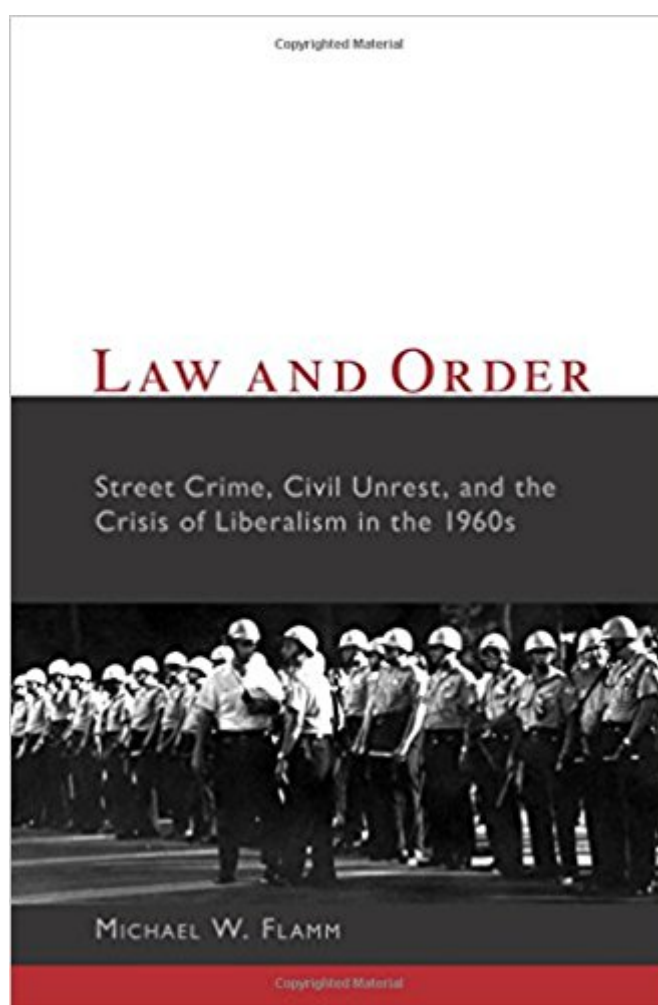


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Law And Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, And The Crisis Of Liberalism In The 1960s (Columbia Studies In Contemporary American History)



Synopsis

Law and Order offers a valuable new study of the political and social history of the 1960s. It presents a sophisticated account of how the issues of street crime and civil unrest enhanced the popularity of conservatives, eroded the credibility of liberals, and transformed the landscape of American politics. Ultimately, the legacy of law and order was a political world in which the grand ambitions of the Great Society gave way to grim expectations. In the mid-1960s, amid a pervasive sense that American society was coming apart at the seams, a new issue known as law and order emerged at the forefront of national politics. First introduced by Barry Goldwater in his ill-fated run for president in 1964, it eventually punished Lyndon Johnson and the Democrats and propelled Richard Nixon and the Republicans to the White House in 1968. In this thought-provoking study, Michael Flamm examines how conservatives successfully blamed liberals for the rapid rise in street crime and then skillfully used law and order to link the understandable fears of white voters to growing unease about changing moral values, the civil rights movement, urban disorder, and antiwar protests. Flamm documents how conservatives constructed a persuasive message that argued that the civil rights movement had contributed to racial unrest and the Great Society had rewarded rather than punished the perpetrators of violence. The president should, conservatives also contended, promote respect for law and order and contempt for those who violated it, regardless of cause. Liberals, Flamm argues, were by contrast unable to craft a compelling message for anxious voters. Instead, liberals either ignored the crime crisis, claimed that law and order was a racist ruse, or maintained that social programs would solve the "root causes" of civil disorder, which by 1968 seemed increasingly unlikely and contributed to a loss of faith in the ability of the government to do what it was above all sworn to do—protect personal security and private property.

