

The Republican Reformation

The end of arrogance

One of the most devastating results of the 2008 election is the way the equating of conservative governance with the Republican Party has been allowed to stand. As Republicans come to grips with the outcome of the 2008 election cycle, there is no shortage of people clamoring to give the Republicans the answers to “fixing” their party and by extension conservatism. Given these same voices insightfulness following the earlier 2006 election disaster; it is arguable that they will offer anything or even that they will own any ideas that would fix anything...other than their own future political careers.

For the United States to continue as a world leader, to continue the national march of progress, and to provide a safe haven for the pursuit of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness a dialectical tension between conservative and liberal visions is needed. Abdicating that conservative vision or throwing in a mirrored opposing vision to liberals is not in the national interest. Demonizing the opposing views is not only counterproductive, but is a terrible destructive force creating an environment akin to a political civil war. Now what is needed is a fresh vision that can move forward with commonly held beliefs/visions as well as set a new course with a conservative vision. The real question then is how the Republican Party stops their march to being a corporate version of the Democratic Party and reclaims a true conservative governing mantle.

So enough political posturing from those frontrunners for 2012. What really went wrong and how does a conservative in the Republican Party attempt to govern from 2008 onward?

First and foremost let’s understand that the Republican Party suffered from an excessive level of arrogance, led by the Republican administration and by President Bush. While the American people are in many ways comfortable with a certain level of arrogance (after all it is something of a national trait), still they are typically looking for results to match.

In a nutshell, and using an expression the President would be familiar with, arrogance that is only seen as “all hat and no cattle” is not only frowned upon, but is usually met with hearty laughter. Which explained the state of the Republican led United States in the world community over the last four years at least.

While the President manifested the worst traits of empty arrogance, it was the Republican Party’s haughty posturing of Party perceptions as America’s reality that sealed the Party’s fate. And as Presidential hopeful John McCain learned, when reality is crashing around your ears posturing with Republican perception driven talking points – “fundamentals of

our economy are strong” – is easily seen for what it is. You cannot placate reality; you cannot spin reality, reality tends to shine through the faux finish of a neo-conservatism that is not new (Scoop Jackson Democrats) or conservative (Patriot Act, preventive war (!), corporatism, “free” trade?).

Republican governance cannot rely on “fooling all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time” as an effective strategy to oversee America’s national interest. Well...OK so that is politics in some measure, but national interest implies that you have some overarching explicit governing principles that people can rely on as “reality” and that seeks the best for the nation as opposed to the Party. And for sure if you are professing conservatism in governance you must do more than offer banal Bushian talking points.

Where to then conservative Republicans? In the weeks ahead I will layout the fundamentals of a national conservative approach to governance, how to approach the Obama administration, and how to move forward with the Democrat controlled Congress. The American people, regardless of the media’s explanations, are mostly center-right in their views, but they need vision is order to feel confidence and to entrust the future direction of the country to anyone. There is a strong argument, if you followed the daily polls leading up to the final vote, that this was a vote against a perceived lack of vision and against a continuation of failure. Competence was a key to victory, and the absence of the same figured prominently in the final tally.

So in broad strokes here, in no particular order, are the weeks ahead:

Immigration reform? – No an immigration time out.

Off-shoring of labor? – Bring America’s looted jobs and resources back home.

Global trade deals? - There is no such thing as a free lunch or Free trade deals.

Energy independence? – A comprehensive plan for transportation, the grid, and exploration.

Preventive wars? - No more!

Reduced overseas commitments – Empire is not the American way.

Overblown arrogance has seen its day in the American sun. It is time for reason and vision in framing a new start for conservatives and the Republican Party.

