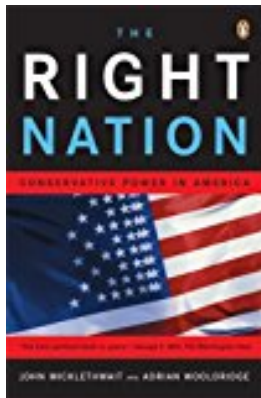


[PDF] The Right Nation: Conservative Power In America

John Micklethwait, Adrian Wooldridge - pdf download free book



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Description:

From Publishers Weekly In the introduction to this engaging study of American conservatism, Micklethwait and Wooldridge of the *Economist* disclaim any allegiance to America's "two great political tribes." It is this Tocquevillian quality of informed impartiality that makes their book so effective at conveying how profoundly the right has reshaped the American political landscape over

the past half century. The authors trace the history of the conservative movement from the McCarthy era, when "conservatism was a fringe idea," to the second Bush administration and the "victory of the right." They dissect the new "conservative establishment," which combines the intellectual force of think tanks, business interest groups and sympathetic media outlets with the "brawn" of "footsoldiers" from the populist social conservative wing of the GOP, and argue that continuing Republican hegemony is likely. Democratic optimists who point to favorable demographic trends are exaggerating the liberalism of Latino and professional voters, say the authors, while other factors, such as suburbanization and terrorism, will tend to promote Republican values. Still, the right should be worried about its own "capacity for extremism and intolerance" and about holding together its unlikely alliance of religious moralists and small-government activists. Even so, say the authors, conservative ideas are now so pervasive in American society that even a Kerry administration could do little to divert the country's long-term rightward drift. This epochal political transformation is rarely analyzed with the degree of dispassionate clarity that Micklethwait and Wooldridge bring to their penetrating analysis.

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From *Starred Review* Somewhere the triumphal ghost of Barry Goldwater must be explaining to the perplexed shade of Edmund Burke why American conservatism has far surpassed--and curiously defied--its European antecedents. Readers of this study of modern American politics may indeed feel that they are eavesdropping on such a spectral colloquy. For in exploring the American politics of the Right, Micklethwait and Wooldridge analyze a phenomenon that owes much to European traditions yet has unexpectedly transformed and even subverted others. Thus in probing the forces that, in recent decades, have given Republicans control of both the White House and Congress, the authors highlight both a widespread American distrust of government that most British Tories can well understand and a conjoined American individualism that utterly mystifies those same Tories. American conservatives owe some of their recent success to liberal overreach (Johnson's Great Society programs, the Clintons' national health-care proposal). However, the authors limn a powerful dynamic within American conservatism itself, a dynamic that unites the brainpower of Right-leaning think tanks with the moral passion of religious activists, the monomania of gun enthusiasts, and the entrepreneurial energy of small-business owners. Whether that explosive fusion will blow away remaining liberal and leftist opposition or will disintegrate amid its own internal contradictions remains to be seen (and both scenarios receive scrutiny). But no one who wants to understand the possible political trajectories for a country that befuddles--and not infrequently enrages--its European allies can ignore this book. *Bryce Christensen*

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