

**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**Politics in America
2012 Presidential Candidates Debates**

Presidential Candidates Debates

October 4, 2012

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Here is a report providing a correction to last night's presidential candidates' debate. I decided to send it to you because this specific confrontation between Obama and Romney is getting a lot of attention today. It's close to being gasp...a gaffe!

Both men were well prepared, but I thought Mitt got the better of Obama. It seems Barack's timing was thrown off by Mitt's assertiveness. Obama seemed distracted. Maybe his handlers advised him:

- "Mr. President, you've already got a lead. Go into the Nickel Defense. You know, the prevent defense the pros use in football."
- President, "Yeah, but most of the time, the team with the ball still scores."
- Handlers, "But not enough to turn the game around."
- President, "We've got two more quarters to go! Why go into a prevent defense so early in the game? ...OK, have it your way."

Some observers were pleased with Romney's assertive stance (red opinion). Others thought he was not respectful of either Obama or the moderator (blue opinion). One of my colleagues, a debate coach in college, informed me a debate has rules that are followed by both parties. One sacrosanct protocol is the moderator is in complete charge. If so, last night's show-and-tell was not a debate. It was a structured in-your-face set of accusations.

Will Obama counter with a revamped offense? We'll see if his team overhauls their game plan for the second debate.

Claim and Counter-Claim

Obama made the claim that U.S. companies were moving themselves overseas to the detriment of the U.S. citizens and American economy. Romney stated quite explicitly that Obama was wrong. Romney's tone in his response reminded me of Al Gore's dismissal of Bush Jr.'s gaffes.

It turns out that Obama was correct. On pages 292-293 of *The Nearly Perfect Storm: An American Financial and Social Failure*, I document this situation. (If you want more details, go to the reference footnoted below.)

Below are direct quotes from the book. I have used bold type on passages that pertain specifically to last night's argument. I have some added comments to the book's text in brackets.

I am a neutral party to these debates. But this error needs to be brought to peoples' attention. I suspect MSNBC will highlight it, and FOX will ignore it.

I pick-up this discussion in Report 21, which was the last report in Part I of the book. (Parts are paraphrased to meld with this specific report.)

+++**Start of Text in book**+++

A law was passed in 2004 [a tax break] to encourage U.S. corporations to (1) bring foreign profits back home and (2) create more jobs.¹ The law required this money to be used **only** to stimulate job growth and other investments, but not for the multinational company to use it to reward employees or stockholders.

The law was supported by many businesses and Republicans who claimed the legislation would create several million jobs and add as much as \$1 trillion to the economy. However, a recent Senate panel study concluded this break did nothing to create jobs or increase investment. Instead, from 2004 to 2006:

- **Some firms moved operations overseas to take advantage of the tax break (by sending their profits back home). Very smart of them. The companies reduced their tax liabilities without changing much of anything. This switch of venue also led to the loss of jobs in the United States.**
- **The government required *no* documentation from a firm to prove the company was adhering to the law.**

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce takes issue with the Senate study, stating stock repurchases and dividend payouts indirectly boost consumer spending, which helps strengthen the economy and bolster employment.

But that is not what the law stipulated! These multinational companies, who are very large businesses, broke the law or at least (unethically) circumvented it. These large businesses were taxed **5.25 percent** on this [foreign-made] income, instead of the customary **35 percent**.

[Obama's team fumbled the ball---big time---on this one. They should correct this mistaken impression in the next debate.

+++**End of Text in book**+++

Other thoughts about this supposed gaffe:

- Obama made his statement about these overseas jobs based on the facts.
- Romney carried the day with his rebuttal, but his rebuttal was incorrect.
- Obama's staff should never have given him this supposed throw-away line, without at least giving him a one or two sentence backup. They should have known this claim was not a throw-away line, but a direct challenge to key aspects of Romney's philosophy.
- As it was, after Romney dismissed him and his assertion, Obama looked inept and foolish.

¹ Paul Davidson, "Study: Tax Break Didn't Create Jobs," *USA TODAY*, October 12, 2011, p. B1.

Bye Bye, Big Bird

This morning I watched recaps of this debate on TV. Two successive segments on CNN were devoted to Romney's promise to deprive PBS of government funding (15 percent of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting budget).

