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Michael Barone — Lessons of the Last 25 Years

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Michael Barone, editor of the *Almanac of American Politics*, and one of the most level-headed observers of the political scene, offers this as his summary of what the last 25 years have taught us. His essay is published in this week's edition of *U.S. News and World Report*.

Barone's lessons: *First, that American military power can advance freedom and democracy to all corners of the world. Under Reagan and his three successors, America has played a lead role in extending freedom and democracy to most of Latin America, to the Philippines and Indonesia and almost all of East Asia, and, most recently, to Afghanistan and Iraq, with reverberations spreading through the Middle East. Area experts said, often plausibly, those countries' cultures were incompatible with democracy. Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and brave men and women in those nations proved them wrong.*

Second, that markets work and that lower taxes and less onerous government produce more economic growth than the alternative. About 43 million jobs have been created in the United States since December 1980, while the number in the more statist nations of western Europe is on the order of 4 million. Markets are creating millions of jobs in nominally Communist China and once socialist India.

Third, that politics and effective government can, as Daniel Patrick Moynihan said, change the culture. The crime-control methods pioneered by New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and the welfare reforms pioneered by Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson, imitated around the country and followed up by federal legislation, resulted in huge decreases in crime and welfare dependency.

These lessons have been widely learned and widely applied by George W. Bush and also to a large extent by Bill Clinton. But not, curiously enough, by those who see themselves as the best and the brightest, our university and media elites. They would still like to see America's power reined in, as it was in the 1970s. They are insouciant about the costs that larger and more intrusive government and higher taxes impose on the economy. They think that leniency and subsidy are the appropriate responses to deviant and self-destructive behavior. They think our most important right is a right to kill our unborn children. You have to be awfully smart, someone once said, to believe something so stupid. And to be so blind to the clear lessons of the past quarter century of history.

Barone just said all this so well that I wanted to pass it along. Consider doing the same.

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