

NEW AMERICAN

An Honest Look at Newt Gingrich

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Imagine a world in which Americans weren't remotely as susceptible to media manipulation as they currently are. Let's call it "America 2." In such a world, Americans would be more disposed to "think for themselves," as we say, to think just a bit critically about the images and sound bites to which they are bombarded daily.

The measured skepticism with which they would treat the media, especially its coverage of politics, would cultivate within them intellectual and moral virtues that, in reality, are sorely lacking among a good portion of the electorate. In this possible world, Americans would be far more fortified against intellectual dishonesty and hypocrisy than are their counterparts in the real world.

For example, self-identified Republicans would know that when they loudly and passionately affirm "limited government" and "individual responsibility," it is because they and those who aspire to represent them are genuinely committed to such goods. Safeguarding *liberty* would be their top priority.

Our America, however, is far more confused place.

Let us take Newt Gingrich, to begin with. According to some national polls, Gingrich is in the front-tier of GOP presidential candidates. In other words, *today*, in 2011, in the Age of Obama and the Tea Party movement – just that time when the Republican Party is supposedly amending its ways by returning to its "conservative" principles – long time establishment Republican Newt Gingrich is regarded as a viable presidential candidate by the base of his party.

While there can be no denying that Gingrich is deserving of credit for some of his accomplishments as House Speaker, neither can there be any denying that he is as committed a proponent of Big Government – i.e., a system within which the *federal* government is ultimately the *supreme* authority – as anyone. To put this point another way, Gingrich is most definitely *not* a champion of the liberty that the framers of the Constitution sought to bequeath to their posterity.

As far as foreign policy is concerned, Gingrich conceives of the U.S. government as an agent by which *the entire world* may be fundamentally transformed. While interviewing with Christiane Amanpour on ABC's *This Week* back in February, Gingrich called for America to promote "democracy" around the globe. "I think we should be pressuring *everywhere*, including Russia, including China, including Cuba," he told the host. "We should be pushing steadily and saying, 'America stands for freedom.'" (Emphasis added.)

Gingrich, not unlike *both* the vast majority of his colleagues in the Republican Party *as well as* his leftist rivals, is preoccupied with visions of grandeur. He shares none of America's Founders' skepticism regarding large concentrations of authority and power, a skepticism that our Constitution both reflects and codifies into the supreme law of the land. Rather, the former Speaker of the House of

Representatives desires a tireless, activist government, a government that, whether the world wants it to or not, will make it “safe” for Democracy.

Gingrich also supports “foreign aid.” During the same ABC appearance in which he called for the United States to “democratize” the planet, Gingrich reiterated his endorsement of “foreign aid.” Although he expressed dismay with the current government-to-government model, urging instead the transfer of American resources to non-governmental organizations, it is clear that he has no objections at all to the federal government’s deployment of American taxpayers’ resources in time, energy, and money to foreign lands.

Domestically speaking, Gingrich is no less an advocate of an omnipresent federal government.

In 2003, he supported the controversial Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act that created the Medicare Part D prescription drugs benefit program. As the “non-partisan” site Politifact.com states, this new program expanded government “hugely.” In 2010, 34.5 million people availed themselves of this benefit, and by 2015 that number is expected to soar to 40.5 million. According to the Congressional Budget Office, through last year, the entitlement had cost \$203 billion. By 2015, at \$391 billion, it will have cost nearly twice as much. Politifact quotes Paul Van de Water, a senior fellow at the Democratic-friendly Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Van de Water asserts that the creation of Medicare D marked “the biggest expansion of the program since the beginning.”

On May 15 of this year, during an interview on *Meet the Press*, Gingrich unabashedly reiterated his long held belief that “all of us have a responsibility to pay – to help pay for health care.” We could fulfill this collective “responsibility,” he said, by way of either an individual *mandate* to purchase health insurance – precisely that feature of “ObamaCare” that renders it anathema to the vast majority of Americans – or a requirement to post a bond that would insure health coverage – which doesn’t differ from the mandate in any morally meaningful way.

In 2005, together with Hillary Rodham Clinton, Gingrich proposed the 21st Century Health Information Act. If enacted into law, this bill would have authorized the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make “health information technology grants” as well as serve “other purposes,” according to Govtrack.us. That is, it would have strengthened the federal government further.

Gingrich is in favor of eliminating the Environmental Protection Agency. However, this isn’t so as to trim down our bloated federal government. Gingrich, rather, seeks to replace the EPA with an agency of his own imaginings, what he refers to as the “Environmental Solutions Agency.” In short, his objective is to substitute one bureaucracy for another. That the latter would allegedly be more market-oriented, more accommodating of “choice,” is neither here nor there: Whether the federal government *owns* “the means of production” or whether it simply seeks to *oversee* it, it is the federal government – *not* the private sector – that is in control.

Ever the environmentalist, Gingrich also supports a “flex fuel” *mandate* for all automobiles sold in the United States. Ostensibly, such a course of action would lower fuel prices while improving the environment. For Gingrich to take this position, though, belies his reputation as a man of good economic sense. As the Cato Institute’s Jerry Taylor says, “Congress can no more guarantee that fuel prices will go down from now until the end of time than it can guarantee a robust sex life for fat, balding, middle-aged

men.” If Congress enacted this mandate into law, it would prove that it “is not a serious legislative body.”

In 2008, Gingrich joined with Nancy Pelosi in ad for government “leadership” vis-à-vis “climate change.” This dynamic duo “demanded” of the country’s “leaders” that they do something immediately to address this crisis. The ad, it is worth noting, was sponsored by the Alliance for Climate Protection – an organization founded by none other than Al Gore. Pelosi exploited this appearance with Gingrich to push for “Cap and Trade.” Conveniently, Gingrich *now* refers to this as among the biggest mistakes of his career.

Another decision over which Gingrich *now* admits to having regrets was his decision to endorse left-leaning Republican candidate Dede Scozzafava over her Conservative Party rival, Doug Hoffman, in New York’s “special” 23rd Congressional District race of 2009.

Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi aren’t the only leftists with whom Gingrich has partnered during his career. He joined forces with, of all people, Al Sharpton to promote “educational reform.” If Sharpton found Gingrich a worthy ally in his cause, it is clear that this cause in essence amounted to the promotion of ever bigger government. Even if Gingrich, not unlike most Republicans, advanced school vouchers and charter schools, contrary to appearances, these do nothing to liberate education from the dominance of the federal government. The language of “choice” appeals to Americans. But the truth of the matter is that until the Department of Education is abolished and the federal government recognizes that education lies well beyond its constitutionally defined jurisdiction, our educational system will remain subject to its power.

In 2008, while he *initially* rejected the bank bailouts, Gingrich eventually, albeit, “reluctantly,” came to support them.

While some of Gingrich’s ideas for the country may be less destructive of liberty than those of others, there is no circumventing the ugly truth that he is an establishment Republican through and through. Newt Gingrich, that is, is just another Big Government politician who will do nothing to weaken the federal government’s control over our lives.