The reactions of the pundits were aligned 100 percent with which station they were affiliated. FOX: great idea. CNN: pros and cons. PBS: America's pre-school educational system would break-down.

I liked Romney's example. It was delivered light-heartedly, but his follow up to the quip was all but ignored. His point was to stop funding discretionary government programs by selling Treasury Bills to China, to stop going further into debt, to scale back government.

I am in agreement with his idea. I think the use of Big Bird served several purposes: It lightened the atmosphere. It showed Mitt's sense of humor. It showed his disdain for government spending, and maybe even PBS.

Liberals' thoughts: Picking on Big Bird while giving a huge segment of American business a free pass (the mammoth securities/derivatives industry, of which Bain Capital is a participant) is disingenuous. Bailing out Big Bird will not break America. It's a few million dollars. Bailing out Wall Street did not break America, but the spoon is being dipped repeatedly into America's bowl of debt. Not millions dollars; hundreds of trillions of dollars. Mitt's picking on what is mostly an icon among children seems disproportionate.

Conservatives' thoughts: Pile in on Mitt!

Anyway, I did not expect Romney to offer excuses for Uncle Sam's multi-trillion bailout of Big Bird...eh Big Companies. It's not in his cards. Besides, most reasonable people know the financial bailout was essential to the economy. Bailing out Big Bird is not.

Let's Lighten Up!

Like Mitt, I'm fond of PBS's Big Bird. I don't love Big Bird, as does Mitt. I don't know Jim Lehrer, so I don't know if I like him, as Matt claimed last night. Jim did seem a bit off-key after Mitt informed him he liked him, but he intended to can his ass if he became President.

In response to Mitt's promise to stop funding PBS with federal money, let's visit the PBS sound stage for Sesame Street. Look, Big Bird is composing a song!

"Bye Bye, Big Bird"

(Sung to the tune of "Bye Bye, Black Bird")

Strum, strum, strum...

Here I go,
flying low, with no more dough.
Bye bye, Big Bird.

Here I am,
One sad Sam. I'll be damn:
Big Bird got the big bird!

But this I know,
I'm full of woe
'cause I've lost my show!
Bye bye, Big Bird.

So, make my bed.
I'll hit the hay.
I've got nothing more to say.
Big Bird, bye bye.

Second Presidential Candidates Debate: The Blame Game

October 16, 2012

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. As mentioned earlier, I watched the first presidential debate and some of the vice-presidential debate. Tonight, I watched the second presidential debate.

This rematch resembled a People's Court session with the plaintiff and defendant exchanging barbs with each other. The debate moderator had a big challenge in controlling the two candidates, who did not have the presence of mind to *wait their turn* to perform their ritualistic attacks on the other party. It was as if they thought they would never get another chance to speak.

I thought it was a toss-up as to who won the debate. I'm listening to the news pundits as I write this sentence. Nothing new to report. Reds: Romney won. Blue: Obama won

We could dwell on tonight's debate, but that would be an exercise in redundancy as it has been amply dissected by the media. Let's go beyond the specifics of this debate and look at an underpinning of America's politics that is largely ignored.

In the three debates, have you noticed the number of times these men blamed each other or the other's party for the current ills of America? I lost count. Initially, Mitt was the plaintiff, and Barack was the defendant, with Mitt accusing Barack of four years of ineptitude. They also reversed roles, and Romney became the defendant, taken to task for his current platitudes vs. his past practices as a governor.

Much of this town hall argument focused on what happened in the past. During this campaign and during these debates, time and again Romney has blamed Obama for America's dangerous deficit. Time and again, Obama has said he did not create the mess to begin with. The Republicans blame the Democrats for doing bail-outs, yet most of the bail-out money was apportioned during George W. Bush's last term. In the past, the Democrats faulted the Republicans for their lax approach to security because 9/11 occurred while the Republicans were in office.

Now, the shoe is on the other foot. The Republicans claim the Democrats were to blame for the lack of security at the American Embassy in Libya, a hot issue these past few weeks and one leading to some nasty words tonight. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton informed us today that she took responsibility for this tragedy. She said the President could not possibly know the details of security protocols at each embassy. I agree. Nor could President Bush have known about the vulnerability of the locks on cockpit cabin doors.

