Contents

Preface, ix

Introduction, 1

1. The World before the War, 11

PART ONE. Bringing Home the Bacon: Congress and the Economics of War

2. “We’ll Get Down and Fight” over Resource Management, 45

3. “Congress DOES Have Power” over the President, 73

4. “A Lesson to the President”: Labor Legislation, 102

PART TWO. Human Rights or Human Wrongs? Congress, Pluralism, and Social Justice

5. “The Dregs of Europe”: A Conflicted Refugee Policy, 135

6. A “Virtual Black-Out of Civil Liberties” and the Politics of Prejudice, 165

7. “Saving America for Americans”: The Fascistic Origins of the Second Red Scare, 197

Epilogue: The World the War Made, 223

Notes, 247
Contents

Essay on Sources, 307

Bibliography, 321

Index, 353
Preface

Some of my earliest memories are of the give-and-take that exists at the core of American democracy, the electoral process. Being the oldest child of older parents who were very active in politics at the grassroots level meant that I had heard many a campaign speech, attended innumerable election night watch events (complete with a big black chalkboard where votes were tallied), sat quietly at precinct and county conventions, and been kissed by politicians—all before I entered public school, let alone registered to vote. Former senator Ralph Yarborough (D-TX) was a guest in our home, and we visited with Lyndon B. Johnson at his ranch once while he was president and over a dozen times after he retired. After I could vote I became an election precinct worker and relished sitting in the back room to count the ballots (old paper ballots with the names of destested candidates often scratched out with a pen or pencil).

I came of age at the moment of transition from New Deal and Great Society liberalism to Reagan-era conservatism. Growing up I asked lots of questions, especially about what politicians did after they went to Washington, D.C., and my parents took me seriously, providing the answers as best they understood them. Many people who knew me at a young age assumed a political career was in my future. I participated in state and national campaigns, once even writing a letter to the editor of the Corsicana Daily Sun. In that 1983 special election for the old Sixth Congressional District in Texas, Phil Gramm had resigned the seat as a Democrat and announced he would run for election again but as a Republican. There were countless candidates, mostly liberal and moderate Democrats hoping to prevent the district from going Republican. A man who saw my letter wrote me with a check to give to the candidate I had endorsed. He noted he was moved to do so because of my youthful enthusiasm for the liberal reformer. Gramm won that election, a signal of the shift away from the solid Democratic South to the GOP, a cause and a consequence of the demise of the moderate political order whose formation I explore here.

Two factors dissuaded me from pursuing politics as a career. First, I knew that I was too liberal to be successful in the place Texas was becoming in the 1980s. My parents’ generation of “yellow dog” Democrats—as in “I would sooner vote for a cur yellow dog than a Republican”—was giving way first to “boll weevils” and “blue dogs” and later to Republicans who cared little for sustaining the economic order of the New Deal or expanding the social justice liberalism of the Great Society. More important, I had grown fascinated with the politicians who governed the United States in the middle of the twentieth century.
I became determined to explain the pragmatic liberalism of midcentury that evolved from the 1930s through the mid-1970s, when it faded in proportion with the rising antistatism of American voters. In an earlier book I chronicled the career of one key member of Congress, Wright Patman, who embodied the economic liberalism of his generation. He entered Congress as more a demagogue than a pragmatist, but I detected a significant shift in his political style during World War II. As such, I searched for literature that would explain the larger dynamics of the institution at this critical juncture in American political development. I found nothing that was satisfactory, so the seed was planted for this book. Initially, my questions were rather broad: what accounts for legislative effectiveness, what is the proper role for congressional deliberation during wartime, and what role does ideology play in the process. As I did more research and started writing, the project gained focus and took its current form: an explication of the New Deal’s fate during the war and the role of moderates in creating a liberalism in praxis that privileged economic policy over social justice policy.

