served the important role of allowing Bush to reverse Reagan’s foreign policy apparatus. However, NSR 3 served its greatest purpose in signaling to the Soviets Bush would not be the aggressive Cold Warrior Reagan had been. Sarotte writes, “The differences between the Bush and Reagan approaches became even more obvious on February 15, 1989. On that date, Bush announced publicly that he was calling for a large interagency study on U.S. foreign policy, known as National Security Review 3. This announcement brilliantly managed expectations, which was presumably its goal, because it bought the new administration a few months of time during which both domestic and foreign audiences knew they should not expect anything. It sent out a clear message that the Bush administration was not nearly as

¹⁶ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 12.

a determined foe of the status quo as Reagan had been.”¹⁷ Demonstrating to the Soviets the Bush administration would take a less hostile stance toward their nation in the future allowed time to form an articulate foreign policy strategy as well as demonstrate a clear shift away from Reagan. NSR 3 established the difference between the Bush and Reagan, while laying the groundwork for more fruitful relationship with the U.S.S.R.

Moreover, National Security Review 3 set the tone for the Bush White House’s conduct toward Soviet affairs. Instead of taking the overtly hostile stance conservatives endorsed, or a more rewarding approach to encourage reform which liberals advocated, NSR 3 gave Bush the opportunity to take the middle path with a laissez-faire approach. As Maynard writes, “the report (NSR-3) on the Soviet Union had suggested that Gorbachev had about a ‘50-50 chance’ at overcoming his domestic problems and succeeding with his reforms, and that, because of the uncertainty surrounding Gorbachev’s ability to power, U.S. policy should not be designed to either help or hurt Gorbachev.”¹⁸ By taking the route of cautious observance, rather than direct interference in Soviet policy, Bush managed to allow Gorbachev to continue reforms while not fomenting backlash through too much engagement in Soviet affairs. Additionally, this allowed the administration to avoid any criticism that a more activist foreign policy might cause.

¹⁷Sarotte, Mary D. *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009. 23

¹⁸ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 17

However, the pivotal NSR 3 did not entirely benefit the Bush administration. To many Soviet leaders, as well as conservative pundits, it seemed as though Bush was dithering. As Nafatali writes, "The pause in managing Gorbachev created a bad first impression about Bush's abilities as president. It seemed remarkable that someone who had served as an understudy for the job for eight years needed this much time to make up his mind about the most important issues in international affairs, an area that by all accounts he considered his strong suit."¹⁹ Despite initially appearing as a sign of weakness, NSR 3 served its purpose of policy realignment, a process that birthed the entire decision making process for the rest of the administration. While perhaps seemingly indecisive, NSR 3 proved vital in turning American policy in a direction that led to victory in the Cold War.

While giving the Soviet Union breathing room and signaling a less hostile stance, the Bush administration began its tenure with a wary, cautious approach to the U.S.S.R. Throughout the duration of the Bush administration, Bush viewed Reagan as too idealistic, an idea that followed him even on trips to other nations. Sarotte writes, "In summary, despite travel to Germany and Poland, the Bush administration had intentionally stepped back. A sense that Reagan had gone too far, too fast, prevailed."²⁰ Bush realized that Reagan's rhetoric created commitment devices that forced his hand in taking action diplomatically. Bush reversed this trend by relying less on public oration and more on cautious deliberation

¹⁹ Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007. 78.

²⁰ Sarotte, Mary D. *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009. 24

Bush's first true test of this new policy approach came with dealing with Germany and the eventual the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Berlin Wall symbolized Cold War division, posing a significant challenge to the Bush administration. How Bush's response to its destruction demonstrates both his departure from the Reaganite model of obstinate policy pronouncements with backdoor negotiations, as well as his realization of the negative effect such rhetoric could have on those negotiations.

The President realized how fiery public rhetoric could undermine allowing events to take their natural, and, from the United States' point of view, desired course. This explains his guarded demeanor with the announcement that the border crossing between East and West Germany fell. Maynard writes, "Certainly, Bush had very sound reasons for reacting in the cautious manner that he did. He feared that a western celebration of the wall's collapse might encourage a backlash by hard-liners in East Berlin and Moscow"²¹ Indeed, it was not only a violent reaction from the East German government Bush feared. Any strong language could force the Soviet Hand as well, and reverse the reforms of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* that the Bush administration wished to encourage. As Tom Wicker explains in his biography of the president, "Most of the West celebrated, [the fall of the Berlin Wall], too, if not as wildly as in Berlin; but in Washington, President Bush chose to 'play it cool', not wishing either to appear as an instigator of revolt or to raise the likelihood of a

²¹ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 45

violent reaction from Moscow.”²² Bush’s cautious, hands-off approach not only allowed Germany to begin the process of integration, it also staved off actions from the Soviet Union that could have undermined years of Gorbachev’s reforms.

However, although a welcome event for the NATO nations, the re-unification of Germany proved a source of contention for the United States’ European allies. Men and women who lived during World War Two presided over Western Europe, and did not desire a resurgent Germany. Additionally, a strengthened Germany could prove an effective competitor against Western European markets, a prospect that kept these nations wary of unification. However, to placate America’s allies, Bush responded by appealing directly to the German people on the re-unification question. This reinforced the perception that the United States desired a truly democratic system in Europe, rather than an extension of NATO hegemony. Additionally, it forced France and the UK’s hand, making them adhere to their own rhetoric on self-determined democracy. As Nafatali writes, “The (East German) election results (for reunification) gave Bush’s policy of hinging U.S. policy on the desires of the Germans themselves a huge boost, ending any remaining opposition from Great Britain and the French to rapid unification and left Gorbachev resigned to the disappearance of East Germany, though not yet to its absorption into NATO.”²³ Bush masterfully appealed to the democratic aspirations of the German

²² Wicker, Tom. *George Herbert Walker Bush*. New York: Lipper/Viking, 2004. 128

²³ Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007. 90

people, while keeping America's Cold War allies in line. This achievement proved especially pertinent when the debate about Germany accession to NATO occurred.

This disagreement emerged with the idea of accession of a reunified Germany as a full NATO member. Even Reagan remained wary of this outcome, seeking to sate his closest ally's (UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher), desire to keep the United Kingdom pertinent in European affairs by keeping Germany divided. Bush's use of NATO as a stabilizing force caused Thatcher to continue coldly acknowledging Bush's position. As Maynard writes, "Bush focused on stability in Europe, noting that NATO, unlike the Warsaw Pact, provided a solid framework for cooperation in an integrated Europe. This brought protests from Thatcher who, for largely economic reasons, did not want Germany to be part of an increasingly integrated European Community and, instead, wanted to keep both NATO and the Warsaw Pact intact in order to maintain part of the old order."²⁴ The desire for stability to allow reforms to continue on a steady pace encouraged the adoption of stances quite alien for a Cold War Republican. As Maynard writes, "[In Poland] Bush wanted a gradual process that encouraged change while maintaining order, a preference which led him to support Jaruzelski over the Solidarity candidates. [...] It was certainly ironic, as even Bush admitted, for a US president to talk a Communist leader into running for election, but Bush realized that a peaceful, controlled

²⁴ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 57

process would be the best course for change.”²⁵ Bush realized events had to occur naturally, and that US involvement could prove counterproductive to European democratization.

The Re-unification of Germany transpired with Bush in the White House, and happened because of Bush eschewing the policies of his predecessor. The further coup de 'grace of German accession into N.A.T.O. demonstrates one of Bush's most successful foreign policy achievements that may not have occurred had Reagan been in power. However, the Bush Administration had to make its case to its allies, which proved more difficult than initially expected.

The Bush Administration faced the initial challenge of dealing with N.A.T.O. allies who remained skeptical of his new approach. Reagan's strong personality and hard-line stance proved popular with nations in Europe, due mainly to displaying America's commitment to European security for their homelands. However, Bush's message of foreign policy re-assessment caused France and the United Kingdom to doubt this new method, fearing future insecurity would be the result of these policies. This intra-NATO disagreement fully manifested itself in the problem of German reunification.

With the negotiations for the re-unification of Germany, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, as well as French President Francois Mitterrand disapproved of Bush's efforts towards total re-unification. Thatcher exemplified this

²⁵ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 37

contempt for the new Bush approach towards Europe. Maynard writes, “Thatcher realized something that many Americans did not: George Bush had markedly different policies than Ronald Reagan. For her part, Thatcher preferred Reagan and was uncomfortable with the astonishing pace of change, warning that ‘times of great change are times of great uncertainty, even danger’”.²⁶ Thatcher, wishing to maintain British influence on continental security, greatly disliked Bush’s attempts to reshape the European order emerging from the ruins of the Berlin Wall.

It is in this disagreement that Bush further distanced himself from President Reagan. Bush and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl desired a solution to German re-unification that originated within Germany, conforming to German demands. However, Thatcher and Mitterrand wished to adhere to the Four-Powers Agreement, a World War Two division of power that gave France, Britain and the United States a great amount of authority in deciding German affairs. Maynard demonstrates Bush’s departure from Reagan on this issue, writing, “The four powers agreement of June 5, 1945, which divided Germany, was actually a stabilizing influence on Europe, a position held by the Reagan administration.”²⁷

Indeed, Bush and Chancellor Kohl remained alone in seeing the rare opportunity available for full German reunification, as well as German membership in NATO. Even though Bush emphasized indirect action in Germany and Europe to let the reforms run their course, he recognized the golden opportunity afforded him

²⁶ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 54

²⁷ Ibid.

by recent successful negotiations with Gorbachev at Malta. However, America's Cold War allies, as well as Gorbachev, did not wish to see unification occur, much less wish for the balance of 50 years of Cold War stability to disappear. Nafatali writes, "Stunned by the political upheaval in Berlin, Gorbachev, Mitterrand, and Thatcher each told Bush that German unification, let alone a unified Germany in NATO, was not on the agenda."²⁸ Bush pushing his German unification agenda, therefore, made the other NATO nations skeptical of his agenda from that point forward.

Bush's choice of leaning towards the German position came with considerable risk. It threatened alienating the other countries within NATO, a rift that the Soviet Union and Gorbachev wished to exploit. However, by allying with Kohl in the internal debate for German accession to NATO, "Bush gave Kohl the strongest possible guarantee of U.S. support (for Germany to remain in NATO), Bush lessened the chance that West Germany might abandon NATO in order to hasten reunification."²⁹ Bush's shift away from the established allies of the Reagan Presidency (Thatcher especially), while risky, led directly to Germany joining NATO, one of Bush's key foreign policy achievements. Maynard elaborates by saying "The rapid and peaceful process toward reunification was a testament to skillful leaders

²⁸ Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007. 86

²⁹ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 61

using behind-the-scenes personal diplomacy, plus a bit of good timing.”³⁰ Sean Wilentz agrees, stating, “In his cautious way, Bush had established rapport with Gorbachev- and with Germany’s swift and relatively untroubled reunification, he secured what would prove to be the greatest diplomatic feat of his presidency.”³¹ Bush later used the momentum from his German success to push east in his quest for reforms.

