

Is the GOP Reusing Its 1964 Playbook?

As CHQ Chairman Richard A. Viguerie observed in his book *Takeover*, movement conservatives have been steadily working the plan envisioned by “the Buckley generation” for over 50 years. Inspired by leaders and thinkers such as John Ashbrook, Morton Blackwell, L. Brent Bozell, Jr., William F. Buckley, Jr., Lee Edwards, Tom Ellis, Jerry Falwell, Ed Fuelner, Russell Kirk, Frank Meyer, Howard Phillips, Henry Regnery, Bill Rusher, Phyllis Schlafly, F. Clifton White, Paul Weyrich, and others, we have made great progress in the Republican Party, and more importantly, in public opinion at large.

And the closer we conservatives get to accomplishing our goal of making the Republican Party the vehicle to govern America according to conservative principles, the more desperately the Republican establishment is going to resist.

In 1964, conservatives nominated Barry Goldwater as the first conservative candidate for president in the modern era, and the parallels between establishment efforts to derail Donald Trump today and what happened before and after Goldwater’s nomination are instructive, to say the least.

Unlike this year, where the Republican primaries had a number of solidly conservative candidates such as Ted Cruz, Rick Perry and Rick Santorum, in 1964 there was only one—Arizona’s Senator Barry Goldwater.

Barry Goldwater didn’t have his roots in the old Midwest-Northeast Republican base that had fought and won the Civil War, as Senator Bob Taft did. Goldwater, from Arizona, was a successful businessman and a man of the New West; and he had new ideas about what being a conservative meant, but when he

was first elected to the Senate in 1952, he didn't have a national reputation or following.

Much like Senator Ted Cruz, Goldwater developed that reputation and following by being the principled and consistent spokesman for conservative principles—even when it meant criticizing President Dwight Eisenhower's "Modern Republicanism" as a "dime store New Deal."

Throughout the 1960s, Goldwater and a group of mostly young conservative thinkers defined what became the modern conservative movement. The movement offered its most cogent expression in *The Sharon Statement*, written by the late M. Stanton Evans and had its arguments put forth in book length when, in 1960, Senator Barry Goldwater published *The Conscience of a Conservative* with the help of L. Brent Bozell Jr. as his ghost writer.

The Republican establishment was thus on notice that conservatives intended to change the way things worked in Washington, and that change did not involve merely swapping who was going to collect taxes for the growing welfare state and handout the prizes to the lobbyists—it was going to be real and profound.

This scared the Devil out of establishment Republicans who had grown lazy and comfortable trading their votes for a couple of stop lights for their district as members of the near-permanent minority party in Congress.

And that's where the parallels between Trump in 2016 and Goldwater in 1964 start to get clear.

While "Trumpism" lacks (at least for now) the intellectual meat that conservatives put on their agenda, it poses the same threat to the go-along-get-along D.C. Republican establishment.

In 1964, as Goldwater's new ideas about conservative

government began to sell, the GOP establishment launched a desperate "Stop Goldwater" campaign and anointed a variety of progressive Republicans as the official establishment favorite, but Michigan Governor George Romney, New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and Pennsylvania's Governor William Scranton all flamed-out.

Goldwater's acceptance speech at the 1964 Republican National Convention at the Cow Palace in San Francisco has become a classic of American political thought, but its most memorable line, "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," would be used against him, much as some of Trump's most memorable and, we might add, most accurate lines, have been used against him.

Suddenly, liberal Republicans claimed to be shocked. The party they had controlled for so long had fallen into the hands of "extremists." Political commentators were equally taken aback. After hearing the speech, one reporter expressed their collective opprobrium: "My God, he's going to run as Barry Goldwater."

They've said much the same thing about Trump.

Goldwater's credo played into the hands of establishment Republicans eager to thwart the conservative takeover of the GOP, and Democrats eager to hold on to power in Washington, by allowing them to continue the drumbeat of criticism of him as an "extremist" that began during the Republican primaries.

After Goldwater won the nomination, the progressive Republican establishment did precious little to help him and much to hurt him—unlike Senator Bob Taft, who actually campaigned for Eisenhower, even after he lost the nomination in what was arguably the dirtiest Republican Convention ever.

Rockefeller, Lodge, and Scranton made no real attempt to debate Goldwater on domestic policy or national defense or

refute his criticism of establishment Republican me-tooism. Instead, he was attacked on a personal level as an “extremist,” a “kook” and a “crackpot” who had no hope of winning the general election.

Progressive establishment Republicans also labeled Goldwater as a racist for opposing, on principled constitutional grounds, much of President Johnson’s civil rights legislation, and labeled him a warmonger for advocating a military build-up to not just counter but roll back the Soviets. Goldwater’s blunt and often profane, off-the-cuff comments seemed to confirm such charges when he joked that he would “lob” missiles “into the men’s room at the Kremlin.”

Sound familiar?

This year what you get is Speaker Paul Ryan saying he would sue if a President Donald Trump were to implement his proposed Muslim ban—an idea that is +30 in some polls.

And the *Wall Street Journal* deputy editorial page editor Bret Stephens trash talks Donald Trump and his voters by saying Trump needs to lose decisively to Hillary Clinton so that grass-roots conservative Republican voters learn their lesson.

Stephens later told Hugh Hewitt, “I think a Donald Trump presidency raises a new kind of version of conservatism which more closely resembles a kind of Father Coughlin, America first populism and nativism and isolationism, than the confident, modern, cosmopolitan, thoughtful, engaged conservatism of Ronald Reagan and Paul Ryan.”

As Mr. Viguerie observed in *Takeover*, the pattern set in the Eisenhower and Goldwater campaigns still holds true today. When a conservative loses, he is expected to campaign for the establishment Republican winner, as Taft did.

When a conservative wins, the losing establishment candidate

routinely undermines the conservative, as Rockefeller, Scranton and Romney did to Goldwater in 1964 and Speaker Paul Ryan, former Governor Mitt Romney and their media acolytes are doing to Donald Trump today.

As I suggested at the beginning of this article, the closer we conservatives get to accomplishing the goal of making the Republican Party the vehicle to govern America according to conservative principles, the more desperately the Republican establishment is going to resist.

There are a lot of parallels between 1964 and 2016, but the most important one is this: By defeating Goldwater, establishment Republicans created the opportunity for Democrats and their progressive Republican allies to bankrupt the country in wars that lacked a strategy for victory and to enact the regulatory and welfare regime that continues to plague our economy and limit our liberty 50 years on. {eoa}

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