

**RICHARD M. NIXON, “THE GREAT SILENT MAJORITY,” WASHINGTON, D.C.  
(3 NOVEMBER 1969)**

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**Abstract:** Richard Nixon considered his address to the nation on November 3, 1969, the best of his career. Yet the speech has been roundly criticized by rhetorical critics and historians as deceptive, historically inaccurate, and divisive. The immediate response to the speech appeared overwhelmingly positive, yet that response was, at least in some measure, a rhetorical construction of the administration itself. Calling on a “great silent majority” to voice its support for his policies, Nixon simultaneously tried to shame and silence his critics. The administration also manipulated polls and other indicators of public opinion to paint a portrait of public opinion in support of Nixon’s Vietnam policies.

**Keywords:** Richard M. Nixon, War in Vietnam, Silent Majority, Vietnamization, public opinion

On the evening of November 3, 1969, Richard Nixon took to radio and television to address growing concerns over the War in Vietnam. Popularly known as the “Silent Majority” speech, Nixon’s prime time address appeared, on the surface, to acknowledge the concerns of the war’s critics, including the antiwar protestors who had staged a massive Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam on October 15. Yet as rhetorical critic Robert P. Newman later observed, the speech was not really designed to “placate the doves,” but to rally those who Nixon famously labeled “the silent majority.”<sup>1</sup> Foreshadowing a mode of rhetoric more commonplace today, Nixon engaged in a rhetoric of confrontation and polarization, appealing to the patriotism of his supporters while dismissing his critics as ill-informed and unpatriotic. Deliberately dividing Americans into two antagonistic camps, Nixon pitted his “silent majority” of supporters against those who allegedly favored “precipitate withdrawal” or even “losing” in Vietnam.

Nixon considered the November 3 speech the best of his career,<sup>2</sup> and it was, in many ways, a classic Nixon speech. Under a veneer of “tough talk” designed to appease the war hawks in his audience,<sup>3</sup> the speech employed a variety of shoddy, even deceptive rhetorical techniques characteristic of Nixon’s style throughout his career. Like his infamous “Checkers Speech” in 1952, the “Silent Majority” speech cast Nixon as a victim—an embattled president unfairly targeted by a slew of critics, from the mainstream press to angry protestors in the streets. At the same time, it was defiant, as Nixon claimed to be unbowed by all the criticism and pledged to stand by his principles and fight for a just and lasting peace. Rhetorically constructing a powerful ally in that fight—the “Silent Majority”—Nixon and his advisers set out to create at least the *appearance* of a “a groundswell of support” for his Vietnamization policy.”<sup>4</sup> He did this not only by invoking the “silent majority” in the speech itself, but by organizing counter demonstrations, displaying piles of supportive letters and telegrams, criticizing the media for “focusing on the problems instead of the achievements of Vietnamization,”<sup>5</sup> and weaponizing poll results. Buoyed by Gallup polls showing high levels of support for how he was “handling the Vietnam situation,” Nixon characterized those who disagreed with his policy as a “vocal minority” sympathetic to the “forces of totalitarianism.”<sup>6</sup>

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The “Silent Majority” speech has attracted more than its share of scholarly attention, and biographers, historians, and rhetorical critics generally agree that the speech was misleading, if not downright deceptive. Not only did Nixon misrepresent his opposition, but he also presented the American people with a false dilemma: support his policy or side with unpatriotic Americans who noisily demanded immediate withdrawal. In addition, Nixon presented a slanted, one-sided version of America’s history of involvement in the war, blaming the violence on an enemy hell-bent on spreading communism around the world.<sup>7</sup> Beyond that, Nixon rhetorically painted a portrait of public opinion more favorable to his position on Vietnam. In Nixon’s political world, the vast majority of Americans supported his policies, despite a hostile media, while only a small, vocal minority stood in opposition. In effect, Nixon weaponized public opinion, utilizing the polls and other opinion data to discredit his opposition and create the appearance of a groundswell of support for his Vietnam policy.

Nixon’s “Silent Majority” speech continues to resonate in today’s highly polarized political environment. Indeed, Donald Trump invoked the very phrase on the eve of the 2020 election, claiming that a “silent majority” of Trump voters would prove the “fake news” wrong and reelect him on November 3.<sup>8</sup> When that didn’t happen, Trump led an even more insidious assault on democratic norms, alleging that the election had been “stolen” by an unlikely cabal of elites, including Democratic operatives, voting machine companies, news outlets (including Fox News), and even some Republican election officials. Although they produced no credible evidence of widespread fraud, Trump and his allies rallied behind the Big Lie. Like Nixon’s “silent majority,” they saw themselves in the vanguard of a movement of “true patriots” fighting against elites who “hated America.”

This essay takes another look at Nixon’s “Silent Majority” speech, beginning with how it reflected Nixon’s personality and personal history. Next, I take a closer look at the speech itself, elucidating how Nixon made the case for his policy while dividing and polarizing his audience and attempting to shame and silence his critics. Finally, I reflect on the legacy of the speech, highlighting some of the ways in which Nixon’s rhetorical strategies have become commonplace in our political discourse. As a precursor to the slash-and-burn rhetorical strategies of today’s MAGA Republicans, the “Silent Majority” speech provided a rhetorical blueprint for dividing Americans and marginalizing those who spoke out against the president.

### **The Making of a Politician**

Biographers and historians have looked to Nixon’s past—even to his early childhood—for clues to his “congenitally insecure” political personality.<sup>9</sup> Coming from “humble folk” and “born in the turn-of-the-century California equivalent of a log cabin,” Nixon was “thoughtful and serious” even as a child. He spent much of his time reading or practicing his music lessons, and he was “shy and reserved” and “sensitive to criticism.”<sup>10</sup> Yet despite his shyness—or perhaps *because* of it—he often put himself in the spotlight, speaking in public, reciting poetry, or playing the piano or violin. “He wasn’t a little boy that you wanted to pick up and hug,” observed a cousin named Jessamyn West, nor did it seem that he “wanted to be hugged.”<sup>11</sup> But he did long for respect from his teachers and fellow students.