Bush married the strategy of German reunification with his plan for the liberation of Eastern Europe. This strategy departed, yet again, from Reagan’s focus on the U.S.S.R. Maynard elaborates, writing, “Bush’s change in foreign policy was orchestrated by his closest advisor, one of the Reagan administration’s critics, Brent Scowcroft, who was convinced that the Cold War could only be brought to a conclusion if it ended where it had begun: in Central and Eastern Europe.”³²

Reagan, as a matter of course, disagreed with this strategy, as it departed from arms-control negotiations. Maynard further elaborates, stating, “This might seem like an obvious decision (the focus on Eastern Europe), but Reagan strongly disagreed. Reagan was obsessed with reducing nuclear weapons and more concerned with arms control discussions with Gorbachev than substantive proposals to reshape Central and Eastern Europe.”³³ Although he angered many on

³⁰ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 54

³¹ Wilentz, Sean. *The Age of Reagan*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008. 296

³² Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 29

the right with his reversal of policy from the Reagan years, this proved the key to his success in the foreign policy realm.

Bush's strategy in Eastern and Central Europe suffered from a considerable handicap, however. A recession erupted in the late 1980's, forcing Bush to use alternative incentives outside of direct economic aid to the Communist regimes to encourage reform. This constraint developed under Bush's predecessor, Reagan, in his quest for the Strategic Defense Initiative and massive increases in military spending. These restraints forced Bush to find alternatives to traditional aid packages. In the process of doing this, he not only fueled democratization in Eastern Europe, but also cut military spending considerably, setting important precedents for winding down Cold War arms buildups. Nafatali describes how Bush achieved this: "'rewarding' these regimes was not to involve cash. Worried about the already ballooning federal deficit, the White House chose not to make any dramatic grants, just promising to support (Polish) requests for international loans."³⁴ However, this support still proved efficacious, and demonstrates the level of skill Bush's diplomacy operated on with its limited options.

A potential hindrance to further diplomatic progress occurred with the Soviet Stance against the Baltic States, especially Lithuania. Throughout the late 1980's, the Soviet Union brutally repressed independence movements in the Baltic region, despite popular support for secession. Bush realized that contention

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007.

between the Soviet Union and the United States on this issue could delay or even reverse the many gains made in the summer of 1989, and chose to tread carefully. Many viewed this to be tacit support for the Soviet repression in these states, angering many conservatives in the United States. Wilentz writes, “American conservatives, already angry at Bush over China, were enraged at what they called his dithering on the Baltic Republics.”³⁵ Bush’s course of action on the Baltic region left much to be desired for many in the Republican Party.

This opposition within the G.O.P. proved swift and brutal. Bush, much like Gorbachev, had to placate conservatives to continue his grand strategy of the democratization and world-integration. Nafatali records the harsh nature of the responses to Bush’s action (or, in their view, lack of action) in the Baltic region, specifically with Lithuania: “Bush faced widespread opposition from idealists and realists alike (for his lack of sanctions on the Soviet Union for the Lithuanian crackdown). The conservative columnist George Will wrote acidly that the Lithuanian crisis proved that ‘Bushism is Reaganism minus the passion for freedom.’ Meanwhile the grand old man of American realism, Richard Nixon, let the *New York Times* know that he feared Bush was making the same mistake as Reagan by identifying the continued political survival of Gorbachev with U.S. interests. The unkindest cut of all came from Lithuania’s president, Vytautas Landsbergis, who in the face of the Soviet energy embargo assailed Bush for authoring a latter-day

³⁵ Wilentz, Sean. *The Age of Reagan*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008. 296

Munich, the twentieth century's symbol of wrongheaded appeasement."³⁶ Bush received harsh critiques from almost all conservatives, and even the people who worked quietly to help achieve independence.

However, this criticism proved too hasty, as each Baltic republic managed to achieve independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Sacrificing expediency (and Baltic freedoms) for the long-term fulfillment of promises from the Malta Summit demonstrates that Bush not only knew how to balance issues for the successful completion of a grand plan, but knew when to slow the diplomatic push on the USSR to continue to achieve reforms and democratization elsewhere.

Bush chose to address this issue after the Malta Summit, largely to avoid alienating Gorbachev in the interest of further reforms. However, Bush knew exactly how to apply the right pressure to force Gorbachev to desist in repression in the Baltic region. Nafatali states, "He [Bush] reminded Gorbachev of his promises at Malta and warned that unless there was a real dialogue began between Moscow and Lithuania, there was no way the U.S. government could accept a trade agreement with Moscow, which he knew that Gorbachev needed to give his people some economic hope."³⁷ Bush's restraint in the Baltic proved to be an invaluable bargaining chip indeed.

³⁶ Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007. 92

³⁷ Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007. 93

Central and Eastern Europe, while remaining the Bush Administration's top priority, nevertheless were merely means with which to engage the Soviet Union. Bush made his clearest departure from Reagan in his dealings with the U.S.S.R., shifting for more conventional means of weakening the country and its domain, rather than obsessively focusing on weapons limitations. This flanking maneuver pulled American diplomacy out of the mire of slow weapons talks, and allowed for the true conclusion to the almost 50 year-long conflict.

Bush immediately set himself apart from Reagan on the issue of ballistic missiles. Had the Reagan administrations focused on a broader range of diplomatic strategies, a more efficacious strategy toward Soviet engagement could have developed. Maynard writes of Bush's cabinet, "Out of this close-knit group [Bush's cabinet] emerged a consensus characterized by both skepticism of Gorbachev and criticism of Reagan's anti-nuclear weapons enthusiasm."³⁸ Reagan indeed stood to *the left* of Bush on nuclear weapons, having proposed the elimination of nuclear weaponry all together at the Reykjavik Conference in 1986. Bush, realizing any kind of deal like this would prove unrealistic, maintained a stance of keeping nuclear weapons, albeit with some reductions. Nafatali writes, "A year earlier Bush had unsuccessfully argued within the administration that any agreement with the Soviets on eliminating intermediate-range-nuclear-missiles should permit both sides to retain one hundred nuclear warheads. Bush that it prudent for the United

³⁸ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 14

States to have some of these missiles in Alaska. But Reagan, who believed the world would be better off without any nuclear missiles, preferred an agreement that would eliminate all of them on both sides.”³⁹

Even Bush’s inside staff opposed the ideas proposed by the Reagan Administration on nuclear weaponry. Writing of Scowcroft, Maynard states, “He [Scowcroft] felt that Reagan’s initial hard-line approach [against the Soviets] was naïve. Scowcroft especially objected to Reagan’s policy on nuclear deterrence, terming Reagan’s 1986 Reykjavik proposal to eliminate all ballistic missiles as, ‘insane’. Bush’s selection of Scowcroft sent a clear message to Washington insiders that he intended to change the direction of defense and foreign policy.”⁴⁰ Bush and his advisors, viewing this focus on arms-control as single minded and not an effective strategy to end the Cold War, almost entirely abandoned it.

Indeed, the new focus became political stability to allow the natural course of events to continue, as Soviet stagnation seemed apt at dismantling the Communist empire on its own. Again emphasizing the shift away from arms control towards letting the course of events occur naturally, Maynard writes that, “During arms control negotiations, Reagan had placed an emphasis on numbers- reducing numbers by eliminating certain kinds of weapons, and approach that Bush’s national security advisor Brent Scowcroft disagreed with. Scowcroft had viewed

³⁹Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007. 57

⁴⁰ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 7

President Reagan's rush towards disarmament as a 'mighty dubious objective for grown-ups in this business' and believed that simply getting rid of certain kinds of weapons did not achieve the overall goal of arms control, which was to *improve stability*. [Italics added for emphasis]"⁴¹ Bush and his advisors pursued a diverse range of strategy to allow Soviet liberalization, which created a much more fruitful environment for the collapse of the Soviet Union than any amount of ballistic missile talks could.

However, the negotiations with Bush and the Soviet Union culminated in the final major summit with between the U.S.S.R. and the United States. The Malta Summit, while officially merely an exchange of views between Bush and Gorbachev. Malta, in addition to accelerating events in Eastern and Central Europe, led to Gorbachev's final yield to Bush in the bilateral relationships. The conference at Malta proved to be the end point of the Cold War due to the concessions wrought there, the final conference that ended 45 years of conflict. Maynard writes on the importance of Malta, stating: "Certainly, the Malta meeting turned out to be very successful for both Gorbachev and Bush. More importantly, it was a key even in the ending of the Cold War. As Bush's press secretary argued, it was the pivotal point in the change of U.S.-Soviet relationship: 'I would say that [Malta] was the pivotal point at which the West first recognized that Communism was changing and may collapse. And we met with the purpose of trying to define how that could happen, what our

⁴¹ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 3

role would be, and how would could help guide the future of whatever Russia emerged.”⁴² These concessions proved uniquely Bushian in origin, vindicating his departure from Reagan’s Cold War strategy.

Bush immediately showed Gorbachev his pragmatic side at the commencement with the conference, demonstrating that he could work with the President in good faith. While Reagan had also established a considerable rapport with the General Secretary, his rhetoric inhibited his ability to match policy with oratory. Bush’s unique brand of diplomacy, however, did not suffer from this problem. As Maynard writes, “This was characteristic of Bush’s style of diplomacy, having similarly warned Gorbachev not to read too much into ‘empty cannons of rhetoric’.”⁴³ This warning allowed both leaders to enter into the summit realizing that the Reagan Administration’s rhetorical commitment devices would not inhibit the agreements reached at Malta.

However, both leaders suffered from internal opposition to the reforms either side proposed. Bush and Gorbachev had to sate the demands of conservatives within their own parties for a tougher stance against each other, an approach that proved to be an obstacle that needed to be immediately addressed. Nafatali writes, “During the first session (at the Malta Summit), on December 2, Bush was candid about his approach to the unwinding events in Eastern Europe. “There are people in

⁴² Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 50

⁴³ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 35

the United States,' he told Gorbachev in a statement that was also revealing about his own insecurities, 'who accuse me of being too cautious. It is true I am a prudent man, but I am not a coward, and my administration will seek to avoid doing anything that would damage your position in the world. But I was insistently advised to something of the sort- to climb the Berlin Wall and make broad declarations My administration, however, is avoiding these steps; we are in favor of reserved behavior.' Bush's vow pleased Gorbachev, 'I welcome your words,' he said. 'I regard them as a manifestation of political will. It is important for me.'"⁴⁴ Bush's opening statement provided a new environment in which both leaders could work in, revealing that Bush chose to ignore hard-line pressure from the United States.

