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The Center cannot Hold: Why Barack Obama Needs to Re-discover his Inner Ideology

The empty vessel that Obama became to the voters when they projected onto him all his ascribed qualities has now become the “non-ideologue” which seemingly allows him to inhabit the political Center that is in his framing, “non-ideological” bi-partisan and pragmatic. It is revealed as a pure space of governance that transcends ideological barriers and partisan agendas, that which dismisses ideology in the name of pragmatic action. Pragmatism and Expertise have trumped ideology in advancing American self-interest. From what vantage position does one voice opposition to such actions if not from an ideological one? Why has pragmatism become the dominant value in the conduct of politics in the American theater and why has Obama embraced such a position that goes against the very grain of his ideological beliefs that he so passionately articulated?

My paper would present that such a “non-ideological” space is impossible and that “the center cannot hold,” or better still, that there is no center, precisely because it is shot through with conservative political ideology that ‘naturalizes’ itself as the “center.” In this context, my paper would, amongst others, discuss the following questions: What does it mean when President Obama moves to the so-called “non-ideological center?” Is such a move a rejection of Leftist/Liberal ideology that initially defined his political philosophy as a campaigner, and an embrace of certain tenets of conservative ideology that he notes as crucial for governing from the so-called Center? What are the ways in which the Left can return ideology to governance and make it matter in order to achieve meaningful legislation during the Obama presidency?