Nixon excelled in high school, and he might well have studied at Harvard or Yale. But his family could not afford an Ivy League education, so he attended “little Whittier College, enrollment four hundred, where the faculty was well intentioned but undistinguished.”<sup>12</sup> At Whittier, Nixon participated in theater and debate, and he quickly became a student leader as

well. He was, in many ways, the ideal student: “. . . extremely intelligent, quick to learn, polite, a hard worker who did his homework and then some, with an impressive ability to absorb and remember facts.”<sup>13</sup> Although not particularly athletic, Nixon made Whittier’s football team as a third-string guard, where he developed a “competitive spirit” and the “determination to come back after you have been knocked down or after you lose,” as he recalled in his Memoirs.<sup>14</sup>

Nixon’s competitive spirit served him well in debate as well, as he became well-versed on a variety of contemporary issues and learned to think on his feet. “To be a good debater,” he once told his teammates, “you’ve got to be able to get mad on your feet without losing your head.”<sup>15</sup> While in college, Nixon made few close friends and remained something of a “mystery” even to his steady girlfriend. Yet as Stephen Ambrose has written, he “was not trying to be loved. He was trying to get ahead, and he was successful.”<sup>16</sup> By the time he graduated second in his class from Whittier in 1934, Nixon was confident and ambitious, and his hard work earned him a scholarship to the new law school at Duke University.

At Duke, Nixon planned to study law as preparation for politics, but he initially found himself overwhelmed by the work and the competitiveness of his classmates. He had an excellent memory and a willingness to sit in the library for long hours, however, and he eventually rose to the top of his class and was elected president of the Student Bar Association. In his second year, he served on the law review, and his grades suffered. But Nixon doubled down and ultimately graduated third in his class.<sup>17</sup> Reflecting back on his educational and debating successes in his book, *Six Crises*, Nixon offered an explanation that reflected both his pervasive insecurity about his own natural gifts and his determination to overcome his limitations through hard work: “I won my share of scholarships, and of speaking and debating prizes in school, not because I was smarter but because I worked longer and harder than some of my more gifted colleagues.”<sup>18</sup>

Many of Nixon’s classmates at Duke took jobs at top New York law firms, but Nixon was unable to find work on Wall Street, and his application for a job at the FBI was rejected. So he returned to California, passed the bar exam, and settled into a job at a local law firm, Wingert and Bewley. Two subsequent events both reflected and helped reshape Nixon’s character. First, he met and married Pat Ryan, a local beauty who, like Nixon, had left Whittier for college only to return after graduation. At first, Pat found Nixon’s intensity “off-putting,”<sup>19</sup> yet he persevered in his courtship and the two were married in a modest ceremony in June 1940. Then came the second event: Pearl Harbor. Nixon joined the Navy and was sent to the naval air training station in Ottumwa, Iowa. “He was newly married and a Quaker, and it was safe there in the Midwest, pushing paper.”<sup>20</sup> But his sense of duty led him to lobby for a combat post, and before long he was in the South Pacific, too late to participate in the fiercest battles and with plenty of downtime to read, play poker, and reflect on the wastefulness of war. His historical heroes had all been presidents—Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson—who had built new structures for peace, and the war became, for Nixon, the “catalyst” that turned his interest in politics into a real “sense of mission.”<sup>21</sup>

Nixon’s first political campaign came in 1946, when he ran for Congress from the 12<sup>th</sup> District of California. Biographers often trace his reputation as a rabid anti-communist back to this campaign against Jerry Voorhis, as Nixon hammered away at the five-time incumbent’s allegedly radical, left-wing views. But as Edwin Black has noted, accusations of socialist or communist sympathies were commonplace in this era, and Nixon added little to what was already known about Voorhis’ beliefs and associations. According to Black, what really set Nixon apart during this first campaign was the personal, self-revelatory character of his rhetoric:

“It is significant (and strangely unremarked by Nixon’s biographers) that the character of Nixon’s discourse in the first campaign was more personal than Voorhis’s.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Nixon could “scarcely open his mouth without divulging himself,” and that “compulsively self-referential” style,<sup>23</sup> combined with a strong performance in a series of debates, led to a big win, with Nixon garnering 56 percent of the vote.

Nixon arrived in Washington as a rising young star in the Republican party. As a freshman congressman, he was assigned to the House Education and Labor Committee, where he worked to curb the influence of organized labor, and to the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), where he made his reputation as an anticommunist. His big break came with the Alger Hiss case, where his dogged pursuit of the alleged spy earned him international renown. As Nixon biographer John Farrell notes, Nixon’s record at HUAC was actually mixed. His tactics sometimes went too far, “breaking the trail that led to McCarthyism,” yet his ultimately successful pursuit of Hiss “put his name on the nation’s front pages for weeks,” positioning him well to run for the Senate.<sup>24</sup>

Nixon’s Senate campaign in 1950 benefited not only from Hiss’s conviction, but also some missteps by his Democratic opponent, Helen Gahagan Douglas. Douglas ran an aggressive campaign, but she couldn’t shake accusations that she was soft on communism. Even the *Los Angeles Times* fed the narrative, concluding that while Douglas herself many not have been a Communist, she was “the darling of the Hollywood parlor pinks and Reds.”<sup>25</sup> Nixon’s campaign capitalized on Douglas’ reputation as the Pink Lady, and he won by a landslide, with 59 percent of the vote.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, Nixon’s rhetorical excesses and Douglas’s attacks on his character left their mark, saddling him with a reputation for “brazen demagoguery” and the nickname Tricky Dick.<sup>27</sup>

