

THE SHRILLIFICATION OF THE MODERATES

I'm fascinated by the outpouring of moderates' conversion narratives, from balanced and temperate to, um, shrill. JMM started it:

As Americans I think we need to grapple with what's happened. And it goes beyond President Bush. He did after all win reelection. He marginally expanded his congressional majorities. In the rough and tumble of the political moment, the fight needs to be taken to the president and his party. But we also need a more probing consideration of the forces that have made all this possible.

In any case, this is all a way of saying that in this all-or-nothing crisis the country has been passing through, I think it's made sense to line up with those who say, No. I guess I'm one of those partisanized moderates Kevin Drum has spoken of (not sure that's precisely the phrase he used.) That leads to a certain loss of nuance sometimes in commentary and a loss in the variegation of our politics generally. As a writer, often it's less satisfying.

But I cannot see looking back on all this, the threat the country is under, and saying, I stood aloof.