In the process of gathering materials for Why We Fight, I have accumulated numerous debts, and it is my pleasure to acknowledge the many people and institutions who have made this book possible. Though I first conceptualized this book when working on my dissertation, I did not begin work in earnest until 2003. During the 2003–2004 academic year I was fortunate enough to be a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C. This center is an ideal location for academics interested in the history of politics and public policy, and while there I received much encouragement and support from several individuals: Lawrence C. Dodd, Kent Hughes, Anne Pitcher, Philippa Strum, and Donald Wolfensberger. In the years since I was a Wilson Fellow, Flip Strum has become a valued mentor, and I am forever grateful for her warm friendship and encouragement. I also benefitted from the work of a wonderful research assistant, Erin K. Fitzpatrick. A special word of thanks goes to the Honorable Lee Hamilton for his work in fostering an intellectual community where conversations flowed freely and all views were welcome. Being at the Wilson Center enabled me to conduct research at the Center for Legislative Archives, National Archives, where I was able to examine the records of all the congressional committees active during the war years. Richard Hunt, the director of the center, William Davis, Rodney Ross, and Ed Schamel all provided immeasurable assistance. I also did a significant amount of work in the Manuscripts Division at the Library of Congress, and I am grateful to the archivists there who filled many a request for boxes with good cheer.
Archivists across the country at numerous university archives made my visits productive and enjoyable. I want to thank the professionals at the Alderman Library, University of Virginia; American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming; the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center Congressional Archives, University of Oklahoma; Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota; the Department of Archives and History, Arizona State University; the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; K. Ross Toole Archives and Special Collections, University of Montana; the Kansas State Historical Society; the Lilly Library, Indiana University; the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research, University of Georgia; the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; Special Collections, Brigham Young University; Special Collections, Georgetown University; Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky; University Archives Political Collections, University of Colorado; the Utah State Historical Society; and the W. S. Hoole Special Collections, University of Alabama. I have also spent extensive time in several presidential libraries while researching this book, specifically the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, the Harry S Truman Presidential Library, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, and the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. I am grateful to everyone at each of these institutions who kindly shared their wisdom with an often harried researcher trying to make time to look at just one more box, and I would like to say a special word of thanks to Dennis Bilger, Rick Ewig, Carolyn Hanneman, Matthew C. Hanson, David M. Hays, Evan Hocker, Karen Jania, Virginia H. Lewick, Elizabeth Safly, Matt Schaefer, Lynn Smith, Randy Sowell, Sheryl B. Vogt, William K. Wallach, Pat Wildenberg, and Cindy Worrell. Librarians at McKendree College and at the University of Houston have been generous with their time, and my appreciation goes to Becky Bos- tian, Bill Harroff, Debbie Houk, Alex Simons, and Liz Vogt.

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Why We Fight
Do moderates matter? Why and how did moderates and conservatives use World War II to revise the New Deal? Conversely, why and how did moderates join with liberals to preserve the New Deal? Congress became the nexus of this conflict between liberals and conservatives about the nature of the state, making the World War II years crucial for understanding postwar politics. Moderate lawmakers in ways not possible a decade earlier limned and constrained but also preserved the New Deal. I contend the New Deal was a revolution with moderate and radical phases, and that its aftermath, in other words the period of retrenchment and reaction, occurred during World War II. Here I am borrowing from Crane Brinton’s *The Anatomy of Revolution*, but the analogy carries nicely to this period of American political history. I assert that we cannot fully appreciate the nuances of American politics in the sixty years from World War II through the end of the twentieth century without careful explication of how the legislative branch redefined the New Deal in the decade following its creation. The early 1940s was a critical moment of transformation from the hopeful, experimental welfare state liberalism of the 1930s to the vital center warfare state liberalism of the 1950s.

My title, which refers to the famous war-era propaganda films directed by Frank Capra, references the myriad ideological, partisan, regional, and institutional conflicts not only among lawmakers but also between the legislative branch and the White House. The numerous honest congressional differences with the executive branch have been airbrushed out of the story in deference to the presidency-centered literature that too often dominates the study of modern American politics, especially by historians on the left who have written on Franklin D. Roosevelt. By revisiting the Roosevelt era from the fresh perspective of Congress, the war-era legislative battles appear in a new light. Long-serving members knew FDR too well by the 1940s, and most had grown to hate him as he they. Even though lawmakers resented Roosevelt for his arrogance toward them, there were no “good guys” and no “bad guys,” only principled politicians doing what they believed to be best for the country. Congress fought because the members believed in the democratic freedom to debate, disagree, and decide. They discounted the Roman statesman Cicero’s observation, “In time of war, law is silent,” instead debating and legislating about the problems of the day. This messiness and the corresponding mistakes in American democracy, especially concerning issues relating to social justice where congressional policy was out of sync with American war aims, mirrored what the war was about. The dean of the Capitol press galleries during the war years maintained, “This is a Congress of
fighting men, women . . . fighters for American democracy. . . . The Congress of the United States is not—and never has been—a ‘rubber stamp’ Congress. It has been a Congress of men of steel and explosiveness, many chosen because of their military records.”