Nixon’s star nevertheless continued to rise as a U.S. Senator. In 1951 and 1952, American setbacks in Korea, Truman’s dismissal of General Douglas MacArthur, the rise of Joseph McCarthy, and other events gave Nixon fodder for his attacks on Democrats. In a speech to the Young Republicans in June 1951, he complained about the “whining, whimpering, groveling attitude” of American diplomats overseas, and he accused the Truman administration of failing to “take effective action to clean subversives out of the administrative branch of our government.” Nixon’s speech was full of “misleading allusions, half-truths, innuendoes, and hyperbole,” but as the Red Scare took hold it was “exactly what the audience wanted to hear.”<sup>28</sup> In May of 1952, Nixon gave another “bravura performance” before New York Republicans at the Waldorf Astoria,<sup>29</sup> and he emerged as a leading contender for the vice presidential spot on the 1952 Republican ticket. After a tumultuous convention, during which Nixon turned his back on California’s favorite son, Earl Warren, Eisenhower chose Nixon as his running mate, hoping that he could deliver California and help heal a rift between Eisenhower and Old Guard Republicans led by Robert Taft.<sup>30</sup>

As Eisenhower’s VP candidate, Nixon cast himself as a common man, yet he also cultivated his reputation as a fierce anti-communist. While Eisenhower largely stood above the fray, Nixon went on the attack, criticizing the Truman administration’s containment policy and calling for a “housecleaning” in Washington. “Who can clean up the mess in Washington,” he asked at a campaign stop in Bakersfield, California? The audience yelled back: “Ike can!”<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, rumors about Nixon’s own “secret” campaign fund began to circulate, then exploded into a sensational headline in the *New York Post* on September 18: “Secret Rich Men’s Trust Fund Keeps Nixon in Style Far Beyond his Salary.”<sup>32</sup> The story, subsequently picked up by the

wire services, caused a firestorm, with Eisenhower's own advisors divided over whether Ike should drop Nixon from the ticket.

With corruption in Washington a key theme of his campaign, Eisenhower could ill-afford for his VP pick to be tainted by scandal. Yet neither could he throw him off the ticket without cause. Nixon initially tried to dismiss the allegations as a "smear" by "the Communists and crooks,"<sup>33</sup> but after Ike refused to voice his support publicly Nixon decided to go on national TV to defend himself. The decision proved historic. The speech attracted the largest audience ever for a televised political speech, and its defensiveness and "holier-than-thou tone" foreshadowed many of Nixon's later speeches, including the "Silent Majority" speech.<sup>34</sup> Ranging across the emotional register from humble pleading to righteous indignation, the Checkers speech was a master class in the modern political apology.

Nixon began his Checkers speech on a defensive note, lamenting that his "honesty and integrity has been questioned."<sup>35</sup> Admitting that he had, in fact, taken \$18,000 from a group of supporters, he then posed what he deemed the key question: "Now, was that wrong? . . . The question is, was it morally wrong?"<sup>36</sup> Nixon's answer, of course, was that it was neither illegal nor morally wrong, as he made no personal use of the funds, the fund was not secret, and none of the contributors got special favors. Then, after a long discussion of the costs of running a political office and the "independent audit" that confirmed no personal financial gain, Nixon announced his intention to do something "unprecedented in the history of American politics": "I am going at this time to give to this television and radio audience, a complete financial history: everything I've earned, everything I've spent, everything I owe."<sup>37</sup>

Nixon's melodramatic rendering of his financial history went all the way back to 1913, the year he was born to "modest circumstances" in Yorba Linda, California. He recalled how he spent much of his youth working in his family's grocery store, and how he had worked his way through college. He also recounted the "rather difficult time" he and Pat had financially as a young married couple.<sup>38</sup> With less than \$10,000 in savings when he returned from the war, he was neither a rich man when he entered politics, nor did he put his wife on the government payroll, as did other politicians. Then came the accounting of his income and debts: His salary as a congressman supplemented by a few speaking fees and a couple of small inheritances, offset by two mortgages and other debts, including \$3500 owed to his parents. "Well, that's about it. That's what we have. And that's what we owe," he concluded. "It isn't very much." That set up one of the most memorable lines of the speech, a line that cast Nixon as the political embodiment of the common man: "I should say this, that Pat doesn't have a mink coat. But she does have a respectable Republican cloth coat. And I always tell her that she'd look good in anything."<sup>39</sup>

Nixon's *apologia* culminated in the famous confession that he did, in fact, "get something, a gift, after the election." A man down in Texas had heard Pat mention on the radio that "our two youngsters would like to have a dog," and before long they got a message from Union Station in Baltimore that "they had a package for us." "You know what it was," Nixon asked? It was a "little cocker spaniel dog, in a crate that he had sent all the way from Texas, black and white, spotted," and their six-year-old daughter Tricia named him Checkers. "And you know, the kids, like all kids, loved the dog," Nixon explained, as he puffed up in righteous indignation: ". . . and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we are going to keep it."<sup>40</sup>

Nixon's Checkers speech foreshadowed many of Nixon's rhetorical strategies as President. On the one hand, it was deeply personal and defensive in tone: "Why do I feel so deeply? Why do I feel that in spite of the smears, the misunderstandings, the necessity for a man

to come up here and bare his soul as I have? Why is it necessary for me to continue this fight? Because, you see, I love my country.” At the same time, it was aggressively political and tough on the opposition. The “country is in danger,” Nixon warned, and the “only man” who could “save America” was “the man that’s running for President on my ticket—Dwight Eisenhower.”<sup>41</sup> Rising from his chair and shaking his fist, Nixon lamented that 600 million people had been lost to communism during the Truman administration, and he called for those responsible to be “kicked out” of the State Department.<sup>42</sup> He also criticized administration officials who had “poo-pooed and ridiculed” his efforts to expose Alger Hiss, before concluding with an anecdote about a financially strapped soldier’s wife who had sent him a \$10 campaign contribution: “Folks, it’s a check for \$10, and it’s one that I will never cash.”<sup>43</sup>

As columnist Robert Ruarck observed at the time, “sophisticates” sneered at Nixon’s Checkers’ speech, but it “came closer to humanizing the Republican Party than anything that has happened in my memory.” He continued: “Tuesday night the nation saw a little man, squirming his way out of a dilemma, and laying bare his most private hopes, fears and liabilities. This time the common man was a Republican.”<sup>44</sup> Supportive telegrams, letters, and phone calls poured into the Republican National Committee, and Eisenhower had no choice but to keep Nixon on the ticket. A few days later Ike famously greeted Nixon at the airport in Wheeling, West Virginia, declaring “you’re my boy!”<sup>45</sup> The two went on to a landslide victory in the 1952 presidential election, ending 20 years of Democratic control.

