

Irving Kristol


the extent that his views are contained in the Packard Commission Report, he has been a positive force. He is obviously part of the debate and hopes to stimulate thinking about what needs to be done with the defense establishment. And clearly, something needs to be done.

Dole has been a strong supporter of every basic initiative of the Reagan Administration. He has, from time to time, extracted policy benefits of his own in the process. He has approached foreign policy, in recent years, through an economic prism, which is very good. Dole understands the interrelationship of trade and national economic policies with basic foreign policy. If President, he would pursue a very pragmatic alliance-centered diplomacy. He would not suffer from delusions of grandeur and he would not cater his policies to the Nobel Prize committee.

There are several outstanding foreign policy accomplishments in the Reagan Administration, one being Grenada. In an initiative like Grenada, the question is which of the candidates, Republican or Democrat, would be capable of being able to take that kind of preemptive action. I would say that were Paul Laxalt President, he would do it. Jack Kemp most likely would take that action. Bob Dole could be persuaded to take that action. Howard Baker, in my judgment, would be disinclined to take that action and would seek another route. George Bush would take it, but after a substantial contemplative struggle had been resolved by those around him. George Deukmejian would indeed take such action.

Gary Hart would not invade Grenada. If Joe Biden were President, he could be talked into such an action; I think he has a great deal of common sense and is not burdened by an ideological agenda. Iacocca could be persuaded to do it because there are enough inputs of realism into his scheme of things that he would see the necessity to act. If Sam Nunn were President, he certainly would take that action. Cuomo, I don't think so.

I laud Jack Kemp's supply-side foreign policy. Lamentably, the questions of the gold standard, I.M.F. reform, Third World debt are not igniting issues in American politics. While they need to be talked about, they are not the main issues. I think that Jack realizes that. That data is dry as dust, and it is very difficult to make it interesting to the American people. But after all, Kemp is an intellectual who thinks these problems through and has come to policy conclusions. These are sincerely held; they are not positions that he has determined by wetting his finger against the wind.

Again, you come back to the basic character of each candidate. What kind of candidate is that? Does he sample and read the public opinion polls and act accordingly, or does he, as Reagan does, consult the public opinion polls to determine, out of a sense of curiosity, which way public opinion is going, and then try to lead it or alter it? The difference lies in being led by public opinion or actively leading it. And Reagan has never failed to understand that difference. That is one of the crucial tests that I would apply to any candidate. 

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I think the most important issue in 1988 will be the economy. It always is. I don't expect to hear too much about foreign policy or human rights in the next campaign. The Republican candidates may try to emphasize foreign policy—especially the desirability of SDI. Democratic candidates, I suspect, will try to duck it. The American people are in a rather belligerent mood at the moment and they are not at all uncomfortable with Reagan's foreign policy. But the economy will predominate. Besides the economy, there is not going to be any urgent issue—only the general question of what kind of President the American people want. There is so very little that the federal government can do about social issues, for instance. Most of these issues are governed at the state level or by the courts. So I do not see the majority of the electorate aligning themselves on social issues, though they will generally favor candidates who give the impression of being moderately conservative on such issues.

The deficit will be an important rhetorical issue. But if the economy is strong, people will not really worry about the deficit, although they will all say they are worrying about it.

Jack Kemp is my choice to be the next President of the United States. I think he is a leader. No one who has ever met him can doubt that. My favorite Kemp anecdote is one that George Will recounted. Will asked him if he was a baseball fan; Jack said "No." And George said, "Why not?" Jack said, "No quarterback." Jack likes to run things, he likes to take command.

Sure, Kemp is reluctant to dismantle the welfare state. Jack believes, as do I, that it is foolish to try to do a Dave Stockman and make savage cuts in the budget. You are not going to do it. But you can slow down the rate of growth of government spending—that is all that Jack has always thought we could do, and in my view it is all that is necessary to do. You don't have to balance the budget in two or three years. It doesn't matter if it takes five or six or eight, so long as the trend is in the right direction.

Everyone understands that Kemp is for future marginal tax cuts. What he or anyone would do in office will depend on the economic situation. He will certainly try to stabilize the dollar and the other currencies. This he feels very strongly about. And I think he is right. I don't know that we will ever get back to a gold standard. Maybe we will get back to a bimetallic standard, gold and silver, or some sort of commodity standard. Kemp is certainly right that world trade flourishes best with stable currencies, and the instability of the currencies today results in a huge amount of financial speculation all over the world. This is very unsettling to the productive parts of the world economy.

Kemp would surely have a more assertive foreign policy than Ronald Reagan. He would not be inhibited by the Pentagon, which seems to want a huge military establishment, but to use it as little as possible. The American people are not going to support such an establishment indefinitely if it does nothing. It has to earn its way, as it were. I think in the case of Libya, Kemp would have taken far more decisive action than Reagan. He might, for in-

stance, have destroyed the Libyan Air Force—which, in my opinion, would have made more sense than Reagan's token bombing.