During the war years, Roosevelt and Harry S Truman faced a fractious Congress riven by hardcore conservatives and liberals (New Dealers), a state of affairs that empowered moderates—mostly Democrats but Republicans also—to cut deals on war-related economic policies but not on issues of pluralism and social justice. This wartime political dynamic established the dominant patterns for postwar politics: the solidification but never complete acceptance of New Deal statism. The contentious legislative-executive contest for power shaped national politics for the remainder of the twentieth century. At its core the partisan debate between liberals and conservatives has been about the scale, scope, and purpose of the federal government, an old conflict rooted in the founding of the government but with new import in the aftermath of the New Deal revolution.

Postwar bickering over the purpose of government intensified during the Truman, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard M. Nixon administrations when reformers pushed to expand the concept of New Deal liberalism to include issues like health care, civil rights, environmental protections, and welfare reform, mirroring the 1940s with heightened peevishness on Capitol Hill and with moderate lawmakers often becoming the kingmakers. At moments where fewer changes to the role of the state were discussed, most notably during the 1950s when Dwight D. Eisenhower was president, the tensions in Congress and between the legislative and executive branches ebbed somewhat. Though ideological debates about what the state should and should not do spiraled in the post-Watergate era of conservative ascendancy, the legislative role changed dramatically because of the demise of the seniority system in Congress and the movement of conservative southern Democrats into the Republican Party. Therefore, I assert that the patterns lawmakers established in the 1940s continued unabated through the mid-1970s whereby moderates determined the direction of national politics and the nature of reform. A new institutional dynamic emerged in Congress after the 1970s whereby the left and the right polarized and consolidated, leaving far fewer moderates to find the compromise necessary to enact successful reform initiatives.

Partisanship dominated wartime politics, as did strains between the branches of government. While a conservative coalition of some Republicans and some Democrats undid parts of the New Deal, particularly those agencies designed to put people back to work, a liberal-moderate coalition consolidated much of the New Deal according to a center left construct. Members of Congress in the majority party fought and won a dual war in the 1940s: preserving but not expanding
the New Deal and providing for a military victory. In the process, lawmakers con-
tested presidential power mongering because some conservatives believed an ex-
panded presidency to be as dangerous as the New Deal. Roosevelt had merged the
twentieth-century trend toward strong presidents and a weakened Congress. This
development chafed moderates and conservatives in Congress, but Rep. Robert L.
“Muley” Doughton (D-NC) claimed, “I am not defending the President who may
be exercising too much war power, but the situation, bad as it is, is not as bad as it
would be if we were ruled by Hitler.”

My work clarifies what the New Deal really meant for those lawmakers who
constructed it and then revised it. The second half of this equation is as important
as the first. Many of the same lawmakers who implemented the New Deal in the
1930s believed by the 1940s it should be narrowed. Junior lawmakers elected in or
after 1938 typically agreed, and their votes were key to the transformations de-
scribed in this book. Of the 819 members of Congress who served between 1941
and 1945, 368 lawmakers had held office during the New Deal years and just 295
had been in Congress in the heady 1933–1935 period. Of those, only 55 consistently
voted with the liberals in the 1940s. The war-era Congress was a very different in-
stitution than the Depression-era one it replaced, deserving study in its own right
for its contributions to the evolution of the New Deal, itself a nebulous construct
that shifted in meaning multiple times in the 1930s. Conservatives in Congress
wanted to rid the body politic of dangerous New Deal experimentalism by the
1940s, or as Rep. H. Carl Andersen (R-MN) put it, “now is the time to lop off a
dead branch of the New Deal tree,” but moderates and liberals disagreed.