As Ike’s VP, Nixon served ably over the next eight years, attending cabinet and National Security Council meetings. Yet he never became a part of Eisenhower’s inner circle of advisors. He traveled overseas on several diplomatic missions, but those trips are remembered more for his hostile reception than for any diplomatic achievements. In Peru, student protestors attacked Nixon’s car, then another mob met them back at the hotel, throwing objects and spitting at Nixon and his wife. In Venezuela the next day, the Nixons were again spat upon and attacked by protestors with pipes and other objects. Nixon won praise for his courage during the incidents, but in retrospect his attempt to blame the incidents on a global Communist conspiracy seemed hyperbolic at best.

Nixon’s campaign for president in 1960 was the highlight of his career to that point, but the razor-thin loss to John F. Kennedy left him bitter. His performance in the first televised presidential debates showed Nixon to be a mature, confident debater. Yet the camera was not as kind to him as it was to the handsome, charismatic senator from Massachusetts. After his term as vice president, Nixon returned to California to practice law and write his bestselling book, *Six Crises*, which included chapters on both the Checker’s speech and the campaign of 1960. In 1962, he was persuaded to run for Governor of California, convinced that a win could reestablish his stature in national politics. But after a humiliating defeat, he lashed out at the media, famously declaring: “You won’t have Nixon to kick around anymore because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference.”<sup>46</sup>

Nixon’s “retirement” lasted but a few years, as he returned as the “New Nixon” in the 1968 presidential election. Carefully coached and packaged for TV by a group of advertising, media, and polling specialists,<sup>47</sup> the New Nixon seemed softer, more relaxed, more confident, and much more effective on television. During the primaries, Nixon’s “greatest obstacle” was his “image of a loser”—an image problem that “lingered from the 1960 and 1962 campaigns.”<sup>48</sup> But in the general election, he struck many as a safer bet than Hubert Humphrey, especially after the chaos at the Democratic national convention. Humphrey also carried the baggage of the Johnson administration’s failed Vietnam policy, while Nixon promised a plan to bring “peace with honor”

in Vietnam. It was a winning pitch in a turbulent election year, but Nixon still won by the thinnest of margins.<sup>49</sup> It remained to be seen how Nixon would deliver on his promise to bring peace to Vietnam.

### The Speech

Nixon was determined not to let Lyndon Johnson's war become his war. In his acceptance speech at the Republican national convention on August 8, 1968, he promised that he would never surrender in Vietnam, nor would he be intimidated by the antiwar protests sweeping the nation. There was a lot at stake in Vietnam, Nixon told the convention attendees in Miami—no less than the “future of peace and freedom in the world in the last third of the twentieth century.” Foreshadowing his “Silent Majority” speech, Nixon pledged to listen not to the protestors but to the “quiet voice” of the “great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans, the non-shouters, the non-demonstrators.” These were the “good people” of America, he declared, and for them he promised to “bring an honorable end to the war in Vietnam.”<sup>50</sup>

Nixon provided no details on how he proposed to bring peace to Vietnam, nor did he make any direct reference to Vietnam in his inaugural address on January 20, 1969. He did, however, talk once again about how “voices of quiet anguish” had been drowned out by the “angry rhetoric” of dissent.<sup>51</sup> After finishing his inaugural address, he rode through throngs of protestors throwing rocks and giving him “middle-finger salutes” as his motorcade traveled down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House. Contributing to a “sense of siege” from the moment he was sworn into office,<sup>52</sup> Nixon's hostile reception portended the difficult challenges to come, not only in Vietnam but at home.

A little more than four months later, Nixon delivered his first major address on Vietnam, a “relatively conciliatory” speech on May 14 offering to withdraw American troops on a fixed timetable if the North Vietnamese would do the same.<sup>53</sup> “I want to end this war,” Nixon began; “The American people want to end this war. The people of South Vietnam want to end this war.” Yet he would do so only in a way that would assure that there would never be “another Vietnam someplace else in the world.” Characterizing his negotiating posture as “generous in its terms,” he insisted that any settlement had to “permit the South Vietnamese people to determine freely their own political future without outside interference.” That, he continued, would require “the withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces” and “procedures for political choice that give each significant group in South Vietnam a real opportunity to participate in the political life of the nation.” Nixon assured his listeners that the US sought no bases or other “military ties” in Vietnam, and that he had “no objection” to the “reunification” of Vietnam, if that was what the Vietnamese people wanted. But then, adding a “personal word” based on his “many visits” to Vietnam, Nixon took a shot at both the North Vietnamese and the protestors back home, characterizing the former as a “ruthless enemy” and praising American soldiers for carrying the “terrible burden” of the war with “dignity and courage,” despite the “division and opposition” to the war back home.<sup>54</sup>

Nixon's May 14 speech did little to advance the peace negotiations, as his call for the withdrawal of “all non-South Vietnamese forces” was a nonstarter. The North Vietnamese had long rejected an independent South Vietnam and a permanent partitioning of their country.<sup>55</sup> Nor did the speech do much to dampen antiwar sentiment at home. Protests continued to escalate over the next five months, culminating in a massive Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam on October 15, 1969. On that day, millions of Americans took a day off from work or school to

protest the war. In his speech on May 14, Nixon called upon Americans to unite behind his program for peace, reminding his audience that the enemy was watching: “Nothing could have a greater effect in convincing the enemy that he should negotiate in good faith than to see the American people united behind a generous and reasonable peace offer.”<sup>56</sup>

Nixon pretended to ignore the Moratorium, with the White House press secretary insisting that it was “business as usual” at the White House on October 15. Yet behind the scenes, Nixon was reportedly furious with the demonstrators, so he began planning for another major speech to respond to his critics and build public support for his war policies. During the last two weeks of October, Nixon was “almost totally preoccupied” with the speech,<sup>57</sup> jotting down some 60 pages of notes, outlining what he wanted to say, and reviewing ten full drafts. Determined to “convey an authentic note of personal involvement,” he barely involved his speech writers at all. One of his chief writers, Ray Price, confessed that he “contributed nothing”—“not even a flourish”—to the speech<sup>58</sup> As Evans and Novak reported, the speech was “written by one hand alone—the President’s hand,” and news of the president’s personal investment heightened the already high expectations for the speech.<sup>59</sup>

