



With the U.S. presidential race run and won, two experts take a look at why Brack Obama was so overwhelmingly successful and where the Republicans went wrong in their campaign strategy.

Republicans must take stock in political winter

HARRY MELKONIAN

WHILE America celebrates the election of Barack Obama as the new U.S. President, it also is important for the Republicans, the big losers, to do more than sulk and engage in recriminations. The Grand Old Party needs to engage in creative change itself.

John McCain secured the Republican nomination by April, 2008, long before the world economic meltdown.

Senator McCain's big issue was his support of the surge in Iraq. By October, however, who cared?

The Republicans were stuck with a candidate who had virtually no understanding nor interest in economics nor fiscal policy.

In an effort to empower the electorate and take away power from the political

bosses, both major political parties now make use of popular primaries to select delegates to the national nominating conventions.

Delegates to the national nominating conventions legally are bound to cast their votes in accord with the primary election results.

While this has energised the U.S. democracy and empowered the American voter, the process also has produced unintended but, nevertheless, undesirable side-effects.

Among those are the vast sums of money needed to mount a campaign and the inflexibility of results.

Senator Obama received 52 per cent of the popular vote and won the Electoral Vote by seizing some of the Red States won by President George W. Bush in 2004.

While the result was deci-

sive and momentous, it was not a landslide. This is not to disparage the significance of Senator Obama's victory but to recognise the popular vote was relatively close.

It is not inconceivable the Republicans might have won this election or at least presented a more viable candidate if their national convention in September had the option to override the primaries and select a candidate who had some economic expertise.

Mitt Romney would have been a formidable contender and, if matched with Governor Sarah Palin, might have been unstoppable.

Mr Romney was a former state governor and very successful financier. Economics was his forte.

While Massachusetts governor, he implemented the

nation's only universal health plan and understood budgeting and working with a legislature controlled by the opposing party.

As chief of the Salt Lake Winter Olympics, he demonstrated an ability to clean-up a corrupted venture and pull-off a successful event.

The Republicans should take advantage of their political winter and again try to make a "more perfect union" by balancing the conflicting concepts of letting the voters choose their candidates with some process whereby the nominating conventions can override the popular choice.

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