Would Kemp ever commit American troops abroad? Yes, in the right situation. Any President who commits American troops abroad, and in a situation that makes sense, in a decisive way so that they are going to win, will get the support of the American people. There is a myth that the American people are averse—actually, as distinct from rhetorically—to sending troops abroad. One should remember: these are professional soldiers. We are not talking about a conscript army of American “boys.”

Bush, I think, would probably have an even less assertive foreign policy than Ronald Reagan. My guess is he would have something like Gerald Ford's foreign policy. He seems to be a fine gentleman, but not a forceful leader. One does not get the sense that he is the kind of man who, if there is a fight going on, might have the urge to join in. My impression is that he would be a much less militant advocate of SDI than Reagan or Kemp.

When it comes to economics, my sense is that Bush is a very conventional Republican. He will be very happy working with Mr. Dole to pursue balanced budget economic policies. The trouble with these traditional economic policies is that they do not focus on employment, they do not focus on jobs. Instead they focus on the budget and on inflation. In a modern democracy, however, jobs are the first priority. And if a politician doesn't understand that, his economic policies are going to lead to political disaster.

Jobs are and should be the first criterion of economic performance. Jack Kemp understands that, which is why he is willing to, if necessary, accept the huge deficit. Thatcher doesn't understand that, which is why, apparently, she is going to lose. Mr. Kohl doesn't understand that, which is the reason why, despite a very successful administration in conventional terms, he is in such deep political trouble. The basic problem for both Thatcher and Kohl was conventional conservative economic thought. This ends up delegitimizing conservatism because of its failure to address the key issue of employment.

I don't regard Dole as a serious candidate. I know people in Washington do, but he arouses no interest whatsoever in any segment of the American population.

If both Kemp and Bush stumble, anyone can jump in and be the nominee. There is Jeane Kirkpatrick and Don Rumsfeld, just to name a couple.


The Democrat whom I know best, not personally but from watching his career, is Bill Bradley. Bradley was the only Democratic senator from the Northeast who voted for aid to the *contras*. That was a brave thing for him to do. He would be a first-class candidate for the Democrats. He seems, however, disinclined to run.

In any case, he or Chuck Robb would have a lot of trouble getting the Democratic nomination. I don't know how you skillfully navigate in that party. Because you have so many well organized factions, your spectrum is broken up into different parts. What do you do about the radical feminists? What do you do about the left-wing isolationists? How can someone like Robb or Bradley cope with this? I am convinced that both would be the strongest kind

of candidate. Whether they could get the nomination is another matter.

Liberalism today is pretty much an umbrella under which a variety of interest groups take shelter. But whoever runs for the nomination will also want to win the election. So he cannot afford to be seen to be making too many concessions to these groups. That would alienate the Democratic working class and the Democratic middle class. Cuomo is very clever in slithering his way around these issues. But he doesn't appear to travel all that well outside New York. People may not want so quintessential a New Yorker as President.

Gary Hart, I do not take seriously. I regard him as a *papier mache* candidate, floating in the wind. If he gets any serious opposition, he will crumble. I don't know anything about his new ideas. I doubt that he has any new ideas. All he has is something that he calls “new ideas.” This is what his so-called new ideas are all about, fudging traditional liberalism. The American people are not going to buy it.

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William Niskanen

The one unavoidable question for 1988 will be how the candidates propose to address the deficit: reduce it by spending restraint or by tax increases, or whether they are even concerned about the deficit.

Now it is true that the deficit is an abstraction to most voters, unless it leads to something that they see more visibly, like inflation, higher interest rates, or loss of jobs. Right now, the most visible manifestation of the deficit is that it is increasing interest payments by \$10 billion to \$15 billion a year. And it is threatening to crowd out other federal spending activities.

Of all the candidates, Congressman Jack Kemp seems to be least concerned about the deficit in that he seems to be unprepared to make either budget cuts or tax increases. On the other side, Senator Robert Dole seems to be willing to make both budget cuts and tax increases to reduce the deficit. The administration is somewhere in between.

Jack Kemp seems to argue that there is no reason to be concerned about the deficit, because economic growth can be sufficient to reduce its impact. Now arithmetically that is correct, but I don't know what it is going to take to increase the economic growth rate. Most economists, including myself, foresee sluggish growth between now and 1988.

I have never heard Jack Kemp suggest cutting anything out of the budget. His recent article in *Policy Review* about his budget was mostly fluff. He suggests that agriculture subsidies would automatically go down if we were on a commodity standard. But I don't understand that. It may be that he wants to inflate between now and the time we lock in on a commodity standard, and that is something that Jack Kemp ought to make clear. My impression is that he favors a gold standard, but he first wants to raise the price of gold to around \$400 an ounce, so we can have looser money. I think that most of Kemp's budget cutting