Even if these men had been made aware of these admittedly dangerous situations, it is highly unlikely they could have taken actions to prevent the embassy attack or the 9/11 attacks for the following reasons:¹

¹ More Marines at this embassy? More secure doors? Smoke inhalation masks in everyone's desk drawers? Escape passages underneath the streets to the Canadian Embassy? The (Republican) critics will be coming out of the

Reason number one: The problems had not yet surfaced to a level that would have warranted the sounding of alarms. Maybe a few underlings were aware of the dangers, but their pleas remained beneath the radar. Certainly underneath the radar of Presidents.

Reason number two: Even if the problem had triggered alarms, it might have taken weeks, months, even years to fix it. Certainly, a notice could have brought in more Marines and State Department security personnel to the embassy. But a few score of armed men guarding a building against a rioting crowd of thousands? No, the problem goes much deeper than “Send in the Marines.”

The Lag Effect

Let’s use 9/11 to expand on this subject. In 2006 a bipartisan committee was created with the goal of determining how 9/11 came about. It is common knowledge that the Bush Administration preferred another mechanism besides a bipartisan committee. And for an obvious reason: 9/11 happened during the Bush watch.

Was George Jr. responsible for not having secure doors on the cockpits of commercial aircraft? Some say yes. After all, he was in office when the airplanes were hijacked. Of course, the answer is no but try telling that to Bush detractors. Is Obama responsible for the current deficit? Not by a long shot, but the Tea Party is up in arms over Barack’s spendthrift ways.

This notion of blame is inaccurate and unfair. It leads to the inability to analyze the facts. It leads to a dangerous game of, “it’s your fault and no one else.” The consequences of a prior party’s actions are ignored. The current occupant of the White House takes on the sins of the previous occupant(s).

We are caught up in blaming a current office holder for sins that have been accumulating for years, sometimes even decades. Here is an idea to illustrate this fantasy. I call it The Lag Effect:

A time lapse (called the lag window) between the occurrence of an action and when the consequences of the action show themselves:



Who Should We Blame?

The many factors allowing 9/11 to take place were not only the fault of the Bush Administration, but also the fault of Clinton and others that came before these men. Who knows? Maybe cracks in the 9/11 cement were appearing during George Washington's first term. But we stick the

woodwork tomorrow. Had a Red been in the White House, the Blues would be mounting a blame game plan of attack.

blame to any person who is in office at the time of the incident even if this person had nothing to do with the circumstances that led to the incident.

No question, the buck stops at the administration in office. And the press grants a newly elected administration a few months of reprieve (the "Honeymoon") to fix complex problems that have taken years to become problems. For example, the Department of Homeland Security was given a few *months* to fix *decades* of bureaucratic mutations and malfunctions.

Very generous. America's Dickens-like intelligence/security apparatus took over fifty years to create. Let's fix everything over a long weekend.

The problem is compounded because most of us want solutions to a problem as soon as the problem shows itself. It's built into our DNA. I call it The Immediacy Syndrome:

A desire for the immediate fulfillment of a wish or an immediate solution to a problem. Any delay toward satiation of the wish or solution to the problem creates an acute breakdown of the hedonistic areas in our brain.

Yes, we want the problem solved immediately. But the problem has been building up, little by little, for a long time and it might take an even longer time to fix it. Therefore, unless you and I are living in the fantasy world, the problem does not lend itself to neat, fast, Disneyesque solutions. So, what do we do? We bitch and gripe about just about everything around us.

It's strange. We have been conditioned to the folly of fixing the blame of failures on the wrong party.

Clinton and his administration did not institute proper FAA rules for securing doors on commercial airlines. This oversight was a major factor in the 9/11 tragedy, which occurred during the administration of Bush, Jr. And it was Bush who was attacked by the Democrats for his gross negligence. After all, he had been President for a few months. He should have had those doors fixed! Clinton did not do anything about this situation, but he was out of office when its ugly head raised itself. Out of sight, out of mind.

President Bush had to devote enormous pools of America's resources for the War on Terrorism. The defense budget went through the roof. In addition, the 2006-2008 financial meltdown happened during the Bush term. But this problem was also created by policies during the terms of *three* presidents including two Republicans and (in truth, to a lesser degree) one Democrat. Who's taking the heat for the deficit? The fourth President, Barack Obama.

