



Political Predictions: Obama's Second Term

With the reelection of President Obama, we may venture to make a few predictions about the near-term future. Of course, the president is only one element in a political system whose partisan makeup has changed little in this latest Election That Matters. The House remains in Republican hands and the Senate remains Democratic. Republicans have picked up a few governorships, but a number of ballot initiatives popular with Democrats — the legalization of so-called same-sex marriage in Maine and Maryland, for instance — passed. If this election is any indication, Americans in the aggregate are content with the status quo (which, as the late cartoonist Jeff MacNelly once quipped, is “Latin for ‘the mess we’re in’”).



What are we to expect from a second Obama term? Simply put, more of the same, but with tax hikes. In his first term in office, President Obama and his Democratic allies in Congress have shown themselves to be shrewd pragmatists, continuing all of the important planks in the bipartisan program that has propelled America toward receivership and post-constitutional rule for several generations. And these planks were espoused with equal enthusiasm by candidate Mitt Romney, as they have been by every Republican candidate and president from Thomas Dewey onward. Pared down to their essence, these planks amount to three realms of orthodoxy that the leadership of neither party is permitted to question. These realms are foreign policy, financial policy, and the expansion of federal government power at the expense of state and local government and individual freedom of choice.

No Change There

U.S. foreign policy has changed little since the end of World War I, except that the U.S. Congress, in defiance of President Woodrow Wilson and the establishment, refused, in the wake of that ruinous conflict, to authorize entry into the League of Nations, an organization that was perceived correctly as a precursor to world government that would require the United States to give up a large amount of sovereignty. But with U.S. entry into the United Nations, which replaced the League of Nations at the end of World War II, the die was cast. And from that day to this, no U.S. president — and precious few even in Congress — has challenged U.S. membership in the UN. With recent presidencies, starting with George H. W. Bush, who sought authorization for the Gulf War from the UN Security Council, the United States has come to defer more and more to UN authority on matters of war and peace. President Obama has certainly been no exception, waging war on Libya only upon securing UN authorization for limited hostilities, and refraining from intervening in Syria for want of a Security Council mandate. The rightness or wrongness of such interventionist activities aside, the point is that the U.S. government, for all practical purposes, has ceded its authority over war and peace to an unelected international body.

It is worth noting that the modern state of Israel was effectively created by a UN General Assembly



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resolution in November 1947. Should war break out with Iran over the alleged “existential threat” that the Persian state poses to Israel, expect the United States to jump in as the leading member of the global community’s enforcement arm.

For the United States to play the role of the world’s policeman under UN auspices, it has been necessary, following the precedent set with the Korean War, to abandon the constitutional requirement that Congress — not the president, much less an international authority like the UN — has sole authority to declare war on behalf of the United States. No U.S. war since the creation of the United Nations has been fought under a congressional declaration, a circumstance neither President Obama nor Mitt Romney has ever expressed any intention of rectifying.

During their three debates, Mitt Romney and Barack Obama sparred spiritedly over foreign policy issues ranging from Israel and Iran to trade with China. But, as most Americans perceived, there were no differences of substance. Both men favored the decades-old program of military interventionism and membership in the United Nations and affiliated internationalist organizations like NATO. Neither uttered so much as a whisper about restoring the congressional authority to declare war, since both appear to believe that war has become the sole prerogative of the U.S. president, with the advice and consent of the United Nations. While President Obama is perceived to be less bellicose than Romney and his predecessor George W. Bush — he did, to his credit, denounce rather forcefully in the debates any rush to military involvement in Syria or Iran — make no mistake about it: If his superiors at the UN Security Council or among America’s foreign policy elites at the Council on Foreign Relations and other private, non-elected policymaking bodies require him to, he will not hesitate to embark on more feckless and expensive overseas military adventures, no matter what American public opinion has to say about it.

