

Obama's new tone shows desperation

By [George F. Will](#)

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"It is a great advantage to a president and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know that he is not a great man."

— Calvin Coolidge

Energetic in body but indolent in mind, Barack Obama in his

frenetic final campaigning for a second term is promising to replicate his first term, although apologizing would be appropriate. His bilious tone — callous indifference and adolescent japes about "Romnesia" — is less elevated than might have been expected from someone who has favorably compared his achievements to those of "any president," with the "possible" exceptions of Lincoln, LBJ and FDR. Obama's oceanic self-esteem may explain why he seems to smolder with resentment that he actually must ask for a second term.



Speaking of apologies, Syracuse University's law school should issue one for having graduated Joe Biden. In the 2008 vice-presidential debate, he condescendingly lectured Sarah Palin that Article One of the Constitution defines the executive branch. This year, he said overturning Roe vs. Wade would "outlaw" abortion. He instructed Paul Ryan that Syria is five times larger than Libya (which is 9.5 times larger than Syria) and that Syria's population is one-fifth that of Libya (actually, it is four times larger than Libya's).

Biden holds high office because Democratic liberalism teaches that compassion should temper the severities of meritocracy. It is, however, remarkable that Biden's proximity to the presidency has not stirred more unease.

Two economic themes of Obama's campaign have been that outsourcing jobs is sinful, and that he saved GM, which assembles 70 percent of its vehicles on lines outside America. He knows that buying an iPhone involves outsourcing to China the jobs of assembling it. Although his campaign slogan is "Forward!" he evidently wants America to compete with China in the manufacture of T-shirts and toasters. His third economic theme — that he will "invest in" (spend on) this and that — has been inaudible amid the clatter of crashing companies he has invested in.

Fifty-two years after birth-control pills went on the market and 47 years after access to contraception became a constitutional right, much Democratic condescension is focused on women. They are told not to trouble their pretty little heads about actual problems but instead to get the vapors about a stricken Sandra Fluke desperately seeking someone to pay for her pills.

Obama's economic panacea is to cure what he considers government's unconscionable frugality. Nothing in Obama's campaign has betrayed an inkling that anything pertinent to Social Security or Medicare has changed since they were enacted 77 years and 47 years ago, respectively.

Four years ago, Obama said he would slow the oceans' rise, but this year has not sought a mandate to cope with — he has barely mentioned — the supposedly onrushing calamity of climate change. Hitherto he has said this emergency, like everything else, justifies giving government huge new dollops of power, yet our Demosthenes evidently despairs of persuading the benighted public. (See above: condescension.)

His only notable new idea in this campaign is to alter the First Amendment in order to empower government to restrict the amount of permissible political speech — speech about the composition and conduct of government.

All politicians are to some extent salesmen. But Obama, having devalued the coin of presidential rhetoric by the promiscuous production of it, increasingly resembles a particular salesman, Arthur Miller's Willy Loman:

"For a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back — that's an earthquake."

Why the empty stridency of the last days of Obama's last campaign? Perhaps he feels an earthquake's first tremors.

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