The future is heavily mortgaged and we have in the White House a thimble-rigging President who sings lullabies about "prudence" and "economy" while dishing out the nation's substance at a rate in excess of any of his predecessors. It is not only the children and grandchildren of today's citizens who will reap the harvest, but these citizens themselves as they find their pensions, their insurance, their social security, and their returns on fixed investments constantly commanding less and less in procuring shelter, food, and the necessities of life.

Beyond that, there are the larger implications of what kind of country and what kind of future there is to be. Why, again, Goldwater? The question in its most imperative form was the subject of discussion on a train bearing delegates to the national convention to this city. A newspaper correspondent from Canada, where there are distorted impressions of Sen. Goldwater's principles, directed an inquiry of this nature to the editor of THE TRIBUNE, and was given substantially this reply:

"This is the first time since the era of Franklin Roosevelt that the United States has been given a chance to vote for a candidate who believes in the enduring validity and inviolability of the Constitution.

"It is the first time in all these years that a candidate with a real respect for the balance of functions among the three coordinate branches of government and an equal respect for the division of powers between the federal government and the sovereign states has been presented to the country.

"It is the first time in a generation that the people can exercise a choice between two diametrically different philosophies of government—total centralization under the heirs and legatees of New Deal socialism, with the inescapable diminution of the liberty and dignity of the individual, or a government which is the servant of all, but the master of none.

"Sen. Goldwater advocates neither the packing of the Supreme court, as did Roosevelt, nor the license of a runaway court which is busy rewriting the Constitution according to its prejudices and whims, political, social, and economic. The senator believes that the Constitution still means that powers not delegated to Congress or the executive are reserved to the states, and to the people.

"There has been no one since the advent of the New Deal who has offered the country a choice as clear as this. Mr. Eisenhower, the one President elected as a Republican in those years, acted as if he were the trustee and conservator of the doctrines of his opposition. Even Richard Nixon did not make a determined fight for the Republican principles which have found so firm and determined a champion in Sen. Goldwater.

"The Republican convention of 1964 will choose a man who is not enthralled with the shibboleths of the past, with the discredited and empty doctrines which deprive us all of hope in the future. It will offer a man who is deeply aware of the wisdom and virtue of the values of our traditional system, but who in the most real sense is a man of the future, not a man who looks behind him, unable to break away from the sterile patterns and forms of an outworn doctrine which induces servility in the people."
As darkness descended on the District of Columbia, and the streets and the windows of the capital blossomed with electric lights, the mightiest pageant ever to pass before a President on the afternoon of his Inaugural was still in motion, its length testifying, as did its splendor, to the enormous significance of the election of Nov. 4, 1952.

Because on that day a large majority of the voters of this country decreed that the Democratic party should turn over to the Republicans the executive power it had held for twenty years, and that the Republicans once again should have majorities in Congress, the nation united to give visual form to the historic decision by the mammoth jubilee which was today’s parade.

Because Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower carried every state outside the South, four within it and two of the border states as well, the rejoicing marchers represented popular majorities on a national scale never attained by a Republican before.

These are perhaps the principal reasons why the spontaneous desire arose in all parts of the country to outdo every previous Inaugural procession in size and length and trappings. In the usual sense of the word, the movement was unorganized. That was not necessary: when plans for today were first discussed the committee heard from every state of elaborate arrangements already in preparation.

The unmatched impressiveness of the parade was the product of another reason—the fact that Americans were fighting a bitter war in Korea against one thrust of the Soviet aggression, which this nation and the others in the non-Soviet world were arming to confine to the embattled peninsula and shatter there.

Spaced regularly among marchers, with brief civilian intervals, were more groups in the uniforms of the armed services, equipped with more of their weapons, than have ever been seen on such an occasion.

And the silence, though brief, that came upon the celebration when a great atomic gun appeared on its block-long carriage showed that the people were conscious they lived in a dangerous world where deterrent force was the only argument a powerful enemy understood.

But to this onlooker it seemed that there was another meaning to the magnitude of the gesture of political victory. This was, that the spontaneous enthusiasm that put the paraders in Washington to pass in review before the new President and his aides, and with which the parade was hailed today, sprang from the reminder it stressed that no political regime could indefinitely entrench itself in the United States.

The ability of the American majority to have the Government and the public servants it wanted, and the inability of any political combination to fragment that majority any longer than it desired, was proved once more. And also was proved the vitality of an old American sentiment against allowing one party to remain in office after it had revealed the flaws that go with long tenure.

That meaning and cause of the overturn at last November’s polls seemed to this observer to account in great part for the extraordinary number and elation of the marchers, and for the joy that radiated from those who watched them give physical form to a momentous fact that was implicit in General Eisenhower’s electoral victory.
[...] When I learned the final news, by then so expected yet so hard to accept, I felt a profound void. In the words of Shakespeare, “He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again.”

