

Join the Debate

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Driving the Conversation:

Arena Ref: [David Mark](#)

- **Roger Pilon** Vice President for Legal Affairs, Cato Institute :

It's possible that Obama is self-absorbed enough to believe that he could unite the nation by announcing that he intends to be a one-term president and then, as Schoen and Caddell suggest, devoting all of his energy to solving the nation's problems. After all, his speeches abroad early last year suggested that he and many of his devotees, including members of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, believed that he possessed similar powers over international problems.

But as both domestic and international reality has set in, as it has a way of doing, we've seen how it afflicts those whose grasp of it is less than sure. They long, disingenuously or not, for some mythical age of domestic comity, forgetting that the nation has ever been divided, even under George Washington, no less.

Today, however, the issues that divide us are fundamental. Indeed, electoral majorities in California and New York have just reminded us of something the ancients understood, that democracy at bottom is a struggle between those who imagine the state to be their spiritual and material benefactor, including the perpetrators of that view who stand to profit from it, and those who have a more limited, arms-length understanding of the state.

As between those two camps, there's not much in common. A wise politician will grasp that reality and pitch his tent accordingly. Thus far, Obama has grasped that, but he's pitched his tent in the wrong camp.