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**Driving the Conversation:**

**Thomas L. Friedman** worries "about what is happening to American politics" because of attempts to "destroy the legitimacy of another president." Agree or disagree?

**12:30 livechat on the deficit with Brookings' Bill Frenzel**

**Sept. 30, 2009**

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**Roger Pilon**, Vice President for Legal Affairs, Cato Institute:

Tom Friedman's worry that "American politics" is again trying to "destroy the legitimacy of another president" is precious. There he sits, as James Gimpel notes, at the feet of the great Gray Lady whose editorialists spew a steady stream of political bile, aimed invariably in only one direction. Please.

But it's **Brad Smith** who demolishes Friedman's shallow, tendentious analysis with a simple observation, backed by evidence: "These [partisan] divides become worse in eras of big government." Friedman asks, "Where did 'we' go?" Well "we," or many of us, at least, saw the problem in that question long before Barack Obama echoed Bill Clinton's "We're all in this together."

America was established with a small and focused "we" in mind. (The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined." – Madison, Federalist 45) The Framers understood that we're individuals, at bottom, each with his own life's plans, not some grand collective programmed to pursue vast public ends. They understood that the more things you throw into in the public realm, the more individuals will disagree about what "we" should be doing in our collective capacity. That's the point Obama doesn't get. On the contrary, his vision is of huge public undertakings, no more evident than in his health care schemes. But it doesn't end there: as we saw last week, he's out to change the world, as if it was born anew with his election. His arrogance is begetting the ridicule it so richly deserves.

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