In the conduct of foreign policy, Richard Nixon was one of the seminal Presidents. He came into office when the forces of history were moving America from a position of dominance to one of leadership. Dominance reflects strength; leadership must be earned. And Richard Nixon earned that leadership role for his country with courage, dedication and skill.

When Richard Nixon took his oath of office, 550,000 Americans were engaged in combat in a place as far away from the United States as it was possible to be; America had no contact with China, the world’s most populous nation; nor negotiations with the Soviet Union, the other nuclear superpower; most Muslim countries had broken diplomatic relations with the United States; and Middle East diplomacy was stalemated – all of this in the midst of the most anguishing domestic crisis since the Civil War.

When Richard Nixon left office, an agreement to end the war in Vietnam had been concluded, and the main lines of all subsequent policy were established: permanent dialogue with China; readiness without illusions to ease tensions with the Soviet Union; a peace process in the Middle East; the beginning, via the European Security Conference, of establishing human rights as an international issue, weakening Soviet hold on Eastern Europe.

Richard Nixon’s foreign policy goals were long-range, and he pursued them without regard to domestic political consequences. When he considered our nation’s interest at stake, he dared confrontation despite the imminence of elections and in the midst of the worst crisis of his life. And he bore – if with pain – the disapproval of long-time friends and allies over relaxing tensions with China and the Soviet Union. He drew strength from a conviction he often expressed to me: “The price for doing things halfway is no less than for doing them completely. So we might as well do them properly.” Thus Nixon’s greatest accomplishment was as much moral as it was political: to lead from strength at a moment of apparent weakness; to husband the nation’s resilience and thus to lay the basis for victory in the Cold War.

Shy and withdrawn, Richard Nixon made himself succeed in the most gregarious of professions and steeled himself to conspicuous acts of extraordinary courage. In the face of wrenching controversy, he held fast to his basic theme that the greatest free nation in the world had a duty to lead and no right to abdicate. [...]

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I would say that there were three distinctive aspects to the neoconservative "movement" (a rather grandiose term, given its modest dimensions). First, the political tonality was different. This was surely the result of our liberal heritage, which predisposed us to be forward-looking, not in any sense dour and reactionary. I once remarked, semi-facetiously, that to be a neoconservative one had to be of a cheerful disposition, no matter how depressing the current outlook. In America all successful politics is the politics of hope, a mood not noticeable in traditional American conservatism. The way to win, in politics as in sport, is to think of yourself as a winner. The pathos of being proved right, while losing, is always a great temptation to a conservative minority in opposition.

Secondly, it follows that our natural impulse was melioristic. From the outset, I was mindful of the injunction of my first editor at Commentary, Elliot Cohen, that you can't beat a horse with no horse. Even while being critical of the Great Society, The Public Interest was always interested in proposing alternate reforms, alternate legislation that would achieve the desired aims more securely, and without the downside effects. This was something that did not much interest traditional conservatism, with its emphatic "anti-statist" focus. The difference also had something to do with the fact that traditional conservatives had many distinguished economists in their ranks, and economics is above all the science of limits, a great nay-saying enterprise. Among the core social scientists around The Public Interest there were no economists. (They came later, as we "matured.") This explains my own rather cavalier attitude toward the budget deficit and other monetary or fiscal problems. The task, as I saw it, was to create a new majority, which evidently would mean a conservative majority, which came to mean, in turn, a Republican majority – so political effectiveness was the priority, not the accounting deficiencies of the government.

Thirdly, neoconservatives – at least the New Yorkers among them – came out of an intellectual milieu, in which some large ideas – i.e., ideas with a philosophic or ideological dimension – were taken very seriously. This was of little significance in the early years of neoconservatism, but it did become very important as the nation found itself in a third stage of postwar conservative history, a stage in which religious conservatism became an active force in American politics.

IV

Active religion-based conservatism did not become a political force in the United States because of either religion or conservatism. Its activism was provoked by militant liberalism and the militant secularism associated with it. This liberalism and this secularism, in the postwar years, came to dominate the Democratic party, the educational establishment, the media, the law schools, the judiciary, the major schools of divinity, the bishops of the Catholic Church, and the bureaucracies of the "mainline" Protestant denominations. One day, so to speak, millions of American Christians – most of them as it happens, registered Democrats – came to the realization that they were institutionally isolated and impotent.
Three decades have now elapsed since the book before you was published in its original form. In the lives of men and women, as well as the cycles of book publishing, such a period of time can constitute an epoch.

So it has been for the subject of the pages that follow. When The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945 was first published, Ronald Reagan was a former governor of California with no apparent political future, and George W. Bush a young oilman in Texas. Journals like First Things, the New Criterion, and the Weekly Standard did not exist. While intelligent conservatism was clearly on the upswing in the 1970s, it was still a minority phenomenon, especially in the academic community. Abroad, Lech Walesa was an unknown Polish electrician, Vaclav Havel a persecuted Czech playwright, and Margaret Thatcher the new leader of a British Conservative Party that was out of power. The pontificate of Pope John Paul II had not yet begun, and the Berlin Wall stood firm. The Cold War was very much a reality.

