



Losing the Center: The Decline of American Liberalism, 1968--1992

Jeffrey Bloodworth

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Many Americans consider John F. Kennedy's presidency to represent the apex of American liberalism. Kennedy's "Vital Center" blueprint united middle-class and working-class Democrats and promoted freedom abroad while recognizing the limits of American power. Liberalism thrived in the early 1960s, but its heyday was short-lived.

In *Losing the Center*, Jeffrey Bloodworth demonstrates how and why the once-dominant ideology began its steep decline, exploring its failures through the biographies of some of the Democratic Party's most important leaders, including Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Henry "Scoop" Jackson, Bella Abzug, Harold Ford Sr., and Jimmy Carter. By illuminating historical events through the stories of the people at the center of the action, Bloodworth sheds new light on topics such as feminism, the environment, the liberal abandonment of the working class, and civil rights legislation.

This meticulously researched study authoritatively argues that liberalism's demise was prompted not by a "Republican revolution" or the mistakes of a few prominent politicians, but instead by decades of ideological incoherence and political ineptitude among liberals. Bloodworth demonstrates that Democrats caused their own party's decline by failing to realize that their policies contradicted the priorities of mainstream voters, who were more concerned about social issues than economic ones. With its unique biographical approach and masterful use of archival materials, this detailed and accessible book promises to stand as one of the definitive texts on the state of American liberalism in the second half of the twentieth century.

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