



Man at the Crossroads

FTDR Analogy: How those who vote can reimagine federal government elections

'The most important political office is that of the private citizen.' – Louis D. Brandeisⁱⁱ

'The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.' – H. L. Menckenⁱⁱⁱ

"A week is a long time in politics." – Harold Wilson. ^{iv}

'All people are born alike – except Republicans and Democrats.' – Groucho Marx^v

1. Due to a generation or two of divided party politics, the last several federal elections have been cast as mandates on whether the Republic will continue – literally *survive* - if the “wrong” party is or continues to be victorious in federal elections. The impetus, of course, is for either the “Rs” or “Ds,” as buffeted by “Is,” to secure federal policy hegemony

- despite occasional pleas to lay aside politics for the good of the nation.^{vi}
2. In simple script, many of those who vote conclude the times so dire – pessimism about democracy in the U.S.^{vii} - that if “the other party” were to win (or continue to win) federal elections, the nation faces a Matthean ‘abomination of desolation?’^{viii}
 3. Should those who vote and voters collectively define if or when a politically divided nation “returns” to formed, settled and accepted political direction?
 4. Has the nation entered a period when, in order to “condition” the will of those who vote and the electorate collectively, philosopher Thomas Carlyle’s axiom that “the history of the world is but the biography of great (politicians),” becomes the edge to ensure the nation is safeguarded from “the other?” Of course, Carlyle said ‘men’ rather than ‘politicians.’^{ix}
 5. Are politicians - “D,” “R” or “I” – gifted with Karma of *their own* making? If the metaphorical rain falls on the just and the unjust, can personality politics or politics of candidate persona become the nation’s hedge against the “other” winning federal elections?
 6. What of the United State’s heralded checks and balances, including divided party leadership? That means one party may control the presidency and another party the Congress or a House of Congress. Isn’t the key “the majority” of control in Congress? Let’s say a 30-40 majority rather than an elusive, dwindling half-dozen in the U.S. House of Representatives. Think back to the Clinton era, which

ushered, despite government shut-down, a balanced federal budget, 'welfare' reforms, and economic growth – the harbinger of which was the Reagan Administration's efforts to shore up Social Security. Today's political environment demands authentic melding of use of strong partisan positional goals with enough of a political congressional majority to heave the minority from dominating politics. Although, some will find the source loathsome, U.S.

Representative Nancy Pelosi, a politician having long-term success in Washington, said, ". . . (But) if you don't believe in governance and you don't believe in science — it's very hard to find leverage with people who don't have really any beliefs or any agenda. It's hard to negotiate with somebody who wants nothing."

7. Adding to the mix, in this writer's layman interpretation, it appears the U.S. Supreme Court is wont to bypass Congressional inaction by pushing policy to the states, including abortion access? Why? You see, state governments are 'closer' to voters and can be held accountable more easily than a Congress adrift and, in many ways, out of touch with greater voter "realities."^x
8. Consider these written words of Michigan Gov. Gretchen E. Whitmer,

"It was really a conversation I had with a woman in the Detroit Children's Hospital that crystallized everything for me. This is a mom, her son is there, he's in a brace, and she's obviously focused on her child. I asked her, 'What

could I do that would make your life better if I get elected governor?' And she looked me in the eye and said, 'Fix the damn roads.' And I was not expecting that response, especially in that situation. I figured she'd want to talk about health care or child care or education, something about what she was there for that day. She explained to me, she's from Flint, Mich., north of Detroit, and she was driving to Detroit to go visit her son and hit a pothole that absolutely destroyed the rim on her wheel. It sidelined her for a whole day. She had to go get her car fixed. She had to spend hundreds of dollars she wasn't planning to spend. She never got to see her son in the hospital that day, had to pay for child care for the other two kids who were at home. And it was just such a massive hit to her and her family — money out of rent or child care. And that's why she said, 'Fix the damn roads.' And I do worry about people losing faith in government because so many people exaggerate what they can accomplish. I do worry about people checking out because over and over again these people who make these fake promises don't deliver and then they think we're all that same way and that government can never get anything done."^{xi}

9. West Virginians are not estranged from FTDR politics, which is the beauty of state government – despite flawed legislation, flawed policies and tilts toward ‘home cooking.’ While it may take decades, Whitmer’s FTDR revelation eventually grabs state and local politicians by the ankles.^{xii} Are federal politicians subjected to such scrutiny, expect for “primarying?”^{xiii}
10. As stated in the last blog entry, “The voter as a political consumer, however, can invest her or his vote to ensure the entirety of the elected executive and legislative branches of government at all levels are beholden to voters rather than politicians who invest in voters.”^{xiv}

To where it bent in the undergrowth;
 Then took the other, as just as fair,
 And having perhaps the better claim,
 Because it was grassy and wanted
 wear;
 Though as for that the passing there
 Had worn them really about the same,
 And both (roads) that morning equally
 lay
 In leaves no step had trodden black.
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
 I doubted if I should ever come back.