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Customer Reviews

Recommended. (Choice)Meticulously documented... an important contribution to the literature on the 1960s era and its link to today's political discourse. (Edward P. Morgan Political Science Quarterly)Law and Order is essential reading for anyone interested in American society during the 1960s (James Miller Journal of American Studies)A cohesive study of the politics-law-and-order nexus. (John C. McWilliams The Historian)This book will be of interest to anyone who teaches and/or writes about the politics of the 1960s. (Timothy N. Thurber H-Net)This is must reading. (Michal R. Belknap, California Western School of Law and University of California, San Diego American Historical Review)

This is an exceptionally smart, utterly realistic, and splendidly narrated study of a vital political issue that historians of the 1960s have ignored -- until now. Michael Flamm explains how the fear of urban crime helped end the liberal era and begin the conservative ascendancy. It will provoke and enlighten anyone who reads it. (Michael Kazin, Georgetown University, co-author, America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Michael Flamm has provided us with an exceptionally well researched and elegantly written book regarding the political uses of "Law & Order" to discredit liberals in the 1960s and catapult Conservatives into leadership positions in American government. The book focuses on how the crisis of Law and Order, as seen by Americans in the 60s (primarily street crime & urban riots), led to a downfall of liberalism as the dominant political philosophy. Flamm does an outstanding job of demonstrating how liberal programs such as the Great Society were unable to combat people's fears of rising criminal activity, and how Conservative candidates such as Goldwater & Nixon were able to play on those fears to bring Conservatism into power in 1968. Undoubtedly this was a critical piece in the rise of modern Conservatism, but it seems that this focus on "law & order" was lost shortly after Nixon gained the Presidency. As Flamm demonstrates in his epilogue, this seems to have been a one or two election wonder at the federal level, thus posing the question of why did this problem only impact national politics for a short period - less than a decade? Flamm starts to get

into some of the reasons why (resignation of Nixon as a "criminal", stagflation, end of the cold war, etc.), but the book tends to give a lot of credit for the rise of Conservatism to this one topic, but I'm not 100% persuaded. After reading this book, I believe that Law & Order was a significant, but not the primary, factor leading to the rise of Conservatism. Other factors, such as the fear of Communism, opposition to increased taxation, and racial divisions must be considered in conjunction with crime.

College course requirement. He should have just written it like

this: <http://cledonism.blogspot.com/2015/05/the-gangsta-version-of-american-history.html>

For one who (like me, born in 1936) lived through the period, LAW AND ORDER is truly compelling. Michael Flamm has written a non-pedantic account of most important social and political aspect of the domestic scene in the USA in the 1960s. His narrative has a vibrant, multi-dimensional quality that seems to take us right into the heads of the people involved--from President Johnson and public figures on all levels to persons struggling in the many urban jungles which seemed on the point of destroying all social cohesion. The story is here: how Johnson's Presidency was eaten away as much by crime, violence, and riots in the cities and on the streets of the homeland as by the escalating death and destruction in Vietnam. Master politician though he was, Johnson was unable to maintain the combination of liberalism and populism which had characterized the Democratic Party throughout its best years. The eighth chapter is a vivid re-creation of those sad days during the Chicago convention in August 1968, when Mayor Daley's police battled it out with radicalized liberals. The ninth explains--correctly, I think--how Law and Order trumped Vietnam as an issue in the election. The Democrats lost by a narrow margin; but conservatism was the real winner. A brief "Epilogue" summarizes events through 9/11. President Nixon more or less dropped both Johnson's domestic "Wars," on Poverty and on Crime. And everything that followed his doomed administration has demonstrated the political utility of fear over hope. It is impossible for me not to reflect that we now have two more such politically motivated, open-ended, "Wars," a War on Drugs and a War on Terrorism. LAW AND ORDER is a highly readable book, but it also has documentation massive enough to satisfy the most demanding professional critics.