The Reds blame the Blues. The Blues blame the Reds. Shielded behind the Lag Window, both colors hold themselves blameless.

Medicare and other so-called entitlement programs could bankrupt America. If this happens, who will be blamed? If a Republican is in office, the Democrats will blame him. If a Democrat is in office, the Republicans will blame him. And the American voter, becoming more aware of and attuned to this blame game, is further alienated from our Republic.

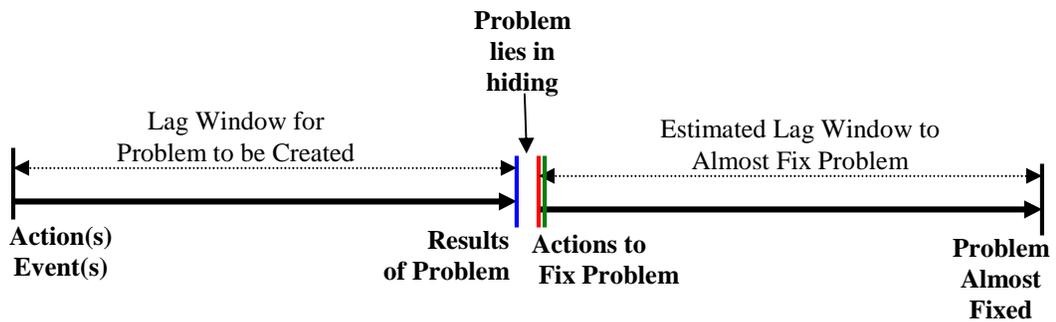
Yet if we citizens changed shoes with those to whom we toss out our daily invective, I wager you and I could not do much better. We are victims of the lag window and the associated blame game. I suspect it is part of human nature.

It's Ike's Fault!

The doors to airplane cockpits have been frail since cockpits had doors. Playing the blame game, let's fault George H. W. Bush, or Ronald Reagan. Let's especially blame Ike. After all, he should have known about mayhem prevention. Oh? In Ike's days, the "doors" were curtains? Never mind, he should have secured those curtains. Absurd? No more absurd than blaming Bush (for 9/11), and Obama (for America's Great Recession). Sure, we're joking here. But we cannot fix ourselves by blaming others.

Why We Are Never Satisfied With Our Government

Here is an illustration of The Lag Effect and The Immediacy Syndrome. It's somewhat complex, so I ask you to put away your crossword puzzle for a few seconds and look it over. It illustrates a major fault line in our society.



Legend:

- | Problem Reaches Fruition
- | Problem is Discovered
- | Citizens Demand Problem be Fixed Immediately

Crosswords on the table? TV volume down? Good.... Put away that Sudoku! This is serious stuff. Thanks, and here is a summary of the meaning of this chart:

As before, it takes a while for a problem to be created. In a way, we are blessed that a government bureaucracy is usually inept. It isn't capable of creating problems instantly.

At the blue timeline | the problem matures and is ready to, yes, cause a problem. In between the blue timeline | and the red timeline | no one notices the problem. Or just as often, the people who created the problem ignore it, hide it, or wish it will go away so they won't be blamed. However, these perpetrators may be out of office and working in wealthy consulting or lobbyist jobs to analyze the problems they themselves created. Also, for problems with a very long boiling point, the people may be dead. An ideal situation as they can't defend themselves.

Now it gets interesting. Someone or everyone discovers a problem exists as shown by the red line |. This revelation occurs in one of two ways: (a) A gradual recognition of the problem, or (b) A sudden recognition of the problem. Here is an example of each:

A Gradual Recognition of the Problem:

- A motorist is slowly conditioned to longer and longer rush hours because he chose to live in a different time zone than his office and the traffic between these two distant points is increasing exponentially. After years of lassitude and a slowly growing recognition of the problem, he comes to realize the problem and exclaims in a moment of clarity, "Goddam traffic! Why don't they fix the roads?" Mr. Motorist has forgotten he voted down the bonds ten years ago that would have created systems to reduce his time-in-car roughly to that of his time-in-bed.