In addition to agreeing upon the aforementioned concessions, the Malta conference single-handedly reversed 50 years of Cold War politics. Bush forced Gorbachev to agree to not use force to quell internal unrest and independence movements. Wicker writes, " The next day on the *Maxim Gorky*, Gorbachev made the flat pledge that 'the Soviet Union will under no circumstances start a war' and was ready 'to no longer regard the United States as an adversary... our relationship is cooperative.'"⁴⁵ This startling announcement, while not a contractual promise, created a public commitment device to which Gorbachev would be held, extending the pressure Bush could apply to the General Secretary. This public announcement

⁴⁴ Nafatali, Timothy. *George H.W. Bush*. New York: New York Times Publishing, 2007. 87

⁴⁵ Wicker, Tom. *George Herbert Walker Bush*. New York: Lipper/Viking, 2004. 130

finally allowed independence movements room to continue fighting against communism, and ultimately led to the peaceful end of the Cold War.

The importance of the Malta Summit, unfortunately, is downplayed as an event that ended the Cold War. Maynard writes, “and even though no agreements were signed at Malta, the meeting was important because it built trust between the two sides and the two leaders.”⁴⁶ Wicker, writing on Scowcroft’s opinion on the meeting, states, “Scowcroft thought, in the end, that the Malta conference ‘worked far better’ than he had hoped, its major accomplishment having been that each side had clearly presented its attitude ‘on a whole range of issues.’”⁴⁷ However, Malta did more than just establish trust and ‘present attitudes’. Through the verbal agreements reached there, it proved to be the true ending point of almost 50 years of global Cold War.

It is through the policies the Bush administration adopted, as well as its vast departures from Reagan, that the Cold War came to a peaceful, and from an American viewpoint, successful end. Rather than solely focusing on weapons, Bush managed to take the fight directly to Eastern and Central Europe, and strike the Soviet Union where it was weakest: its empire. The process of German reunification is clearly marked by Bush’s insistence of not only the complete and swift integration of East Germany with West Germany, but its accession to NATO as well. Had Bush deferred to his European allies, a divided Germany would exist today.

⁴⁶ Maynard, Christopher. *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. 51

⁴⁷ Wicker, Tom. *George Herbert Walker Bush*. New York: Lipper/Viking, 2004. 130

Additionally, Bush's ultimate accomplishment lay with his successful conference at Malta with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. At Malta, Bush forced Gorbachev to agree to the final concessions that led to the successful conclusion of the Cold War. Without Bush's cautious, contemplative foreign policy in place before the summit commenced, The United States may have lost these gains. Malta reinforced existing diplomatic agreements, produced new ones, and demonstrated Bush's mastery of the diplomatic process. It proved a great victory that cemented Bush and the United States as the dominant partner for the remainder of the conclusion of the Cold War.

Although Gorbachev drove the reforms that led to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, Bush provided him with the space needed to complete his reforms, as well as nudging them farther than Gorbachev would have liked. Bush's mastery of the diplomatic process, as well as his realpolitik and patient strategy brought the Cold War to a conclusion. It can safely be stated that George H.W. Bush, rather than Reagan, created the global environment for the conclusion of almost 50 years of ideological conflict.

CHAPTER 3: 1992 AND THE CREATION OF MODERN AMERICAN CONSERVATISM

The stage was set for the epic 1992 election. Much has been written about Bush's struggle with the young governor from Arkansas, William Jefferson Clinton, a struggle he would ultimately lose. However, the election of 1992 presents us with a unique scenario in which three different candidates attracted conservative voters in the Republican Primary and General election campaign. This chapter will demonstrate that the conservative discontent Bush unleashed against his successful oversight of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which when combined with a breaking of the promises he made in the 1988 election, led to an ideological re-evaluation causing the emergence of the candidacies of Patrick Buchanan and Ross Perot.

Chapter Three will not be an analysis of the history of the 1992 election as a whole, of which much has been written. Instead, I will examine the three major conservative candidates for president that emerged in the election cycle, Bush, Perot and Buchanan. Using conservative periodicals in the same manner as chapter 1, I will show that conservative ideology and opinions entered into a period of a flux, and that the diversity of opinions, coupled with the absence of anti-communism, further opened this rift. This split, exacerbated by the conservative media's bipolarity on the conservative candidates, further weakened a president already faltering due to a weak economy.

Additionally, the United States' victory in the Cold War posed a problem for American conservatives, as anti-communism glued together the conservative coalition of business leaders, social conservatives and populist conservatives for five decades. Without the Soviet Union, the Republican Party fragmented in time for the election, leading to candidates like Perot and Buchanan running for the presidency. Furthermore, these candidates represented older ideological tropes from the pre-Cold War era. With the world now bereft of a super power besides the United States, America's mission to cultivate democracy seemed frivolous to these older-style conservatives.

In addition to dissecting Bush's actions in the 1992 election, this chapter will analyze the ideological implications of candidates Buchanan and Perot toward modern American conservatism. Buchanan, the self-styled 'paleo-conservative', ran on a platform of a drawdown of American commitments in the foreign policy realm, hard-right social issues and a protectionist stance on trade. Perot, in contrast highlighted the deficit as America's main problem, and ran on a hybrid platform of massive deficit reduction, combined with a disengagement from the world in the same vein as Buchanan.

Finally, I will demonstrate that in addition to the economy playing a large role in Bush's defeat, issues of foreign policy contributed to the conservative split in 1992. This split forced Bush to both adopt stances to the right of his normal ideology, in addition to having to work to recapture his base. This ideological conflict, coupled with the recession, ruined Bush's chances for re-election. While the

economy played a huge role, Bush's inability to use his successes with the Soviet Union to rally his base pushed the final nail in the coffin of his candidacy. We begin our analysis of Patrick Buchanan, a man who ran against Bush's vision of a 'New World Order' of America's continued engagement and cooperation with the world.

CANDIDATE BUCHANAN

Television commentator Patrick Buchanan determined that President Bush surrendered the Reagan legacy early on in his presidency, and thus decided to mount a primary challenge to the man he viewed as an apostate. Patrick Buchanan displayed the resurgence of the old Republican Party in the mold of Senator Robert Taft of Ohio. Reviving isolationist sentiment and combining it with economic nationalism, Buchanan does not merely represent the backlash against the Bush Presidency in conservative circle. Rather, Buchanan's bid in the Republican Primary in 1992 represents the fragmentation of the Republican Party upon America's victory in the Cold War, a party that could no longer unite the diverse groups of conservatives within itself through anti-communism. Buchanan's challenge influenced both George Bush's campaign and American conservatism more profoundly than has previously been considered, a fact that is made manifest in the success of his insurgent candidacy.

Patrick Buchanan began his political career working as an opposition researcher in the Nixon White House, and remained a member of the Republican establishment heading into the 1992 election. This makes the idea of his strategy as a political outsider all the more surprising. However, as we will see, Buchanan's

outsider status did not originate in his career, but in his political stances that challenged Reaganite neo-conservative orthodoxy. Buchanan, thus, garnered a mixed response. While emphasizing social issues that pleased many Republicans, he also created fears that he stoked too much populist fire, and that he ignored a half-century of evolution of the Republican Party. In the 1992 Republican primary election, Buchanan's isolationism presented the biggest problem for a new breed of conservatives that took an activist approach to foreign policy.

Buchanan likened himself a 'paleo-conservative', meaning he adhered to a value set more akin to the isolationist Republicans of the 1930s. paleo-conservatives argued for drastic protectionist measures to protect domestic manufacturing, in addition to taking a hard-right stance on social issues. However, to take this position demonstrated the problem of rejecting the very successes in foreign policy Republican Presidents from Eisenhower to Nixon, and even Reagan, achieved. This prompted William F. Buckley to comment, "We simply can't have someone (leading the conservative movement) who says America First and wants to retract all foreign aid,"¹ Buckley's magazine, *National Review*, echoed this sentiment, writing, "In short, an isolationism (like Buchanan's is) none the better for being erratic and inchoate."² Buchanan perturbed many conservatives with his rage aimed at the GOP's laissez-faire policies, policies that became orthodoxy in the post-war era.

¹ Perry, James. "Campaign 92: Conservatives Find Themselves Caught between a Bush They Mistrust and a Buchanan They Fear." *The Wall Street Journal*, March 10, 1992.

² Anonymous. "Grading Buchanan." *National Review*, April 27, 1992, 12.

The standard narrative to the 1992 election maintains that domestic policy decided the outcome, but even in the Republican primary we see this is too simple an understanding. Buchanan's presidential run remained extremely concerned with issues of foreign policy, which in turn spilled over into the economic arena. Issues of trade policy dominated Buchanan's talking points, driving home his critiques of president Bush. Fellow conservative Richard Brookhiser noticed Buchanan's focus on external issues reflected a trend started well before the 1992 election, writing, "In his memoirs, Buchanan notes that he agreed with Richard Nixon that 'the action and passion of our time' are engaged, not in domestic issues, but in 'the world arena.' For 45 years, the main bout in that arena was the fight against Communism. Now that the Soviet Union is no more, it almost seems as if Buchanan the protectionist is casting about for new sparring partners."³ Buchanan relentlessly pursued this narrative on the campaign trail, ultimately leading to his success in the New Hampshire primary election. This topic of trade, a new issue in the 1992 election, demonstrates the foreign policy concerns of the Republican Party, despite Buchanan desiring a drawdown of the global American presence.

The issue of trade disparities, an issue of particular importance in the early 1990's, presented concern even in the activist wing of the Republican Party. American fears about a resurgent Japanese manufacturing sector pervaded public discourse in the early 1990's. Conservatives felt imperiled by this issue as well, worrying the Japanese manufacturing could undercut an economic recovery that

³ Brookhiser, Richard. "Waiting for Righty." *National Review*, January 20, 1992, 40.

would lead the country out of the recession. Neo-conservative Richard Brookhiser reflected many Americans' fears of a resurgent Japan, for example, writing, "an external danger is the activity of nations that know the score. The rising economic power of Japan has filed a claim to displace the United States as dominant power.' Cold-war institutions must be revamped to take account of the new realities: Should the United States 'defend rich and prosperous allies' who 'invade our markets?'"⁴ Buchanan's presidential run opened up long dormant forces that questioned the GOP's turn towards internationalism, forces that would later coalesce into the Perot's independent run for president. However, before this occurred, Buchanan campaigned on themes of trade, and linked them to foreign security.