And within hours of Romney’s concession speech, European leaders announced a push for new involvement in Syria, including the possible deployment of Patriot missile batteries to enforce a no-fly zone over a NATO-declared safe haven for the Syrian rebels — measures already under discussion in secret, but which were kept from public view until the reelection of Obama. As Shashank Joshi, an analyst with London’s Royal United Services Institute, a military think tank, told the Associated Press, “With the re-election of Obama, what you have is a strong confidence on the British side that the U.S. administration will be engaged more on Syria from the get-go.”

Here at Home

Financially and economically, the United States has never in its entire history been in graver circumstances, and Obama 2.0 will do nothing to rectify matters. Only once before has our national debt as a percentage of GDP ever exceeded 100 percent: after World War II. Back then, be it noted, the amount of additional debt stemming from future obligations to unfunded mandates like Social Security was then nowhere near what it is now. In the late 1940s, the Social Security program was still in its infancy, and Medicare didn’t even exist. Our real debt situation, therefore, is incalculably worse now than it was 65 years ago. Also, much of the cost of government back then was eliminated when wartime programs were terminated (and yes, the U.S. military was scaled back, too). Postwar real cuts in the cost of government amounted to at least 30 percent, and possibly much more. In stark contrast, today’s Republican budget warriors, like Paul Ryan, are proposing no real cuts at all, preferring merely to cut the rate of growth in future projected spending by a few percentage points, cosmetic flourishes that provoke howls of outrage from Democrats nonetheless.

The notion of actually cutting real government spending below the current level — not just slowing its



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growth — is, as Washington insiders like to say, a non-starter on Capitol Hill and in the White House. And for good reason: Everybody in Washington knows that, if more money is needed, the Federal Reserve, in cahoots with the U.S. Treasury, can create it out of thin air simply by issuing more debt. This is the reason that no U.S. president in the nearly one hundred years of the Fed's existence has ever proposed hobbling or eliminating the Federal Reserve System; the allure of easy money on credit has proven too intoxicating for our venal political leaders. And the one candidate in this electoral cycle who dared to challenge *that* orthodoxy — Ron Paul — was ridiculed, attacked, and, along with his followers, effectively shown the door at the Republican convention in Tampa. (In the case of almost half the Maine delegation, it was literal.)

If the United States somehow discovers the moral fortitude to renounce borrowing and spending before financial catastrophe supervenes, it will become the first nation in world history to do so. A far likelier outcome, and one that may overtake us sometime in the next four years, is a collapse of the entire global fiat money system, including the highly leveraged American dollar. The massive debt America has incurred for wars of choice, for cradle-to-grave welfarism (including, unhappily, a brand-new socialized medical system), and for subsidies and bailouts too numerous to list, will likely never be repaid. Once it dawns on America's creditors that the best they're going to get on their Treasuries will be repayment in massively depreciated dollars, things will get interesting.

Of course, no one can predict when the financial tipping point will occur; unforeseeable events, like another major war in the Middle East or another costly natural disaster, may hasten the day. But it is likely that a second Obama term will see many more trillions piled on the national debt, even as taxes are hiked in a vain effort to keep the federal beast properly nourished. Under such conditions (which will commence with the arrival of the new year and the tax hikes that will be instituted), another steep recession is a certainty. Where we go from there, and how quickly, is anybody's guess, although soaring inflation and more job losses are foregone conclusions.

Serious Second Term

President Obama's first term saw not only an affirmation of the garrison-state measures put into effect by his predecessor — the Department of Homeland Security, the TSA, warrantless wiretapping, the Guantanamo gulag, the Patriot Act, and so forth — it also strengthened many of them. New security measures in airports now see passengers strip-searched by machine and molested by unaccountable agents with blue rubber gloves. The TSA has begun taking its act to bus stations and even interstate rest areas, searching and interrogating travelers at random. Predator drones now hunt down and assassinate alleged enemies of the state, including American citizens, with impunity. And, despite Candidate Obama's promises prior to the 2008 election, the Guantanamo internment camp continues to operate apace, safely beyond the scrutiny of congressional investigators, lawyers, and concerned private citizens alike.