A Sudden Recognition of the Problem:

- A bridge suddenly collapses during rush hour. Several vehicles plunge into a river or lodge themselves into the mud along the banks. Those passengers stuck in the mud bank are miffed because they can't get their windows rolled down. Those in the water are miffed because they can't get their windows rolled up. The bridge engineers erroneously assumed an upright structure, such as a bridge, would remain upright forever, impervious to the laws of rust and metal fatigue. But those tiny little bolts had been yes! exponentially weakening to suddenly snap.

Let's restrict ourselves to one example of each. But I'll wager you can come up with many others. I know I can, but reporting deadlines force me to segue back into the subject. Here we go: The green line | on the graph represents the time when citizens demand their government fix the problem. I have separated the red line | from the green line | with a small space. In fact, the two lines may represent the same timeline as: |, which means we demand solutions the very instant we discover we have a problem.

Should we curtail criticism of an Administration's policies and practices and the results of their actions? Of course not. But here's the rub: The pressure to "get the heat off" often leads a bureaucracy to take the easiest path toward a supposed solution. It leads to patches to the problem. Usually, the problem is "almost" but never fixed, which keeps the former politicians who created the problem busy as K Street consultants posing solutions to the problems they created while in office.

Yes, "almost." It may be that the problem is not solvable. Gradually, over the years, we have created patchworks of systems that are so complex and convoluted the problems they produce overwhelm our efforts to solve them. Examples: Our legal code; the tax laws; Medicare; enforcing a "do not call" law; boarding an airplane.

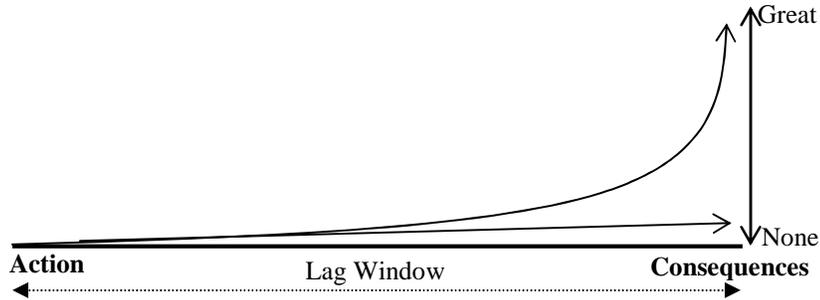
The Exponential Consequences of Simple Linear Actions

Depressing stuff, eh? Don't slay the messenger, just send me money. Anyway, the problem itself, compounding exponentially over decades, may indeed become insolvable. Nonetheless, a politician announces a fix---a tiny piece of silly putty in the wall of a Hoover-size dam---and

declares the problem fixed. Next reel! Turn the page! Switch the channel! "Dancing with the Stars" is on. Let's boogie out of our real world, it's just too hard to deal with.

I mentioned exponentiation. It's a big part of our discussion. And it makes the problems we discussed seem like cake walks. Here is a graphical and verbal definition of this phenomenon:

The Exponential Consequences Curve: *The consequences of an action in which the consequences are far greater (non-linear) than any one---besides doomsayers---predicted:*



Note: In many instances, this curve is associated with, unintended, as in The Unintended Exponential Consequences Curve.

The accumulating problems---piling up year-by-year---end up having a bigger impact than any of us could have predicted. Let's try some examples:

- My linear viewings of Maury Povich's TV shows (two) lead me to an exponential distaste for Maury Povich.
- The linear accretions of chicken waste in the Chesapeake Bay, resulting in a sudden appearance of mutant fish sporting lesions that make fisherman sick if the fishes' sores are touched.
- The linear partitioning of the Middle East (by those stalwarts of fair play, England and France) in the 20th century along lines based on surveyors' instruments instead of thousands of years of culture and religious heritage, resulting in an exponential rise of pissed-off folks who are not fond of having their tent divided by a longitude reading.
- The linear smoking of cigarettes, labeled as not a good idea for one's health, resulting in the smoker suddenly having trouble breathing,² because the smoker's lungs have been destroyed. Restitution is taken by suing the cigarette companies for the smokers' poor choice of oral palliatives.

OK, I'll stop. But you can give it a go yourself. Make it a parlor game! It's a lot of fun.

² "Sudden," in relation to the long time spent inhaling poison.

It's Not My Problem; It's My Grandchildren's Burden to Bear

As mentioned, The Exponential Consequences Curve often acts as a partner with The Lag Effect, which results in huge, non-linear problems being pushed off into future generations. Can you think of any?

