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Is Obama turning U.S. into European-style welfare state?

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GOP presidential candidates Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich have been asserting on the campaign trail that President Obama is turning America into a ["European-style welfare culture."](#)

He "takes his political inspiration from Europe--and from the socialist-democrats in Europe," Romney said [during a debate last fall](#).

Former Labor Secretary Robert Reich recently argued [in a Salon piece](#) that Gingrich and Romney "have cause and effect backwards."

"The reason for the rise in food stamps, unemployment insurance and other safety-net programs is Americans got clobbered with the worst economic catastrophe since the Great Depression," he wrote.

Conservative and independent thinkers point to the president's ideas on taxes as the redistribution of wealth and his policies on government programs as furthering an entitlement society.

Romney and Gingrich have both revived the "socialist" critique about the president. But is it true?

On Thursday, The Daily Circuit will host the first of two discussions on the president's economic ideals and tax policy. First up is Dan Mitchell, senior fellow at the Cato Institute with expertise on taxes and fiscal policy.

"Calling Obama a fascist, however, is counterproductive," [Mitchell wrote](#). "Other than a few economists and historians, people don't understand that fascism developed (with Mussolini perhaps being the best example) as a social/economic system. Instead, most people associate it with Hitler's lunatic ideas on matters such as race and militarism. That's why I prefer to call Obama a statist or a corporatist. Those words accurately describe his governing philosophy without creating the distractions caused by calling him a socialist or fascist."