Early drafts of the November 3 speech did not focus on his appeal to the “silent majority.” Indeed, the first draft of the speech said little about the domestic politics surrounding the war; it was a straight policy speech, focused on Vietnamization. The words “silent majority” first appeared in the margins of the handwritten notes Nixon jotted down on yellow legal pads as he reviewed multiple drafts. As Nixon worked in near seclusion, the speech became less about policy and more a deliberate effort to divide and polarize the country. On the one side were the critics who seemed to favor “losing” in Vietnam, while on the other were those patriotic Americans who supported Nixon’s policies and appreciated the heavy burdens he bore as president.

The November 3 speech was, in that sense, a classic Nixon speech: personal, even a bit defensive in tone, but also confrontational and, in some ways, politically shrewd. He began by acknowledging the “deep concern” over Vietnam (1), while attributing the “deep division” over Vietnam to a loss of confidence in the government (2). Promising to tell the “truth” about that policy, he then articulated the questions he proposed to address in the speech:

How and why did America get involved in Vietnam in the first place? How has this administration changed the policy of the previous administration? What has really happened in the negotiations in Paris and on the battlefield in Vietnam? What choices do we have if we are to end the war? What are the prospects for peace? (3)

Nixon’s answers to these questions may have seemed plausible at the time, but they do not hold up under closer scrutiny. In explaining how the U.S. got involved in the first place, Nixon recounted a one-sided history, in which the North Vietnamese launched a “campaign to impose a Communist government on South Vietnam by instigating and supporting a revolution” (7). In this partial history, the U.S. entered the war only at the “request” of the South Vietnamese government, and the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations all contributed to the escalation. Nixon reminded his audience that it was LBJ who first committed U.S. combat forces to Vietnam, and he noted that there were “many” people who thought that decision wrong. Nixon then positioned himself among those who had long been critical of the conduct of the war, but he gave no particular reasons. Finally, he transitioned to what he dubbed the “question facing us today”: “Now that we are in the war, what is the best way to end it?” (8)



In answering that question, Nixon first ruled out an option that very few prominent politicians advocated: immediate withdrawal. Like three presidents that preceded him, Nixon recognized the stakes in Vietnam, and immediate withdrawal would likely bring a “bloody reign of terror” in Vietnam and have repercussions around the world. It also would bring a loss of faith in American leadership. “For the future of peace,” Nixon insisted, “precipitate withdrawal would thus be a disaster of immense magnitude” (11). Nixon elaborated with his own version of the domino theory:

A nation cannot remain great if it betrays its allies and lets down its friends. Our defeat and humiliation in South Vietnam without question would promote recklessness in the councils of those great powers who have not yet abandoned their goals of world conquest. This would spark violence wherever our commitments help maintain the peace—in the Middle East, in Berlin, eventually even in the Western Hemisphere. Ultimately, this would cost more lives. It would not bring peace; it would bring more war (11).

Nixon’s account of the Paris peace talks was similarly melodramatic. In his version of those talks, America’s good faith proposals for a cease fire and withdrawal of all forces were greeted by a refusal to even discuss the matter. Instead, Hanoi demanded “our unconditional acceptance of their terms,” which were that “we withdraw all American forces immediately and unconditionally and that we overthrow the government of South Vietnam as we leave” (14). Nixon then recounted how he went still further in his pursuit of peace, initiating a personal negotiation with Ho Chi Minh, which was also “flatly rejected” (19). After still more efforts to negotiate in good faith, Nixon finally realized that the whole peace process had accomplished little and the talks essentially had stalemated: “No progress whatever has been made except agreement on the shape of the bargaining table” (21).

Nixon blamed the stalemate on “the other side's absolute refusal to show the least willingness to join us in seeking a just peace” (22). But despite the failure of negotiations, there was good news on “another front,” Nixon insisted (24). According to Nixon, he had announced a “major shift” in US foreign policy—a shift that had come to be known as the Nixon Doctrine—and that shift held promise not only of ending the war in Vietnam but assuring that there were no future Vietnams (24). That shift involved three principles: (1) the US would keep its treaty commitments; (2) it would provide a “nuclear shield” to those allies whose survival the US deemed essential; and (3) it would “furnish military and economic assistance when requested” by treaty allies *but* it would “look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense” (27). In the present context, that meant “Vietnamization,” and that policy was already “bringing American men home” from Vietnam (31). Eventually, the goal was a “complete withdrawal of all U.S. combat ground forces, and their replacement by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled timetable” (33). Nixon refused to reveal that timeline, however, explaining that it might have to be “adjusted” if Hanoi misbehaved.

Nixon concluded the policy portion of his speech with one of his rhetorical trademarks: the false dilemma. Just two options were “open to us if we want to end this war” (39), he declared. He could “order an immediate, precipitate withdrawal of all Americans from Vietnam without regard to the effects of that action” (39). Or we could persist in “our search for a just peace through a negotiated settlement if possible” while implementing his plan for Vietnamization—a plan that involved withdrawing all US forces once the South Vietnamese

became “strong enough to defend their own freedom” (39). Of course, there were other options, including one favored by many Americans: withdrawal on a fixed timetable. But Nixon focused instead on “precipitate withdrawal”—a straw man of sorts favored by only the most radical of antiwar activists. Not only would that policy lead to “inevitable remorse and divisive recrimination,” Nixon argued, but it would also “scar our spirit as a people” (40). Vietnamization was thus the only real choice. “It is not the easy way,” Nixon concluded, but it was “the right way” (39). And according to Nixon, it would not only “end the war and serve the cause of peace” in Vietnam but “in the Pacific” and around the world (39).

