



Leading from the Center: Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents

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George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy—most would agree their presidencies were among the most successful in American history. But what made these very different men such effective leaders? According to presidential historian Gil Troy, these presidents succeeded not because of their bold political visions, but because of their moderation. Although many of the presidential hopefuls for 2008 will claim to be moderates, the word cannot conceal a political climate defined by extreme rhetoric and virulent partisanship. In *Leading From the Center*, Gil Troy argues that this is a distinctly *un*-American state of affairs. The great presidents of American history have always sought a golden mean—from Washington, who brilliantly mediated between the competing visions of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, to Lincoln, who rescued the Union with his principled pragmatism, to the two Roosevelts, who united millions of Americans with their powerful, affirmative, nationalist visions. As America lines up to select a president for the future, Gil Troy astutely reminds us of the finest traditions of presidential leadership from our nation's past.

Leading from the Center: Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents Details

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From Reader Review Leading from the Center: Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents for online ebook

Joe Rodeck says

Unexpected high ratings for George Washington and JFK. And I now have a much higher opinion of FDR.

Not expected: scathing reviews of LBJ and Clinton, both whom I considered to be at least highly capable politicians.

Upshot: You can count decent American presidents on two hands. Most were useless or worse.

Complaints. Troy should have followed his own wisdom and had a history expert review this book for possible oversights before publication. Ex. In a book about making tough decisions, how can you sum up Harry Truman without mentioning the firing of MacArthur?

Troy is also hard on several presidents, even Reagan, for being weak about various Arab nation crimes. But in the discussion how can you not mention that these countries sit on half the world's oil?

Highly recommended for high school or college American Government or US History classes. Skillful, stylish writing. More interesting than the title suggests

"Leaders must try building bridges . . . playing to the center, not to the base."

"Political parties become destructive when they demonize and polarize."

Erik says

An articulate, objective bit of research probing a question we've heard for the last eight years, "Where's the center?"

In his pursuit of the question, Troy was close to getting five stars from me. The problem lies in the fact that Troy does not explain his premise well. "Center" in the political context tends to refer to the center of the spectrum between the extremes. However, you'll find that this is far too narrow a definition as time goes on.

"Center," in Troy's context, refers to any center in an dichotomy - sweeping age old divides like the traditional right-left divide and public vs. private interest or even the more mundane warring between Cabinet factions. It takes awhile before we derive this from Troy, especially considering his setup is a demonstration of the balancing act did between the Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian factions of his Cabinet. Troy eventually goes on to evaluate Lincoln as a arbiter in the slavery question and fast forwards to Teddy Roosevelt. The meat of the book begins with an evaluation of FDR and progresses into the respective failings of the Clinton and Bush administrations.

Above all, Troy is fair to his subjects. As someone that rather respects both LBJ and Reagan, I was originally taken back by Troy's assessments of both but in retrospective, Troy was running against my bias for both. Once I processed my own bias, I found his work to be an enjoyable read. That being said, if you idealize any

particular president, prepare for the wake up call.

So enjoy but remain open minded about the definition of "center" and you'll begin to see the enormous task and burden the presidency holds no matter the state of the nation.