And yet, as I reread these pages, mostly written in graduate school, I am struck by how contemporary their subject still seems. Despite the corrosive passage of time and the ephemerality of so much public discourse, the conservative intellectual movement chronicled in this book has not faded into quaint irrelevance. It has not become history. To the contrary, it has made history and it is still making history—to the point that, for adherents and detractors alike, it is more relevant to our nation’s life than ever before.

For this reason alone, it seems fitting that my book remain accessible to readers in a new edition, reflecting the developments of recent years. There is another reason as well: since the early 1990s, and especially since 2001, the conservative movement has entered a period of introspection and fractiousness not seen, in such acute form, since the early 1960s. Gladdened by political victories, yet disappointed with their fruits, many on the Right are seeking to reorient and even redefine the conservative mission in a post-Cold War, post-9/11 world. In such confusing circumstances, it is usually helpful to “remember who we are” or have come to be. As thoughtful conservatives feel impelled to reexamine their first principles, perhaps this study of modern American conservatism’s intellectual history will provide some edifying perspective.

“The only thing that’s new in the world is the history you don’t know,” Winston Churchill once remarked. It is my hope that students of all persuasions, especially students who call themselves conservatives, will find in this book some history that they “don’t know” but will what to know, if they would truly understand the national debates raging around them.

For the thirtieth-anniversary edition, I have essentially let stand the portions of the book first published in 1976. What I called the Epilogue in the second edition (published in 1996) has become, with a few modifications, Chapter 12 here. The Bibliographical Postscript of 1996 has been revised and expanded to encompass the surge of scholarship about conservatism in the past decade. My Conclusion (“Wither Conservatism?”) is new.
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The grassroots and the elite.
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**Question au programme:**


**Sujet de leçon:**

Discuss the following topic:

Culture Warriors
Question au programme :


Sujet de leçon :

Discuss the following statement:

In talking about his domestic initiatives with me, Nixon insisted that all of them reflected his own background and association with the progressive wing of the Republican party. Aside from the improbability of such an assertion, his domestic reforms were far from conservative by Republican or Democratic standards.

**Question au programme:**


**Sujet de leçon:**

Discuss the following statement:

"Because of their confrontation with the civil rights movement, white southern conservatives were forced to abandon their traditional, populist, and often starkly racist demagoguery and instead craft a new conservatism predicated on a language of rights, freedoms, and individualism. This modern conservatism proved to be both subtler and stronger than the politics that preceded it and helped southern conservatives dominate the Republican Party and, through it, national politics as well."

**Question au programme:**


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"Conservatives’ successes, to be sure, were due in no small part to liberalism’s foundering on the shoals of race, economic discontent, and its own internal contradictions. But just as significantly, conservatives’ ability to build a powerful movement enabled them to pick up the pieces and profit politically from liberal failures."

Question au programme :


Sujet de leçon :

Discuss the following statement

There is perhaps no stronger validation of [George H. W.] Bush’s emphasis on incremental policy development than the experiences of the Republican Congress elected in 1994. The conservative wing of the GOP had its “revolution,” replete with a large-scale agenda to change the nation’s policy direction. However, [...] the Republicans ran into the predictable barriers of an incrementalist policy system. In rejecting the nature of the policy system and trying to work against it, they minimized their influence and ultimately found themselves on the political defensive and heavily divided.

Question au programme:


Sujet de leçon:

Discuss the following statement:

“The compassionate conservatives were quite conscious of conservatism’s shortcomings. They worried about the sense of indifference their allies often conveyed toward the poor and to the social pain the budget cuts they championed might create.”

Question au programme:

Sujet de leçon:
Discuss the following statement:

'Eisenhower hoped that by enunciating "broad and liberal objectives," advancing moderate improvements in social programs, and establishing a reputation (and above all a record) for fostering a thriving economy, he could (if he could preserve an untroubled international environment) reconstitute the electoral base of his party. "Twentieth Century Republicanism," he hoped, would deprive the Democrats of their corner on "the common man," especially if his own "broad and liberal" Republican programs (and his personal appeal) helped bring young, attractive leaders into the party—leaders who would modernize the party's organizational procedures as well as its policy stance.'

**Question au programme:**


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**Sujet de leçon:**

Discuss the following statement:

“In the contemporary conservative version of history, Reagan dramatically shrank government and earned the public’s everlasting affection and gratitude in return. Big Government persists after Reagan, Reagan’s contemporary admirers admit, but only because liberals and Washington elites have used government programs to buy off the public’s votes and used allies in the media to cloak their unpopular policies.”