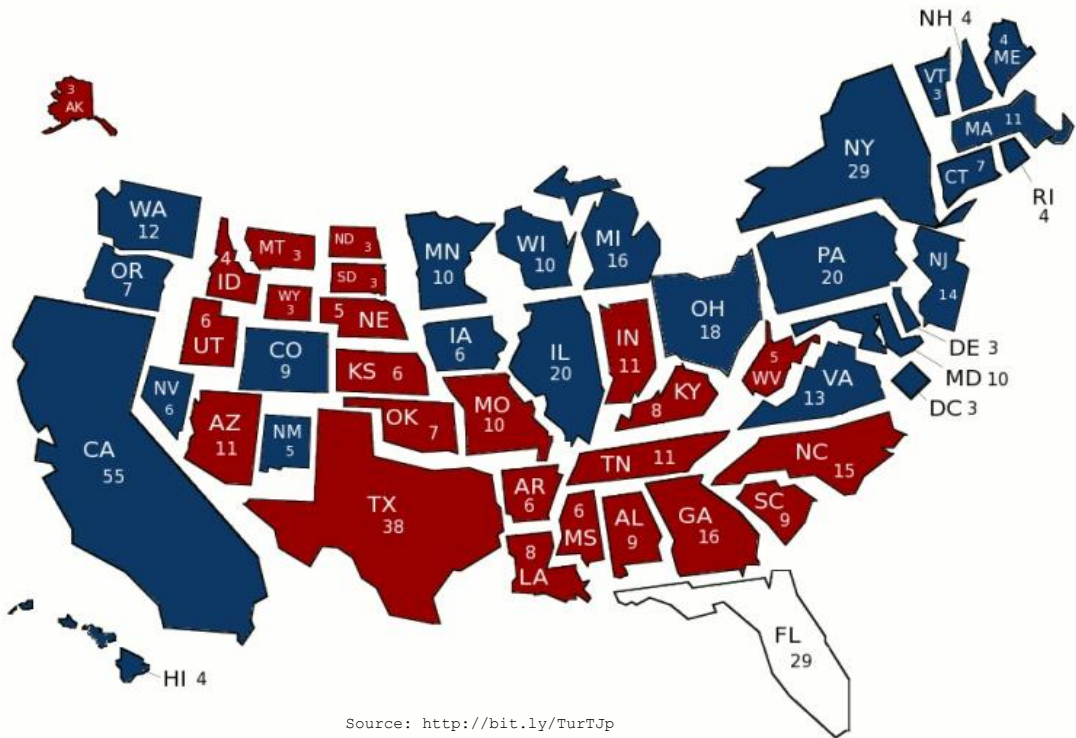


A Change in Washington?

Net result: status quo, no change.

[Johan Galtung](#)

1



Johan Galtung: A CHANGE IN WASHINGTON? 06-12-2012

Washington, Election Night: OK, one of them won even if the real winners as usual were the non-voters, for whatever reason; men more than women. At about 23:15 Obama passed the magic 50%, not of the popular votes but for the electoral college, with 302-206 well above 270 and it turned into a landslide. Net result: status quo, no change.

2 The media did their best to make the presidential election look important, being the pinnacle, the altar on which democracy is built. Some democracy. Bad enough with a Supreme Court washing the process in six billion dollars as one more freedom of expression like talking words; any kind of words, libelous, often neither true nor relevant. Stupid TV spots. But many issues were somehow articulated, there were real disagreements, there was some kind of rhetorical left-right.

However, the real problem lies somewhere else, not in what was said but in what was not. The list is long. Washington Post on Election Day (Manuel Roig-Fanza): "A tough day for causes without a candidate". The article mentions climate change, gun control, immigration as issues not picked up, neither by the party conventions, nor in the debates. But there are many more issues; and they are among the most pressing problems confronting the country.

Two major lobbies advocating use of force were left untouched; the National Rifle Association, NRA, for violence in the USA, and the American-Israeli Political Action

Committee, AIPAC, for violence abroad. They both exercise power through their impact on the media, denying critical politicians access to political power, thereby removing obstacles to violence. Press campaigns, gerrymandering (like for Dennis J. Kucinich), reduce fatally the political spectrum in Congress and elsewhere. Both candidates knew that to take them on would be as suicidal for themselves as the lobbies are inside the country, through massive murders at home and anti-Muslim wars abroad.

3

Foreign policy was actually twisted in the debates to economic relations with China, trying to sound tough. The fact of the matter is that the US majority cannot live without affordable Chinese goods with adequate quality/price ratios. Unless --a big unless-- the USA restructures its economy from below, with cooperatives and self-employment, activating the countryside and the local communities with numerous small enterprises focused on basic needs, food above all, housing and clothing, health and education, direct from producers to consumers. No country in the world has a population so creative and cooperative; but the blossoming Occupy Movement has so far limited itself to occupation and critique, not to constructive action.

They left untouched the basic change in the world: the US grip on elites in other countries is loosening, in Latin America, even Africa, in the Arab awakening. Instead they recited the "largest economy in the world" (EU, not only the euro-zone, is bigger, and China will overtake the USA soon) and the "strongest military power in the world" (losing Vietnam-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iraq-Yemen-Somalia-Sudan is a

strange concept of "strongest"). Truth might have liberated the USA rather than catching up in disagreeable, repressive ways.

Climate change. The USA is dragging their feet, delaying action anywhere in international fora. Not the candidates but Nature, in the shape of Sandy talked; a brutal reminder of climate reality, another now taking shape. How much is man-made is uncertain but the change is certain enough. And the self-proclaimed world leader does not lead.

Then, incredible: 16% in misery with hunger and 1% in opulence, feeding on speculation, were drowned in glib talk about the "middle class". Yes, they are large, and stagnant. But far from 100%.

4

Neither candidate had answers, possibly agreeing to be silent. The USA needs desperately more parties, less afraid of truth as they will not win anyhow, for democratic transparency, and open dialogue.

Does the election make a difference? What **new** will the second Obama term bring? Obama said in his victory speech that he will focus on deficit, the taxation system, and immigration. None of the above. In foreign policy Romney, like Bush, might have been more reckless, accelerating the fall of the empire. Obama, like Clinton, is better informed, more sophisticated, holding up the fall a little longer. And democrats are more inclined to do what Israel wants; Christian Zionists wanting to accelerate the return of Messiah playing a role.

Obamacare will continue, whatever its worth given the rise in costs for any medical care--possibly because the "state will pay".

On January 1 2013 budget deficit reduction strikes, according to the Congress consensus, with major "austerity" for those who can least afford it, touching the military gently. Misery will accelerate and so may military deployment and wars the Obama way, drones and SEALs, extrajudicial execution--Obama repeatedly boasted killing Osama (with no evidence that he masterminded 9/11). Imagine a Politburo committee in China studying photos to decide whom to kill abroad for anti-Chinese activity or threat to China's security. Or China arming Cuba and Haiti, as close to the USA as Taiwan to China, to the teeth; with a fleet cruising in the Caribbean. Too asymmetric to stand.

5

But Obama will play "I am above the parties uniting the nation". In his first term he was leaning over backward to the Republicans and was badly punished mid-term; this time that makes Romney a de facto co-president. The Dodd-Frank finance economy reforms will be very bland, Wall Street will by and large continue its credit swaps and other lethal games. The rich may be taxed and may find more loopholes including settling abroad. Like the French super-rich in London?

Is US democracy a two-party system becoming a one-party state? If so other countries beware. Do not imitate. Democracy is more than elections. It is also transparency and dialogue. For real change.