

The great shift

Election 2012 was the most ideologically significant presidential contest since Ronald Reagan defeated Walter Mondale back in 1984, only this time it was conservatism, not liberalism, that got thumped.

That verdict—that Americans chose Barack Obama (and thus political liberalism) over Mitt Romney (and thus conservatism)—isn't necessarily supported by all the particulars; after all, Romney was a weak candidate who hardly emphasized conservative themes and had spent much of his political career running away from them. Nor was Obama's victory of such decisive proportions—less than 4 percent of the popular vote—in comparison to earlier ideological triumphs like Reagan's, or Franklin Roosevelt's over Herbert Hoover.

Still, conservatives had every reason to be shattered; they had expected a repudiation of both Obama and his beliefs, maybe even a landslide to that effect, and it didn't happen. The defeat was even more difficult to explain when considering that Obama had run perhaps the most nakedly left-leaning campaign in recent memory; indeed, that perhaps no other major political figure in American history has sketched out so expansive a collectivist/statist vision. (As such, there should have been little doubt among voters as to where he wished to take the nation if re-elected.)

The leftward ideological appeal has been sharpened still further since Obama's victory, as reflected in both his second inaugural address and recent State of the Union speech, suggesting a newfound confidence in an ideology that only a decade or so ago dared not speak its name. That such unbridled expression of Obama's previously muted ideological tendencies is occurring without much backlash from the public or pushback from Republicans is a testament to both liberalism's apparently enhanced appeal as well as the perceived deterioration of conservatism. *key*

Few analysts have captured this ideological shift better than Arthur Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute. Writing in *National Review* only a month or so after

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the election, Brooks noted that a new conventional wisdom had apparently settled in among the body politic and been belatedly reinforced at the ballot box.

This new conventional wisdom consists, according to Brooks, of three key elements. First, that the capitalist system is unfair because the "wealthy have so much more than others." Second, that Americans have enthusiastically accepted the welfare state to the point of opposing any cuts in its major programs and actually advocating its expansion. Third, and finally, we now trust and expect government, not the private sector, to manage the economy and create jobs.

Much flows from these three pillars. The idea that the system unfairly favors the rich was devastating to Romney's prospects, and justifies an emphasis upon reducing inequality through higher taxes on the wealthy, even at the expense of economic growth. The idea that the welfare state must be preserved contains within it a rebuke of conservative concerns over deficits and accompanying demands for entitlement reform and reduced spending. The idea that government should lead and manage the economy complements Obama's demands for yet more stimulus and "quantitative easing" consistent with the Keynesian formula.

Not all Americans have, of course, internalized such views (remember, Romney did, ironically, get 47 percent of the vote), but enough have such that, reinforced by the sympathetic media echo chamber, they now clearly drive our political debate. What this also means is that the left's long march through the institutions that began in the 1960s has succeeded to spectacular effect. *key*

Because the left now decisively controls the levers of American culture—from the mass media and academe through the publishing industry and Hollywood—we have acquired a political discourse that moves relentlessly along left/liberal lines and which has inevitably produced the mass beliefs Brooks identifies. Conservative principles have become irrelevant, if not the subject of derision and invidious caricature. Many of our less ideologically aware citizens are so surrounded on all sides by politically liberal ideas as to be unaware that conservative alternatives and critiques of those ideas even exist. *keyloss!*

So yes, demographics are shifting against the GOP, and with demographics go votes. And the traditional pillars of American life (and conservatism)—marriage, family and religious belief—are also in decline. But it is, and all along has been, the cultural shift that matters most. *!!!*

If liberalism is now ascendant, it is because liberals have won the culture

war, in large part because conservatives who didn't understand its long-term significance neglected to fight it. While conservatives safely ensconced in their think tanks comforted themselves with the belief that America was and always would

be a center-right nation, liberals were busy everywhere else changing that nation by changing the beliefs and attitudes of its citizens. *key*

No wonder, then, that conservatives are in despair and disarray. Underlying that despair and disarray is the fear that the principles that have guided the nation since its founding—individual liberty and self-reliance under limited government—are now being rudely discarded. *The Issue*

A hostile ideological takeover is under way and America truly is being fundamentally transformed, as Obama and his minions promised.

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