

Predictions for 2013

Written by Harvey M. Sapolsky

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HARVEY M. SAPOLSKY, DEC 28 2012

It is that time of year when the illusion of insight is replaced by the illusion of foresight in bloggers everywhere. Let's get on with it.

1. Michele Flournoy will be nominated by President Obama to be the first female US Secretary of Defense. She is an experienced defense hand, having served recently as Under Secretary Defense for Policy for Obama and having also served in the Clinton administration. She co-founded the currently fashionable Washington Think Tank, the Center for a New American Security. Recently she was the chief security spokesperson for the Obama campaign. She is a solid citizen, acceptable to Republicans and Democrats. Being the first woman to be Secretary of Defense is a big deal.

2. There will be no war with or attack on Iran. The US administration does not want another war as it tries to end the nation's longest war. A deal to limit Iran to the step before a fatal one in its quest for a nuclear weapon will be struck. Israel will be busy enough watching tensions build in its immediate environs not to take any unilateral steps.

3. Syria breaks apart as the Alawites and Christians head for the coast above Lebanon and abandon the main Syrian cities to the rebels who then fight some among themselves. The humanitarian disaster grows.

4. The Afghani government works toward a deal with the Taliban as the US and coalition forces decide that enough is enough in terms of fighting and corruption and head fast for the exits. Not wishing to be weaned totally off the foreign dole, the government and the Taliban work to hold onto to the international aid machine.

5. Egypt becomes another Turkey where an Islamic party rules without destroying totally the power of the military or driving out all of its opponents.

6. Castro dies and Cuba gives up. It seeks a peaceful transition toward an open, market oriented society, earning much support from the US. Its stock of vintage American cars is bought up by car happy collectors across the globe.

7. President Obama makes global warming the center of his second term agenda. The debate over policy is as contentious as the health policy debate of his first term.

8. Reduced defense expenditures is the way in which the spending reductions needed for an overall budget/tax deal is achieved. America accelerates its return home from the self appointed tour as global policeman. Nothing bad happens in Europe or Asia as all become absorbed with economic issues and fear taking a step too far over territorial disputes without the hovering protective presence of the United States.

9. Bad things continue to happen in Africa especially on line between radical Islam and the rest without much notice or intervention from the rich nations of the world.

10. Attempts to make lists like this one longer or shorter than 10 fail.

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About the author:

Harvey M. Sapolsky is Professor of Public Policy and Organization, Emeritus, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and former Director of the MIT Security Studies Program. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Michigan and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. In the defense field he has served as a consultant or panel member for a number of government commissions and study groups. His most recent books are *US Defense Politics* written with Eugene Gholz and Caitlin Talmadge and *US Military Innovation Since the Cold War* edited with Benjamin Friedman and Brendan Green, both published by Routledge.