Finally, Nixon turned his attention to the domestic politics of the war, professing respect for those “honest and patriotic Americans” who had come to “different conclusions” about Vietnam (41). Yet in discussing the politics of the war, he again focused on the most radical of his critics, represented by demonstrators in San Francisco who carried a sign: “Lose in Vietnam, Bring the Boys Home” (41). Nixon stood tough against those voices, pledging that he would not be “dictated” to by a “minority” that sought to impose its will “by mounting demonstrations in the street” (41). Then, in a jarring change of tone, he seemed to offer an olive branch to America’s youth. “I respect your idealism,” he began; “I share your concern for peace. I want peace as much as you do” (43). After all, he personally bore the burden of writing letters to those who lost loved ones in Vietnam. Moreover, he hoped to redirect the energy and dedication of young people, “now too often directed into bitter hatred against those responsible for the war” (46), in more positive directions.

Nixon’s appeal to young people was, at once, empathetic and dismissive. He claimed to share their concern for ending the war. But he didn’t appreciate the “bitter hatred” directed against those responsible for the war (46), nor would he be dictated to by protestors in the streets. In retrospect, his appeal to young Americans seemed part of a strategy to isolate and discredit his critics by rallying that “silent majority” of Americans who shared his old-fashioned patriotism: “I know it may not be fashionable to speak of patriotism or national destiny these days, but I feel it is appropriate to do so on this occasion” (48). As the “strongest and richest nation in the world,” he concluded, the question now was whether the U.S. still had “the moral stamina and the courage to meet the challenge of free-world leadership” (48). With an eye on what future historians might think if the “most powerful nation in the world . . . passed on the other side of the road and allowed the last hopes for peace and freedom of millions of people to be suffocated by the forces of totalitarianism” (48), he urged his listeners to rally around their president: “And so tonight, to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans, I ask for your support” (49).

It was all classic Nixon: the defensiveness, the false dilemmas, and the *pathos* as he paused to speak to young people and appealed to old-fashioned patriotism. He had a “plan of action” to bring an end to the war, as he had pledged during the campaign, and the more support he received from his fellow countrymen the sooner that pledge could be “redeemed” (49). “Let us be united for peace,” Nixon concluded; “Let us also be united against defeat. Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that” (50). Invoking Woodrow Wilson, Nixon closed by conceding he could not promise that Vietnam would be the “war to end all wars,” as Wilson had promised. But he did have “a plan which will end this war in a way that will bring us closer to that great goal to which Woodrow Wilson and every American President in our history has been dedicated—the goal of a just and lasting peace” (52).

## The Legacy

Just as the Checkers speech saved Nixon's career in 1953, the "Silent Majority" speech saved his Vietnam policy.<sup>60</sup> The White House switchboard "lit up" with supportive callers, and Nixon's poll ratings "soared."<sup>61</sup> With approval for Nixon's Vietnam policies jumping from 58 to 77 percent in the Gallup polls,<sup>62</sup> the Nixon administration viewed the polls as "ammunition to use against its critics."<sup>63</sup> In addition the Nixon administration organized counter demonstrations and staged photo ops, with Nixon and his aides standing around tables piled high with supportive mail and telegrams. The demonstrations and the communications all seemed to confirm what the polls already showed: that the "Silent Majority" speech was a great success, arousing an outpouring of support for Nixon and silencing his critics.

In retrospect, the outpouring of public support for the "Silent Majority" speech was, in some measure at least, illusory. Not only did the White House put its own "spin" on the polls, but it went so far as to "suggest" questions about the speech to Gallup.<sup>64</sup> Gallup used several of those questions, which according to White House aide Dwight Chapin, were designed to "validate what the president said" and to "isolate the Vietnam protestors from the silent majority."<sup>65</sup> Chapin also led the effort to orchestrate a flood of supportive telegrams to the White House. After Nixon asked how many wires had arrived, Chapin called the president of Western Union, which had closed for the day, and persuaded him to stay open that evening. The result was a pile of telegrams that Nixon proudly displayed on a table in the Oval Office, producing one of the "enduring photographs of the Nixon years."<sup>66</sup>

All this was part of what Sarah Thelen has described as one of the first "astroturf campaigns" in American political history. Utilizing the "full range of public-opinion tools,"<sup>67</sup> the Nixon administration not only manipulated the polls and orchestrated letter-writing campaigns, but also set out to "identify, organize, and mobilize outside support" for Nixon, combining "grassroots activism with outside surrogates, all closely supervised by administration officials."<sup>68</sup> Public demonstrations and counter demonstrations were central to this plan for manufacturing a groundswell of support for Nixon, as were a "patriotism campaign" eliciting statements and other demonstrations of support from a variety of sympathetic organizations, including the National Rifle Association, the American Security Council, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the American Legion.<sup>69</sup>

Leading this effort to shape public opinion was an amorphous group known as the "Nixon Network." Made up of Nixon loyalists, this group was coordinated by Jeb Stuart Magruder, who was appointed Special Assistant to the President in 1969, and supervised by Nixon's Chief of Staff, H.R. Haldeman, a former advertising executive. Countering the antiwar Moratorium scheduled for October 15, 1969, this group organized counter demonstrations and letter-writing campaigns designed to "marginalize" the antiwar movement and "limit its scope and effectiveness."<sup>70</sup> Laying claim to the label "patriots," they proudly displayed the US flag on their homes, automobiles, and jacket lapels, and they conducted a successful advertising campaign, "Tell It to Hanoi." In that campaign, Americans were urged to write to Congress and the President "to voice their support for administration policies and their opposition to the antiwar movement."<sup>71</sup>

The final piece of the Nixon administration's "Silent Majority" campaign was Spiro Agnew's infamous speech in Des Moines on November 13, 1969. Designed to undermine the credibility of Nixon's critics in the media, Agnew lashed out at that "small band of network commentators and self-appointed analysts" who subjected Nixon's speech to "instant analysis and querulous criticism."<sup>72</sup> According to Agnew, it was "obvious" that those commentators'

minds were “made up in advance,”<sup>73</sup> and that raised larger questions about the power of this “small and unelected elite.”<sup>74</sup> Agnew’s speech foreshadowed the populist demonization of the media by today’s MAGA Republicans, and then—as now—it had something of a chilling effect on media criticisms of the administration. Like today’s MAGA Republicans, Agnew sought to undermine the credibility of all but sympathetic news outlets, although he stopped short of Trump’s demonization of the mainstream media as an “enemy” of the people.

