

EXCERPT



Cold Civil War

Overcoming Polarization, Discovering Unity, and Healing the Nation

March 22, 2022 | \$28, 320 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4764-8

Jim Belcher (PhD, Georgetown) is president of the Institute for the New Vital Center. He previously served as president of Providence Christian College in Pasadena, California, and as associate professor of practical theology at Knox Theological Seminary in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He is the founding and former lead pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Newport Beach, California, where he served from 2000–2010 and led a period of steady growth. He is the author of *Deep Church* and *In Search of Deep Faith*.

A Way Beyond the Left-Right Stalemate

I am writing for two primary audiences. First, I am writing for pastors and Christian leaders in all walks of life, including in politics, business/economics, and culture/education, who see this polarization tearing apart their congregations and organizations. They desperately want unity but don't know how to find a new vital center. And they long for an organization that is truly missional, one guided by a public philosophy of civic and public life, providing a road map for lasting impact. Moreover, it is written for those who realize that if evangelicals, one of the largest voting blocks in America, fail to lead, they will continue to be tossed to and fro on the waves of partisan political polarization, incapable of helping the country rediscover a viable public philosophy and bringing the country together. In fact, I contend that if evangelicals don't regain a public philosophy, one capable of diagnosing our cold civil war, one that can call out our political polarization on both sides (and how the ruling elite exploits it) and clearly articulate a new vital center, one based on natural and divine sources, we are in trouble as a nation and a church.

But along with pastors and Christian leaders, this book is for all those who care deeply, whether on the left or the right, about the best of America, our constitutional republicanism, civil liberties, our civic republican tradition, the sharing of power between all classes in society, a robust working and middle class, and ultimately the fight against oligarchy in all its manifestations throughout American history. It is for those who are saddened by the cold civil war, by the takeover of our country by the ruling class, afraid of what it means for the civil liberties of all people. It is for those who believe deeply that grounding our politics and social and economic life in more than pure power is important and that a renewed public philosophy is desperately needed, and they want to be part of this new movement. To this end I believe my new quadrant system, clearly showing how polarization on the right and left is tearing us apart and what a bipartisan new vital center must look like, will be an aha moment for many, helping open up all kinds of dialogue with erstwhile enemies that are now allies.

My hope in writing this book is that it is not too late to call America back from the brink of total oligarchy, an impending hot civil war, and the total destruction of our constitutional democracy. It is my hope that it is possible to step back from the abyss, the threat of the total destruction of our republic in the name of revolution, whether from the far left or far right.

I am well aware that many thinkers are not optimistic that we can end our cold civil war. Many on the left say that only violence can transform America into a nation of racial equity. Some of the right believe that the American regime has already been captured and only a revolution will win it back. Claremont McKenna professor Charles Kesler is one of those thinkers on the right who contends the culture war may be too great to overcome, that in fact our republic has already been lost. If this is indeed true, he believes there are only two real options—one side secedes from the nation, or worse, our cold civil war turns into a hot civil war and we begin to kill one another in a second civil war. Kesler realizes we need a different path and writes, almost wistfully, "Let us pray that we and our countrymen will find a way to reason together and to compromise, allowing us to avoid the worst of these dire scenarios—that we will find, that is, the better angels in our nature." Yes, let's hope our better angels can and will prevail. But here's the thing: even if the republic has been lost (or never existed, as the far left says) or we need to split apart to avoid a real civil war, those who love

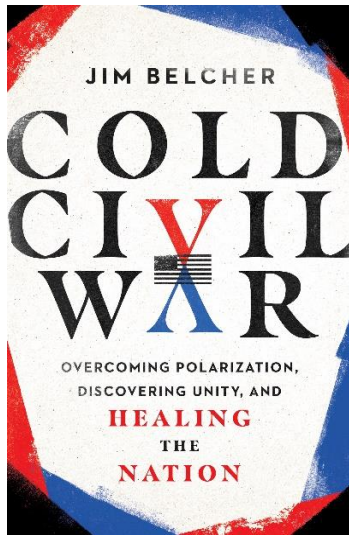


Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



EXCERPT



Cold Civil War

Overcoming Polarization, Discovering Unity, and Healing the Nation

March 22, 2022 | \$28, 320 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4764-8

constitutional republicanism will still need to regain the new vital center, at least to strengthen and safeguard the newly created nation, whenever and wherever it is formed.

