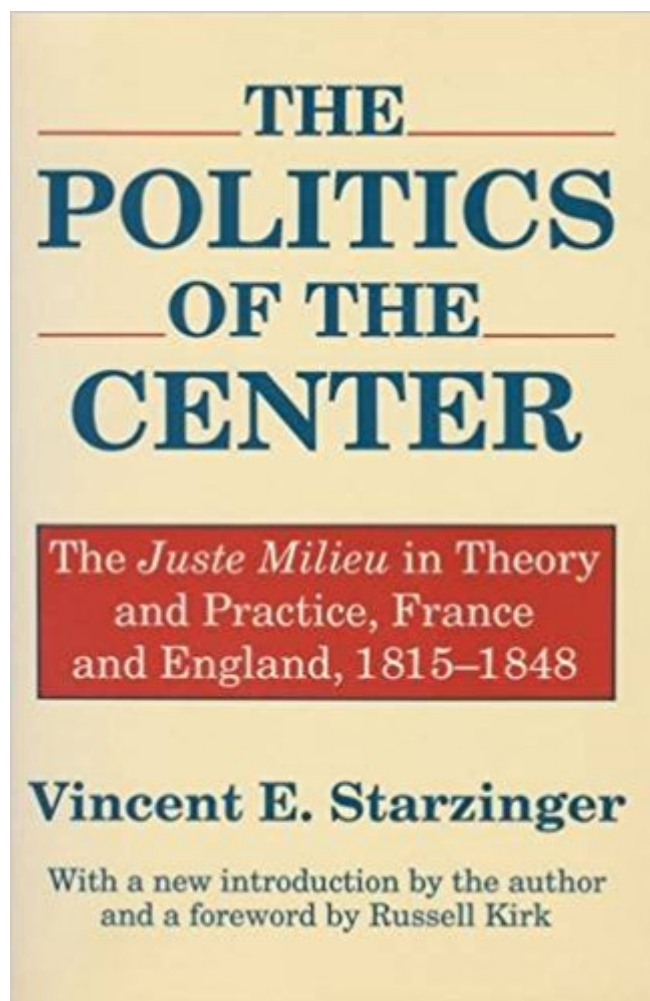




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Politics Of The Center (Library Of Conservative Thought)



Synopsis

This is a study of what it means, both strategically and intellectually, to take the center position in politics. The two specific political centers considered are the efforts in France and England after the Napoleonic Wars to establish middle class rule as a permanent center, or *juste milieu* between the extremes of revolution and reaction. The four prototypical political thinkers examined are Pierre Paul Royer-Collard and Francois Pierre Guillaume Guizot in France, and the English reform Whigs, Henry Peter Brougham and Thomas Babington Macaulay. Starzinger carefully explains his choice of these critical figures, emphasizing in his new introduction a current climate of opinion that is far more appreciative of their contribution to modern constitutional government than the critics have been in the past. This is much more than an historical study. It is an effort to examine the enduring ideas and dynamics of political "centrism" which help explain why the center sometimes proves to be a hopeless position, but in other circumstances can hold or even vanquish its foes to left and right. The work is highlighted by a comparative mode of analysis which explores these questions with sustained sensitivity to the differing social and political contexts of 19th century France and England. Starzinger also considers the moral dilemma of those who hold the middle ground. He asks whether such a center position must always lead to opportunism as its critics claim, or may instead serve some high ethical purpose. Finally, in examining the *juste milieu* concepts of sovereignty, representation, freedom, and history, he addresses critically the classic question of what indeed the relationship is between political ideas and underlying social class. This book will be of interest to both political scientists and historians.

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“Vincent Starzinger’s *The Politics of the Center* is a brilliant effort to study the history of two major and related centrist political movements; to explore their theory, the cast of mind which invented and instantiated these positions, their relationship to social and political realities, their attempt at justification by an appeal to ideological history, and their political deficiencies and ultimate failure. In a work of remarkable concision and argumentative vigor, Starzinger moves from past political reality and theory to enduring concerns and contemporary debate.”
—Stephen J. Tonsor, *The University Bookman*

Vincent E. Starzinger is professor of political science in the Department of Government at Dartmouth College.

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