Buchanan, competing for the New Hampshire primary vote, hammered foreign nations stealing American jobs. Buchanan stated, "In 1988, you recall, Mr. Bush said, 'We're going to create thirty million new jobs.' What he didn't say was that they were in Guangdong Province, Yokohama, and Mexico."⁵ He even took an aggressive stance against a Japanese journalist, proclaiming, "You and I may be friends, but we're not going to tolerate dumping of computer chips, which take out a couple of American industries, and then suddenly shortages.... This is the kind of stuff that is not going to go on. We're going to play hardball with you."⁶ This rhetoric resounded with the people of New Hampshire, who, although arguably not the victims of Japanese mercantilism, viewed the economic problems the country

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Brookhiser, William McGurn. "Pat Buchanan and the Intellectuals." *National Review*, February 17, 1992, 41.

⁶ Ibid.

endured as ones originating outside the nation. Buchanan appealed to the populist minded citizens of New Hampshire with his denouncement of outsourcing and laissez-faire trade policies. However, this made many conservatives doubt Buchanan's commitment to upholding the free-market traditions of the GOP.

Buchanan's populist economic appeal, while playing well with the average citizen in New Hampshire, supremely worried the GOP establishment. William F. Buckley, writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, argued, "We simply can't have someone (leading the conservative movement) who says America First and wants to retract all foreign aid,"⁷ *National Review* even compared Buchanan to Democrats, arguing "Buchanan told Detroit it had to cut union featherbedding. Otherwise, his rhetoric on Japanese auto imports was indistinguishable from Dick Gephardt's. Buchanan also criticized fast-track negotiations with Mexico, making him indistinguishable from Jerry Brown and sharply distinguishable from Ronald Reagan."⁸ However often conservatives might have disliked Bush, they greatly feared a return to a pre- World War II ideology, an ideology that betrayed the laissez-faire economic policies long established in the Republican Party.

This fear of an abandonment of laissez-faire economic policy within the Republican Party led John Fund of *The Wall Street Journal* to comment, "He (Buchanan) has fallen in with a curious breed of conservatives that wants to use his

⁷ Perry, James. "Campaign 92: Conservatives Find Themselves Caught between a Bush They Mistrust and a Buchanan They Fear." *The Wall Street Journal*, March 10, 1992.

⁸ Anonymous. "Grading Buchanan." *National Review*, April 27, 1992, 12.

candidacy to promote policies of economic nationalism that are, in an increasingly global economy, at best archaic. At worst, they could repeat the trade strife of the 1920s and 1930s that helped plunge the world into depression and war.”⁹ If the election of 1992 presented a crossroads for the Republican Party and conservatives, to many, Buchanan represented a retreat from the successes of Reaganist foreign policy and economics.

However, many conservatives dispute the notion that Buchanan even operated as an isolationist. Thomas Bethell argued in *National Review*, “In some respects, Buchanan has shown a greater foreign-policy activism than Bush. He has called for the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, to which end he would ‘send the Sixth Fleet on a courtesy call to Dubrovnik.’ To the dismay of some of his friends in the John Randolph Club, he recently told a San Francisco Chronicle reporter that he would ‘support the President in any decision to use covert action to get rid of Saddam Hussein.’ But Buchanan would oppose subordinating U.S. foreign policy to the UN Security Council, as happened in the war against Iraq, and he is bitterly opposed to the Remocrat-DeRepublican policy of bailing out foreign governments through the World Bank and IMF--and sticking U.S. taxpayers with the bill.”¹⁰ Whether Buchanan argued for recognition for the seceding Yugoslav states of Slovenia or Croatia or even for action against Iraqi dictator (and Gulf-War initiator) Saddam Hussein, he clearly presents Buchanan as opposed to isolationism. Not only

⁹ Fund, John. "The Protectionists Behind Buchanan." *The Wall Street Journal*, March 3, 1992

¹⁰ Bethell, Tom, and Humphrey Taylor. "The Case for Buchanan." *National Review*, March 2, 1992, 34.

does Bethell defend Buchanan in a publication that normally expressed skepticism to a campaign that many conservatives viewed as flawed on foreign policy issues, it demonstrates that even Bush's successes in foreign policy, such as the American victory in the Gulf War, only led to more points of critique.

Indeed, Patrick Buchanan was a more nuanced figure than many on the political right gave him credit for. Indeed, many *conservatives* recognized this, arguing that Buchanan did not represent a return to the failed policies of 1930's-style isolationism, and possessed complex policy goals. William McGurn argued, "For all his opposition to the Gulf War, for example, he never did join the Committee to Avert a Mideast Holocaust. For all the John Randolph Club's railing about civil rights, Buchanan says he supported the original (1964) act. For all his America Firstism he favors intervention on behalf of Croatia."¹¹ That Buchanan supported intervention in limited circumstances allowed respectable conservatives to support his candidacy with minimal reservations.

Indeed, Buchanan brought out many old-style conservatives in the opinion war the raged over Bush's legacy. "Mr. Buchanan is not so much attacking George Bush's "New World Order" -- in part because it is so vaguely defined that there is nothing much to attack -- as he is confronting the "Old World Order," a set of U.S. foreign policies that have been little altered by either Democratic or Republican

¹¹ McGurn, William. "Pat Buchanan and the Intellectuals." *National Review*, February 17, 1992, 41.

administrations since World War II."¹² This critique of Bush's 'New World Order' legitimated the fears people like Buckley, and neo-conservatives as a whole, that there remained a strain of 'paleo-conservatives' within the Republican Party that could derail the Reaganite legacy of an activist foreign policy.

However, Buchanan's critique of American global activism resonated with some conservatives. This extended into the appraisal of America's position after the end of the Cold War. The idea of maintaining a global, anti-Soviet force seemed to some fiscally imprudent. This sentiment is reflected by George Melloan, who wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "Mr. Buchanan is suggesting that he would dismantle the U.S. 'empire' for much the same economic reasons that brought about the collapse of the Soviet empire. He is saying, in effect, that the empire - or more appropriately the Pax Americana - is too expensive for U.S. taxpayers to support."¹³ Thus, Bush's success in concluding the Cold War opened up a critique of his policies of maintaining a global presence after America's main enemy ceased to exist. Ironically, Bush's foreign policy seemed archaic by many in the old paleo-conservative movement.

Buchanan's success in the New Hampshire primary, in which he garnered forty percent of the vote against an incumbent president, generated an even greater fear of his future role in the conservative establishment. They dreaded a purging of the party that could create the smallest of tents in which conservatives could

¹² Melloan, George. "Global View: Buchanan Is Challenging the 'Old World Order'." *The Wall Street Journal*, February 24, 1992.

¹³ Ibid.

operate in. *National Review*, invoking Ronald Reagan to defend their position, argued, "Ronald Reagan understood very well that conservatism is a broad church. But Buchanan regards neoconservatives as domestic liberals and thus heretics"¹⁴. An anonymous contributor to the *National Review* echoed this sentiment, stating, "[...] there are conservative leaders who wish to squash now any prospect of Mr. Buchanan's ascendancy in the conservative movement in 1996. Some of these leaders may be inspired by considerations of personal rivalry; but some undoubtedly harbor the genuine conviction that Mr. Buchanan's conservatism is too narrow, exclusive, and ungenerous to be the conservatism of tomorrow."¹⁵ This fear of a 'narrow, exclusive' conservatism led many disgruntled conservatives back, at least temporarily, into the Bush fold.

However, many conservatives also whole-heartedly endorsed Buchanan's challenge to Bush, arguing that the President long forfeited his right to right-wing identity. William McGurn proclaimed that, "George Bush has abandoned the heart and soul of the Republican Party, and we can turn this little rebellion into a middle-class revolution that will take this party back."¹⁶ Nevertheless, these pro-Buchanan Republicans did not just perceive Buchanan as more conservative than Bush; they also viewed him as possessing a greater chance of victory in November. Thomas Bethell argued in *National Review* that "It's not just that Buchanan would put up a fight. The big difference between him and the country-club types who have kept

¹⁴ Anonymous. "Grading Buchanan." *National Review*, April 27, 1992, 12.

¹⁵ Anonymous. "Divided We Fall." *National Review*, March 30, 1992, 11.

¹⁶ McGurn, William. "The Boys on the Bus." *National Review*, March 30, 1992, 18.

control of the ever-shrinking GOP is that Pat Buchanan understands that we are in a fight. Bush doesn't."¹⁷ Since the 1980 election, conservatives viewed the path to electoral victory in staying true to the underlying philosophy of the Republican Party. Because Bush seemed an apostate, Buchanan offered a more attractive alternative, and proved an efficacious challenger for the White House.

The ideological effects of the Buchanan candidacy did more than force conservatives to reevaluate policy positions. Buchanan represented a factionalizing force that had the potential to rip apart the Reagan coalition of social conservatives and economic laissez-faire advocates. However, Buchanan saw Bush's stance as a moderate as a betrayal to the party, leading him to justify his actions on ideological grounds. Richard Brookhiser wrote, "One of the things he (Buchanan) wasn't worried about was picking a fight within the GOP. 'I haven't factionalized my party,' he told us, 'George Bush has.... I'm challenging the President of my party because he's abandoned the principles of his party.'"¹⁸ Buchanan's critiques, contributing to the fracturing of the Republican Party, also put President Bush on the defensive.

Patrick Buchanan scared Bush out of complacency with his strong showing in the New Hampshire primary election. However, the results of this victory lay in long-dormant trends within American conservatism's re-awakening, stirred by the collapse of global Communism. Buchanan channeled conservative discontent with the Bush administration, but also offered new philosophical options to a party

¹⁷ Bethell, Tom, and Humphrey Taylor. "The Case for Buchanan." *National Review*, March 2, 1992, 34.

¹⁸ McGurn, William. "Waiting for Righty." *National Review*, January 30, 1992, 40.

locked in fifty years of Cold War thinking.

In addition to this ideological re-evaluation, Buchanan stirred a new constituency that found new candidates as the election wore on. As political scientists Rapoport and Stone argue, “Buchanan’s challenge to an incumbent president who had recently enjoyed astronomical popularity exposed Bush’s weakness and presaged the success of Perot’s insurgent candidacy.”¹⁹ The electorate, vastly more awakened to concerns of foreign and trade policy than the common historical narrative gives them credit for, engaged in a journey away from Bush, towards Buchanan and finally, in many cases, settling on Ross Perot. Although domestic policy did indeed play a huge role in the 1992 election, the protectionist stances, in addition to rhetoric arguing for a disengagement from foreign affairs, gave Buchanan (and eventually Perot) a huge amount of support they garnered. It is due to Bush presiding over the many changes in the world (Europe democratizing, the collapse of the USSR), and the startling pace in which they occurred, that allowed Buchanan to exploit a worry in the electorate of America over-shooting its capabilities to maintain Bush’s ‘New World Order’. The Buchanan run for presidency demonstrates how George Bush’s foreign policy undermined his conservative support, and thus his efforts for re-election.

