

# A Conflict of Visions: Washington in 2013

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# Overview

The Indictment

Salient Issues in Stasis

Competing Visions: 2012

Competing Visions: 2013

Hill Wars: House and Senate

The Fiscal Conundrum

Competing Visions: 2014-16

# The Indictment

Running Against Washington

The Dysfunction Narrative

Approval Ratings for Obama

Approval Ratings for Congress

Approval Ratings for Everybody

Fear of Government

Contempt for Government

# The Irony

Washington only place in country  
without a vote in Congress

It's the place where America Comes  
Together to Tear Itself Apart

The National Political Collision

# The Ambiguous Term

Washington as Metaphor

United States

Body Politic

National Identity

Federal Government

Great Contradictions

Whatever You Dislike

# Salient Issues in Stasis

Guns

Immigration

Budget wars / Debt / Sequestration

NSA Spying

Syria and Iran

Partial Shutdown

Affordable Care Act

# “Obamacare” in Cross Hairs

Rarely has a single bill  
so defined an administration  
or so imperiled a presidency.

Misgivings and resistance

Website malfunction

Policy cancellations

# “Obamacare” in Cross Hairs

If ACA collapses, it will be a potential  
“Katrina moment.”

Opponents will say  
the hybrid solution does not work.

They may be right. What’s next?



# “Obamacare” in Cross Hairs

Obamacare has become the flash point and emblematic battle between the competing visions of left and right in 21<sup>st</sup> century Washington.

# Competing Visions

The parties do not stipulate the same set of facts.

When they recognize common data (election results) they subject even these to disparate interpretations.

# Democrats Recall 2012 as the confirmation of 2008

Obama's re-election reconfirmed  
the mood and mind  
and demographic trends  
of 2008...repudiating the  
"Tea Party" backlash of 2010

# Democrats Recall 2012 as the confirmation of 2008

- Solid Electoral College win 332-206
- 5 popular vote wins for D's in last 6
- 7 of 10 most populous states
- 55+% among women
- 60% under age 30
- 80+% among minorities

# How Democrats Saw 2012

- Added 2 seats to Senate majority  
(Carried national vote for Senate)
- Gained 8 seats in House  
(Carried national vote for House)
- Turnout high among minorities
- Those under 30 outvoted over 65

# How Democrats Saw 2013

A chance to begin anew on agenda

Immigration

Job Growth

Minimum wage

Social issues

Labor issues

# How **GOP** Saw 2012

- Incumbent Obama barely over 50%
- Winning margin *down* from 2008
- Coattails minimal beyond Senate
- R's held clear majority in House
- R's protected Class of 2010
- States: R's held strong advantage among governors and legislators

# How **GOP** Saw 2012

- Romney was flawed nominee
- Romney ran weak campaign
- Still carried independents
- Still won in most House districts
- Still won 59% among whites
- Also won among whites under 30



# No One Ready to Kneel No One Ready to Deal

Both sides emerged from 2012 convinced the election had proven their basic view of issues and voters to be correct.

Neither side saw a mandate for internal re-examination or adaptation, although some Republicans tried.

# How **Political Science** Assessed 2012

- Demographics realign Electoral College
- Black vote 12% of total
  - Turnout slightly higher than whites
- Hispanic vote 13%
  - 50,000 eligible added each month
- Asians / Others 3%
- Anglo share down sharply from 1990s

# Visions of 2013: **Obama**

- Re-election would “break the fever”
- Economy would continue to improve
- Congress would come to terms
- Would hit reset button
- Wants “Grand Bargain” revived
- Sees deals on immigration, taxes

# Visions of 2013: **GOP**

- House now safe through 2020
- Senate within reach
- Obama as waning “lame duck”
- House majority as bulwark
- Senate rules as bulwark
- Supreme Court as bulwark
- No need for panic or capitulation

# Visions of 2013: **GOP**

- Fortress redistricting reinforced
- Internal debate about outreach
  - Women, youth, minorities, gays
  - RNC vs. Rush Limbaugh
  - Moderates look to governors
- Competing focus on base / turnout
  - “Missing white voters” thesis

# Visions of 2013: “Tea Party”

- “Tea Party” activists see different world
- See Obama / Dems as “House of Cards”
- See GOP leaders as enablers
- Ready to risk government shutdown
- Ready to risk debt default
- Ready to challenge in GOP primaries

# Obama 2.0 Under Fire from Right

Affordable Care Act  
Second amendment issues  
IRS targeting of conservatives  
Benghazi and its aftermath  
Tax and spend economics  
Business regulations  
NSA surveillance  
Labor issues

# Obama 2.0 Under Fire from Left

NSA surveillance

“Whistleblowers”

Drone strikes

Guantanamo Bay

Minimum wage

Keystone pipeline

Continuing wars abroad



# 113<sup>th</sup> Congress: **Senate Wars**

- Resistance to Obama nominees
  - Willingness to use filibuster, even for judges
- Resistance to majority agenda
  - Willingness to use filibuster across the board
- Challenges to leadership
- Exceptions for key issues
  - Immigration, student loans, farm bill

# 113<sup>th</sup> Congress: **House Wars**

- **Activist anti-Obama agenda**
  - Repeal Obamacare
- **Resistance to business as usual**
  - Farm bill and Transportation bill
  - Shutdown and debt ceiling showdown
- **Crisis for leadership**
- **No exceptions for key issues**

# 113<sup>th</sup> Congress: **House Wars**

The organization/leadership structures of the House have broken down under pressure from ...

Constant campaign mentality

Fear of primary challengers

Fundraising imperatives

Constant media presence

# 113<sup>th</sup> Congress: **House Wars**

Redistricting compounds the existing concentration of minority vote in cities and enables GOP to win more congressional seats state by state despite getting fewer votes in the country as a whole.

