

Introduction

Groucho Marx was one of my boyhood heroes, and now that I'm older, he's become one of my superheroes. His unique brand of wisecracking, disdain for authority and slightly off-kilter views of life continue to appeal to me. Take this quote: "Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read." In a roundabout way that quote points to one of the thorniest political problems we face today...how to find common ground that is built on mutually accepted truths (*inside of a dog it's too dark to read*). This book is not about Julius (Groucho) Marx nor any comic or political satirist for that matter. Instead, it's my take on what our national politics has become since I returned to the USA after spending 20 years abroad in the U.S. Foreign Service. I came back just in time to see George W. Bush re-elected.

As a U.S. diplomat serving abroad, I observed American politics from a vantage point way outside the Beltway: in Europe, the Caribbean Basin and the Pacific Rim. Living and working in over 30 countries, I was expected to be a spokesman for the 'American way of life.' I did my best to explain our country, its political system and culture to people who had never been to the U.S. and to many who had but were confused about what they experienced. As a stand-in for America, I was often the target of pointed criticism, some praise and occasional gratitude. One time a man came up to me in St. George's, Grenada in the West Indies and thanked me for the U.S.' intervention in that island country in 1983 that threw out the Communists. I simply said, "You're welcome" and went on my way.

Why you should read this book

There are two reasons: The first is that we should not forget what got us to this point in our political history. By remembering the last eight years, we are more likely to avoid the same mistakes in the next eight years. The second is that I believe we have chosen a new path - a third way - in how we conduct ourselves, politically, and it's probably time we did some soul-searching and self-analysis. Also, there's a slew of *Trump books* popping up over the last few months. Seems like anybody that can spell Trump feels they can write a book about him - with authority. I'm not one of them, though my co-author of "Breaking Republican" and "How Republicans can win in a changing America" (Lance Tarrance, a renowned and roundly respected pollster) and I spoke of the likelihood of a non-traditional *third way* candidate winning the presidency in 2016. I'm proud to say that we were right on target.

I even predicted Trump's win on live Danish television on election eve from a studio overlooking Times Square long before the State of Pennsylvania was called. (In the end, my prediction came within one electoral vote of the actual outcome.) Near the end of the program, the Danish moderator asked me what I thought Trump's chances of winning were. I said, "80%." At that point, the other panelists sort of chuckled to themselves feeling certain that a Hillary Clinton victory was in the bag. We closed down the set at midnight and a few hours later I was awakened by a phone call telling me that Trump had, indeed, pulled it off.

I decided to stay up and begin preparation for my next interview which was to be held bright and early on November 9th on Times Square. I remember walking there from my hotel past throngs of people with their heads bowed, looking like zombies. An antediluvian pall had descended on New Yorkers who realized that 'their' gal had been cast out from the political Garden of Eden by a Philistine who had little or no regard for the art of politics, and they were in a profound state of shock. Some were still wearing their Hillary buttons, but nothing even remotely resembling a smile passed their lips. It was at that moment that I knew we had crossed the political Rubicon and that life wouldn't be the same...at least for the next four years.

We were about to enter the age of a *third way* presidency and I was determined to chronicle it as I did with the eight-year long *winter of discontent* for conservatives during Barack Obama's reign.

What follows are about 300 articles on the new politics of America, starting with the Obama Presidency extending into the first few months of Donald J. Trump's administration. They are presented in alphabetical order by chapter. For me, the political clock of our new millennium really started ticking with the entry of businessman Ross Perot into the Presidential race in 1992. But that's another story for a whole other book. In the meantime, enjoy this one.