Sidebar: Shave and Smile! You're Running for President

As a substitute for facts, we alter our opinions---and Gallup Polls gallop to yet another change---based on the personalities and faces of the candidates. Nixon had a 5 o'clock shadow. Many experts say he lost the election because the shadow made him look shady. Hmm. Reagan won elections because he was light-hearted and had stored funny one-liners from his days in Hollywood. Gore lost because of his condescension toward his opponent. Romney has been behind in the polls, largely because he has been seen as stiff and not very user friendly. Obama loses a lot of votes because of his skin color. Obama gains a lot of votes because of his skin color.

What do these physical and personality traits have to do with a politician's political philosophy and platform? Nothing. Certainly, personality is important to sway people here and there. But swaying with no common sense agenda does more harm than good.

Anyway, are you skeptical of my claims? Do your own survey of news media op-eds. You will find references to these soft features are way out of proportion to discussions about the candidate's core beliefs.

Back to the Presidential Debates

Ultimately, the debates last week and the debate tonight were mostly irrelevant because they were suffused with the blame game. They spent far too much time on what was, on what had happened, *but not on what will be done in the future.*

Solution?

I bring up the problem, so do I have a solution? As your reporter, I do not. My job is to report a problem, not solve it. But as a citizen I do:

In these three debates, the four men were impressively articulate about the facts reflecting what had happened in the past and what was happening in the present. I could have sworn I was watching a variation of the Jeopardy show.

But the amount of time (and facts) devoted to what would be done in the future was brief or the facts were so vague they could not be evaluated.

I believe the American public is far less interested in what a person did than what the person intends to do. I recognize I am on thin ice with this statement. After all, why should the politician change his course? Nonetheless, I remain convinced that the most listened-to parts of a political campaign are those dealing with campaign promises. Whether they come true or not, these commitments are what the average citizen cares about.

As some examples of these points, the citizen wants less of “what was before I *was* there” and more of “what I will do when I *am* there.” Not vague generalities (“I’ll reduce Medicare.”...“I’ll expand Medicare.”). But specifics (I’ll reduce co-payment reimbursements by 20%.”...“I’ll decrease Medicare premium payments by 20%.)

If these candidates would be as detailed about their proposals for the future as they are of their assessments of the past, we voters would pay more attention to core issues and less on 5 o’clock shadows.

So, a presidential debate would have the moderator require the combatant present a brief excoriation of his opponent’s past performances. But the majority of the time would be spent on the examination of the details each candidate would propose for the future.

Now, some salt on the wound. I must also offer that politicians have learned if they get down to specifics, they will lose more votes than they gain. That is one reason they stay general and vague. That is also why we voters, perplexed and ultimately bored with this vagueness, tend to look for ways to stay awake during a debate. We check out their sweaty brows and swarthy looking faces.

Not a happy ending. I proposed a solution and then explained why it won’t work.

So, let me hear about your ideas. I’ll make a promise, if they are good ones and found to work, I’ll take the credit. If they stink, well...you know...the blame game.

Third Presidential Candidates Debate

October 23, 2012

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Thank you for the feedback on the second debate. It appears we are in agreement about the Blame Game. This report offers a few thoughts on the third presidential debate, which took place last night.

Once again, I was impressed with the candidates' abilities to remember many sound bites. I agreed with much of what was said. They also agreed with what was said, even claims from the other candidate. Regardless of this heated debate, they do not have major issues on foreign policy about which they disagree.

I was put off by Obama's petty interruptions and his sarcastic comments that were directed toward Romney. Some came across as personal. I admired the way Romney remarked about these "attacks." I thought Obama's condescending remarks about aircraft carriers and submarines were below the belt. The comments were petty and offensive to Mr. Romney and the audience.

Yes, I know the important thing is policy and not personality. But his behavior toward his opponent left a bad taste in my mouth. Romney handled it with dignity.

At times, *both* men resembled the people on the Sunday morning talk show, "The McLaughlin Group." They had to get it off their chests! In the following scenario, I substitute the candidates' names with names Alpha and Bravo. They are interchangeable.

