

What a Tie Election Looks Like

No overtime.

No free throw.

A good old tie, parliamentary style. We were in Israel for the third election, while visiting our daughter. There was a virtual tie. It was the third tie in which no party could obtain a ruling majority. The deal making began, but neither of the top two vote getters could cobble together a majority of Knesset members. In our country, with a two-party system, someone is sure to win the Presidential election. We have a mechanism for throwing the election to the House of Representatives, if no one gets 270 electoral votes.

We have been there before. The Hayes/Tilden election before the entrance of the Twentieth Century was beset by fraud and wound up being decided by a farblunget cockamamie political contrivance that was an embarrassment to the nation.

In Israel, because people are getting tired of elections, a deal was hammered out to let Prime Minister Netanyahu fill half the term and his opponent, Benny Gantz, to fill the second half. Whether that actually will work, remains to be seen.

In our nation, enemies were forced to govern. The original federal Constitution had the loser becoming Vice President. It did not work well and it was one of the first changes to the Constitution. How can rivels get along, even if the good of the nation demands it? The answer is that they will not.

In Israel, it oddly seems to be working at least for the time being. Benny Gantz was only willing to enter into the leadership sharing deal because of the crisis created by Covid-19.

In the United States we now have what essentially is a tie. Of course, there will be no power sharing; not gonna happen, no way, no how. However, in the House and Senate power sharing will have to work, or not! If we are deadlocked in both chambers, the Independents and the few freethinkers will occasionally give a win to the donkey or the elephant.

The more interesting question is whether President Biden, which seems to be the inevitable end of the current imbroglio, will feel comfortable making wholesale changes in United States foreign and domestic policy. Since power breeds both hubris and is generally speaking, a tremendous aphrodisiac, the likelihood is that the Democrats will want their revenge. The politics of getting even is not particular to the Democratic Party. The Republicans have done the same thing when following a Democrat who they detested. Witness the George Bush Administration subsequent to Bill Clinton.

In 2000, the Republicans sued to stop recounts and the United States Supreme Court awarded their candidate the presidency. Donald Trump is likely to be unsuccessful at the same strategy. Questions are okay, especially when the late Biden winning margin will come from the big cities, where corrupt voting has a long and sorry history. Is that still the case today? That will be for the courts to decide.

In the meantime, the stakes are keeping the political trollers on tenterhooks. While we no longer have a patronage system similar to that which led to President McKinley's assassination, there is still plenty of patronage to go around; federal judges, cabinet officials and many of their underlings, party positions, US Attorneys and ambassadors, just to name a few. Those who seek to feast at the trough of success are too numerous to mention.

The ultimate question is whether a tie is good for America? Imagine a country in which one party has an overwhelming ability to rule. Of course, they will take their liberties with opponents and attempt permanently to install their agenda. We have seen it before since it is an ordinary part of human nature. In a political structure "equally balanced," as the courts like to say, either nothing gets done or the work of the people only is accomplished through compromise and deal making.

Is it better or worse to be in a nation where no one agenda is controlling? Many political scientists would say that the answer proven by history is indisputably "yes." After all, the founders of this country created the tripartite government system with an executive, legislative, and judicial in order to create a somewhat uncomfortable balance of power. de Tocqueville, when he traveled throughout the United States, admired the system although it was largely rejected by the European democracies which later came into existence. The parliamentary system is a combined executive/legislative and usually a very separate judiciary. In every democracy, and totalitarian states for that matter, there is now a fourth branch of government which is the administrative or bureaucratic. When countries are tossed into turmoil because the political structure does not operate very well or efficiently, who runs the country? It is the bureaucrats and administrators who keep on with their work, sometimes with loyalty to the parties that influenced their selection, and other times they simply function on auto pilot.

The American political tie, is likely to reinvigorate calls for elimination of the electoral college. The heck with state sovereignty; let's just count noses. Denying smaller states the power which they currently have in the electoral college is a dangerous precipice to jump off, but it certainly is worthy of continuing discussion and debate.

The fact that a President did not do as well in a general election as his party otherwise did in both the House and the Senate is a powerful message. Donald Trump, regardless of whether he did a good or bad job, lost the likeability election. There are those who like Trump's tough guy, take no baloney from anybody personality but it probably lost him 10-20% of the suburban vote. He was not going to get the big inner city vote anyway, although he did make some inroads with minority groups.

This election was Donald Trump's to lose and he did his best to realize that self-defeating vision.

Going forward with a tie may just be the medicine which America needs right now. Let us all work together to try to keep the nation stable and successful, while planning for the next presidential election between Kamala Harris and Nikki Haley. That should be a real interesting one – I can hardly wait.

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