¹⁹ Rapoport, Ronald, and Walter Stone. *Three's A Crowd*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992. 52.

CANDIDATE PEROT

If Buchanan drew out the discontent within American conservatism, Ross Perot stepped in to capitalize on it. Ross Perot, the billionaire founder of Electronic Data Systems, received encouragement to run from a largely discontented, deficit-concerned electorate. Perot declared on Larry King's television program that he would run for president, provided he received enough signatures to appear on the ballot in all fifty states. Having met this challenge, Perot supporters galvanized the discontent with the political status quo. However, Perot did not solely represent a protest vote. He drew from a large pool of angry conservatives to finish the voter transition Buchanan started.

Perot saw himself as the ultimate political outsider. In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, Perot stated, "I am not the servant of the Establishment, or the media, or any other group. I don't want to belong to anyone but the owners of the country."²⁰ This is largely in line with the strategy of Patrick Buchanan, noticed by Michel McQueen of *The Wall Street Journal*, who wrote, "As yet another voice for the anti-Washington, anti-incumbent mood in the country, Mr. Perot embraces parts of the messages of already declared insurgent candidates. His blunt call for more government accountability strikes a similar chord to Mr. Buchanan's message."²¹ This anti-establishment message represented a direct challenge to President Bush,

²⁰ Shribman, David. "Campaign '92: Perot's Campaign Enters the Nitty-Gritty Phase of Fleshing Out Positions, Developing a Strategy." *Wall Street Journal*, May 30, 1992.

²¹ Abramson, Jill, and Michel McQueen. "Bush Camp Is Unnerved by Prospect of Facing Another Texan--Ross Perot." *Wall Street Journal*, May 19, 1992.

the ultimate establishment figure in Washington D.C. However it also signaled Americans' desire to shift to a new mode of operations in Washington D.C.

However, this anti-establishment stance did not originate entirely in the economic recession that occurred during Bush' presidency, as many historians have suggested. In fact, foreign policy issues attracted people to the Perot coalition as much as economic issues. Perot ingeniously linked the two to create a new issue constituency that saw foreign policy as directly linked to the economy

Perot, therefore, adopted many of Buchanan's positions on trade policy to deliver a message of economic recovery beginning with our relationship with other countries, a message that neither President Bush nor Bill Clinton articulated. *The Wall Street Journal* noticed this, writing, "Presidential candidate Ross Perot is pushing for tough U.S. trade policies that differ sharply from those advocated by free-traders George Bush and Bill Clinton."²² That Perot offered an alternative to both Bush and Clinton's vision of free trade lumped Bush and Clinton together, strengthening Perot's appearance as a genuine alternative to Clinton and Bush.

Perot's appeal extended to the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) then under debate. With Bush and Clinton both supporting NAFTA, Perot campaigned with a large amount of skepticism about the free trade deal. Rapoport and Stone write, "He (Perot) stated his reservations about NAFTA by declaring in *United We Stand America*, 'I do not want a trade agreement that trades

²² Murray, Alan. "Perot's Tough Stand on Trade Belies His Claim of Opposing Protectionism." *Wall Street Journal*, June 8, 1992.

away jobs.’ In the second presidential debate, he declared, ‘ We’ve shipped millions of jobs overseas,’ bemoaning ‘these one-way trade agreements that we’ve negotiated over the years.’ He promised, ‘if the people send me to Washington, the first thing I’ll do is study that 2000-page agreement [NAFTA] and make sure it’s a 2-way street.’²³ Perot continued to emphasize this point, playing to the Public’s concern about NAFTA. This focus on fair trade policies between countries demonstrates the importance Perot supporters attached to foreign policy issues.

Indeed, on the issue of trade conservatives saw Perot as man with fraudulent solutions who made empty statements. George Melloan of *The Wall Street Journal* writes, “On the basis of what we know so far, a President Perot at (the G-7 conference in) Munich would be punching air with parochial slogans instead of furthering the interests of the U.S. and the world in a freer global business environment”²⁴ Additionally, Perot’s reluctance to embrace free-trade worried conservatives that built the Republican Party into the party of free trade. Melloan continues, writing, “He is clearly bright but his few policy utterances, such as that dealing with NAFTA, suggest ignorance on major national and international issues.”²⁵ Perot therefore alienated many conservatives with his views that opposed much of conservative trade ideology.

Perot’s criticism of Bush’s trade policy echoed his critique on the President’s

²³ Rapoport, Ronald, and Walter Stone. *Three's A Crowd*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992. 66.

²⁴ Melloan, George. "Global View: On Global Issues, Perot Sounds Texas League." *Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 1992.

²⁵ Ibid

actions in the Gulf War. This war represented a clear victory for the United States, the first major victory since the defeat in Vietnam. Not only did Bush's action help rid the country of the so called "Vietnam syndrome" (a fear to use force as an option in foreign policy), it also briefly led his poll numbers into the ninety percentile range, the highest a president ever achieved since modern polling. However, the Gulf War became an issue that Bush's opponents successfully used against him. Perot attacked Bush for his historically hypocritical actions, as Bush worked to secure the support of Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980's. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that, "Mr. Perot, who opposed the war with Iraq, also launched a spirited attack on President Bush over the war, and for Mr. Bush's policy of courting Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in the years that led up to the conflict. 'Keep in mind people died in that war,' he said. 'To the people who died and were wounded, that war was World War II.'"²⁶ Perot turned Bush's victory into a cold-hearted calculation, creating the impression that Bush's pragmatism represented a failure to recognize the true costs of war.

Perot's criticism of the Gulf War represented a broader criticism of Bush's 'New World Order' policy of continued engagement with the rest of the world. Conservative Gerald Seib recognized this, writing, "Still, Mr. Perot, the independent presidential contender, has put his finger on something. The political rhetoric emerging in this election year -- the first of the post-Cold War era -- shows that pressure is mounting to further shrink the already declining U.S. military presence

²⁶ Murray, Allen, and Timothy Noah. "Perot, in a Long TV Appearance, Vows to Raise Taxes Only in an Emergency." *Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 1992.

in Europe and Asia.”²⁷ Perot played on fears amongst both the conservative base and the general electorate that the conclusion of the Cold War left America overextended. This overextension utilized resources that could be used to alleviate the economic woes facing the country in place to fight a war already won.

Perot’s critique of Bush’s foreign policy led him to develop an audacious plan to charge other countries for the United States military presence. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Perot would, “Tell allies in Europe and Asia they will have to pay \$100 billion if they want the U.S. to continue to defend them.”²⁸ The fact that such a plan could seriously be put forth by a presidential candidate, a plan that would have been considered ridiculous only five years before, demonstrates the shift in the issues the electorate concerned themselves with. This shift, however, still concerned itself with foreign policy issues, and not just economic ones.

Conservative opinion varied widely on Ross Perot. Some viewed him as a legitimate conservative challenger to George H.W. Bush, while others thought him a liberal in sheep’s clothing, Perot’s ideological ambiguity became apparent in issues ranging from abortion to trade policy allowed this range of conservative opinion to develop. Ultimately, conservative viewed Perot’s candidacy as a distraction that aided Democrat Bill Clinton’s election to the White House. Indeed, Perot widened the rift developing within the Republican Party between the ideological factions contending for the soul of the GOP.

²⁷ Seib, Gerald. "Perot's Plan to Charge Allies for Their Defense Is Fuzzy on the Facts, but Politically on Target." *Wall Street Journal*, June 16, 1992.

²⁸ Ibid.

Perot's stances on issues pertaining to the federal deficit and government spending attracted many conservatives to his cause, viewing him as a means to reform the Washington establishment. Allison Wick of *National Review* wrote, "[...] the revolutionary thrust he can set in motion will do more to damage an entrenched liberal establishment than anyone since Ronald Reagan."²⁹ That he possessed no links to the so-called 'liberal establishment' pleased Hadley Arkes of *National Review* as well, who wrote, "And when Perot says he belongs only to his followers, he means that he belongs to no one at all. He is the man who springs from no alliances, encumbered by no institutions, and he is liberated from the past of our politics. He is, in short, the man from nowhere."³⁰ This detachment from politics-as-usual played well to small government conservatives that desired a candidate unlike Bush, with his many decades of experience in Washington. Perot gave them a candidate who seemed more legitimate and sincere in his adherence to the conservative, small government principles.

Perot's business experience also played well to a base that values the private sector's input in federal decision-making. William F. Buckley wrote, "But although many questions were posed during the presidential debates, Ross Perot hit one theme tenaciously: We are a can-do country which is losing its managerial skills. Mr. Perot knows how to manage; he has proved himself out in the world of business."³¹ Conservative *National Review* contributor Ben Toledano agreed, sarcastically

²⁹ Wick, Allison. "Strange Adventure." *National Review*, April 27, 1992, 39.

³⁰ Hadley, Arkes. "The Man from Nowhere." *National Review*, August 3, 1992, 24.

³¹ Buckley, William F. "A Solution for the Post Office?" *National Review*, December 3, 1992, 62.

stating, "But worse (for Harvard professor Harvey Mansfield) than not even being a general is the fact that Perot is 'a businessman with experience in dodging the government or using it.' Wow! Not even a professional politician but a businessman! We can't have that."³² Perot's business experience contrasted with Bush's political experience, giving Perot a further advantage against the incumbent amongst conservatives in his base.

However, Perot engendered a massive resistance to his attempts to gain conservative votes from the Republican establishment. They viewed Perot as a man who would use conservative themes to achieve popularity, only to institute liberal programs once elected President. Bush received the support of conservatives who disliked Perot, allowing him to maintain part of the conservative coalition that elected him in 1988. Perot may have provided an alternative to Bush, but many conservatives found the cure to Bush's lukewarm conservatism to be worse than the disease.

