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WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

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The main policies the candidates are debating -- whether to cut taxes or raise them on the rich; whether to shrink government or increase investments in infrastructure or research -- are all pitched as ways to "grow" jobs. ... But it's worth remembering that before the crash we had nearly full employment, and yet it had already become clear that the American Dream was fading for most Americans. ... Through a combination of stagnant wages, indebtedness to often predatory lenders, and the rising cost of middle-class staples such as health care and energy, the average family's personal balance sheet -- assets minus liabilities -- was turning red. Household debt soared from 77 percent of disposable income in 1990 to 127 percent in 2007. During the same interval, the personal savings rate dropped from 7 percent of disposable income to near zero.

-- Paul Glastris and Phillip Longman, *The Washington Monthly*

The most fascinating aspect of the 2012 presidential campaign has become [Mitt Romney's](#) incredible shrinking campaign-relevant biography. Seriously, think about it: His entire strategy is to keep the focus on unhappiness with the performance of the economy under Barack Obama's stewardship, and then glide to victory after easily crossing the invisible threshold of acceptability that challengers to struggling incumbents supposedly need to navigate. Yet the number of items from his resume that he is willing and able to talk about in order to cross that threshold is close to the vanishing point. His governorship of Massachusetts? No way; it's loaded with base-angering heresy and flip-flops. His Bain Capital tenure? Not any more, particularly now that he can't even establish when he left that company. His "success" as measured by his fabulous wealth? Not so long as he won't release his taxes. His clear, lifelong identification with a coherent ideology? Not applicable! His party's agenda, as presented most comprehensively in the Ryan budget? Don't wanna go there! His values as expressed in his strong personal faith? You gotta be kidding!

What was left until this week as the one untarnished moment of [Mitt Romney's](#) adult life was, of course, his triumphant stewardship of the 2002 Olympic Games. And now, having been talked by his staff into coordinating his obligatory pre-election international trip with the opening of the 2012 Games in London, that decision is looking hourly like less and less of a good idea. And we haven't even gotten to the dressage competition.

-- Ed Kilgore, *The New Republic*

This year, 80 percent of Pakistanis view America negatively, up from 68 percent in 2009. Only 12 percent have a favorable opinion. An astounding 74 percent of Pakistanis consider the United States to be more of an enemy, up from 64 percent. ... There is much that destabilizes Pakistan. The war next door, with the aggressive involvement of the United States, is one of the most important factors. If Washington weren't actively undermining Pakistani interests -- seen from Islamabad's perspective -- there would be far less bilateral tension. If Washington weren't involved in a shooting war over the border, there would be no intentional border violations and inadvertent killings. If Washington didn't have such a high and hostile profile, there would be less popular antagonism and fewer militant attacks against the United States. ... U.S. policymakers hate to acknowledge that it matters what other nations and peoples think of American policies. But it does.

-- Doug Bandow, The National Interest

President Obama's announcement last fall of a "pivot" to Asia has been greeted with skepticism. For one thing, there will be no appreciable increase in U.S. military assets in the region any time soon. Furthermore, even for an administration generally unconvincing in its commitment to the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad, Team Obama has been remarkably timid in advancing any such agenda in this region of 4 billion people.

The administration ... raised doubts about its commitment to democracy and human rights when it took a backward step in its Burma policy, easing sanctions on investment there, including in the energy sector. President Obama abandoned an earlier "step by step" approach that was supposed to maximize the benefit to Burma's people by allowing investment in sectors like tourism, manufacturing, and agriculture first, and only later, after progress on institutionalizing democracy, in sectors controlled by the unreformed, brutal military, like natural gas.

-- Ellen Bork, The Weekly Standard