

Five Easy Post-Election Predictions, No Matter Who Wins

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Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, October 30, 2012

It's true that Barack Obama and Mitt Romney have many political differences. But they also agree on many essential policies; enough to make the next four years easily predictable, no matter who wins. Here are five predictions based on the most important shared beliefs of the two candidates:

1) The war on unions will continue. The Republicans are explicitly anti-union, while the Democrats are pro-union in words, but anti-union in practice. Obama's much touted Race to the Top national education policy directly targets the heart of the teacher's unions — the most powerful union in the country — by attacking seniority rights and restricting wages and benefits.

Also, Democratic and Republican governors on a state by state basis aim to either carve giant concessions from public employees, or take away their rights as unionists altogether — the lesser evil policy of demanding concessions (Democrats) is but one step from ending collective bargaining (Republicans).

As the recession grinds on, this bi-partisan anti-union policy will intensify, no matter who is president. The aim of this anti-union policy is to lower wages for all workers, since unions artificially skew the labor market to the benefit of workers in general; attacking the unions is thus an attack on all workers, organized or not, so that corporations can regain "profitability" by having their labor costs lowered.

2) The war on the environment will continue. Both parties treat the environment like they do organized labor. The Republicans openly degrade it and the Democrats make pro-environment statements while practicing the opposite. Whoever wins will continue to pander to Big Coal, and they will continue to advocate for dangerous arctic and Gulf oil drilling, wreak havoc by shale "natural gas" drilling, build the cross continental Keystone pipeline, while continuing to do little or nothing to build the absolutely necessary alternative energy infrastructure that would provide jobs and hope for humanity against climate change. Obama and Romney refuse to take the necessary actions to address the climate crisis because doing so would harm the profits of the big corporate polluters. Neither presidential candidates will do so much as begin an honest public discussion about the problem, ensuring that other countries will follow suit, to the peril of all of us.

3) Wall Street will reign supreme. During the debates it was made clear that no further action against Wall Street was necessary. But the banks are bigger under Obama than they were under Bush, which means they are still "too big to fail," ensuring future bailouts paid by taxpayers. Federal Reserve policy is not controversial for either Republicans or Democrats: historic low interest rates combined with printing massive amounts of additional money — called "quantitative easing" — have both served the profits of Wall Street banks

quite well, while everyone else sees their wages and benefits cut. Loans to working people are no easier to come by, while the banks and corporations are literally sitting on trillions of dollars of reserves in cash.

4) Post election national austerity cuts. The national deficit is the result of bank bailouts, foreign wars, and decades of continually lowering taxes for the rich and corporations. Obama and Romney both ignore these facts, and favor “trigger cuts” — massive cuts in jobs and social programs that would go into effect if Republicans and Democrats can’t agree on how many trillions of dollars of cuts to make (Obama’s proposed deficit cutting plan would make 4 \$trillion in cuts; Paul Ryan wants 6 \$trillion.)

And while Obama has made quite a bit of noise about “taxing the rich” to help fill the deficit gap, the same promises were made last election and amounted to naught when he extended Bush’s tax cuts for the rich. Taxing the rich is the only alternative to making cuts, since working people have so little left to tax. Instead, Obama is using the deficit to justify massive cuts to Medicare, public education, unemployment insurance, and likely Social Security and other programs. The Obama/Romney “rift” over the deficit is, in reality, a polite discussion of how best to slash and burn social programs, while differences are exaggerated for the sake of their election campaigns.

5) Foreign wars will continue. Listening to Obama and Romney debate foreign war was very much a Pepsi/Coke style debate. Both candidates love Israel, hate Iran and Syria, lie about a “time table” for Afghanistan (no serious foreign policy pundit believes the U.S. is leaving Afghanistan in 2014). Both are for continued drone bombings of Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia which are obvious war crimes, while both candidates hypocritically accuse Syria of “human rights violations.” In short, both candidates argue over how best to push the Middle East and North Africa to the brink of regional war, without being blamed for it.

Ultimately, there do exist differences in social policy between President Obama and Mitt Romney. The above policies, however, will deeply affect all working people in the United States. The country is not in a typical recession. Most economists agree that, at best, the U.S. economy can expect a “lost decade” of economic stagnation — at worst, a double dip recession/depression.

The above policies are shaped with this worst case scenario in mind, with the understanding that for capitalism to re-stabilize itself, a “new normal” is needed that shifts the power in the U.S. even more towards the banks and corporations, who must be completely unrestrained by labor, environmental and other regulations to ruthlessly chase profit, to the detriment of us all.

Thus, the Democrats and Republicans have the same “big picture” agenda that all working people should find abhorrent, since corporate gains will come at our expense. Once workers feel compelled to organize themselves to put up a fight, as the Chicago teachers did, all illusions in the Democrats will begin to fade, as people see with their own eyes the Democrats not only refusing to help them but actively opposing them, just as they did to the teachers in Chicago. Developments like this will allow a real movement to emerge that can challenge the two-party corporate dominated agenda. Until labor and community groups can unite on a widespread basis in independent action against the above bi-partisan agenda, we’ll be forever dragged into rooting for one of two candidates, neither of who have our basic interests in mind.

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