The issue of abortion, while not one concerned with foreign affairs, provoked the harshest critiques of Perot's candidacy. Perot maintained his pro-choice stance throughout the election, which greatly concerned conservatives he wished to win over. *National Review* accused Perot of expanding the practice of abortion, writing, "Perot and his wife have been prominent, extravagant contributors to Planned Parenthood, and they were early enthusiasts in advancing the practice of

³² Toledano, Ben. "Mind Your Memorabilia." *National Review*, August 3, 1992, 32.

abortion.”³³ William F. Buckley himself eventually denounced Perot for his abortion stance, arguing that Perot’s philosophy on abortion was to “Denounce thoughtlessness and a lack of reason, praise the precious human lives created athwart that thoughtlessness and lack of reason, and--get out of the way of anybody who wants to abort for any reason. Under a Perotocracy, nothing will stand in the way of Planned Parenthood via abortion.”³⁴ The criticisms of Perot’s pro-choice stance forced conservatives to analyze Perot in more depth, alienating many conservative establishment figures.

The Wall Street Journal continued its general critique of Perot, arguing he represented a conservative in name only. Paul Gigot argued, “Nor is Mr. Perot a ‘conservative,’ as he is usually described. He favors abortion rights, gun control and a Texas state income tax. He's to the left of Tom Harkin in deriding Desert Storm and pulling U.S. troops from Japan and Europe.”³⁵ John Podhoretz sustained this critique in *National Review*, arguing “Perot's re-entry means there are two Democrats in the race.”³⁶ Although Perot’s messages of deficit reduction and fiscal responsibility through reducing foreign engagements may have resonated with some conservatives (especially Buchanan supporters), Perot ultimately failed to garner decisive support through his seemingly liberal stances on issues of taxation and abortion.

³³ Hadley, Arkes. "The Man from Nowhere." *National Review*, August 3, 1992, 24.

³⁴ Buckley, William F. "The Perils of Perotocracy." *National Review*, July 20, 1992, 54.

³⁵ Gigot, Paul. "Potomac Watch: Boss Ross: Perot Knows \$\$, Not Politics." *The Wall Street Journal*, March 27, 1992.

³⁶ Podhoretz, John. "The Growing of George Bush." *National Review*, November 2, 1992, 48.

Despite electoral failure, Perot garnered the most third party votes for any candidate since Theodore Roosevelt ran on the Progressive ticket in 1912. Indeed, many of these voters either mobilized specifically for the election (and had not voted before) or would have voted for Bush. Rapoport and Stone write, “[...] Reform (Party) contributors (to a partisanship survey) identified themselves as moderately conservative in their overall political philosophy.”³⁷ Gerald Pomper supports this assertion, writing, “Perot drew far more heavily from those who had once supported the president than from the Dukakis vote, and gained about a fourth of the new entrants to the polling booths.”³⁸ Therefore, Perot supporters tended to possess center-right political sentiments, leading to many defections away from Bush’s base.

Perot peeled away many of the ‘Reagan Democrats’ that propelled Bush to his victory in the 1988 election. The conservative *Wall Street Journal* noticed this, writing, “The result, (Republican pollster) Mr. (Vince) Breglio concludes, is that some of the Reagan Democrats who are determined to abandon President Bush could end up voting for Mr. Perot instead of Mr. Clinton, making the Midwest more competitive than it otherwise might be.”³⁹ However, Perot also mobilized a huge amount of voters that did not identify as politically minded prior to the 1992 election. Although Bush lost many conservatives to the Perot campaign, these voters

³⁷ Rapoport, Ronald, and Walter Stone. *Three's A Crowd*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992. 85

³⁸ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 142

³⁹ Shribman, David, and Timothy Noah. "Campaign '92: Perot Is in Spotlight Again, but His Intentions Remain Hidden in as Much Darkness as Ever." *Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 1992.

linked with previously a-political Perot activists to form a strong new voting bloc. Ultimately, the economy remains largest single factor undermining Bush's reelection. However, his alienation of conservatives, combined with the mobilization Perot engendered, created a voting bloc that shifted the Republican Party back to issues of fiscal responsibility, and away from a large Cold War era federal government. This played an enormously important role in shifting votes away from the incumbent President.

Perot's political positions on issues rode on the wave of conservative discontent started by Patrick Buchanan. Bush largely caused this defection through his moderate stances in office, in addition to his own success in the foreign policy realm. His steady-handed navigation of America's position during the collapse of the Soviet Union created a 'New World Order' (as he termed it) that threw the United States into unfamiliar territory. This, coupled with the need for conservatives to replace anti-communism as a unifying force within their party, caused the rise of Buchanan and Perot. Ross Perot's enigmatic run for the presidency engendered the conditions for Bush's November 4th loss. Despite conservatives largely retaining a skeptical opinion of the businessman, Perot drew from a pool of alienated Bush supporters to create a new issue constituency within the Republican Party, an issues-constituency that viewed deficits, trade disparities and American involvement in world affairs as the outdated problems created by a Bush administration drunk with success.

CANDIDATE BUSH

President Bush therefore occupied an awkward position leading into the 1992 election, with conservatives remaining highly skeptical of him. They viewed Bush as a placeholder for a more conservative candidate in the future at best, and as a traitor to Reaganism at worst. The candidacies of Perot (in the general) and Buchanan (in the primary) did little to strengthen Bush's run for reelection. Each candidate ran on conservative discontent and effectively galvanized a part of the electorate against Bush.

With Republicans and conservatives fighting one another for influence, Bush tried to fall back on his foreign policy experience, his greatest strength. However, even this worked to his disadvantage, as voters viewed him as too distant from the economic problems facing the nation. This worked well with already existing conservative discontent with many aspects of Bush's foreign policy (not marching into Baghdad during Operation: Desert Storm, among other things) to create a perfect storm of criticism to derail Bush's reelection. The economic downturn of the early 1990's played an important role in Bush losing the election. However, foreign policy proved to be almost as devastating to a President who long prided this as his area of strength. Conservative discontent stirred by Buchanan and Perot, combined with the in fighting against Bush's brand of moderate Republicanism led to the election of Bill Clinton. The election of 1992 was defined by more than just 'the

economy, stupid'⁴⁰; it was also a contest for the soul of the Republican Party.

Perot and Buchanan posed a tremendous obstacle for Bush. Political Scientist Gerald Pomper illustrates this, writing, "The prominence of the right helped fracture the Republican coalition: In 1988, 90 percent of Republican voters supported Bush, but in 1992, his share fell to 73 percent, most of the defectors going to Perot."⁴¹ In addition to Perot siphoning off voters from Bush, Buchanan forced Bush to appeal to his base more thoroughly than he otherwise would have in a year without a primary challenger. Pomper continues, "When challenged from that (conservative) wing of the party by Pat Buchanan, Bush's impulse was to ingratiate himself with party conservatives by becoming more like Buchanan than Buchanan himself."⁴² These two factors synergized to derail Bush's reelection efforts, especially Buchanan's challenge. The shift rightward for Bush (at least in rhetoric) made itself manifest at the convention

The Republican convention fully displayed Bush's dilemma with retaining conservative cooperation. Pomper writes, "For the Democrats (at their convention),

⁴⁰ Kelly, Michael. "The 1992 Campaign: The Democrats - Clinton and Bush Compete to Be Champion of Change; Democrat Fights Perceptions of Bush Gain." *The New York Times*, October 31, 1992.

⁴¹ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 204

⁴² Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 70

the watchword was moderation; for the GOP, it was hard-edged conservatism.”⁴³ Bush attempted to return conservatives to his base, however this alienated many moderate and independent Americans. Pomper continues, stating, “The Republicans (at the nominating convention) saw their job as shoring up their base of socially conservative voters who had never been terribly enthusiastic about George Bush and who had been a tempting target for Buchanan’s campaign.”⁴⁴ Bush recognized his actions as President alienated many conservative Americans. However, appealing to this base through what seemed like an extreme convention and platform had its disadvantages.

To many conservatives, Bush continued to seem inauthentic. *National Review* writes, “Mr. Bush is still privately convinced that he can win in November without giving unmistakable evidence that he has returned to conservative actions as well as conservative rhetoric.”⁴⁵ *The Wall Street Journal* wasted no time in pouncing on Bush, stating, “The hollowness at the core of the Bush presidency is what has made this election so vexing.”⁴⁶ Perhaps the most devastating critique of Bush’s perceived lack of authenticity came after the election, in which Llewellyn Rockwell of *National Review* wrote, “[...] the president (Bush) smoothed the way for Clintonian

⁴³ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 63

⁴⁴ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 64

⁴⁵ Anonymous. "Pyrrhus on the Hustings." *National Review*, March 16, 1992, 14.

⁴⁶ Gigot, Paul. "Potomac Watch: Bush Too Requires Leap of Faith in Voting Booth." *The Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 1992.

socialism"⁴⁷ This extreme discontent, coupled with an already fracturing conservative movement, led Bush supporters to be far from solidly supportive.

Conservatives continually signaled to Bush that their support remained conditional. *National Review* wrote, "No stranger to compromise himself, however, he may find the calculation behind our support familiar: namely, that moderation in the pursuit of liberty, while it may not be a virtue, is infinitely preferable to extremism in the defense of government."⁴⁸ Given this rampant displeasure, it is hardly surprising that Perot and Buchanan attracted the vast amount of defectors. Even amongst rank-and-file, Bush's credibility produced little confidence. "It's clear that Mr. Bush's standing with the Republican right is shaky. 'People just don't believe him,' said conservative activist Donald Devine."⁴⁹ That conservatives had the option of Perot did not help Bush in his efforts.

The Christian Right, perhaps the strangest bedfellow of George Bush (given Bush's pro-choice position earlier in life), also remained his strongest supporter within the conservative coalition. *National Review* noticed this, writing, "Polling evidence demonstrates that the most faithful group for Mr. Bush was the Christian Right [...]"⁵⁰ While a tactical move to support the President (largely for supreme court appointments), the Christian Right also moved the president rightward.

⁴⁷ Rockwell, Llewellyn. "Some Domestic Lowlights of the Bush Administration,." *National Review*, November 30, 1992, 38.

⁴⁸ Anonymous. "Foul-Weather Friendship." *National Review*, November 16, 1992, 10.

⁴⁹ McQueen, Michel, John Harwood, and Jill Abramson. "Bush, Stung in New Hampshire, Goes on Offensive against Buchanan in Battle for GOP Right Wing." *The Wall Street Journal*, February 20, 1992.

⁵⁰ Abrams, Eliot. "Breaking Ranks." *National Review*, January 20, 1993, 40.

Pomper writes, "By 1992 the religious right could well suppose that with another four years of George Bush, their cause would finally go over the top."⁵¹ However, while Bush represented a convenient placeholder for Christian Right's efforts at influencing the Oval Office, this ideological block did little to help Bush's reelection effort among independents and moderates.

