

# Professor analyzes election strategies, political transition

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UT government professor Daron Shaw has spent the past few months analyzing the 2008 general election for Fox News, a fact he shies away from addressing. Shaw has worked with presidential campaigns and elections since his days as a strategist in President George W. Bush's 2000 and 2004 presidential bids. Shaw shared his insight about the 2008 election, President-elect Barack Obama's transition to the White House and the future of the Republican Party with The Daily Texan.

*Daily Texan: How were the campaign strategies this election different from those employed in 2004?*

Daron Shaw: I think the extent to which 2008 featured novel campaign strategies has been overblown. It was a very conventional campaign. Strategically, they did what they always do. They went to states where they thought the race was going to be decided and spent most of their time in those states.

Much has been made of the fact that Obama embraced more of a 50-state strategy and didn't concede certain states that Democrats typically concede. I don't think it was actually all that different. He didn't campaign in Utah, and he didn't campaign in Wyoming and states where Republicans are really dominant.

*DT: How would you compare the Bush-Obama transition to the Clinton-Bush transition?*

DS: Well, I think that the main feature of this transition is that it is occurring extremely quickly. This might be partly due to the particular circumstances under which Obama is assuming the presidency: a huge economic crisis. He needs to hit the ground running.

Also, since [Sept. 11] there's this threat that Obama will be tested on day one, so he's getting briefing on al-Qaida chatter and terrorist threats. My understanding is that you didn't get the threat briefings in previous transitions until you assumed the office, and apparently, Obama is getting threat briefings every morning.

[President-elects] also usually name their cabinet before they name their chief of staff. Obama's doing the opposite. This was Clinton's self-criticism — that he underrated the necessity of having your own people and your day-to-day operations in place before you make those big decisions about staffing executive agencies.

*DT: How smoothly do you think the transition from Bush to Obama will go?*

DS: I think it will go very smoothly. The Bush administration prides itself in its professionalism. As he's thinking of his



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Government professor Daron Shaw, a former strategist for President George W. Bush's campaigns, talks to the Texan about the presidential transition and Gov. Sarah Palin's future in the Republican Party



legacy, I think it is important to him personally to make this transition smooth.

*DT: How do you think the power dynamic is between Bush and Obama right now, during this transition?*

DS: I think Obama had clearly indicated there are some things he is going to do on day one: executive orders and things to depart from the previous administration's policies. I don't think Bush takes that personally. In some ways Bush is fairly unique among recent presidents in that press reports and criticism really do seem to just roll off his back.

*DT: Do you believe Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin has the potential to become the future of the Republican Party?*

DS: There is more of a clear line of succession in the Republican Party than in the Democratic Party. You can argue this party nominated John McCain because he was next in line. He finished second in 2000. That says Mitt Romney or Sarah Palin would be the front-runners in the next election cycle. Right now, she's a front-runner because everyone knows who she is and she has a following and can raise money, but there is some precedent to believe that is not enough — Dan Quayle would be the obvious example.