Two hundred years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville, the greatest observer of American democracy, observed that “the most powerful, most intelligent, and most moral class of the nation have not sought to take hold of it so as to direct it. Democracy has therefore been abandoned to its *savage instincts*.” In fact, while some of our best leaders have failed to protect our public philosophy, others have purposely corrupted it for their own plutocratic ambitions. Like Tocqueville, I believe what we need today is a “new science of politics,” one “to instruct democracy, if possible, to reanimate its beliefs, to purify its mores” and one that will provide the grounding to justify our system, the glue to hold us together, and the God-ordained norms found in nature, discovered by right reason, and strengthened and made clear in revelation, protecting our rights and inspiring our responsibilities. This is the new vital center. Like Tocqueville, I hope to make clear that “this book is not precisely in anyone’s camp . . . to serve or contest any party” but “to see . . . further than the parties,” and in the process “ponder the future.” In the end, this book is about principle, not party, and my argument is open to anyone who mourns the loss of a vital center and wants to understand why we are being polarized and how we can regain a new vital center.

I invite you to come along with me and see that despite how polarized we are, how strong the ruling class has become, and that we may be in the eleventh hour of our country, we must remain hopeful. Ultimately, we are not guided by uncontrollable forces; we are actors that have real agency and real voices, and we need to use them. And when we see that this struggle is a moral and ethical and spiritual battle, we will have the courage not to give, to work for a better day. I hope it is not too late.

—Taken from the introduction



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



Cold Civil War

Overcoming Polarization, Discovering Unity, and Healing the Nation

March 22, 2022 | \$28, 320 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4764-8

America is experiencing what some have called a cold civil war that could split the country in two. Is there any way to step back from this dangerous precipice? This book lays out a quadrant framework of understanding today's political climate, revealing both how polarization divides us and how to move beyond the left-right stalemate toward the seeds of a new vital center which can transcend political tribalism and bring America back together again.

The New Vital Center and Unity for the Nation

At what point in our political climate did you decide to write *Cold Civil War*?

Jim Belcher: I decided to write it in 2018 when it was obvious how divided the evangelical church was over politics, how the country had lost a vital center, and how unaware the two political parties were at the manipulation of the ruling class.

Describe what you mean by our cold civil war.

Jim: The phrase *cold civil war* means that we are locked in a battle that is cold (not yet hot) over what it means to be an American citizen, what our country is grounded on, and the very definition of the nation itself.

How does this book transcend the right and the left?

Jim: What I show in the book is that the old left-right spectrum is unhelpful because the left and the right actually have two sides—an order side and a freedom side. I illustrate this in my new vital center quadrant graph. So there really are four quadrants and not two sides. Moreover, as I show in the book, the Democratic Party versus the Republican Party showdown is really just political theater because the two establishment parties in DC are really one uniparty controlled by the ruling-elite oligarchs in Silicon Valley, Wall Street, and the transnational corporations.

How do you challenge both sides?

Jim: By showing that both sides have succumbed to polarization and that this polarization has been stoked by the ruling elites to divide us and strengthen their control.

What is the new vital center?

Jim: The new vital center is at its heart a form of constitutional republicanism that transcends the Democratic and Republican Parties and is anti-oligarchical. Because it eschews the polarization of the left and the right, and the manipulation of the ruling elites, it can be shared by people on both sides and is our only hope for unity and saving the nation.

What role do you hope this book plays in our current political climate?

Jim: I hope it wakes people up to the uniparty in DC, the oligarchic control of the ruling elites, and how the uniparty uses polarization on both sides to stoke division, and hates the new vital center because it is a threat to the party's power and control.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media