The Christian Right, and moral conservatives in general, gave Bush their support at the expense of many independent and moderate voters. *National Review* noticed this trend, writing, "Having driven economic and social conservatives away, the President was left with moral conservatives, who stood by him because of his firmness on abortion. They set the tone at Houston because they were the only people left in the Big Tent."⁵² Losing the support of moderates and independents disadvantaged the president immensely. Pomper writes, "Bush, however, openly capitulated to his party's right wing and Bush came closer than any incumbent president to finding himself on the threshold of the general election in the position of a factional candidate."⁵³ While giving Bush the support he needed, the Christian Right served to make his candidacy less attractive.

This courting of the Christian Right went against Bush's natural stance as a

⁵¹ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 15.

⁵² Anonymous. "Why Bush Is Losing." *National Review*, October 20, 1992, 14

⁵³ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 70.

moderate conservative. However, moderate, centrist Republicanism seemed to many conservatives to be an outdated ideology. Pomper writes, "The fact is that George Bush was an anomaly in the Republican Party, or, more kindly, the noble relic of another day. No element of the party felt spiritually bonded to Bush as conservatives had felt bonded to Ronald Reagan."⁵⁴ Additionally, moderate Republicanism appeared too narrow of an ideological foundation to allow a broader G.O.P. John O'Sullivan of *National Review* writes, "Moderate Republicanism, which animates (if that is the term) Mr. Bush and his closest friends, has a narrow definition of what constitutes a political issue. It does not concern itself with battles over remote and theoretical matters such as supply-side economics."⁵⁵ This style of conservatism also took the blame for Bush's failed reelection. *National Review* wrote, "Mr. Bush might have been able to convince himself that a liberal Republican strategy was the best route to winning political power; no future Republican leader can have the slightest excuse for making that mistake again."⁵⁶ Bush's failure to reign in his base proved disastrous for his campaign. However, Republicans in the future took Bush's ideological style as a failed formula, resulting in an abandonment of moderate Republicanism.

Ultimately, the Republican Party fragmented in the first post-Cold War election without anti-communism holding them together. Pomper writes, "The

⁵⁴ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 70.

⁵⁵ O'Sullivan, John. "Why Bush Lost." *National Review*, November 20, 1992, 30.

⁵⁶ Anonymous. "Not with a Bang." *National Review*, November 30, 1992, 14.

collapse of Soviet Communism softened the glue that held the conservative coalition together, and for most Americans, foreign threats seemed distant, hypothetical or unpersuasive.”⁵⁷ Bush, in an attempt to rally his base, only alienated moderate and independent Americans, in addition to appearing pandering and inauthentic to the Republican right wing. Pomper states it best, writing, “Bush had to curry favor with the right, stepping up his rhetoric where Reagan could be temperate because, unlike Reagan, the right did not see Bush as one of its own.”⁵⁸ Bush’s appeals fell on deaf ears amongst a party no longer unified around a single purpose.

Without a strong leader to hold the party together, the conservative coalition began to crack at the seams. With the Cold War over, anti-communism ceased to exist as a viable force to hold the party together. This is reflected amongst the defection of some Neo-conservatives to the Clinton campaign. *National Review* noticed this, writing, “on domestic policy, then, most neo-cons are plain vanilla conservatives, while those who broke away to support Clinton are not. They are not, in fact, conservatives at all, but Scoop Jackson or George Meany Democrats, whose principled hostility to Communism led them to back Republicans in 1980, 1984, and 1988. With Communism vanquished, there is really no reason for them to stay with

⁵⁷ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 143

⁵⁸ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 205

the GOP.”⁵⁹ This neo-conservative exodus is particularly surprising, given that Bush accomplished much of what neo-conservatives desired (i.e. the final defeat of communism). This proves again, however, that Bush remained a victim of his own success, as well as the ideological re-orientation that occurred with the conclusion of the Cold War.

Foreign policy, the realm of expertise for Bush, also provided him with glaring weaknesses in his reelection strategy. Indeed, due to Bush’s successes, the G.O.P. began to lose a unity of purpose. Pomper writes, “Ironically, these very successes (in foreign policy) were the root causes of Bush’s defeat in the 1992 election. Inheriting the Reagan legacy, [...] Bush confined himself to the role of understudy, dismissing what he ridiculed as ‘the vision thing.’ The end of the Cold War allowed voters to concentrate on domestic problems, even as it opened fissures within the Republican Party.”⁶⁰ However, even when the public focused on issues of concern external to the United States, Bush’s legacy in the voters’ remained far from perfect.

This lack of unity opened Bush up to withering critiques from the right wing in his party. Eliot Abrams described this conservative fissure, writing, “It is not surprising that this split was reflected in the presidential campaign, for Clinton espoused a much more activist view than did Bush. It is widely believed that one

⁵⁹ Abrams, Eliot. "Breaking Ranks." *National Review*, January 18, 1992, 40.

⁶⁰ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 133

reason Schifter (Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights) quit his job and endorsed Clinton was that the Democrat had urged stronger protests against the human-rights abuses of the Chinese Communist government, while the Bush Administration's Realpolitik required near silence on those abuses, even after Tiananmen Square.”⁶¹ Although Bush maintained constancy in the very unsteady period from 1988-1992, stability no longer satisfied the right. They willed Bush to press the offensive.

Bush received withering criticism from many sectors of the conservative establishment for his continued pragmatic approach to international issues. Conservatives looked at this strategy as illegitimate, and immediately began attacking Bush for archaic policy. John O’Sullivan of *National Review* wrote, “As it is, Mr. Bush's lack of vision (in post-Cold War foreign policy) has proved politically disastrous.”⁶² Even Bush’ ‘New World Order’ seemed to be empty rhetoric to *The Wall Street Journal* contributor (and international chess champion) Gary Kasparov, who wrote, “Underlying the phrase ‘New World Order’ is Mr. Bush's lack of leadership. Three years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, one year after Moscow's failed coup attempt, Mr. Bush is still pursuing policies governed by Cold War assumptions.”⁶³ Those on the political right seemed to retrospectively laud Bush for his role in the end of the Cold War. However, his abilities served little purpose for a

⁶¹ Abrams, Eliot. "Breaking Ranks." *National Review*, January 18, 1992, 40.

⁶² O'sullivan, John, and William McGurn. "The Goofy Politics of George Bush." *National Review*, February 3, 1992, 26.

⁶³ Kasparov, Gary. "Bush's Bungled Foreign Policy." *The Wall Street Journal*, August 27, 1992.

post-Cold War conservative movement, especially when it came to Bush' handling of the Gulf War.

Between August 1990 and February 1991, The United States and a broad coalition of allies successfully removed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's army from neighboring Kuwait. The Gulf War, in addition to representing a major victory for Bush, also was a triumph in international cooperation. However, in continuing their critique of President Bush, neo-conservatives especially scorned the president over the conflict. Eliot Abrams writes, "Most neo-cons, like most other conservatives, were unhappy with the President's failure to unseat Saddam Hussein, his support of Gorbachev against Yeltsin, his lack of enthusiasm for breaking up the Soviet empire, and his sometimes bitter criticisms of Israel."⁶⁴ They viewed the Gulf War not as a successful, limited campaign that achieved its stated goals, but as a human rights disaster. Kasparov continued his criticism, stating, "In his Houston acceptance speech, Mr. Bush described his success in 'locking Saddam inside the prison of his own country.' What the president did not say was that he had, more accurately, locked a whole nation of people in with a leader who remained willing and able to kill them when he wished."⁶⁵ This critique filtered into the public realm as well.

Although contemporary narratives state that the public overwhelmingly backed the Gulf War, and cite Bush's near ninety percent approval rating

⁶⁴ Abrams, Eliot. "Breaking Ranks." *National Review*, January 18, 1992, 40.

⁶⁵ Kasparov, Gary. "Bush's Bungled Foreign Policy." *The Wall Street Journal*, August 27, 1992.

immediately after, the Gulf War also heightened criticism of the President.⁶⁶ For the Republican Party, the Gulf War failed to reunite the disparate conservative coalition. Pomper writes, “Thus, as public opinion evaluations about George Bush’s performance in office swung rapidly against him in the second half of 1991, it could readily be seen that the Gulf war was but the palest and most evanescent reflection of what the cold war provided (unity of purpose) the United States (and the Republican party) for decades on end.”⁶⁷ Among the greater public, the Gulf War proved to be less popular than conventionally thought as well. Pomper continues, stating, “Even worse for him (Bush), Americans were less likely to say they judged the Persian Gulf conflict a complete success. Three in four thought the United States was wrong to stop when it did; that is, they felt that the United States should have continued fighting until Saddam Hussein was removed from power.”⁶⁸ The Gulf War thus represented a missed opportunity to Republicans, and many in the wider public. This not only fueled Buchanan and Perot’s critiques of the president, the failure to remove Saddam Hussein from power also contributed to Bush’s election defeat.

The Gulf War also reminded many Americans of Bush’s lack of attention to the domestic economy. Voters desired Bush to put as much effort into solving the

⁶⁶ Gallup. Gallup, Inc. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx>.

⁶⁷ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 21

⁶⁸ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 111

issues facing the domestic economy as he used in resolving the Gulf crisis. Pomper demonstrates that the Gulf War highlighted domestic problems at home, and proved to be *detrimental* to Bush's campaign; He writes, "Disillusionment hovered even around Bush's triumph in the Gulf War, which appeared more and more suspect and inconclusive, a mood typified by the bumper stickers that read *Saddam Has a Job. Do You?*"⁶⁹ This led to voters toward trade policy, in part encouraged by Buchanan and Perot.

Bush, as an heir to Reaganomics, followed a free-trade policy in driving decisions on economic foreign affairs. Voters felt Bush ignored a real threat from aggressive trade policy from nations like Japan and Germany. Pomper supports this assertion, writing, "The second component of economic worries (voters were) concerned the competitiveness of the United States as challenged by Japan and Germany."⁷⁰ However, Bush's ideological disposition forced him to support decreased trade barriers. Not only did this run against fears of foreign trade dominance, it fueled Buchanan's primary challenge. The trade policy issue resonated with voters when Bush vomited on the Japan's prime minister. Conservatives and the general public found a symbolism in Bush, the President, acting in a sickly manner in the presence of the Japanese economic juggernaut.

⁶⁹ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 194

⁷⁰ Pomper, Gerald, Christopher Arterton, Ross Baker, Walter Burnham, and Kathleen Frankovic. *The Election of 1992: Reports and Interpretations*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishing, 1993. 77

Pomper writes, "The symbolism of his illness during a state dinner (in Japan) mirrored the enfeebled the response of American industry to public-private cooperation employed by competitors with vigorous industrial growth policies."⁷¹ Trade policy worked with previous criticism of Bush's foreign policy amongst both conservatives and the general public, creating a distinct disadvantage for the President in a field that should have been his greatest asset.

