

AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONALISM
VOLUME II: RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES
Howard Gillman • Mark A. Graber • Keith E. Whittington

Supplementary Material

Chapter 8: The New Deal/Great Society Era—Foundations/Principles

Barry Goldwater, Speech Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination (1964)

With one exception, Republican presidential candidates from 1940 to 1976 did not challenge the constitutional foundations of the New Deal political order. That exception was Arizona senator Barry Goldwater. In 1964, an organized and mobilized group of conservative activists surprised the party establishment by securing his nomination, defeating New York governor Nelson Rockefeller, another candidate of Republican moderation who promised sound management for the post-New Deal state. Goldwater's nomination represented the budding of a new conservative movement. The anti-Communist Goldwater embraced America's postwar status as a global power, shedding the isolationism of the old conservatives. He married that internationalism with a domestic libertarianism that emphasized small government and states' rights. Although Goldwater was soundly defeated in the general election by President Lyndon Johnson, he set the stage for the future political success of the conservative movement. Goldwater was not a white supremacist, but his opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and emphasis on limited national power paved the way for a Republican "Southern strategy" of wooing white conservatives in the region and breaking the century-long Democratic hold on the South. Of particular note during the campaign of 1964 was the political emergence of Ronald Reagan, who stumped for Goldwater and called on voters to resist those "who ask us to trade our freedom for the soup kitchen of the welfare state."

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The good Lord raised this mighty Republic to be a home for the brave and to flourish as the land of the free—not stagnate in the swampland of collectivism, not to cringe before the bully of communism.

Now, my fellow Americans, the tide has been running against freedom. Our people have followed false prophets. We must, and we shall, return to proven ways—not because they are old, but because they are true. We must, and we shall, set the tide running again in the cause of freedom. And this party, with its every action, every word, every breath, and every heartbeat, has but a single resolve, and that is freedom—freedom made orderly for this nation by our constitutional government; freedom under a government limited by laws of nature and of nature's God; freedom—balanced so that liberty lacking order will not become the slavery of the prison cell; balanced so that liberty lacking order will not become the license of the mob and of the jungle.

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I believe that we must look beyond the defense of freedom today to its extension tomorrow. I believe that communism which boasts it will bury us will, instead, give way to the forces of freedom. And I can see in the distant and yet recognizable future the outlines of a world worthy our dedication, our every risk, our every effort, our every sacrifice along the way. Yes, a world that will redeem the suffering of those who will be liberated from tyranny. I can see and I suggest that all thoughtful men must contemplate the flowering of an Atlantic civilization, the whole people of Europe unified and free, trading openly across its borders, communicating openly across the world. This is a goal far, far more meaningful than a moon shot.

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We Republicans see in our constitutional form of government the great framework which assures the orderly but dynamic fulfillment of the whole man, and we see the whole man as the great reason for instituting orderly government in the first place.

We see, in private property and in economy based upon and fostering private property, the one way to make government a durable ally of the whole man, rather than his determined enemy. We see in

the sanctity of private property the only durable foundation for constitutional government in a free society. And beyond that, we see, in cherished diversity of ways, diversity of thoughts, of motives and accomplishments. We do not seek to lead anyone's life for him—we seek only to secure his rights and to guarantee him opportunity to strive, with government performing only those needed and constitutionally sanctioned tasks which cannot otherwise be performed.

We Republicans seek a government that attends to its inherent responsibilities of maintaining a stable monetary and fiscal climate, encouraging a free and competitive economy and enforcing law and order. Thus do we seek inventiveness, diversity, and creativity within a stable order, for we Republicans define government's role where needed at many, many levels, preferably the one closest to the people involved. Our towns and our cities, then our counties, then our states, then our regional contacts—and only then, the national government. That, let me remind you, is the land of liberty, built by decentralized power. On it we must have balance between the branches of government at every level.

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Today . . . the task of preserving and enlarging freedom at home and safeguarding it from the forces of tyranny abroad is great enough to challenge all our resources and to require all our strength. Anyone who joins us in all sincerity, we welcome. Those who do not care for our cause, we don't expect to enter our ranks in any case. And let our Republicanism, so focused and so dedicated, not be made fuzzy and futile by unthinking and stupid labels.

I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.

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