The Nixon administration, of course, was not the first to appeal directly to the public or to mobilize outside supporters and proxy organizations behind their policies. Such efforts go back to the first “rhetorical presidency,” when Theodore Roosevelt staged modern media events and approached the White House as a “Bully Pulpit.” Both Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt actively shaped wartime public opinion during the two world wars, and Cold War propaganda flowed freely out of the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy administrations. It was common in these earlier propaganda campaigns to enlist the support of proxy groups, such as the VFW or the American Legion. And, of course, it was common to polarize the world into “patriots” versus “communists” or even “traitors,” many of whom became the targets of Cold War witch hunts.

Yet none of the proxy groups behind these earlier efforts hid their connections to the White House, nor did they engage in the sort of deceptive communication practices that came to define the Nixon White House. In seeking to rally support for its Vietnam policies, the Nixon administration not only manipulated the symbols of patriotism, but also organized phony “grass-roots” op-ed and letter-writing campaigns. They cast doubt on the patriotism of the mainstream media and the anti-war movement, and they helped organize pro-Nixon, pro-Vietnam parades and demonstrations. The rhetoric of those events centered around “traditional values,” and its animosity toward protestors was encapsulated in a ubiquitous sign of the times: “AMERICA: LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT.”<sup>75</sup>

Nixon’s admirers have long remembered the “Silent Majority” speech as a great victory. “It was a defining moment,” presidential speech writer Pat Buchanan would recall many years later. “It was a moment when the Beltway media and the Congress were all against him, and yet he stood up and defended his position.” The “Silent Majority” speech was, in Buchanan’s view, “the strongest moment of his presidency.”<sup>76</sup> Yet the legacy of the speech also includes persistent fears of “another Vietnam,” along with a legacy of divisive, polarizing debates over American foreign policy. After America chaotically evacuated South Vietnam in 1975, fears of “another Vietnam” became entrenched in the national psyche. Twenty years later, President George H. W. Bush, in his first inaugural address, would observe that the Vietnam war “cleaves us still,” as he struggled to make sense of its legacy: “The final lesson of Vietnam is that no great nation can long afford to be sundered by a memory.” Urging the nation to move beyond the divisiveness and partisanship of the Vietnam era, Bush declared that a “new breeze is blowing” and argued that “the old bipartisanship must be made new again.”<sup>77</sup>

Unfortunately, that unity and bipartisanship has remained elusive. Beyond a brief spell of national unity following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, America has remained bitterly divided over its role in the world. Exacerbating those divisions is Donald J. Trump’s “America First” movement—a slogan dating back to isolationist opposition to America’s entry into World War II. It is a slogan that questions America’s post-war alliances, while downplaying the threat posed by authoritarians like Vladimir Putin. It represents an isolationism that demonizes Washington elites while supposedly giving voice to the “forgotten men and women.” Most Americans still support NATO, and most embrace America’s role as a champion of democracy around the

world. For a significant portion of the Republican Party, however, “America First” promises a new era of US isolationism with an emphasis on defending our own borders.

Nixon was never an isolationist, of course, yet his rhetoric portended the foreign policy rhetoric of Donald J. Trump. Like Nixon, Trump polarizes the nation. His rhetoric is “meant to create divisions,” as Democratic Senator Edward J. Markey observed, as if Trump were somehow “channeling Richard Nixon.”<sup>78</sup> Like Nixon, Trump insists that there is greater wisdom in the “silent majority” than in noisy protestors who take to the streets. Like Nixon, Trump monopolizes the symbols of patriotism, inspiring his flag-waving supporters to lash out against a long list of supposed enemies. Unlike Nixon, however, Trump never learned how to accept defeat. When Nixon lost an election, he may have lashed out at the media and the Washington elite, but he never denied the legitimacy of elections in America, nor did he foment an insurrection against the government itself.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Robert P. Newman, “Under the Veneer: Nixon’s Vietnam Speech of November 3, 1969,” in *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., James R. Andrews, ed. (New York: Longman, 1990), 103.

<sup>2</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Great Silent Majority: Nixon’s 1969 Speech on Vietnamization* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2014), 15.

<sup>3</sup> According to Newman, the Nixon’s “veneer of tough talk” was aimed at Wallacites and other members of an emerging Republican majority who rejected “peacenik” demands for an immediate end to the war. Combined with Nixon’s decision to “placate the doves not at all” and his appeals to the “patriotism” of the “silent majority,” this strategy, according to Newman, constituted a “rhetoric of confrontation” that was designed to polarize public opinion and isolate the dissenters. See Newman, “Under the Veneer,” 101-103.

<sup>4</sup> Sara Thelen, “Mobilizing a Majority: Nixon’s ‘Silent Majority’ Speech and the Domestic Debate over Vietnam,” *Journal of American Studies* 51 (2017): 890.

<sup>5</sup> Chester Pach, “‘Our Worst Enemy Seems to be the Press’: TV News, the Nixon Administration, and U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Vietnam, 1969-1973,” *Diplomatic History* 34 (2010): 555.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Z. Katz, “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The Nixon Administration and the Pursuit of Peace with Honor in Vietnam,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 27 (1997): 498.

<sup>7</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “An Exercise in the Rhetoric of Mythic America,” in *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., James R. Andrews, ed. (New York: Longman, 1990), 121-123.

<sup>8</sup> Sabra Ayres, “Does Trump’s ‘Silent Majority’ Really Exist?” *Spectrum News 1*, September 3, 2020, <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nc/charlotte/news/2020/09/03/trumps-silent-majority-texas>.

<sup>9</sup> John A. Farrell, *Richard Nixon: The Life* (New York: Doubleday, 2017), 127.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: The Education of a Politician, 1913-1962* (New York: Touchstone, 1988), 9, 27, 33.