In all the twentieth century wars, ritualistic invocations of nonpartisanship oc-
cur just after the onset of hostilities, and then politics as usual recurs immediately.
Because World War II is understood as “the Good War” fought by the “Greatest
Generation,” too much focus has been placed on sentiments such as those
recorded in the New York Times on December 8, 1941: “Gone is every sign of parti-
anship in the Capitol of the United States. Gone is every trace of hesitancy and in-
decision. There are no party lines today in Congress.” The illusion of cooperative
congressional behavior masked the internecine party warfare over issues ranging
from strikes, economic regulation, and anti-Communist red-hunting to race, gen-
der, and refugee policies. Senate Minority Leader Charles McNary (R-OR) re-
lected, “Yes, it is true that when we get a Democratic administration we get into a
world war. Maybe it is to cover up their domestic sins.” A close look at Congress
during the most consensual war in American history will reveal that politics
thrived in World War II because members of Congress fought two wars, the well-
known war against the Axis powers and the less well-known war about the New
Deal. Lawmakers quarreled not primarily to impede progress but to find compro-
mise, behavior in sync with a society and government based on free speech.
I demonstrate how scaling back on certain domestic reforms was an essential compromise liberals and moderates made in order to institutionalize the New Deal economic order. Congress, not executive branch officials, controlled this process, and they did not fully depress the lever for change until the war years, a development that I argue was inevitable. Indeed, examination of the period reveals a bifurcated record of accomplishment and failure. In certain policy domains (taxation, rationing, military oversight, labor management policy, and postwar economic conversion) Democrats held together their coalition and preserved the New Deal economic order. Doing so was no small feat. The result: some policies and programs were rejected—including the Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration, and the Works Progress Administration—but others—like the Wagner Act, Keynesianism, and economic regulation—were institutionalized (at least until the 1970s and 1980s with the rise of modern conservatism). Policymaking remained productive despite, and sometimes because of, the vituperative partisanship. These quarrels resulted from the freedom to debate; the participants understood the end game was legislation, not simply ideological vindication.

On other issues (refugee policy, the persistence of racial discrimination, and hunting Communist spies) the discord proved insurmountable. A minority of congressional conservatives used legislative procedures to stifle liberal domestic policy. Indeed, conflicts concerning such social matters never dominated the New Deal order within Congress and were not important enough for moderates in that body to waste their political capital on, especially when struggles about the economy were intense and, from their perspective, more relevant to the war effort. While these political developments might seem unremarkable at first glance, in actuality they prefigure postwar attitudes toward liberalism. Departure from the economic radicalism of the 1930s made the New Deal economy more sympathetic to capitalism and also facilitated postwar rights-based liberalism benefiting groups previously marginalized in the American state: people of color, women, and gays and lesbians. This development generated even more passionate outbursts from conservatives, who drew from the modern rhetoric of antimstatist opposition refined in the 1940s. For example, Rep. Karl Mundt (R-SD) insisted, “The New Deal Santa Claus has an unpleasant but inevitable habit of calling back with due bills for the gilded presents which he leaves on the doorsteps of the people.”

Congress reflected the divisions within the country over the various war programs and over the ever more powerful presidency. Congress, more than the president, encapsulated the national political and social consciousness, for good
and for ill, meaning that lawmakers collectively held the same range of values and prejudices as did average Americans. So explained Sen. Carl Hayden (D-AZ), “The Representatives and Senators in Washington are simply a good cross section of the general public. If the purpose to be served by our system of government is to assure the election of only intellectual giants to the Congress, then I am afraid that in our democracy as we know it that purpose will never be achieved.”

Lawmakers acted on constituent priorities. Members of Congress remain in office by keeping aware of what voters in their districts are thinking, and while presidents often see legislators as parochial, they provide a good reflection of shifting public opinion on the local level. Congress also takes direct pressure from lobbyists and citizen protests. One caveat worth making is that Congress in the 1940s was not truly representative of the national population. Congressional districts were stacked in favor of rural areas over cities since the Supreme Court did not mandate “one person, one vote” until twenty years later. In the South, African Americans and many poor whites were disenfranchised. Few women served in Congress, and those who won election often found themselves on the margins of an “old-boy” institution governed by the seniority system.

