



Super Committee Failure — or Success?

If you think the goal was to solve the country's fiscal crisis, then obviously the Super Committee was a complete failure. But, if you think the goal was to improve the chances of the Obama administration being re-elected in 2012, it was a complete success.



Imagine that there had been no Super Committee in the first place. Who would be blamed for the country's fiscal crisis? The overwhelmingly Democratic Congress that voted to spend the money which increased the deficits more during the Obama administration than in the eight years of George W. Bush.

When the Obama administration's massive spending spree was going on, Republicans were so hopelessly outnumbered in both houses of Congress that nothing that the Congressional Republicans could say or do would have the slightest effect.

Even the cleverest political spin-master would have a hard time trying to keep blame from falling on the Obama administration, without the later shift of attention to the debt crisis.

Two things got the blame shifted. The first was the national debt ceiling, which had to be raised, if politicians were not going to be forced to either cut existing programs or shut down the government — neither of which was politically attractive.

By the time a vote on raising the national debt ceiling was required, Republicans had gotten control of the House of Representatives. This meant that the national debt issue was now a bipartisan issue, whereas the spending that drove the national debt up to that national debt ceiling had been a problem strictly for the Democrats.

Splitting the blame with the Republicans for what Democrats alone had done was a political victory, in terms of making the Obama administration less vulnerable at the polls in 2012.

With the help of the media, the big issue was no longer the big spending that drove the national debt up to the legal ceiling, but the failure of the Republicans to help solve the debt ceiling crisis.

Many people lamented the failure of President Obama to become engaged in the process of working out a solution to the fiscal crisis, and regarded that as a failing. But, again, success or failure depends on what goal you are trying to achieve.

If the goal was to reach a bipartisan solution to the country's fiscal crisis, then the president's involvement might have increased the chances of doing that. But, if the goal was to outsource the blame, then the president's fading away into the background was the perfect political ploy.

Appointing a bipartisan Super Committee with dramatic powers, and apparently dramatic consequences if they failed to reach agreement, created another long distraction in the media that took the president



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on November 23, 2011

further out of the picture. When it came to media coverage of the country's financial crisis, it was almost a question of "Barack Who?"

The draconian spending cuts that were supposed to hang over the heads of the members of the Super Committee, like a sword of Damocles, turned out to be a cardboard sword when the inevitable failure to reach an agreement occurred.

A new Congress meets before these draconian cuts are supposed to happen — and no Congress can be forced to do anything by a previous Congress. So all this turned out to be a grand charade — and politicians are great at charades.

This one was a complete political success, because we are now talking about who is to blame for not coming up with a way of solving the fiscal crisis, rather than who did the runaway spending that caused that crisis in the first place.

An even longer-running charade is the budget-cutting charade, where big spenders promise to make spending cuts to match tax increases — or even to exceed tax increases. Of course the tax increases come first and the spending cuts are spread out into the future — and usually end up not taking place at all.

This particular charade could be ended by making the spending cuts take place first. But that would spoil the political game.

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