



# Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, From Eisenhower to the Tea Party (Studies in Postwar American Political Development)

By Geoffrey Kabaservice

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The chaotic events leading up to Mitt Romney's defeat in the 2012 election indicated how far the Republican Party had rocketed rightward away from the center of public opinion. Republicans in Congress threatened to shut down the government and force a U.S. debt default. Tea Party activists mounted primary challenges against Republican officeholders who appeared to exhibit too much pragmatism or independence. Moderation and compromise were dirty words in the Republican presidential debates. The GOP, it seemed, had suddenly become a party of ideological purity.

Except this development is not new at all. In *Rule and Ruin*, Geoffrey Kabaservice reveals that the moderate Republicans' downfall began not with the rise of the Tea Party but about the time of President Dwight Eisenhower's farewell address. Even in the 1960s, when left-wing radicalism and right-wing backlash commanded headlines, Republican moderates and progressives formed a powerful movement, supporting pro-civil rights politicians like Nelson Rockefeller and William Scranton, battling big-government liberals and conservative extremists alike. But the Republican civil war ended with the overthrow of the moderate ideas, heroes, and causes that had comprised the core of the GOP since its formation. In hindsight, it is today's conservatives who are "Republicans in Name Only."

Writing with passionate sympathy for a bygone tradition of moderation, Kabaservice recaptures a time when fiscal restraint was matched with social engagement; when a cohort of leading Republicans opposed the Vietnam war; when George Romney--father of Mitt Romney--conducted a nationwide tour of American poverty, from Appalachia to Watts, calling on society to "listen to the voices from the ghetto." *Rule and Ruin* is an epic, deeply researched history that reorients our understanding of our political past and present.

Today, following the Republicans' loss of the popular vote in five of the last six presidential contests, moderates remain marginalized in the GOP and progressives are all but nonexistent. In this insightful and elegantly argued book, Kabaservice contends that their decline has left Republicans less capable of governing responsibly, with dire consequences for all Americans. He has added a new afterword that considers the fallout from the 2012 elections.



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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"In *Rule and Ruin*, his wonderfully detailed new history of moderate Republicanism, Geoffrey Kabaservice makes a strong case that moderate Republicanism was hardier than we remember." --Timothy Noah, *The New York Times Book Review*

"The good guys lost; the bad guys won. That's the story Kabaservice sets out to tell in *Rule and Ruin*. He tells it in strong and engaging prose, often with a literary flair." --*The National Interest*

"Kabaservice is a wonderfully straightforward historian who does not layer on a lot of interpretive gloss...*Rule and Ruin* is a wonderful reminder of what was once -- not very long ago -- a vital tradition in American politics." --*The New Republic*

"An audacious and important history that rediscovers a great political tradition at exactly the moment when it is again needed most." --David Frum, author of *Comeback: Conservatism that Can Win Again*

"The radical turn of the Republican Party into a voice of right-wing extremism is one of the major themes of modern American political history. *Rule and Ruin* tells the whole story in stunning detail, and in prose that is as balanced as it is lucid. No study of our recent politics could possibly be more timely on the eve of the 2012 elections." --Sean Wilentz, Princeton University, author of *The Age of Reagan*

"Meticulously researched and compellingly written, *Rule and Ruin* is more than an account of the demise of moderate Republicans; it is a penetrating history of the modern Republican Party over the past half century. This is an exceptional book, and must reading for anyone who will follow with interest (or dread) the Republican race to a presidential nomination in 2012." --Norman J. Ornstein, Resident Scholar, The American Enterprise Institute

"In this timely work, Geoffrey Kabaservice successfully combines thorough historical research and a gripping narrative. The result is a comprehensive account of an ideological and political contest which, played out over half a century, has had a profound influence on the Republican Party and modern American politics." --Strobe Talbott, President, Brookings Institution

"Kabaservice's book is a painstaking and well-argued attempt to resurrect the losers in the GOP's fratricidal war, the liberal and moderate Republicans, including many from the northeastern states where today their influence still lingers." --Sam Tanenhaus, *The New York Review of Books*

"Kabaservice ably narrates the Republican Party's fifty-year conversion from a diverse political organization into an exclusively conservative 'ideological vehicle.'...Kabaservice is as moderate as his subject matter; he resists proposing an implausibly easy solution. He believes that third-party projects are likely "foredoomed to failure," and redistricting reforms will be "a slow process" at best." - *Commonwealth*

#### About the Author

**Geoffrey Kabaservice** is the author of the National Book Award-nominated *The Guardians: Kingman Brewster, His Circle, and the Rise of the Liberal Establishment*. He has written for numerous national publications and has been an assistant professor of history at Yale University. He lives outside Washington, DC.

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