This imperfect Congress with its imperfect representation of the nation nonetheless legislated the important shifts that had occurred in national politics in the 1930s and 1940s. Members of Congress learned an overriding lesson from the New Deal: productive policy could be crafted when the White House and Congress worked in tandem as was the case in the so-called first 100 days of the Roosevelt presidency and again in the so-called second New Deal of 1935. Congressional authors of the New Deal included a sometimes bizarre combination of liberal Democrats and southern segregationists, with both groups advocating economic liberalism in the early and mid-1930s. Such a fragile coalition based more on self-interest than on principle could easily break, and break it did in the 1940s. These fissures first appeared early in Roosevelt’s second term when he asked for legislation to reform the Supreme Court by expanding its membership. He fell flat because there was scant cooperation with Congress. The record of legislative and executive cooperation in the 1940s is mixed: the two branches were most often in pursuit of common purpose over economic mobilization matters while there was almost no attempt at compromise on social justice legislation. These results were no accident. Scholars have long acknowledged that Roosevelt abandoned support for New Deal reforms midway through the war. What is less well known is the process by which liberal and moderate lawmakers made a similar shift.

Though grammatically Congress is a singular noun, functionally it is not. Congress is composed of two separate, often contentious institutions, the House and the Senate, the former with 435 members and the latter with ninety-six dur-
ing the war years. In addition to the two dominant political parties, Democrats and Republicans, a scattering of third-party members played a not insignificant role in legislative debates. Just as important, members divided according to ideology, schisms that crossed party lines. Moreover, region functioned as a secondary factor, shading the ideological divisions.

Wartime partisanship, another determinative factor, was not a simple clash between Democrats and Republicans but was as much about cross-party factionalism, ideological differences, and intra-party conflicts. Congressional Democrats never cohered into a homogeneous party in the 1930s, a problem that intensified in the 1940s. These internal divisions resulted from size, geography, and ideology. Two contradictory trends emerged. The Democratic Party both nationalized its influence and regionalized its leadership in the 1930s and 1940s with liberal, moderate, and conservative southerners exercising power. Democratic priorities differed from region to region and fractious domestic politics resulted.¹⁰

Congressional liberals during the war years believed in the New Deal, the importance of an activist federal government, and the centrality of economic reform and regulation to prevent a capitalist oligarchy from taking over the United States. War-era congressional liberals were less unified on questions of individual rights and social justice. Nor were liberals of one mind regarding capitalism, with some retaining the anticapitalist animus of the early 1930s and some accepting the inevitability of capitalism in the United States. Liberal leaders included Sens. Robert Wagner (D-NY), George W. Norris (I-NE), Robert M. La Follette Jr. (P-WI), Hiram Johnson (R-CA), and James E. Murray (D-MT). La Follette, a Progressive Republican, was acknowledged among administration Democrats and Senate leaders as “one of the best we’ve got.”¹¹ Liberals hailed from across the country. Northeastern liberals tended to be urban and have immigrant, working-class districts and constituents who identified as consumers. Southern and western liberals shared a concern about their regions as colonial economies for the northeast. As such, they wanted a strong state to encourage industrial growth in their regions, but they also sympathized with rural producers, sometimes putting them at odds with northeastern liberals. Midwestern liberals evolved from the progressive, insurgent political leaders of the early twentieth century. They fluctuated between northeastern liberals and southern and western liberals depending on the issue.