Meanwhile, the federal government during the first Obama term amassed ("usurped," the Founders would have said) a vast array of new unconstitutional powers, including unprecedented controls over the financial and insurance sectors and, of course, the nationalization of healthcare. Among many other things, the recent election, combined with last summer's Supreme Court decision upholding Obama-Care, has all but guaranteed that socialized medicine, once almost universally viewed as un-American, is here to stay, outside of state nullification.

Unfortunately, Candidate Romney offered few contrasts with President Obama, with nearly identical takes on foreign policy issues, and a gubernatorial track record in Massachusetts that featured the



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creation of a system of state-controlled healthcare that included compulsory insurance, and which was the model for ObamaCare. Governor Romney also signed into law onerous new anti-firearms legislation, and was avowedly pro-abortion until his comparatively recent political epiphany. Not surprisingly, the American electorate concluded that a Romney administration would be little different than Obama (except, perhaps, in fiscal matters), and opted to stick with the devil they knew.

In broader terms, it is difficult to escape the new demographic realities that the 2012 election has brought into sharp focus (to the gloating delight of the Democratic Party and its more radical constituencies). Huge numbers of new Hispanic immigrants, who have a strong cultural preference for welfarism, are changing the political map all over the South and West. According to the *Washington Post*, one in 10 voters nationally was Hispanic in 2012, for the first time ever, ensuring that formerly conservative western states like Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico are now reliably Democratic and pro-Big Government.

Today's senior citizenry, except for the very superannuated, grew up in the post-Depression culture of entitlement; almost no one left alive can remember pre-New Deal America. Meanwhile, the rising generation is supportive of what used to be viewed as ultra-radical attacks on American culture, including most prominently the legal countenance not only of the homosexual lifestyle but now, via successful ballot initiatives in Maine, Maryland, and Washington state, so-called same-sex marriage. The "swing state" of Wisconsin not only repudiated the Romney-Ryan ticket resoundingly, it also sent to Washington the nation's first-ever openly homosexual senator in Tammy Baldwin.

In a word, young Americans mostly reject the cultural and moral values of a generation ago; growing minority constituencies, especially Hispanics, clamor for immigration reform (read: amnesty and open doors); unionized workers now expect their employers to be bailed out in hard times; and senior citizens have little appetite for scaling back costly government programs on which they have come to depend, especially Social Security and Medicare. The old Right, traditionally included in the Republican Party, is dwindling. "We're going the way of the dinosaurs," admitted Florida GOP strategist David Johnson to the *Washington Post*. "The meteor's already hit, and we're just trying to wonder what the blast zone will look like."

But the Republican constituency and the freedom constituency, while traditionally overlapping, are not the same, especially in the era of Ron Paul and Gary Johnson. The Republican Party, with its decades of me-tooism and broken promises, has little lingering appeal for many people committed to limited constitutional government and laissez-faire economics. The only realistic chance that the freedom constituency ever had of wresting the reins of power from the GOP establishment was with the Goldwater candidacy in 1964. Since then, with the exception of a handful of GOP congressmen who have mostly been prevented from wielding any clout on Capitol Hill, the GOP has been the party of Less Big Government Than the Other Guys, and its most visible mouthpieces, from the radio talk-show warriors to effete, former Trotskyite neocons, have made sure that the party has toed the liberal internationalist establishment line in all the critical areas of orthodoxy. A Mitt Romney presidency would have been no different; perhaps Romney's defeat betokens the disintegration of a Republican constituency that has been such an enervating distraction to the freedom movement.

We may expect that the partisans of Big Government and social revolution will continue to find a home in a hypercharged Democratic Party and a champion in Barack Obama and his epigones in the new Congress. But the real story of the next four years, other than the looming fiscal catastrophe, will be the reconstitution of the freedom movement outside the framework of the GOP, and the vigor it will



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eventually assume.

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