

# Obama's political playbook

Barack Obama very much wants to choose who his successor will be and, if Obama's history with the Clintons is our guide, that person is not Hillary Clinton. Why then has Obama endorsed Hillary Clinton and initiated a direct campaign against Donald Trump? Is it not to maximize the chance of Hillary's victory in November. I think it is not. I think it is to ensure that Obama remains the central figure in Democratic politics, takes center stage at the Democratic National Convention, and ultimately helps engineer a Biden victory in the Fall, resulting from a Biden entry into the race after Hillary is indicted.

The animosity between the Obamas and the Clintons is well known. So is Obama's penchant for avoiding controversy and relying on behind the scenes manipulation to bring about the political results he desires. Just ask Elizabeth Warren. The foremost socialist advocating debilitating restraints on lending institutions, she was herself certain until the very day of the Rose Garden announcement by Barack Obama, she Obama intended to pick her to be the Director of the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, but he did not. On the day she expected him to announce that she would be the Director, the very day she came to the White House expecting that result, he stood by her in the Rose Garden and announced that another individual, somewhat more tolerable to industry, Richard Cordray, would be the Director. He neglected to tell Warren of that choice until the very day he announced it publicly.

That is Obama's way. He cannot be trusted, and he has no problem throwing loyal supporters under the bus if it serves his political interests. Just ask Reverend Jeremiah Wright, who Obama met privately and told him that there is no loyalty in politics and that he would have to sever his ties with that notorious anti-semitic and racist despite Obamas years of involvement with Wright, attendance at his church, marriage at

his church, and affirmation that Wright was like a father to him.

I think once again Obama is engaged in another bit of political intrigue, reminiscent of the acts of princess dowagers in ancient China, whereby he seeks to alter the expected direction of the general election through acts of manipulation made possible by Clinton's necessary willingness to have Obama take center stage. Publicly, Obama maintains the façade that he is Clinton's ally. He is trying to bring Sanders campaign to an end in support of Hillary (and, indeed, he is but not for Clinton, just to get Sanders out of the way). He campaigns for Clinton, but he does so not so much to support her as he does to attack Donald Trump. By all appearances Clinton is meant to think Obama an ally (but, in fact, she is quite suspicious of his motives, as indeed she should be).

However, where Hillary would like Obama to act on her behalf most, by unlawfully interfering with the FBI investigation or by pressuring Attorney General Loretta Lynch to obstruct justice and block an indictment, Obama is keeping his distance. He is avoiding any direct pressure on Attorney General Lynch, which in this administration is in effect a green light for Lynch to follow the law and proceed with an indictment when FBI Director James Comey comes calling. In short, Obama knows that Clinton will likely be indicted. He also knows that he must placate Clinton in order to have a central place in prime time at the Democratic National Convention. He also knows that he must have her trust in order to be directly involved in the effort to destroy Donald Trump. And, indeed, he knows that only if he destroys Trump will he be the ultimate king-maker when Hillary falls after the indictment issues. Then, he may bring in Biden and cement Democratic unity in time to snatch the general election, or so I suspect he thinks.

Obama knows that the Democratic National Convention will be a

Clinton spectacle. He does not want to be given a secondary role in that convention because of a failure to endorse Clinton and prove his support for her. Indeed, he wants a starring role, and he also wants a leading role in the general election campaign, but he fully expects that Clinton will be indicted, despite his limited public rhetoric to the contrary.

He and Biden no doubt have calculated the likely fall of Hillary when she is indicted. Given the close proximity to the Democratic National Convention and the likelihood that an indictment will now proceed after Hillary is nominated during the general election, Obama no doubt expects that when the indictment issues Hillary Clinton's popularity will plummet and Democrats will begin to splinter, some choosing to remain with Hillary, others pushing for Sanders to run as an independent, others vowing to stay home, and others urging Biden to step in. Biden, not Hillary, is Obama's choice. I suspect that when the indictment issues, Obama will then stand down from supporting Hillary, Biden will step in, and then Obama will reappear as a major advocate of Biden's presidency. Already fully ensconced in the campaign, Obama will be an election voice Democrats support, and he will rally them to Biden. Biden may indeed bolster his prospects by choosing Bernie Sanders as his running mate, thereby uniting the old Clinton faction with the new Sanders faction of the Democratic Party.

In this way, the sly fox Obama will have led the chickens back into the chicken house where he will effectively devour them, feasting on the election and bringing about his desired outcome in the form of a loyal successor, Joe Biden.

The largely unprecedented direct involvement by Obama in trashing Trump, which will become increasingly apparent in the weeks and months to come, is a prelude to the foregoing scenario. Obama's involvement is not so much an endorsement of Hillary as it is an excuse for ramping up every effort to portray Donald Trump as Satan incarnate. By doing so, he hopes

to bring down Trump's numbers as much as possible so that when Biden does pop into the race after the Hillary indictment, Biden will be better able to beat Trump, even if there is a splintering of the vote.

Biden in turn will rally the Clinton voters, reach out to the disaffected Sanders voters, and join Obama in hammering Trump, hoping to secure enough votes to defeat Trump in the general election. That, at any rate, I think a plausible explanation for Obama's present behavior. In my next column I will explain the best Trump counter-strategy because, despite this dire scenario, I do think Donald Trump best positioned to win the general election.

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