

# Romney/GOP Play Good Cop, Bad Cop

**Exclusive:** On Nov. 6, the American people will face a choice, not just between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, but whether they will reward the Republican Party for its four years of obstructionism or whether they will demand that the GOP return to its more responsible past, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

As Election 2012 nears, the Republican Party is cashing in on a ruthless strategy of “good cop, bad cop” having used harsh obstructionism in Congress to keep Americans suffering under high unemployment for four years, the GOP now brings in a smiling Mitt Romney to offer some hope, if only the nation does what the GOP says.

Romney’s closing argument for his election as President of the United States has been that the only way for Americans to stop the pain from Republican obstruction is to surrender to total Republican control. The “good cop” message is: If you don’t sign here on Nov. 6, the bad cop will have to return and make your next four years miserable, too.

And it seems the strategy is working. For instance, the Des Moines Register justified its endorsement of Mitt Romney on the grounds that America needs a President who can pull “the economy out of the doldrums” and work on other national problems “in a bipartisan manner that the country demands.”

The newspaper’s editorial board then poses the question: “Which candidate could forge the compromises in Congress to achieve these goals? When the question is framed in those terms, Mitt Romney emerges the stronger candidate.”

The editorial notes that “one of the biggest obstacles either candidate faces is partisan gridlock in Congress. It appears unlikely either party will have enough votes to have its own way without bringing over members from across the aisle.

“Early in his administration, President Obama reached out to Republicans but was rebuffed. Since then, he has abandoned the effort, and the partisan divide has hardened. That has hampered not only the economy, but the entire country. We remain a nation of red states and blue states.

“Voters should give Mitt Romney a chance to correct the nation’s fiscal course and to implode the partisan gridlock that has shackled Washington and the rest of America, with the understanding that he would face the same assessment in four years if he does not succeed.”

## **Ignoring Romney's Positions**

Curiously, the Des Moines Register offers little assessment of why Romney's economic policy prescriptions, which include continuing George W. Bush's tax cuts and tacking on a new 20 percent across-the-board tax cut, would do anything to create jobs or reduce the federal deficit. Romney also wants to add \$2 trillion more in military spending.

Nor did the editorial address other pressing issues, like Romney's promise to scrap Obama's new regulations of the health-care and financial industries, or Romney's disdain for action on global warming. In his speech at the Republican National Convention, Romney made a punch line out of Obama's rhetoric about reversing the rise of the seas.

The newspaper did express hope that Romney would not implement Republican plans for rolling back progress on the rights of gays and women. But there is little reason to believe that a federal government under total or near-total Republican control would not fulfill longstanding promises to its right-wing base, either through legislation or through the appointment of more reactionary justices to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Indeed, the Des Moines Register's editorial had the feel of a hostage video from a desperate captive who is trying to bond with the least abusive of his tormentors. Staring into the camera, the victim says: If you just pay the ransom and do what they say, I'm sure everything will work out.

But the editorial's most troubling failure was its unwillingness to recognize that the Republican behavior over the past four years represents a dangerous development in the history of the U.S. democratic Republic. If one party is rewarded for political nihilism, the logic is that nihilism will become the wave of the future.

Or perhaps you will get permanent Republican control of the U.S. government, what political operative Karl Rove has set as his most cherished goal. That would come because any future Democratic president could expect the same GOP scorched-earth response that confronted Obama and thus cowardly people like the editors of the Des Moines Register would counsel against bringing on such nastiness again.

In that view, the only way to avoid the GOP's wrath is to surrender to Republican rule, with the presumption that the Democrats, operating in a permanent minority status, would not dare engage in similar obstructionist tactics.

## **An Abusive Relationship**

I have sometimes compared the current relationship between the Republicans and the Democrats to an abusive husband and an abused wife. The Republican husband comes home in a fury, roughs up the wife and kids, and trashes the house, before passing out on the couch. The Democratic wife then tries to tidy up the place and conceal the bruises before the husband awakes in another bad mood.

In that metaphor, the editors of the Des Moines Register and similar analysts play the role of the enabling family member who counsels the wife to keep quiet and accommodate the husband's demands "for the good of the family," no matter how outrageous those demands might be.

What the newspaper's editors fail to recognize or they have chosen to ignore is that the Republican Party has undergone a troubling transformation over the past several decades, from the generally responsible business-oriented party of Dwight Eisenhower to a party that mixes the anti-democratic tactics of Richard Nixon, with the anti-government philosophy of Ronald Reagan, the know-nothingism of George W. Bush and the extremism of the Tea Party.

For most of those decades, the Washington Establishment also averted its eyes from this emerging reality. Only recently have some mainstream commentators faced up to the dangerous truth.

For instance, last April, two committed centrists, Thomas E. Mann of the Brookings Institution and Norman J. Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute, penned a Washington Post Outlook article entitled "Let's just say it: the Republicans are the problem":

"In our past writings, we have criticized both parties when we believed it was warranted. Today, however, we have no choice but to acknowledge that the core of the problem lies with the Republican Party.

"The GOP has become an insurgent outlier in American politics. It is ideologically extreme; scornful of compromise; unmoved by conventional understanding of facts, evidence and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition."

The Des Moines Register's editorial chooses to be blind to this reality, offering only a glancing acknowledgement that Obama did try to reach out to the Republicans in his early months in office.

The point of the Republican rejection wasn't that Obama wasn't persistent enough in his outreach; it was that GOP leaders had plotted a strategy from the first day of Obama's presidency that they would sabotage his administration and clear the way for a Republican to reclaim the White House in 2012.

That strategy was similar to something the CIA might do against a targeted foreign country, i.e. make the economy scream and then exploit the discontent to destabilize the nation's leadership. Only this time, it was one of America's two major parties targeting the United States.

What the Des Moines Register's editors and similar opinion-shapers are telling the American people is that they must succumb to this kind of political terrorism. There is, of course, another alternative: to stand up to the GOP bullies and punish their party until it rebuilds itself as something that Eisenhower might recognize.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).**

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As always, thanks for your support.

Robert Parry

**Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 as the Internet's first investigative magazine. He saw it as a way to combine modern technology and old-fashioned journalism to counter the increasing triviality of the mainstream U.S. news media.**

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