

What Would Another Attack Do To This Country?

☒ How would the American people react to another major attack on our country? The conventional wisdom is that we would all put aside our differences and rally around our country's leadership, like we did after 9/11. At least, that's the consensus that news analysts come to whenever the topic arises in panel discussions.

It's a reasonable presumption to make. A hopeful one, for sure. But I have to wonder whether or not it would actually be the case. After all, we're just not the same country that we were twelve years ago.

In the months preceding 9/11, we were pretty content as a nation. Our economy was in relatively decent shape, Republicans and Democrats were finding common ground on education reform, and the biggest news story of the day was the speculation surrounding who actress Jennifer Lopez was dating.

When the attacks came, Americans were struck with shock, fear, and a lack of understanding of who our attacker was. Very few of us had ever heard of Bin Laden or Al Qaeda, or realized just how despised we were in certain parts of the world. Because of this, it was easy to put our trust and faith in our country's leaders who were tasked with protecting us from follow-up attacks and seeking justice for the thousands we lost. To our leaders' credit, they momentarily removed their political hats and rose to the occasion. They weren't looking for someone to assign blame to for the attacks. They recognized the importance of coming together, for the sake of the country, to deal with the problem. And the public followed their lead.

Today is different. For people like me, 9/11 doesn't seem like it was all that long ago. Yet so much has happened since then.

Many years of a highly politicized war on terror spawned an era of angry finger-pointing, hyper-partisanship, and a malicious media culture that deeply divided this nation.

Things didn't get better after George W. Bush left office.

Our current president, who rode into power on promises of healing and unification, has instead gone to great lengths to drive the wedge of division deeper into the heart of our country. The Obama administration has turned slander and vilification into an art-form, obsessed with pursuing *social-justice*, and punishing their political opposition rather than working with them to deal with the severe challenges our country faces. The result has been an embittered nation – one that has been divided and disillusioned along the lines of social-class, race, and gender.

This political culture has led to the public being less trusting of our government than ever before. Conspiracy theories are running rampant, and many people feel as though their rights are quickly being peeled away while opportunistic politicians insist that it's all being done *for the greater good*.

We have a national media who most people believe is dishonest, is in the tank for the president, and is actively pushing a progressive agenda.

We're watching our economic future collapsing under the weight of unsustainable spending from a government, already enormous in size, whose leaders would rather demagogue issues than ensure our children have the same opportunities in life that we've had.

Many of us distress that there's no longer a will for dealing with foreign threats. We're war-fatigued. We're no longer

feared by other countries. Our operations in the Middle East have proven costly in both blood and treasure, and there is a growing isolationist sentiment, especially in conservative circles. Some of us question whether or not the battle against radical Islam is still worth fighting, while others are convinced that our operations abroad are making us less safe. We have a president who has never bothered to offer a bold defense of our efforts in Afghanistan, but *has* demonstrated a willingness to cover up a terrorist attack in Libya that took the lives of four American patriots.

For supporters of the president, it's the other side of the aisle that's tearing the country apart. They've been convinced by the Democratic party and the media that it's those dirty racists in the Republican party who are bringing down the country because they only care about rich people, and despise the weak and the helpless in our society.

Right now, it's difficult to identify *any* area of our government that Americans feel they can place trust or faith in. There's little hope for strong leadership because polarity is now the winning formula for winning elections and moving forward on agendas.

After the unity I witnessed in the wake of September 11th, 2001, I never thought our country would look like it does now, just over a decade later. Back then, there was an understanding that it was only a matter of time before our country was attacked again... And when that day came, we would face that challenge together as Americans.

But now, I just don't know... And that bothers me.

If another successful attack is pulled off in our country (God forbid), I'm concerned that our current climate of division and weak leadership would not guide us back to cohesion. I'm concerned that the act would immediately become politicized, public unrest would overflow, and an unprecedented level of

chaotic dysfunction would ensue because any remaining confidence in our government could very well evaporate.

As we've seen with the economy and our national debt, our top leaders just don't have it in them to deal with a crisis anymore. We're not even at a point right now where there's a consensus that nearly \$17 trillion in national debt is a bad thing, and that alone should terrify us all.

In the face of a major attack on our country, we would need a real leader. But right now, we're led by a man who has neither the integrity nor the maturity to face serious challenges head-on. We're led by a man whose inclination is to run away from *big boy* problems, find a scapegoat to assign blame to, and carry on with his own agenda.

For these reasons, I fear another attack would not serve as a rallying cry, but rather as the straw that broke the camel's back as far as the American psyche is concerned. I don't see how a president who has spent his time in office alienating half of the country is going to be able to suddenly pull people together. And one has to wonder if he would even try. Judging by his track record, who's to say he wouldn't blame an attack on sequestration cuts to national security spending, or find some other creative method of painting blood on the hands of congressional Republicans?

I worry about this kind of thing because the solvency of America is on the brink, and not just economically. Our country is so weak and divided right now that we could just be one more catastrophe away from completely losing our grip and our identity.

For the sake of us all, let's hope it's not a scenario we'll have to contend with.

