

## A Conversation with STEVEN F. HAYWARD

Currently a Visiting Scholar at UC Berkeley, Steven F. Hayward is a writer, political commentator, and author of a definitive biography of Ronald Reagan. In this conversation, Hayward discusses Reagan and the qualities that made him a successful president. Kristol and Hayward also explain why studying great political figures is essential for understanding politics. Finally, Hayward reflects on how he came to the study of statesmanship and on some important books and teachers that have influenced him.

On **Reagan's magnanimity**, Hayward says: Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama are very similar in being very self-regarding. **It's always "I" and "me."** You can count the personal references, sometimes they go [into] the hundreds. Reagan **always liked to say "we."** He would often say: **"I say the word 'we' because I had a lot of help from a lot of good people who work with me and for me..."** That sets him apart from a lot of politicians who are insecure people in a lot of ways.

On what made Reagan a successful President, Hayward says: [These days] **everyone wants to be a "Reaganite Republican."** On the other hand, an awful lot of people who nowadays claim to be following the legacy of Reagan have spent very little time studying him closely to realize *why* he was so successful. **It wasn't just that he was optimistic about America—that's sort of the Sean Hannity talking point, unfortunately.** It was a lot more than that. He was a very disciplined person, thought carefully and seriously about his political rhetoric, **worked very hard... I think [his] subtleties, discipline, the depth of his thinking, how much reading he did—I think that's not appreciated by a lot of people today, [even by those] who look to him, rightly, as a great model to follow.**

On the importance of studying statesmen, Hayward says: In one of my last conversations with [Walter Berns](#) [the great political scientist], he said "the proper method for the study of politics is *biography*." My other teacher, [Harry Jaffa](#) said the same thing—something like, "the proper method for the understanding of politics would be the study of the words and deeds of statesmen..." That's very much out of fashion [in academic history and political science]... This is a great mistake. Political science ought to be one of the most vibrant departments. And at some universities it is; it's usually the ones who have more conservatives, or liberals who teach it the old-fashioned way. But **you're losing enrollment in political science departments in lots of colleges, the faculties are shrinking. That's because it bores students to death.**

Chapters in STEVEN F. HAYWARD Conversation

[On Ronald Reagan](#)

[Why We Need to Study Statesmen](#)