# 113<sup>th</sup> Congress: **House Wars**

That is why states such as Wisconsin and Michigan can cast more votes for Democrats overall but get more Republicans elected to Congress.

*Pennsylvania votes Dem statewide*

*But House delegation is 13-5 GOP*

*NC votes Dem but 9-4 GOP*

# 113<sup>th</sup> Congress: **House Wars**

Conversely, as Democrats are concentrated in urban districts, more are non-white.

**Anglo males** are now a **minority** within the **Democratic** Caucus

# 113<sup>th</sup> Congress: **House Wars**

“Split ticket” voting is increasingly rare

95% of House districts vote same party  
for President and for the House

November is the land of **landslides**

Most incumbents now fear *primaries*  
more than November

# 113<sup>th</sup> Congress: **Fear**

Members' behavior  
in both House and Senate  
is more than ever a function  
of their fear.

Members' greatest fears are  
being challenged in a primary  
and being outspent.



# 113<sup>th</sup> Congress: **Fear**

That is why the Senate's bi-partisan immigration bill has no chance in the House.

And it is why no other bill will be brought to the House floor without the support of a majority of the House Republicans.

# The Fiscal Agenda

- October shutdown biggest GOP misstep of 113<sup>th</sup> Congress to date
  - New budget negotiations stalled already
  - No Grand Bargain expected
  - Even small CR deal difficult in December
- January 15 deadline for new CR
- February 7 deadline to lift debt limit

# The Fiscal Agenda: Deficit/Debt

Sequester and debt ceiling are political devices to lower deficit, restrain growth of debt and limit spending and taxes.

The debt/deficit has risen and fallen as political focus since 1960s...Ronald Reagan ran against the national debt in 1980 when it was \$1 trillion

# The Fiscal Agenda: Deficit/Debt

- Reagan won but *deprioritized* deficit
- Debt tripled in 1980s to \$3 trillion
  - Despite Gramm-Rudman Act of 1985
- Debt doubled in 1990s to \$6 trillion
  - Clinton & GOP reduce annual deficit to zero
- Debt doubles again = \$12 trillion
  - Tax cuts, War on Terror, recession, crash

# The Fiscal Agenda: Deficit/Debt

- Crash of 2008 and 2009
  - First deficit year over \$1 trillion (\$1.4T)
- First Obama term: Huge deficits
  - Next four FYs average \$1.15 trillion
  - Accumulated debt passes \$16 trillion
- “Tea Party” Class of 2010 arrives
  - Not beholden to compromises of the past

# The Fiscal Agenda: Sequester

- Showdown in August 2011
  - White House reaches back for sequester
  - Meant to be unthinkable
- Sequence leading to sequester
  - “SuperCommittee” fails
  - Showdown delayed until after election
  - Fiscal Cliff reached December 2012
  - Sequester kicks in spring 2013

# The Fiscal Agenda: Sequester

Sequester helps lower annual deficit.

Economic recovery is improving revenue.

Recovery also eases program costs.

Tax increases are improving revenue.

Housing recovery makes GSE's profitable.

Fannie & Freddie back in the black.

# The Fiscal Agenda: Sequester

- Second Obama Term: Deficits falling
  - Current fiscal once projected at \$973 Billion
  - Now projected to be around \$600 Billion
- Working like late-90s standoff
  - Better economy in FY13
  - Some higher taxes (+14% revenue overall)
  - Spending restraint (-3%)
  - Democratic / Republican power division



# The Fiscal Agenda: Sequester

- Will lower deficit kill sequester?
- GOP sees chance to exempt defense
- Democrats see chance to restore cuts
- Complications arise
  - Shutdown to block ObamaCare
  - Tea Party support for sequester
  - Loss of McConnell-Biden link

# The Fiscal Agenda: Irony

Few Democrats *really* want to vote for tax increases, especially “blue state” taxes.

Relatively few Republicans are eager to vote big cuts in entitlements – or even discretionary spending.

# The Fiscal Agenda: What About the People?

- Polls say public wants balanced budget
- Public wants “balanced” approach
- But public also wants more *cuts*
- Public also dislikes any *specific* cut
- Public hazy on origins of debt
- Public hazy on funding of entitlements

# 2014 Elections: Billions for Campaigns

As in 2010 and 2012 candidates and parties will be outspent by new players.

The “new” players =  
Special interests, ideological entities  
corporations and  
wealthy individuals.

# 2014 Elections: Watch Out for that Pendulum

Democrats face rugged landscape

Presidents' "second midterm curse"

Senate: Democrats defending 20  
GOP just 13 seats

House: Redistricting reinforces GOP

# 2014 Elections: A Competition of Burdens

Democrats face headwinds of  
“Obamacare” and the Rocky Rollout and  
the president’s declining status

Republicans bear heavy negatives  
from shutdown, party divisions  
and historically low approval ratings

# 2016: Pendulum Swing versus Population Shift

## **White House:**

Two-year nominating process will  
empower and amplify base

## **Senate:**

GOP Class of 2010 offers targets

## **House:**

Partisan districts still protect GOP

# 2016 Election: WH Prospects

## Democrats

- HILLARY CLINTON
- JOE BIDEN
- MARTIN O'MALLEY
- MARK WARNER
- ANDREW CUOMO
- ELIZ. WARREN
- CORY BOOKER

## Republicans

- JEB BUSH
- CHRIS CHRISTIE
- TED CRUZ
- RAND PAUL
- SCOTT WALKER
- MARCO RUBIO
- RICK SANTORUM



# Review

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