Yes, Obama's the Great Pretender

☒ Let's pretend just for a moment that the state of our country's economic situation is exactly how President Obama describes it. Let's pretend that the \$5 trillion dollars plus added to our national debt since the day he took office really was unavoidable and was the amount required to save the country from a second great depression. Let's pretend that unless we continue to keep spending more and more (currently each newborn baby in the United States owes \$50,000 and that amount is rising quickly), our economy will never fully recover. Let's pretend that gas prices really are beyond the president's control and that every cent of the 83% increase that has taken place since he was sworn in to the presidency is in no way his fault. Let's pretend that an 8.3% unemployment rate really is a promising number, despite the workforce participation rate being at an all-time low. Let's pretend that rising healthcare costs have nothing to do with the implementation of Obamacare. Let's pretend that the credit downgrade of our country really was politically motivated and doesn't reflect at all the credibility of our nation to pay back what we owe. Let's pretend that Paul Ryan's plans to fix our safety-net programs and balance the budget really are too draconian to implement. Hell, let's go as far as pretending that every single problem going on in this country right now was directly caused by George W. Bush and the Republican party.

For the sake of the argument, let's just go ahead and cede all of those explanations for why none of these problems are our president's fault.

With that in mind, let's ask a simple and logical question that I would hope every honest American would feel compelled to ask: What are Obama's plans to fix these problems?

After all, we vote presidents into office to fix problems, don't we? We don't just expect them to assign blame for current challenges and spend the rest of their term delivering speeches and attending fundraisers, right?

Now, I will give Obama credit for at least *talking* about fixing these problems. He hasn't completely ignored their existence. He's delivered eloquent speeches where he's framed these problems and expressed a desire to resolve them in front of cameras and cheering, enthusiastic supporters. And let's be honest... he looks good giving those speeches. With his shirt-sleeves rolled up, his dramatic pauses, and that powerful voice of his, he at least *appears* to be serious about wanting to fix them. On presentation alone, he delivers verbiage that rivals that of Bill Pullman, Morgan Freeman, and other Hollywood actors who have portrayed presidents on film. It's the primary reason his personal popularity ratings have remained consistently high.

Still, it seems reasonable to expect that Americans would believe they deserve more. You'd think that the electorate wouldn't be content with a president who offered endless pillow-talk, but no serious solutions to fix such problems. By *serious*, I'm not talking about ideas that meet some sort of conservative litmus test that would wow people like me. I'm not setting the bar that high. I'm merely talking about solutions that have some sort of plausibility behind them. I'm talking about coherent solutions that have some sort of fathomable chance of actually working.

If the problem-solving debates in our country were about opposing, realistic visions of how to best address difficult dilemmas, we could at least rest assured that our leaders were taking our challenges seriously. The truth, however, is that

the president has offered nothing but pretend solutions to deal with very real problems. That statement's not a partisan assessment on my part. It's the assessment of any honest observer or number-cruncher who checks their ideology at the door.

When it comes to cutting the deficit, Obama has built an entire social narrative around the idea of increasing taxes on the rich as a solution. As the CBO and numerous economists have pointed out, you could tax all of these people at 100% and *still* not put a dent in our national debt. It's a pretend solution.

When it comes to high gas prices, Obama's answer is alternative energy which always sounds good but its practicality exists largely in theory. He mocks Republicans for having the gall to suggest that we increase domestic drilling to make our country less reliant on oil coming from volatile regions of the world. Then, with a straight face, he endorses the idea of converting algae into fuel. Yes, algae. At this point, I half expect him to suggest we harness the power of rainbows for energy. More pretend solutions.

Obama's pretend solution to deal with expensive healthcare has unfortunately already been signed into law. The Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare) has increased healthcare premiums (which the president said would not happen) by a national average of 9% in just a year and is on track to double within ten years. Obamacare is now projected to add hundreds of billions to the deficit (the president said it would actually cut the deficit), many people have been yanked off of their insurance plans (which the president said would not happen), and the law itself does absolutely nothing to actually bring down the cost of healthcare services (which was the entire stated point of reforming the system). It was a pretend solution laced with pretend benefits, but came at a very real and substantial cost.

Obama proposes federal annual budgets that are so nonsensical and ridiculous that he can't get a single member of his own political party to vote for them. Think about that for a minute... The current class of Democrats in congress is made up of some of the most liberal, big-spending elected leaders in our nation's history, and the president's budgets are too expensive even for them!

To grow the economy, Obama proposes infrastructure spending such as light rail systems (which we have no money to pay for) that receive a mountain of press coverage for a couple of days before they're never spoken of again and never revisited by the media.

Renewing the payroll tax cut to stimulate the economy is a pretend solution. It didn't work the first time around and just digs a deeper hole for the Social Security trust fund. Yet, our president doubled down on failure (like he often does) for the sole purpose of positioning himself politically.

I could go on and on with more examples, but you hopefully see my point. What we've seen for the last three years is a pretend leader who offers pretend solutions. The media has acted like a dream-team of defense attorneys who diligently use every tool at their disposal to protect their client (who they know is guilty as hell). They lend credence to his audacious claims. They distract the jury from opposing arguments and evidence. They play off people's emotions rather than letting them judge the president's ideas based on the facts.

With today's media as the messenger, there's little hope of the electorate getting a clear picture of the absurdity behind Obama's proposed solutions. That's a reality I *wish* was pretend. The media's not getting any more reputable as time goes on, so if voters aren't intellectually curious enough to research the content of our president's lip service, they'll most likely re-elect *Hope and Change*. And I can't pretend,

even for a second, that this country can take another four years of that.