Read between the lines: Have political parties, particularly at the federal level, have fallen captive to their rhetorical successes and failures – that is, while also having to govern (or not govern) for constituents?^{xv}

Will FTDR populism transfer to Washington?
 Will FTDR politics ameliorate rise or success of political figures who are fated to *Deus Ex Machina*,^{xvi} the hubris of *their* gifted Karma?

Or, as stated by poet Robert Frost,

“ . . . I shall be telling this with a sigh
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
 I took the one less traveled by,
 And that has made all the
 difference.”^{xvii}

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
 And sorry I could not travel both
 And be one traveler, long I stood
 And looked down one as far as I could

No matter the road taken, aren't all those who vote are in this, voting from "bases" of individual political, cultural, social and religious values, although that's not the totality of the story?^{xviii}

Man at the Crossroads (1933) was a fresco by Mexican painter [Diego Rivera](#)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man_at_the_Crossroads#/media/File:Libro_Los_Viejos_Abuelos_Foto_68.png

ⁱⁱ Louis Dembitz Brandeis (1856-1941), U.S. lawyer who served as an associate justice on the Supreme Court of the United States from 1916 to 1939.

ⁱⁱⁱ Henry Louis "H.L." Mencken (1880-1956), U.S. journalist, essayist, satirist, cultural critic, and scholar of American English. He commented widely on the social scene, literature, music, prominent politicians, and contemporary movements.

^{iv} James Harold Wilson (1916-1995), British statesman and Labour Party politician who was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom twice, from 1964 to 1970 and again from 1974 to 1976.

^v Julius Henry "Groucho" Marx, U.S. comedian, actor, writer, and singer who performed in films and vaudeville on television, radio, and the stage. He was a master of quick wit and is considered one of America's greatest comedians.

^{vi} [Thune: Bipartisanship and Compromise are Key Pillars That Should be Safeguarded, Not Threatened](#) / <https://www.thune.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2023/3/thune-bipartisanship-and-compromise-are-key-pillars-that-should-be-safeguarded-not-threatened> A representative read.

^{vii} <https://www.wral.com/story/new-polling-shows-u-s-voters-pessimistic-about-democracy-split-on-trump-biden-rematch/21084998/>

^{viii} Also referred to as *The Desolating Sacrilege*

¹⁵ "So when you see the desolating sacrilege, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; ¹⁷ the one on the housetop must not go down to take things from the house; ¹⁸ the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat. ¹⁹ Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! ²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. ²¹ For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved, but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. . . Matthew 24:15-22 (NRSVUE)

^{ix} Thomas Carlyle (1795 – 1881), Scottish essayist, historian, and philosopher from the Scottish Lowlands. A leading writer of the Victorian era, he exerted a profound influence on 19th-century art, literature, and philosophy.

^x The Dobbs decision is one factor as well as a decision that affected energy regulations.

^{xi} <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/30/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-gretchen-whitmer.html>

^{xii} Time doesn't fly

Just hangs over like the sky

It's we who go by

Makes no difference how or why

Everything you cherish

Throws you over in the end

Thorns will grab your ankles

From the gardens that you tend

Damned if you do
Double damned if you don't try
Caught on the fly
Hello fades into goodbye.

Aim At The Heart

Lyrics: *Robert Hunter*

Music: *Robert Hunter*

<https://whitegum.com/introjs.htm?/songfile/AIMATTHE.HTM>

^{xiii} <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/primarying> Of course, politicians of both parties are guilty.

^{xiv} (<https://chopwoodcarrywaterllc.com/index.php/2024/07/31/the-voters-investment-using-the-vote-to-hold-government-accountable-rather-than-investing-in-politicians/>.)”

^{xv} <https://wvmetronews.com/2022/04/07/ftdr-3/> . . . It is risky to predict what issues will face West Virginia in the future, but it is a safe bet that for years to come our Governors (this writer’s addition – and legislators) will be trying to fix the roads.” #FTDR (Fix the damn roads.)

^{xvi} Deus ex machina (<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/understanding-deus-ex-machina#6VsvF3FEujKP2gA2vl4oD>

^{xvii} <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken/>

^{xviii} Of course, federal and state politics differ in tone and temper, including the fact states must have balanced budgets (for the most part), which results in urgency to keep state fiscal affairs in order, although closely divided legislatures make this more difficult in that budgets set policy.