This complicated range of views makes it difficult to talk about liberals as a coherent group. I have used roll call voting data to more precisely understand liberal behavior by looking at the difference between economic and social justice liberals. Economic liberals endorsed the statist solutions embodied in the New Deal and wanted the federal government to continue to exert a strong regulatory role in the nation’s economy. Social justice liberals avowed the need for federal poli-
cies, again statist in orientation, that equalized rights and opportunities in a pluralist nation. There were fewer of the former than the latter, but the majority of the latter served in the House, not the Senate, thus diluting their power to effect civil rights reform. In the absence of presidential leadership, the Senate through the filibuster had near veto power over social justice legislation. The economic issues that Congress addressed were all directly related to the war and often also reinforced the New Deal ethos. Of the economic liberals 216 were Democrats and 34 were Republicans while 63 were southerners, 89 were northeasterners, 72 were midwesterners, and 31 were westerners. Wartime efforts at social justice reform proved even more divisive in part because no one of notable stature pushed this agenda for greater individual rights or fought against the wartime red-baiters. There was divergence among members who were liberal on economic issues and members who were liberal on social justice issues. Of the social justice liberals, 189 were Democrats and 158 were Republicans while 34 were southerners, 130 were northeasterners, 134 were midwesterners, and 54 were westerners. Only 32 senators and 142 House members fell in both categories. Overcoming isolationism, a key component of conservatism since the end of World War I, proved to be the biggest obstacle for conservatives. Republican leaders—Sens. Gerald P. Nye (ND), Robert A. Taft (OH), and Arthur Vandenberg (MI)—had been important isolationist critics of the drift toward war in the late 1930s. As with liberals, conservatives were not limited to one political party or to one region of the country. Northeastern conservatives represented the concerns of the privileged industrialists and the financial elite and they advocated for smaller government, lower taxes, and fewer benefits for labor unions. Southern conservatives were more motivated by race than by economics though they did endorse statist solutions for agriculture and regional industrialization. The war legitimated a newer mode of conservatism that built on the low-tax, antiregulatory GOP agenda from the 1920s. What emerged in the 1940s appeared primarily antistatist, and it functioned in opposition to the New Deal, abandoning all appeals to isolationism by the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. As it evolved during World War II, the new conservatism constituted a bridge to the modern conservatism of the late twentieth century by arguing against social justice reform in ways that were reminiscent of progressive-era ethnocultural politics. During the early 1940s, conservatives achieved their greatest successes in thwarting social justice reform, and these triumphs resulted because few non-southerners, regardless of region or identity, were willing to defend a civil rights agenda. This Pyrrhic victory must be juxtaposed against the twin conservative goals where they met with defeat: deconstructing the New Deal and reducing the power of the presidency. As such, wartime conservatives opposed existing New Deal policy and did not propose new policy. Among Republicans, Sen. Eugene Mil
likin (R-CO) expressed the views of many in his party, blaming the New Deal for “attacks on the Congress designed to bring it into disrepute as an institution of our Government.” Wartime conservatives most wanted to stop the federal government leviathan from becoming permanent and eliminating individual economic liberty. They were unhappy with both the bureaucratization of government and increasing authority for the White House. Presidential usurpations of the legislative process, specifically the increased reliance on executive orders, political initiatives not vetted by the legislative branch, intensified this complaint. During his presidency, Roosevelt not only signed 3,728 executive orders, he also turned them into a device for unilateral policymaking initiatives. In 1945, the Senate Judiciary Committee passed a resolution condemning the president for his “grabs of power.” Sen. Taft lamented the need for a strong Congress to legislate domestic policy and not become “the mere shell of a legislative body.”

Partisan discord functioned as an opening wedge for conservatives to challenge the New Deal liberal order, work that required moderate compliance. In the 1940s, though, moderates were not stooges of the conservatives. By their very nature, moderates are not ideologues but are often the antithesis of such. The war enabled pragmatic moderates to dominate the political process, and these center-left politicians forged a liberalism in praxis that shifted the country away from welfare state liberalism and toward warfare state liberalism. Indeed, the 1940s were different from the 1930s in important ways: whereas public support for liberal reform waned during the war, a decade earlier conservatives had been in retreat. Instead, the exigencies of wartime governance created conditions where moderates were empowered. In the middle of the vehement statist versus anti-statist debates, the war necessitated a third way of nonideological compromise. When something had to be done, when doing nothing was not an option, the limited statist approaches that moderates advocated proved the least unappealing. Indeed, moderates privileged governing over endless quarrelling. Studying how wartime moderates broke this inertia clarifies the importance of the 1940s to understanding American political development. While ideologues shaped the contours of debate, moderates determined the results and enabled legislation to be passed.

Moderates proved key to sustaining a revised but still liberal economic order; on social justice questions moderates were less reliable, typically aligning with conservatives, especially in the Senate. Conservatives win when politicians from the center abandon liberal views, and the unspoken conservative agenda in the 1940s and since has been to move the center to the right. With liberal and moderate victories on the economic front but conservative and moderate triumphs on the social justice front, a calculus emerged that presaged the political battles for
the remainder of the century, and the political center began shifting rightward, assuming a center-left position that was muted in comparison with the New Deal era.