Despite some scholars' claims to the contrary, there has by now developed a growing literature on the origins and development of post-World War II American political conservatism. This includes Patrick Allitt's, Neil Jumonville's, George Nash's and Peter Steinfel's explorations of the intellectual

origins of conservative thought as well as Michael Dallek's, Lisa McGirr's, William Berman's and Jonathan Schoenwald's studies of conservative political development. Michael Flamm's new book represents a newer strand of scholarship supplementing the others -- a study of a discrete area of public policy and conservative politics. As a result, Professor Flamm helps show that the 1960s was an incubator for ascendant conservative politics in the last 30-35 years of twentieth century America (and beyond, of course). At the most general level, *Law and Order* is about changing definitions of "security" and the effect of that transformation on American politics. Time was when economic security mattered, and the American mainstream voted the Democratic Donkey in the 1930s and 1940s. But starting in the 1950s, and accelerating in the 1960s, different notions of "security" took root; first came security from the Communist menace, then security from the perceived threat of urban disorder and cultural anarchy, which crested in the second half of the sixties. Though most so-called conservative voters would perhaps disagree, they began to vote for the Republican Elephant in the late 1960s because they wanted governmental security ... not economic, but cultural (and perhaps racial). This trend manifested itself firstly, and most starkly, in the area of crime control policy and/or "law and order" politics. Professor Flamm shows how Democrats and Republicans each sought to provide the best political responses to three interwoven threats in the 1960s -- the rise of urban street crime; the increase in anti-war protests; and the frustratingly common urban riots in the "long, hot summers" of the late 1960s. Liberals, headed by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, increasingly sought to connect rising crime to poverty as part of their effort to extend liberal social spending programs, most famously LBJ's Great Society. They also tried to staunch the racial implications of these separate developments; for example, the growing voter perception that civil disobedience in the early 1960s led to urban rioting in the late 1960s, or that urban crime was a direct result of the Great Migration's placement of African-Americans into the urban centers of the Northeast and West Coast. In a series of policy initiatives from combatting juvenile delinquency in the early 1960s to anti-riot commission proposals toward the end of the decade, liberals generally tried to argue that disorder in America would cease and desist once poverty -- for blacks and whites and browns -- was eliminated. Flamm shows how this liberal agenda was attacked from both the left and the right. The New Left believed the Great Society was just another attempt to grow government at the expense of community empowerment and a white-wash of the root causes of the economic, racial, and social problems besetting America. But, more importantly politically, a series of rightist politicians -- Barry Goldwater; George Wallace; Richard Nixon; Ronald Reagan -- argued with increasing electoral success that the correct response to crime would not be more governmental programs to stop poverty, but the establishment of moral authority in national politics,

the reversal of Great Society programs which stymied initiative and encouraged crime, the selection of tougher federal judges, the growth of the repressive apparatus of the state -- in short, the imposition of "law and order." And guess what?? -- they won!! This argument, Flamm argues, formed the core of conservative political ascendancy in the United States after 1968 even if, ironically, crime ceased to be a national issue after that time, more or less. Thus, the conservative response to the law and order issue marked the truly (counter) revolutionary event of the 1960s. This is a really good book for understanding federal policy and politics in the 1960s. It works well with Hugh Davis Graham's work on civil rights policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a way of understanding how the federal government, like the Energizer Bunny, just keeps going and going and going in an ostensibly conservative, anti-government political age. Especially fascinating in this regard is Professor Flamm's coverage of the increased security apparatus (i.e. eavesdropping) in the late 1960s, fed by the related concerns of failure in Vietnam and anarchy in L.A. and Detroit. What is now needed is historical studies continuing the narrative from the 1970s through to 2005. The government keeps on promising us security and we keep buying into it. Oh well, buy this book in the meantime.

Mr. Flamm skillfully takes us through the history of the urban unrest in our major cities in the '60's. Having lived through the era, it is fun to review all the events that changed us forever and led to the rise of the Republican Party and their conservative agenda. Well worth a read.

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