- Candidate Alpha: He utters Assertion One by using Sound Bite A. (This sound bite has been drilled into his head by his drill team.)
- Candidate Bravo: He interrupts, because his opponent has uttered a sound bite to which he can counter with Assertion Two, using Sound Bite B. (Also drilled into his head by the other drill team.)
- Strictly speaking, Assertion Two, while called an assertion, is actually a counter assertion.¹
- Both candidates realize their respective opponent has uttered an assertion to which they can respond with Assertion Three and Assertion Four using Sound Bite C and Sound Bite D respectively.
- Damn! They also know they must get these assertions and counter assertions orally documented *immediately*. If they wait, the window of opportunity for displaying the knowledge and wisdom of the assertion, counter assertions, and related sound bites will be lost to future generations.
- So they engage in a two-way exchange of assertions and counter assertions. Their sound bites cross over as vocal gibberish, and are lost to future generations.
- But they got them off their chests.

Later, in a post-debate assessment meeting of each candidate and his drill team:

¹ The beauty of politicians' sound bites is their interchangeability. Depending on the circumstances of which candidate is on the offensive or defensive line of scrimmage, they can be either an assertion or a counter assertion.

- “Mr. President/Mr. Governor, well done! You got-in thirty sound bite/assertions.”
- “How many did my opponent get in?”
-Silence...then, “He had thirty-one, but some of his assertions were the same as yours--- just couched in different adjectives. But more than that, your opponent’s face looked a bit shiny.”
- “Sweat, huh?”
- “Yes sir. His glossy brow more than makes up for that one assertion!”

Don’t think so? Send me reasons for my view being inaccurate. I’ll post it on my blog under naïve.com.

A few more observations:

- Long time readers of these reports know I disagree with America’s taking up Israel as its 53rd state. It has resulted in (almost) our entire Middle East strategy being dictated by this one country. I was not adamant on this issue until it became clear that Israel intended (intends) to annex land to which it has no legal or moral claim and is in the process of becoming a cultural and religious apartheid nation. Last night’s debate had Israel mentioned twenty-two times by the two men. But I’m beating a dead horse here. Opinions are made up, and cast in stone. My views will not put one chip in this granite. To continue:
- At last, two opposing candidates who agree that in fighting terrorism America cannot, as Romney said, “Kill our way out of this mess.” They both said our country should offer more beans and bombast (public relations...aka propaganda) and fewer bombs. I wrote about this subject in “We Face Two Wars.” They agreed that in the end, the Muslim world has to resolve this problem on its own.
- Also, as I have claimed in many reports, Romney said the emphasis in fighting terrorism must be on a) economic development, b) better education, c) gender equality, and d) respect for the rule of law. Obama did not counter with a sound bite. Who could? It’s common sense.

We should be thankful both candidates described China as being an economic adversary, as well as a trading partner, and not a country rushing to displace America’s role as the World’s Policeman.

Left unsaid about China: You don’t diss your creditors.

If China is smart, all this country needs to do is to wait for our stalemated political process to continue to lead America down the path to financial and economic irrelevance. We will have to unplug the Department of Defense in order to pay for keeping grandma’s plug plugged in.

Wrapping It Up

Obama and the Democrats must accept that Medicare and Medicaid services must be cut. They must accept that government must be down-scaled. Romney and the Republicans must accept that additional revenue is part of the process.

The answers to our problems are simple. Our will to implement them is another matter.

But let's keep one thing in mind. At the end of the debate last night, there were handshakes between the two opponents. No bombs, guns, or a *coup*.

Of course, many countries now have this benign political climate. But look back one-hundred years. In 1912, few countries exchanged regimes peacefully, unless they were oligarchies to begin with. Look back two-hundred years. In 1812, even the (now) socialistic European countries were mostly governed by dictatorships, clothed in the robes of family dynasties.

America needs to stay its path of knowing, in the long run, its way of governance works. It should not dictate this way to anyone else. It does not have to. Time is on America's side. But only if America fixes its finances, Congress once again accepts the notion of compromise as a pragmatic way to govern, and we citizens go about healing ourselves before we take on the (often impossible) job of healing others. I am not suggesting an isolationist policy. I am suggesting pragmatic, self-interest restraint.

For this specific topic, in spite of their pontifications, Obama and Romney are pragmatists. If either man can somehow guide the legislative branch away from its ideological and associated finance-based self-aggrandizements, we will get through their four years relatively unscathed.