The fluidity of moderates—who they were and why they shifted from left to center and sometimes to right on the various economic issues before Congress—explains the extraordinarily dynamic and contentious environment within national politics. Because this was a battle decided by the center, such omissions elide understanding of midcentury politics. Moderates, often decried for occupying the inchoate middle, held the balance of power in the 1940s and often determined what policy areas prevailed and what did not. Indeed, moderates succeeded in preserving the core of the New Deal economic reforms but never sufficiently coalesced to influence the social justice reform initiatives. Discerning a pure set of moderate principles is impossible because pragmatic compromise governed moderate political mores. There were about twice as many House Democrats as Republicans in this category, 115 and 53 respectively, but in the Senate Democrats far outnumbered Republican moderates, 30 and 9. Moreover, moderates were geographically dispersed in both chambers. Their collective longevity in Congress was comparable with other ideological factions. However, they were more willing than liberals to view New Deal programs as temporary experiments and they were more willing to trim or eliminate in deference to the war effort. The result was an incomplete victory for both conservatives and liberals, one that exaggerated the ideological contests between the two for the remainder of the century. Indeed, the transformation to modern conservatism was rooted in the ideologically neutral behavior of moderates and was evolutionary, dating back decades earlier to the World War II era.14 Put simply the ideological wars that came to dominate the American political landscape in the last four decades of the twentieth century germinated in the 1940s.

The chapters that follow look at congressional politics, governance, and the policy formation process in what was the defining decade of the twentieth century. This method reveals the nuances of partisanship and the reasons for a bifurcated record on economic and social justice policy. Policy success and policy failure stand in bold relief against each other. Part 1 of Why We Fight sheds new light on economic policies with clear ties to the war effort. Chapter 1 defines the complicated institutional and historical context by exploring congressional procedure at midcentury and the parameters of congressional behavior from World War I through the New Deal, in other words the key antecedents for what happened between 1941 and 1945. Three chapters on taxation, rationing, and labor laws reveal just how difficult passage of these necessary wartime measures was. Lawmakers
were never able to isolate the debate to the questions at hand but instead used the need for additional taxation, the construction of a command economy, and the challenges of manpower mobilization as proxy issues to fight what was for them a war about the New Deal and the role of the federal government in American life. These chapters precede the second part of *Why We Fight*, and they show the fragility of wartime liberalism, clarifying why, when, and how reform ended. Only from this context can the failures to enact wartime social justice reform be understood.

In Part 2 three chapters explore refugee policy, civil rights, and anti-Communist red-baiting, revealing a potent racial conservatism too powerful for the moderates and liberals to overcome. Not only did these issues have less direct impact on the outcome of the war, but, more important, they seemed disconnected from the core of the New Deal, making them expendable to moderates in Congress. The congressional contribution to these policy struggles was significant, yet little is known of these events because one of the conventional arguments about American politics is that Congress lost power to the executive branch in war making. Through my new look at World War II we see this is not quite the case. Finally, an epilogue explores how the partisan dynamics established in the 1940s shaped national politics through the 1970s when the seniority system was eliminated, conservative southern Democrats began their migration to the GOP, and the ongoing Cold War intervention in Vietnam ended. World War II then becomes the template for understanding the history of the twentieth century, one where politics and war merged and warfare state liberalism replaced the welfare state.

World War II catapulted the United States from a third-rate military power to one of two leading superpowers. An equally important conversion occurred at home in the realm of national governance. Nevertheless, the role of Congress in this transformation has yet to be examined. The World War II congressional generation saw everything—depression, war, and then Cold War. These incredibly varied experiences changed the members of Congress and the institution in which they served. Informal and cordial part-time lawmakers sharing quarters in the capital city’s many hotels disappeared, and, because of the partisan politics of moderation, a professional, modern, even imperial Congress of full-time lawmakers unwilling to cede an ounce of control to the newly powerful imperial presidency emerged. These alterations to New Deal liberalism, especially a revitalization of congressional moderates, illustrate how America’s national lawmakers responded to and were transformed by the last great worldwide military conflagration.