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The Party Is Over: How Republicans Went Crazy, Democrats Became Useless, And The Middle Class Got Shafted



Synopsis

The New York Times's "bestselling manifesto about America's broken political system and how it got that way" Mike Lofgren's *The Deep State* is now available from Viking. Mike Lofgren was once a proud Republican. When he came to Washington in the early 1980s, the party was controlled by what was mostly a rational group of people with a basic grasp of economics and foreign policy. So what happened since then? How did the party of Lincoln become the party of lunatics? After some thirty years in Congress, Lofgren, exasperated by the circus of the debt-ceiling debate, stepped down from his position on the Senate Budget Committee in disgust in 2011. Written by a refreshingly skeptical insider, *The Party Is Over* is an electrifying manifesto for the growing number of Americans who are appalled by our politicians and fed up with their pandering to corporate interests. Wry, trenchant, and highly persuasive, Lofgren offers clear suggestions for how to break through the gridlock and reverse political dysfunction in Washington.

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Customer Reviews

In "The Party Is Over" Mike Lofgren presents a very similar message to Joseph Stiglitz's "The Price of Inequality" and Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein's "It's Even Worse than It Looks." The difference is that Lofgren's perspective is from working as a Republican analyst on House and Senate budget committees for 28 years. Throughout the book he tells of some of his interactions with unnamed elected officials, but primarily he focuses on specific people in government who forgot

about what was for the good of the people in return for the power -- Republicans like Bush, Cheney, Abramoff, Gingrich, Bachmann, the Koch Brothers and Democrats like Obama, Rubin and Geithner. (Hint - you don't want to be mentioned in this book.) I've made it a point to read books that were written by people who have written from different vantage points -- columnists, think tankers, bloggers, former officials, news people. It's interesting to see how those authors attempt to balance their criticism to attempt to attract both liberal/Democratic and conservative/Republican readers and to avoid the shut-down response where one side jumps onboard enthusiastically and the other pans it without actually reading it. None of those books were as outspoken and specific as Lofgren's. The first 10 chapters focus on aspects of the Republican strategy or how the Republican Party has gotten to the point where they are now -- its history, tactics, selective use of the Constitution, the words it uses to fire up its base, its tax strategy (it's really all about reducing taxes for the rich ... all the rest is purposely used to distract from that main strategy), its alliance with the religious right, its media complicity, its anti-liberal fixation, and its continued dishonesty -- and all this from a Republican staffer!

Caveat emptor: what follows is a biased book review. The author Mike Lofgren (bio - see ref [1] below) is a very close friend of mine. I have been flogging this important new book, since I first read it in draft copy. Mike Lofgren, a native of Akron Ohio, is a conservative of the now forgotten Republican old school. He is more at home with the likes of Robert Taft, Dwight Eisenhower, and Abraham Lincoln than right wing ideologues like Newt Gingrich or plutocratic highway robbers like Mitt Romney. Ideologically disposed readers of Lofgren's aptly titled book may be tempted conclude he has flipped and joined the Democrats. To be sure, Lofgren is harder on Republicans than Democrats. Having served on the Republican staffs of the House and Senate Budget Committees, he was in a much better position to observe and understand their hijinks than those of the Democrats. So, it is not at all surprising that his book has more detail describing how the ideological Republican crazies created a political economy that is poisoning our culture and wrecking what used to be the greatest job engine in economic history. It would be a great mistake, however, to conclude that Mike is arguing Republicans are THE culprits. The thesis of this book is about how the Republicans and Democrats worked together to sell out the middle class. Lofgren is a modest, unassuming individual, who at first glance would appear quite unlikely to write such a book. He never sought the klieg lights. Nor did he ever pal around with the gucci shoe crowd to lubricate his way through the revolving door into a high paying lobbying job on K Street. Lunch for Lofgren was not at the Prime Rib or Capitol Hill Club, but a simple sandwich in a brown bag.

The Party Is Over is excellent. Mike Lofgren is a real historian and has filled his book with terrific insights and analyses. Nowhere is there a better assessment of the fundamental axiom of Republican politics than on page 35, "that relentless attack is its own Teflon." I suspect this book will itself be relentlessly attacked and Lofgren vilified as an apostate. But Lofgren is a genuine conservative in its traditional definition as respectful of tradition and cautious. His analysis of "paleoconservatives" on page 23 is on point, "Scratch many a paleoconservative and you will find a neo-Confederate at heart." The Republican Southern Strategy of 1968 has borne the bitter fruit of turning the clock back to secessionism. While a few, like Texas Governor Rick Perry, have treasonously advocated open secessionism, the contemporary version is secession by withdrawing financially from our nation either by endless tax cuts for the rich to hollow out our infrastructure and institutions or by corporate outsourcing. While there are similar gems throughout the book, I want to outline just a few. On page 44: "Like the biblical literalist, Republicans assert that the Constitution is divinely inspired and inerrant. But also like biblical literalists, they are strangely selective about those portions of their favorite document that they care to heed, and they favor rewriting it when it stands in the way of their political agenda." On page 149, there is a lyrical thumbnail sketch depicting William Jennings Bryant as a sad parallel to the descent of the Republican Party into anti-intellectualism. William F. Buckley Jr. is nostalgically contrasted with the crudity of rightwing mouthpieces on page 150.

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