Rather than issues of foreign affairs giving Bush the needed momentum to win the 1992 election, critiques of his handling of his greatest successes crippled his ability to make the case for their success. Gary Kasparov succinctly summed up many conservatives' opinion of the President in *The Wall Street Journal*, arguing, "But has George Bush really been such a successful master in the foreign-policy arena? The answer, I believe, is clearly no."⁷² The image of Bush as a master of foreign policy came only in retrospect. Conservative opinions forced many away from President Bush, depriving him of a greater base through which to win reelection. Rather than serving as an asset, foreign policy worked with the economic recession to cripple Bush's chance at reelection.

Perot and Buchanan started a process of pulling away conservatives from Bush's voter coalition. Rather than rally around the incumbent, reluctantly voting for him in the election, voters had the opportunity to flee to Perot to express their

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² Kasparov, Gary. "Bush's Bungled Foreign Policy." *The Wall Street Journal*, August 27, 1992.

displeasure with Bush's handling of foreign affairs and the federal deficit, among other issues. Buchanan began the process of galvanizing voters with an appeal to an older Republicanism, arguing America finished its Cold War mission, and that continued involvement in the world would harm America. Perot, able to attract many of these voters, crystallized this discontent into the second-most successful third party campaign in American history.

However, Bush did not maintain an error-free campaign either. His courtship of his last conservative allies, the Christian Right, only served to alienate the broader public. Neo-conservatives fled from the Republican fold to the Clinton camp, viewing Bush's pragmatic foreign policy as too timid for the Cold War, and especially so for the 'New World Order'. In an attempt to return these neo-conservatives, among others, to the Republican fold, Bush ramped up his conservative rhetoric. This backfired, exacerbating the splits in the conservative establishment, leading to the third-party run of Perot, the support of neo-conservatives for Bill Clinton, and the alienation of the general public.

Finally, with the successful conclusion of the Cold War Bush's winning issue of his mastery of foreign policy only hurt him. For conservatives, Bush failed to articulate a clear enough 'New World Order', and his moderation and pragmatism in the foreign policy realm seemed to them defeatist and timid. Bush also remained hemmed in on trade policy, having to prove his conservative credentials. Always politically suspect in the right-wing of the Republican Party, Bush chose a laissez-faire trade policy at the same time free trade looked to voters as a major cause of the

stagnant economy. This position, coupled with the brilliant adoption of protectionist stances by Buchanan and Perot, changed Bush's foreign policy record from one of success and steady guidance to one of archaic Cold War thinking and economically harmful calculation.

We see, therefore, that President Bush did not lose the election simply because the economy remained in a recession. A complex interplay between conservative fracture and an idea of a president with the wrong kind of foreign policy worked to the disadvantage of the President's reelection chances. The conservative fracture, which resulted in the candidacies of Buchanan and Perot, led to an increased scrutiny of Bush's foreign policy. Had the election occurred during the Cold War, President Bush would have had an extremely efficacious record in foreign policy to run on. However, especially with the critiques of Perot and Buchanan (who in turn came from the conservative fracturing) Bush's foreign policy looked old-fashioned and out of place to the general public. It can therefore be safely stated that Bush, the pragmatic statesmen that guided America through the end of the Cold War, became a victim of his own success as well as conservative ideological fragmentation, a fragmentation caused by the removal of anti-communism as a cohesive force. Bush, by successfully guiding America through the end of the Cold War, removed the key issue (anti-communism) that kept the conservative coalition intact. Therefore Bush, and not merely the economy, laid the groundwork for his loss in the 1992 presidential election.

CONCLUSION

The 1992 election ended in a resounding victory for William Clinton, who took three hundred and seventy electoral votes. In what should have been an absolutely secure election victory for Bush immediately after the Cold and Gulf Wars, became a bitter defeat for the one-term president. We have witnessed the opinions and ideological fragmentation that made this happen, with members of the conservative media pushing for an ever more conservative candidate to hold Reagan's standard. However, Bush, ever the pragmatist, could never hold the same appeal to his base that Reagan did.

For all his faults and mistakes, Bush's Presidency must still be examined for its success. His masterful handling of America's response to the end of the Cold War let the Soviet Union die with a whimper, and not a bang. The Gulf War, by all measures, succeeded in all aspects of its mission, and even briefly united the world against Saddam Hussein's authoritarian regime. Even in the domestic arena, thousands of people benefit today from the American's With Disabilities Act, legislation pushed by Bush to allow accessibility and opportunity for all Americans. This thesis was inspired in part to highlight these achievements that are too often ignored.

A caveat: I am by no means a person who should be confused for a Bush partisan. Indeed, I hold center-left viewpoints and also disagree with many of Bush's

actions during his campaigns and presidency. However, as a budding historian, I am obligated to look at facts as objectively as possible, and I saw a story not being told when it came to the Bush presidency. Too often, his tenure in office is viewed as an interim period between the Reagan and Clinton years, a bridge from the 'Savings and Loans' scandal that plagued 1980's, to the booming 1990's. However, as this thesis has demonstrated, Bush's presidency is enormously important, and still affects modern America.

In Chapter One, I demonstrated the nature of the conservative press Bush received following his 1988 campaign. Opinions ranged from skeptical to hostile, illustrating the battle Bush fought with securing his own base of support. The need to secure conservative votes caused Bush to make decisions, such selecting of Dan Quayle, to reinforce his conservative credentials. Having done this, Bush's actions in during his presidency, which include guiding America through the end of the Cold War, were explained through the lens of his campaign commitments. Shifting to the political right during his campaigning, Bush looked distant from himself during his presidency, which had broad repercussions on conservative ideology and opinion.

In Chapter Two I explore the often-overlooked role Bush possessed in presiding over America during the collapse of the Soviet Union. Rather than aggressively promoting American interests, I argued that Bush's quiet, pragmatic policy facilitated a favorable end to the nearly fifty yearlong conflict. However, his actions in pursuing a moderate, non-ideological course of action also caused considerable consternation amongst conservatives. They viewed Bush as having

falsified his conservative credentials during the 1988 election, and thus they viewed his (in their view) decidedly un-Reagan-esque actions as a betrayal to the conservative cause. Chapter Two argued that Bush needs to be reexamined as a key actor in the fall of the Soviet Union and Europe's transition to democracy. However, more important to the purpose of the thesis, Chapter Two also demonstrates the conservative hostility to Bush's foreign policy agenda, foreshadowing the conservative splits that occurred in the 1992 election.

This is not to say that Bush caused the end of the Cold War. This thesis merely argues that the pragmatic approach Bush took to the crisis in the Soviet Union in the late 1980's allowed events to unfold on their own. Rather than pushing along a process that could have easily been derailed by foreign agitation, Bush allowed events to unfold on their own, an especially impressive feat given his predecessors propensity towards grandiose statements against the 'evil empire' of the Soviet Union.

Finally, in Chapter Three, I examined the three key conservative candidates for president in the 1992 election (Bush, Buchanan and Perot) and their effect on American conservatism. Historical narratives often portray the conservative movement post-Reagan as unified and single-minded in their goals. This chapter refutes this assertion, demonstrating the fragmentation that occurred within the Republican Party, leading to the primary challenge from Buchanan and Ross Perot's general election campaign. By examining these three actors, I also illustrated the

ideological split between ‘paleo-conservatives’, conservatives concerned with debt and old-style Republicans such as President Bush.

Additionally, I assert that more than just the economy affected the 1992 election campaign. Standard narratives state the poor economy undermined Bush’s efforts at reelection, a narrative I challenge. Rather, I argued the ideological fragmentation started in 1988 and continued throughout Bush’s presidency, exacerbated by Bush’s actions at the end of the Cold War, created the conditions for Perot’s (and Buchanan’s) effective run for president. As the statistical evidence drawn from Rapaport and Stones phenomenal study (*Three’s A Crowd*) of the election illustrates, Perot’s campaign greatly drew from the ‘push’ effect from Bush’s seemingly weak conservatism.

Throughout the 1990’s, budgetary conflicts between Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and President Clinton demonstrate the lasting influence of the return of fiscal conservatism to the forefront of the Republican Party, an issue that re-emerged with Perot’s candidacy. Additionally, Buchanan’s campaigning against free-trade galvanized opinion against the North American Free Trade Agreement, providing post-Cold War America with new issues concerning ‘fair-trade’ versus ‘free-trade’. Bush’s legacy as president manifests itself just as much by the opposition to his actions as by the actions themselves. The period of the 1990’s, dominated by concerns of government shutdowns, balanced budget amendments and a general desire on the right for strict fiscal responsibility demonstrate this as truth.

With the rise of the Tea-Party movement, we see strands of the Buchanan and Perot legacy lasting into the present. Fiscally minded Republicans have returned to the forefront, making arguments mirroring Perot's on issues of the federal deficit. While Reagan's legacy is debated and argued about, Bush's actions in foreign policy are quietly accepted as proper courses of action for any President. Indeed the very international landscape we live in today would be vastly different if the Cold War ended a hot war. Had events gone differently, we may have continued to worry, to this day, about the KGB rather than the Taliban.

Bush's ideological legacy reaches far beyond the Republican Party. President Obama even cited Bush as a role model for his foreign policy views. Jacob Weisberg writes in *Slate*, "He (Obama) declared his "enormous sympathy" for the foreign policy of George Bush Senior. Obama cited the first Bush team's prudent, nontriumphal management of the Soviet empire's collapse as his model. After winning the election, he reached out to Bush Senior's foreign policy alter ego, Brent Scowcroft, for advice. As a decision-maker, Obama has lived up to Bush Senior's positive example."⁷³ That even a Democratic President twenty years later is turning to Bush's example to inform his own foreign policy conduct is a strong indicator of the lasting importance of Bush's presidency to the contemporary American scene.

Bush's legacy extends far beyond his Presidency. Indeed, as this thesis illustrates, Bush galvanized new opinions and ideologies within the Republican Party during his campaigns and tenure in office. Bush's unique form of conservative

⁷³Wiesberg, Jacob. "What Is Obama's Foreign Policy." *Slate*, May 24, 2011.

pragmatism contrasted sharply with the rhetoric of his predecessor, Reagan, leading to inevitable disappointment from the base of the GOP. However, because of Bush's position as a lightning rod of conservative criticism, this makes his achievements all the more incredible. Despite pop culture caricatures, George Herbert Walker Bush remains an extremely interesting historical figure, both for his actions as President and the ideological tumult he caused in within the Republican Party.

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