



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on December 13, 2016

Where Are We?

We are now in a kind of political no-man's-land between an administration on its way out and a new administration taking shape. Predictions are always risky — and nowhere more so than in times like these.

What we can do, however, is assess where we are, and what some of the opportunities and dangers are.

The opportunities are many, which is to say that many things are in desperate need of changing, beginning with rebuilding our dangerously neglected and undermined military forces. The monstrosity of ObamaCare needs to be gotten rid of, not just cosmetically adjusted.

Our fundamental freedoms under the Constitution are at stake in the choice of the next nominee to become a Justice of the closely divided Supreme Court. We need someone with both the depth and the strength to resist the pressures and the temptations that have seduced too many supposedly “conservative” justices, over the years, into betraying Constitutional principles.

The current hysteria over “fake news” — including hysteria by people who have done more than their own fair share of faking news — shows the continuing efforts of the political left to stifle free speech in the country at large, as they already have on academic campuses.

These are just some of the opportunities the incoming administration has, now that the Republicans finally have control of both Houses of Congress and the White House — which is to say, now that they no longer have any excuses for not doing what they said they were going to do, when they were running for election.

Opportunities are of course also challenges, and few of these challenges can be met without paying a price. Will the slim Republican majority in the Senate put bipartisan cooperation ahead of the Constitution, when it comes to choosing a Supreme Court Justice based on principles, rather than on avoiding a nasty fight with the Democrats?

The same question arises when it comes to repealing ObamaCare. Democrats threw bipartisanship to the winds when it came to passing ObamaCare. Republicans who wanted to have an input on this sweeping legislation were bluntly reminded of the outcome of the elections. “I won,” President Obama told them.

Now that the Republicans have won — not only the presidency but also the Congress, as well as most governorships and state legislatures across the country — do they have the guts to do what they were elected to do?

Surely no one can be unaware that one of the reasons why such an unorthodox outsider as Donald Trump won the Republican nomination, and then the election, is that Republican voters were fed up





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with the repeated betrayals by the Republican establishment, going all the way back to President Bush 41 and his betrayal of his bold assertion: “Read my lips, no new taxes!”

What do we know, at this point, about the people being tapped as nominees for key positions in the incoming Trump administration? By and large, they are of a higher caliber than usual, especially General James N. Mattis who has been selected to become Secretary of Defense.

The love of rhetoric by both the media and Donald Trump has caused General Mattis’ nickname of “Mad Dog Mattis” to become a distraction from the facts about a man of both high intellect and a great concern for the troops he commanded. He has, for example, taken it upon himself to personally visit many families of those who died fighting in the battles he led.

As a personal note, I have had the privilege of having discussions with many military people who have visited the Hoover Institution over the years, and have been impressed with officers of many ranks, including General Mattis. The young officers I have encountered are head and shoulders above so many young people of similar ages who are graduates of even our most prestigious colleges and universities.

The liberal media are already expressing worry about the number of military people being considered for key positions in the new administration. They would be worried about anyone who has not been brainwashed in the political correctness that reigns among the intelligentsia.

The key individual in any administration, however, is the President — and that remains the key mystery in the new administration.

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