

America's Three Regimes

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AMERICA'S THREE REGIMES

A New Political
History



MORTON KELLER

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出版者:Oxford University Press

出版时间:2007-10-25

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780195325027

When historians take the long view, they look at "ages" or "eras" (the Age of Jackson, the Progressive Era). But these time spans last no longer than a decade or so. In this groundbreaking new book, Morton Keller divides our nation's history into three regimes, each of which lasts many, many decades, allowing us to appreciate, as never before, the slow steady evolution of American public life. Americans like to think of our society as eternally young and effervescent. But the reality is very different. A proper history of America must be as much about continuity, persistence, and evolution as about transformation and revolution. To provide this proper history, Keller groups America's past into three long regimes--Differential and Republican, from the colonial period to the 1820s; Party and Democratic, from the 1830s to the 1930s; and Populist and Bureaucratic, from the 1930s to the present. This approach yields many new insights. We discover, for instance, that the history of colonial America, the Revolution, and the Early Republic is a more unified story than usually assumed. The Civil War, industrialization, and the Progressive era did relatively little to alter the character of the democratic-party regime that lasted from the 1830s to the 1930s. And the populist-bureaucratic regime in which we live today has seen changes in politics, government, and law as profound as those that occurred in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. As Keller underscores the sheer staying power of America's public institutions, he sheds light on current concerns as well: in particular, will the current political polarization continue or will more moderate forces prevail. Here then is a major contribution to United States history--an entirely new way to look at our past, our present, and our future--packed with provocative and original observations about American public life.

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