



Debt Limit Raise: a Victory for Obama

According to the conventional narrative, [Obama is the big loser](#) in all of this because, as Pat Buchanan said, the Republicans, thanks to the Tea Partiers, achieved some of what they wanted while Obama and the Democrats received virtually *nothing* in return. The President originally demanded an unconditional increase in the debt ceiling. Then, when he recognized that this wasn't going to occur, he indicated a willingness to negotiate some spending cuts while insisting upon tax increases. The Republicans, though, held firm, and in the end, Obama conceded to spending cuts in spite of having abandoned his hope for any tax hikes.



This wisdom, I am afraid, is but a species of wishful thinking at best, deception at worst.

There is no way that Obama could not have known that a Republican-controlled House of Representatives would under no circumstances agree to raise the debt ceiling in the absence of conditions. And it is doubtful that he had much confidence that Republicans would endorse any proposals involving overt tax hikes. Yet so that he could obtain at least a good measure of his heart's desire while perpetuating the myth of Obama the Great Conciliator of conflicting partisan interests, the President began this series of negotiations with requests that he knew were unrealistic.

But it can't be accentuated enough that, far from getting "nothing" from the debt deal, Obama received no inconsiderable amount of what he wanted.

First and most obvious, the President achieved *a raise in the debt ceiling*. This means that now there are more resources available for him and his fellow partisans to deploy in their task to "fundamentally transform" America, as Obama promised while on the campaign trail in 2008.

Second, real spending cuts are *immediate* spending cuts. So-called "projected" or "future" spending cuts are nothing more or less than *potential* spending cuts. However, as both experience and logic readily reveal, practically speaking, potentiality is nothingness. Republicans managed to secure approximately \$60 billion in spending cuts within the next two years. When it is considered that Obama will have at his disposal 900 billion new dollars over this same period, and when we remember that the national debt is in *the trillions*, it becomes obvious that Republicans are *guaranteed* virtually nil.

Third, along with a motley crew of irresponsible journalists and pundits in the media, Obama succeeded in promoting the lie that a failure to raise the debt ceiling would be tantamount to a default on our debt obligation. In reality, the two are entirely distinct. But reality hasn't anything at all to do with the perception that during his tenure Obama averted economic Armageddon by compromising just enough to get the debt ceiling raised.

Fourth, Republicans herald this resolution as a victory for the Tea Party. Democrats in Washington and the media tend to characterize this as a Tea Party win as well; however, in contrast to their opponents,



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they have depicted the Tea Partiers as having pursued their goals at the expense of the country. In the meantime, Obama openly laments that he was forced to consent to terms for which he lacks all enthusiasm. When stocks are plummeting and the world's confidence in America's ability to get her financial house in order continues to deteriorate as our economy worsens — as it is guaranteed to do (at least) until the next election — Obama's somberness casts the Tea Partiers and the Republicans in the role of Nero, the tyrant who fiddled while Rome burned.

In short, when this deal proves to be for naught (*vis-à-vis* the economy), Obama can remind voters that, as Republicans are repeatedly informing us, this was *the Tea Party's deal*. We tried it their way, he will doubtless say, and it only made matters worse. So Obama will have found himself a new scapegoat for the problems that he has created during his time in the White House.

Fifth, by being able to now shift responsibility off himself and onto the Tea Partiers and Republicans, Obama can kill a second bird with this same stone. He can now use the worsening economy as a pretext for pushing through the remainder of his socialist agenda. This just might work too, for recall, Americans originally voted for Obama and the Democrats because of their belief that it was primarily *the Republicans* who were responsible for having brought the country to the precipice of financial ruin. Obama and company, exploiting the perception that the Democrats were generally more trustworthy when it comes to matters of economic significance, convinced an economically and politically illiterate electorate that it was the Republicans' "tax breaks for the rich" and their support of a "deregulated market" that explains the mess that Obama "inherited." As the economy further erodes *in the wake of* this latest "Tea Party victory," it won't be too terribly difficult for Obama and an exceptionally Democrat-friendly media to push this line again.

Sixth, the debt deal proposes cuts in the military budget. This pleases both Obama's left-wing constituents and some on the non-neoconservative Right — especially including the much coveted "independents."

Finally, in spite of all the talk we have heard from Republicans regarding the dreadful ObamaCare and their pledge to defund and repeal this Leviathan, it is not so much as touched upon in the latest debt deal. In other words, the President gets to keep his signature landmark program (at least for now).

Republicans tell us that this is as good a deal as they could get given that they control "only one-half of one-third of the government." If we *really* want to restore "fiscal sanity" to Washington, then we need to regain control of the Senate and the White House in 2012. A couple of brief remarks on this line of reasoning are in order.

First, it is deceptive, for it suggests, and is designed to suggest, that the Republicans have less power than they really do. The three branches of our government are the legislative, executive, and judicial. Only the legislative and executive branches have anything to do with this debt ceiling issue. So, while the Republicans do indeed control one-half of one-third of the government, the Democrats control, not *everything* that is left over, as this argument is meant to imply, but half of the government. Of course, the numbers here are not nearly as important as we may be misled to think, for that "one-half of one-third" of the government that the Republicans control is *the House* — exactly that chamber of Congress where *all* spending originates. To control the House of Representatives is to wield much power.

Second, those Republican politicians and pundits who are now "reminding" the rest of us about how constrained they currently are didn't issue any of these condescending, disingenuous, cautionary tales in the weeks and days leading up to the November election of 2010. No one said then that if



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Republicans only take control of the House, they would never be able to arrive at any deal on spending that wouldn't be better than the one they now have.

So, my advice to Republican and Tea Party voters is to force those Republicans running for office in 2012 to *specify* not just *what* they *want* to do in order to restore "limited," constitutional government, but *how* they plan to do it.

For now, though, we must accept the brute fact that this debt deal, far from being a victory for the Tea Party, is a victory for Obama.



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