

The X Factor(s)!

☒ A lot of my conservative friends are convinced that Mitt Romney is going to win come November. More than a few think he's going to win big. Optimism is a good thing, and I hope it's based on something more than wishful thinking.

You can't tell much from the polls. It's too early for that. Besides, one poll may say Romney is leading, then the next day another poll comes out and that one has the president heading for re-election.

At this point, the only thing we know for sure is that we don't know very much for sure. But I've compiled a short list – only 3 items are on it – of X Factors that could affect the election, if they pop up between now and Election Day. Here they are

1. The October (or maybe September) Surprise

You may have seen the TV ad Romney is running that says if he's elected, on his first day in office, he'll green light the FX pipeline project that the president has put on hold – and that, the ad says would create thousands of jobs for American workers.

But what if President Obama pulls a September or October surprise and approves the pipeline first? What if whoever's in charge of these things, changes the route by a foot and a half in an attempt to appease the environmentalists, and the president says, "Now I'm OK with this, let's move ahead."

Sure the green crowd wouldn't like it, but by the time blue collar workers start laying pipe, the enviros will already have written checks to Mr. Obama's re-election campaign – and then where will they go? To Romney. I don't think so.

And yes, there's a risk that the raw cynicism of the move

might mean that some on the Left would sit out the election. But the president would likely win over lots of independents, who at the moment can't figure out why he hasn't already approved the pipeline project.

This alone wouldn't spell victory for Barack Obama, but it could help him – a lot.

2. The Sister Souljah Moment

For those of you too young to remember Sister Souljah, she was a black hip-hop artist and author some 20 years who didn't like white people. In the spring of 1992 Sister Souljah said in an interview: "If black people kill black people every day, why not have a week and kill white people." As if that wasn't bad enough, she also said this in the music video of her song "The Final Solution: Slavery's back in Effect": If there are any good white people, I haven't met them."

Bill Clinton was running for president at the time, and while giving a speech to Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition he took a shot at Sister Souljah – right there in front of a black audience. Clinton said, "If you took the words 'white' and 'black' and you reversed them, you might think David Duke was giving the speech."

Clinton looked tough. He conveyed the outrage of ordinary Americans. And so the "Sister Souljah Moment" was born.

It could happen again. Barack Obama would throw anybody under the bus in order to win re-election. So it's not hard to imagine that if some prominent liberal loudmouth – even one prominently known for his support of the president – spouted off in a way that was especially dumb, you could see President Obama jumping ugly all over his loyal fan – and in doing so, win lots of friends among independents and undecideds.

That alone wouldn't guarantee re-election, either. But I think # 3 would.

3. The Nuclear Option

President Obama dumps Joe Biden and puts Hillary on the ticket. I shudder to think that it might actually happen.

Nobody likes Biden and lots of independents and lots of women like Hillary. Would such a move late in the game look desperate? Maybe. But so what? The upside is far, far greater than the downside. This would be a real game changer.

To a large extent, it's still the economy stupid. And if it doesn't get a lot better -real soon, this clearly would be a problem for the president. But there's always the chance that an X Factor will unexpectedly pop up and cause great turmoil.

This year there may even be 3 X Factors.