



# **Rebels All!: Rebels All! A Short History of the Conservative Mind in Postwar America (Ideas in Action)**

*Kevin Mattson*

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Do you ever wonder why conservative pundits drop the word “faggot” or talk about killing and then Christianizing Muslims abroad? Do you wonder why the right’s spokespeople seem so confrontational, rude, and over-the-top recently? Does it seem strange that conservative books have such apocalyptic titles? Do you marvel at why conservative writers trumpeted the “rebel” qualities of George W. Bush just a few years back?

There is no doubt that the style of the political right today is tough, brash, and by many accounts, not very *conservative* sounding. After all, isn’t conservatism *supposed* to be about maintaining standards, upholding civility, and frowning upon rebellion? Historian Kevin Mattson explains the apparent contradictions of the party in this fresh examination of the postwar conservative mind. Examining a big cast of characters that includes William F. Buckley, Whittaker Chambers, Norman Podhoretz, Irving Kristol, Kevin Phillips, David Brooks, and others, Mattson shows how right-wing intellectuals have always, but in different ways, played to the populist and rowdy tendencies in America’s political culture. He boldly compares the conservative intellectual movement to the radical utopians among the New Left of the 1960s and he explains how conservatism has ingested central features of American culture, including a distrust of sophistication and intellectualism and a love of popular culture, sensation, shock, and celebrity.

Both a work of history and political criticism, *Rebels All!* shows how the conservative mind made itself appealing, but also points to its endemic problems. Mattson’s conclusion outlines how a recast liberalism should respond to the conservative ascendancy that has marked our politics for the last thirty years.

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