

Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus: A Historical Exploration



Barry Goldwater, a conservative Republican senator from Arizona, ran for president in 1964 on a platform of limited government, free markets, and a strong military. He challenged the post-World War II consensus on the role

of government in American society and politics, which had been dominated by the Democratic Party and its liberal wing. Goldwater's campaign was a watershed moment in American politics, as it marked the rise of the modern conservative movement and the beginning of the end of the New Deal order.



Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus by Rick Perlstein

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language	: English
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
X-Ray	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
File size	: 3510 KB
Screen Reader	: Supported
Print length	: 705 pages



The Post-War Consensus

The post-war consensus was a period of relative political stability and economic prosperity in the United States that lasted from the end of World War II to the early 1970s. During this time, the Democratic Party controlled the presidency and Congress, and the Republican Party was largely marginalized. The consensus was based on a number of key principles, including:

- The importance of government intervention in the economy to promote economic growth and stability.

- The need for a strong social safety net to protect the poor and vulnerable.
- The United States' role as the leader of the free world in the Cold War.

Goldwater's Challenge

Goldwater's campaign challenged the post-war consensus on all three of these fronts. He argued that government intervention in the economy was harmful to economic growth and that the social safety net was too generous. He also advocated for a more aggressive foreign policy, including the use of nuclear weapons if necessary.

Goldwater's campaign was met with fierce opposition from the Democratic Party and the liberal wing of the Republican Party. They argued that Goldwater's policies would lead to economic chaos, social unrest, and nuclear war. The 1964 presidential election was one of the most bitter and divisive in American history.

Goldwater's Defeat

In the end, Goldwater was defeated by Lyndon B. Johnson in a landslide. Johnson won 61% of the popular vote and carried 44 states. Goldwater won only 38.5% of the popular vote and carried only six states.

Goldwater's defeat was a major setback for the conservative movement, but it also marked the beginning of a long-term shift in American politics. The post-war consensus was beginning to unravel, and the conservative movement was on the rise.

The Legacy of Goldwater

Goldwater's campaign had a profound impact on American politics. It helped to awaken the conservative movement and set the stage for the conservative resurgence of the 1970s and 1980s. Goldwater's ideas continue to influence the Republican Party and American politics today.

Goldwater was a complex and controversial figure. He was a staunch conservative, but he was also a pragmatist. He was willing to compromise when necessary, and he was always more interested in winning elections than in promoting ideological purity.

Goldwater was a true believer in the American dream. He believed that anyone could succeed in America if they worked hard and played by the rules. He was also a strong supporter of the military, and he believed that America had a duty to lead the free world.

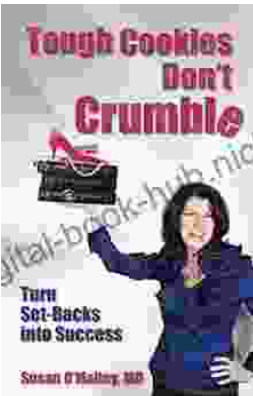
Goldwater was a flawed man, but he was also a great American. He was a true patriot who loved his country and was willing to fight for its values. He will always be remembered as one of the most important figures in American history.

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