

the key to this potential is economic growth based on private industry and governmental support, which allows the needs of all people to be met. Third, meeting popular needs will produce a more equal society in which conflict between social classes becomes unnecessary and obsolete, where workers become members of the middle class. Fourth, social problems can be solved like industrial problems; the economy can be fine-tuned and the welfare state can eradicate poverty. Fifth, the main threat to this beneficent system is communism; therefore, the United States and its free world allies must fight a prolonged struggle against communism while promoting the American free enterprise system throughout the world.³³ This was the ideological foundation for the national security and free market ethos that pervaded the minds of American policymakers.

By the mid-1950s, most Americans within the mass and elite public were part of this liberal-conservative ideological consensus. This consensus became possible during the 1950s because most conservatives accepted the legitimacy of the limited welfare state created by the New Deal under Franklin Roosevelt, while most liberals adopted the anticommunist stance in vogue following World War II. Therefore, the liberal-conservative consensus represented neither liberalism nor conservatism, but was a hybrid or amalgamation of the two ideologies. Differences did exist among members of the consensus. Liberals were more favorable toward welfare and government intervention in the economy, while conservatives generally were opposed to such policies. Conservatives were more prone to rely on force to respond to instability in the Third World, while liberals were more sympathetic to the need to promote third-world economic and political development. However, such differences were overshadowed by agreement on the promise of the American private market system and the threat of communism. According to Hodgson, "since the consensus had made converts on the Right as well as on the Left, only a handful of dissidents were excluded from the Big Tent: southern diehards, rural reactionaries, the more . . . paranoid fringes of the radical Right, and the divided remnants of the old, Marxist, Left."³⁴

As with the foreign policy consensus, the liberal-conservative consensus did not develop overnight. Beginning in the 1930s, American ideology went through three phases which will be discussed below. First, the 1930s and 1940s witnessed the rise of liberalism and the political Left and a corresponding decline of conservatism. Second, the late 1940s and 1950s resulted in the resurgence of conservatism and the political Right. The more extreme conservative elements, represented by McCarthyism, were a powerful force even though they were ultimately unsuccessful in gaining political ascendance. Third, these two trends resulted in the formation of a liberal-conservative consensus by the mid-1950s that lasted throughout much of the 1960s.³⁵

The United States experienced considerable change in ideological views from the 1920s to the 1940s. The Great Depression represented a momentous crisis in the lives of most Americans that politicized issues in society like no other event since the Civil War. Liberalism grew in popularity and became ascendant as Franklin Roosevelt passed New Deal policies based upon activist government to pull the economy out of the depression and provide welfare for the needy and impoverished. Conservatives, dominant before the depression and representing

many Americans afterwards, continued to believe in a “laissez-faire” economy based upon minimal government involvement and the magic of the marketplace. The economic collapse, massive unemployment, and impoverishment produced by the depression also resulted in growing popularity for a third group of Americans advocating greater change, represented by socialists and American communists. Thus, politics became very divisive during the 1930s at the same time that the rise of domestic liberalism and greater government activity in the economy was accompanied by the growth of presidential power and the federal bureaucracy. Many conservatives, especially those with extreme views, accused Franklin Roosevelt of becoming a dictator and imposing socialism on Americans through his New Deal programs. Socialists and the Left complained that New Deal policies were inadequate for addressing the mass poverty and inequality, for all they did was reform the capitalist system which was the fundamental source of the problems.

With the attack on Pearl Harbor, America’s involvement in World War II temporarily united most of these competing ideological factions under the gauntlet of liberalism against the common enemy of fascism. The isolationism behind U.S. foreign policy during the interwar years was overwhelmed by America’s war effort. The decline of isolationism was accompanied by the growth of liberal internationalism in foreign policy, whose advocates supported the establishment of a liberal international political economy—that is, a democratic-capitalist international order. A liberal world order would flourish through international cooperation, international law, and international organizations, such as the United Nations. Thus, World War II not only represented a time of fear but also of great hope. In fact, the end of World War II was a triumph for the United States and liberalism, for the allies had won the war abroad and, with the war taking the United States out of the Great Depression, Americans were beginning to prosper at home once again.

With the war over, the middle and late 1940s witnessed the beginning of the cold war and a resurgence of conservatism in American society. Conservatives renewed their criticism of the New Deal, arguing that the restoration of economic prosperity no longer required the permanent intrusion of massive government in the economy. In foreign policy, conservatives initially promoted a “fortress America” strategy, emphasizing the need for isolationism abroad and military withdrawal, but this political stance was quickly discredited during the great foreign policy debate of the late 1940s. The issue of communism, however, began to surface and reinforced conservative concerns with the New Deal and perceptions of growing socialism at home. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, fear of communism both at home and abroad became the rallying cry of conservatism. McCarthyism represented the height of conservatism and its most extreme positions during the cold war. Its proponents saw themselves as engaged in a battle for the future of America with its major ideological adversaries: liberalism and the Left, Roosevelt’s New Deal and Truman’s Fair Deal policies at home, and the Democratic party’s so-called appeasement policies of containment abroad.³⁶

Although conservatism and the political Right were unsuccessful in gaining political ascendance in government and society, they were instrumental in push-