

The Evolution of 'Extremism' in the Era of Obama

☒ One doesn't have to look all that far to find proof of the gross hypocrisy that has come out of Washington over the past five years. As conservatives like to point out, the words spoken by U.S. Senator Barack Obama and other top Democrats during the Bush era are often diametrically opposed to the things these same people say today.

Some of the inconsistencies truly are audacious, especially in the case of President Obama. It's tough to imagine that any other president wouldn't be haunted with such blaring deviations in rhetoric and policy throughout his or her time in office. But as we all know, no other president has enjoyed the kind of fawning adoration from the media that our current one does. And that's really the reason he can get away with it.

What I find particularly interesting, beyond just the hypocrisy, is the political culture we've found ourselves in when it comes to the rhetoric we now hear used by our Democratic politicians (and the media alike) when attacking the opposition party.

"Extreme" is the winning term that liberals have used to describe and successfully marginalize those *defiant conservatives* who have been a consistent thorn in the side of President Obama's vision for the country.

The Democrats' dedication to using the term at every given opportunity, along with the media's constant drumbeat of the narrative, has indeed taken its toll on the Republican party and conservatives alike because the label has engrained itself into the minds of mainstream America.

Now, I'm sure there are many people who would argue that

conservative groups like the Tea Party have *earned* their “extreme” mantra, and they’re sure to give me examples of why. But I would ask those people to question why it is that viewpoints and actions that weren’t at all considered to be extreme five years ago are considered to be completely *over the top* today.

I’ll give you a few examples:

Ring the panic bell on our national debt

We’ve all seen the videos of Barack Obama during the presidential campaign in 2008 speaking to audiences about what he portrayed to be a *very serious* problem for our country at the time: The size of our national debt.

Here’s a partial transcript from one of those speeches:

“The problem is, is that the way Bush has done it over the last eight years is to take out a credit card from the Bank of China in the name of our children, driving up our national debt from \$5 trillion dollars for the first 42 presidents – number 43 added \$4 trillion dollars by his lonesome, so that we now have over \$9 trillion dollars of debt that we are going to have to pay back – \$30,000 for every man, woman and child. That’s irresponsible. It’s unpatriotic.”

Sounds pretty similar to the things we often hear Sarah Palin and Ted Cruz say about our current president, doesn’t it?

As I mentioned earlier, we all understand the hypocrisy of Obama’s statement in the context of where our national debt now stands. We now owe \$17 trillion. \$7 trillion was added under Obama and another \$3 trillion will be added by the end of his presidency. *Every man, woman, and child* now owes close to \$55,000.

Now, let’s talk about public perception...

Did *anyone* categorize Senator Obama’s rhetoric or position in

2008 as being “extreme?” Did anyone label his viewpoint as being “dangerous” to our country? Of course not. Yet, what he was saying was precisely what the Tea Party has been labeled as “extremists” for saying for the past three years.

When you think about it, Obama was spreading the Tea Party message before the Tea Party was. He was sounding the alarm on our national debt long before CNBC’s Rick Santelli made his famous rallying cry that brought economic conservatives to the streets with protest signs. Yet, between those two people, which one did the media brand as an extreme ideologue at the time?

Yes, that’s a rhetorical question.

Voting against raising the debt ceiling

Here’s are some excerpts from a speech Barack Obama made in 2006 on the senate floor:

“This rising debt is a hidden domestic enemy, robbing our cities and States of critical investments in infrastructure like bridges, ports, and levees; robbing our families and our children of critical investments in education and health care reform; robbing our seniors of the retirement and health security they have counted on. Every dollar we pay in interest is a dollar that is not going to investment in America’s priorities. Instead, interest payments are a significant tax on all Americans – a debt tax that Washington doesn’t want to talk about. If Washington were serious about honest tax relief in this country, we would see an effort to reduce our national debt by returning to responsible fiscal policies.”

*“Increasing America’s debt weakens us domestically and internationally. Leadership means that ‘the buck stops here.’ Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership. Americans deserve better. **I therefore intend to oppose the***

effort to increase America's debt limit."

And that's *exactly* what Barack Obama did in 2006. He voted *against* raising the debt limit.

Again, this stance stands in firm opposition to the things he's been saying and doing since he became our president. But again, let's disregard the blatant hypocrisy and look at how his vote was interpreted.

Were he and the others that voted the same way portrayed as "extremists" by the media? Did anyone suggest that he was *taking the country hostage* or *putting a gun to the head of the American people*? Was Barack Obama's lack of concern for America not being able to *pay its bills* described by anyone as un-American, or in any way compared to the actions of a terrorist?

Of course not, and our debt problem was merely a fraction of what it is today!


Trying to de-fund a major presidential initiative

The most recent budget battle, which ultimately led to the government shutdown, happened because of the attempt by many Republicans in congress to de-fund Obamacare. This resulted in high-profile Democrats, including President Obama, using every nasty metaphor imaginable to describe their opponents: "hostage-takers", "terrorists", "abusive spouses", and of course, "extremists." And those names just came from the politicians. The media was even harsher in their condemnation.

Yet, back in 2007 when many Democrats in congress (including Barack Obama) were voting to de-fund our military operations in Iraq while our troops were in harms-way, I don't recall any such terminology being used, neither by the Republicans nor the media. The worst I remember were some pundits from *the right* saying that the move would help the enemy (which I don't think anyone could deny), but never were those Democrats

referred to as “terrorists.” The condemnation certainly didn’t rise to anywhere near the level it did over a two-week shutdown of %17 of the U.S. government.

To me, de-funding our troops while they’re in the middle of combat operations against *actual* terrorists seems like a *far* more extreme action than de-funding a social program that the government clearly isn’t even prepared to employ. Yet, where were the cries of “extremism” at the time? Where were the people in the media who asked Democratic politicians questions like, “Do you hate the Iraq War more than you love your country?”

It’s perfectly legitimate to debate each and every one of the policies and actions I’ve described above, but can *anyone* honestly debate how completely inconsistent and totally biased the political and media narratives of “Republican extremism” have been? 

In my book, things like a \$17 trillion national debt are extreme. In my book, a government take-over of 1/5 of the U.S. economy under a law that most Americans oppose is extreme. In my book, the slowest economic recovery in U.S. history is extreme. In my book, today’s gas prices are extreme. In my book, high unemployment and a staggeringly low workforce participation rate for five straight years is extreme. In my book, foreign policy fiascoes that resemble the plot of an episode of *Inspector Gadget* are extreme.

Lastly, the national redefinition of the term “extreme” in the era of Obama is just about as “extreme” as anything I can think of – at least in the realm of rhetoric and double-standards.