



Is Obama's Lead Over Romney Really Widening?

A Fox News poll taken between August 5 and August 7 purports to show that if the presidential election were held today, President Obama would defeat Republican challenger Mitt Romney by nine percentage points.

According to Fox News, Obama would receive 49 percent of the vote compared to the 40 percent that support Romney. Within just a month, and presumably as a consequence of the intensely negative campaign that Obama has waged against Romney, the president's lead has widened by five points.



Fox News reported that Obama's increased support derives largely from the boost in his support from independents, who now favor him by 11 percentage points over Romney.

When this poll is considered more carefully, however, things don't look nearly as bad for Romney as it suggests.

First, Democrats are oversampled. It isn't until the very end of the polling survey that it is discovered that 44 percent of those questioned identify themselves as Democrat versus only 35 percent who claim to be Republican. Moreover, to the question, "Regardless of whether you've attended a Tea Party rally or event, do you consider yourself to be part of the Tea Party movement, or not?" only 16 percent of respondents reply in the affirmative, while 80 percent answer negatively.

Second, the poll canvasses registered voters, not likely voters. The difference between the two is the difference between those who are likely to participate in elections and those who are not.

Third, in addition to mentioning a five-percent increase in support for Obama among independents, it also adds that there is "an uptick in support for Obama among women, blacks and Democrats." Actually, it is only single women who are more disposed to the president; married women are much more inclined to vote with their husbands against him. But nevertheless, an "uptick in support" among these demographic groups is all that the president can hope to expect given that they already, unfailingly, fall solidly behind Democratic politicians.

Fourth, while polls concerning "registered voters" — particularly polls taken at this relatively early a moment in the election season — are worth very little, even this poll shows that a higher percentage of Romney supporters (87 percent) than Obama supporters (83 percent) are "certain" to vote for their candidate. Furthermore, one out of four independents admits to being open to changing their mind before the election.

Perhaps most tellingly, the most important issue for this collection of voters is the economy. And it is on this score that they have more confidence in Romney than in Obama.

Fifty-six percent of those polled state that the economy will be "extremely important" for them when voting for the presidency. In contrast, the next most important issue is healthcare, of which only 45



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percent identify as “extremely important.” National security, taxes, foreign policy, and immigration are “extremely important” for 44 percent, 39 percent, 30 percent, and 25 percent, respectively.

Crucially, when it comes to reducing the deficit, Romney leads Obama by eight percentage points, and when it comes to improving the economy overall, he leads by three percentage points.

There is, though, something within this poll from which Romney and his party may be able to learn a thing or two: Relatively few people (30 percent) express much in the way of concern for foreign policy. This finding is consistent with other polls that similarly show a much smaller percentage of the American public than the Republican Party establishment that attaches top priority to the type of foreign policy that the federal government generally and the GOP specifically are known for advancing.

In 2006, Republicans lost control of both houses of Congress. In 2008, they lost control of the White House. In large measure, the devastating beatings that they received were due to what the majority of Americans, including an ever growing number of Republican voters, perceived to be Republicans’ unduly bellicose, wasteful foreign policy.

Shortly after the attacks of September 11, 2001, George W. Bush had the highest approval rating of any president before or since. Yet his decision to abandon the “more humble” foreign policy approach that he advocated during his primary race in favor of an agenda to “rid the world of evil” by launching a “freedom revolution” in the Middle East resulted in a precipitous decline in his numbers.

The prolonged and seemingly pointless war in Afghanistan, coupled with the equally seeming senseless invasion of Iraq, left Americans disenchanted with the 43rd president and his party.

Now, however, although Romney has been speaking primarily about the economy, he has also given some occasional nods — such as when addressing the Veterans of Foreign Wars last month — in the direction of precisely the same foreign policy vision that Americans have repeatedly voted overwhelmingly against.

Perhaps more potentially damaging, the GOP convention that is to be held at the end of the month in Tampa, Florida, consists of a speakers’ list that may prove to be a bit too reminiscent of the Bush years.

While a speaking slot for Kentucky Senator Rand Paul — the son of Republican maverick and thrice presidential candidate, Congressman Ron Paul — could go a considerable distance in forcing the memory of the Bush era to recede ever further and faster beyond the historical horizon, there are other speakers who promise to counter this tendency.

Former Pennsylvania senator and presidential contender Rick Santorum is one featured speaker. Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush is another.

Santorum is at least as adamant as was George W. Bush in promoting a program to “spread democracy” throughout the Middle East. During the most recent GOP primary contest, he rebuked Ron Paul when the latter called for bringing home America’s military personnel from the 130 or so installations around the world where the troops are currently deployed. Santorum shot out that America needs to expand her troop presence around the globe.

Jeb Bush was a fairly popular governor, but the fact remains that he is a Bush.

And however unhappy Americans may be with the current state of affairs and the Democrats in the Senate and the White House, it is doubtful that they long to be reminded of either the last president or the conduct of the party of which he was then the titular head.



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