<sup>11</sup> Ambrose, *Nixon*, 27.

<sup>12</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 4.

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- <sup>13</sup> Ambrose, *Nixon*, 58.
- <sup>14</sup> Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 20.
- <sup>15</sup> Quoted in Bella Kornitzer, *The Real Nixon: An Intimate Biography* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1960), 112.
- <sup>16</sup> Ambrose, *Nixon*, 72.
- <sup>17</sup> Ambrose, *Nixon*, 73-86.
- <sup>18</sup> Richard M. Nixon, *Six Crises* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co.), 295.
- <sup>19</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 5.
- <sup>20</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 5.
- <sup>21</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 7.
- <sup>22</sup> Edwin Black, "Richard Nixon and the Privacy of Public Discourse," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2 (1999): 4.
- <sup>23</sup> Black, "Richard Nixon and the Privacy of Public Discourse," 1.
- <sup>24</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 93, 125.
- <sup>25</sup> Ambrose, *Nixon*, 218.
- <sup>26</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 129-157.
- <sup>27</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 158-159.
- <sup>28</sup> Ambrose, *Nixon*, 225-226.
- <sup>29</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 167.
- <sup>30</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 158-176.
- <sup>31</sup> Nixon, *Six Crises*, 81.
- <sup>32</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 181.
- <sup>33</sup> Tom Wicker, *One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream* (New York: Random House, 1991), 87.
- <sup>34</sup> Wicker, *One of Us*, 98.
- <sup>35</sup> Richard M. Nixon, "Checkers," in *Words of a Century: The Top 100 American Speeches, 1900-1999*, ed. Stephen E. Lucas and Martin J. Medhurst (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 311.
- <sup>36</sup> Nixon, "Checkers," 311.
- <sup>37</sup> Nixon, "Checkers," 313.
- <sup>38</sup> Nixon, "Checkers," 313.
- <sup>39</sup> Nixon, "Checkers," 314.
- <sup>40</sup> Nixon, "Checkers," 314.
- <sup>41</sup> Nixon, "Checkers," 315.
- <sup>42</sup> Nixon, "Checkers," 315-16.
- <sup>43</sup> Nixon, "Checkers," 316.
- <sup>44</sup> Ruark, Robert. "Human Republican," *New York World-Telegram*, September 25, 1952.
- <sup>45</sup> Nixon, *Six Crises*, 123.
- <sup>46</sup> Tim Weiner, *One Man Against the World: The Tragedy of Richard Nixon* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2016), 15.
- <sup>47</sup> See: Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the President 1968* (New York: Trident Press, 1969).
- <sup>48</sup> Farrell, *Richard Nixon*, 324.
- <sup>49</sup> In the three-way race including George Wallace, Nixon won just 43.42 percent of the vote to 42.72 for Humphrey, although his 301 electoral votes were decisive.
- <sup>50</sup> Quoted in Campbell, *The Great Silent Majority*, 45.

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- <sup>51</sup> Quoted in Campbell, *The Great Silent Majority*, 45-46.
- <sup>52</sup> Weiner, *One Man Against the World*, 27.
- <sup>53</sup> Campbell, *The Great Silent Majority*, 49.
- <sup>54</sup> Richard Nixon: "Address to the Nation on Vietnam, May 14, 1969," *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/239084>.
- <sup>55</sup> Scott Laderman, *The "Silent Majority" Speech: Richard Nixon, the Vietnam War, and the Origins of the New Right* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 40.
- <sup>56</sup> Richard Nixon, "Address to the Nation on Vietnam, May 14, 1969," *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/239084>.
- <sup>57</sup> Robert B. Semple, Jr., "Speech Took 10 Drafts, and President Wrote All," *New York Times*, November 4, 1969, 17.
- <sup>58</sup> Semple, Jr., "Speech Took 10 Drafts," 17.
- <sup>59</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Nixon's Appeal for Unity," *Baltimore News-American*, November 3, 1969, 7B.
- <sup>60</sup> In his 1990 memoir, *In the Arena*, Nixon proclaimed Checkers and his "Silent Majority" speech the "two most effective speeches of my political career," and he attributed the success of both to an "element of surprise" that increased the size of the audience and "massively" expanded the "impact" of both speeches. Richard Nixon, *In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat, and Renewal* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 215.
- <sup>61</sup> David M. Shribman, "Nixon's 'Silent Majority' Speech, 50 Years Later the Battle Against the Washington Establishment Continues Today," *Pittsburg Post-Gazette*, November 3, 2019, E3.
- <sup>62</sup> Thelen, "Mobilizing a Majority," 903.
- <sup>63</sup> Katz, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," 499.
- <sup>64</sup> Katz, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," 497.
- <sup>65</sup> Quoted in Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro, "Presidential Manipulation of Polls and Public Opinion: The Nixon Administration and the Pollsters," *Political Science Quarterly* 110 (1995-96): 527.
- <sup>66</sup> Shribman, "Nixon's 'Silent Majority' Speech," E3.
- <sup>67</sup> Thelen, "Mobilizing a Majority," 888.
- <sup>68</sup> Thelen, "Mobilizing a Majority," 890.
- <sup>69</sup> Thelen, "Mobilizing a Majority," 893-94.
- <sup>70</sup> Thelen, "Mobilizing a Majority," 893.
- <sup>71</sup> Thelen, "Mobilizing a Majority," 894.
- <sup>72</sup> Spiro T. Agnew, "Television News Coverage," in Lucas and Medhurst, *Words of a Century*,
- <sup>73</sup> Agnew, "Television News Coverage," 498.
- <sup>74</sup> Agnew, "Television News Coverage," 503.
- <sup>75</sup> Thelen, "Mobilizing a Majority," 906-07.
- <sup>76</sup> Shribman, "Nixon's 'Silent Majority' Speech," E3.
- <sup>77</sup> George H.W. Bush, "Inaugural Address of George Bush," *The Avalon Project*, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/bush.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/bush.asp).
- <sup>78</sup> Shribman, "Nixon's 'Silent Majority' Speech," E3.