

Dispute erupts over who would have won

By JOSH LEDERMAN
Associated Press

HONOLULU — In an alternate universe in which President Barack Obama ran for a third term against Donald Trump, who would have won?

No surprise: The president and the president-elect disagree.

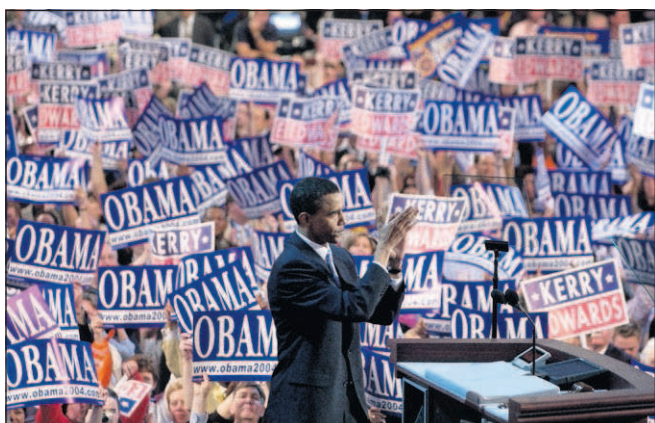
A fresh dispute erupted Monday between Obama and his successor, spurred by Obama's hypothetical musings that had he run again, he would have been victorious. Interviewed for a podcast, Obama suggested he still holds enough sway over the coalition of voters that elected him twice to get them to vote for him once again.

"I am confident in this vision because I'm confident that if I had run again and articulated it, I think I could've mobilized a majority of the American people to rally behind it," Obama told his former White House adviser, David Axelrod, in a podcast released Monday.

Trump, naturally, disagreed. He took to his preferred medium — Twitter — to offer his reaction.

"President Obama said that he thinks he would have won against me. He should say that but I say NO WAY!" Trump wrote.

He suggested Obama's record would have prevented him from securing a victory, citing jobs that have left the U.S., troubles with Obama's Affordable Care Act and the ongoing threat posed by the Islamic State group as



In this July 27, 2004 photo, Barack Obama, then-candidate for the Senate from Illinois, speaks to delegates during the Democratic National Convention at the FleetCenter in Boston.

examples.

The White House declined to comment on Trump's tweet.

In the podcast, Obama didn't address whether he would have been able to surmount the obstacle that the Electoral College posed for Hillary Clinton. The Democrat failed to secure a majority of electoral votes despite winning the popular vote by millions.

Yet Obama said he's spoken to people across the U.S. who have told him the direction he pursued "is the right one," a sentiment he said extends even to some people "who disagreed with me." He suggested Democrats' failure in the election may have stemmed from the prevailing assumption that Clinton's victory was all but assured.

"If you think you're winning, then you have a tendency — just like in sports — maybe to play it safer,"

Obama said.

Though Obama railed against Trump during the campaign, he's largely held his tongue since the Republican's Election Day victory, in large part to ensure a smooth transition of power. He and Trump have spoken regularly by phone, and Trump has praised his predecessor for the graciousness with which he's handled the process.

But in recent days, points of tension between their two teams have started to emerge, driven by Trump's picks of Cabinet nominees who have vowed to dismantle much of what Obama has accomplished. The Obama administration has also been dismayed by requests from Trump's team for information they fear could be used to try to identify and then eliminate bureaucrats who have worked on Obama priorities like climate change and women's rights overseas.



In this Oct. 29, 2016 photo, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally in Phoenix.

Pick for ambassador opposite of Obama

NEW YORK (AP) — If President-elect Donald Trump wanted to show he planned to obliterate President Barack Obama's approach to Israel, he might have found his man to deliver that message in David Friedman, his pick for U.S. ambassador.

The bankruptcy lawyer and son of an Orthodox rabbi is everything Obama is not: a fervent supporter of Israeli settlements, opponent of Palestinian statehood and unrelenting defender of Israel's government. So far to the right is Friedman that many Israel supporters worry he could push Israel's hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to be more extreme, scuttling prospects for peace with Palestinians in the process.

The heated debate over Friedman's selection is playing out just as fresh tensions erupt between the U.S. and Israel.

In a stunning decision Friday, the Obama administration moved to allow the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution condemning Israeli settlements as illegal. The move to abstain, rather than veto, defied years of U.S. tradition of shielding Israel from such resolutions, and elicited condemnation from Israel, lawmakers of both parties, and especially Trump.

Obama, who is vacationing in Hawaii, was prohibited by the Constitution's 22nd Amendment from running for a third term. But Obama

has said even if there weren't term limits for presidents, he believes it's important for the country to have a change of leadership after eight years.

Trump says UN just a club for people to 'have a good time'

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Days after the United Nations voted to condemn Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, Donald Trump questioned its effectiveness Monday, saying it's just a club for people to "have a good time."

The president-elect wrote on Twitter that the U.N. has "such great potential," but it has become "just a club for people to get together, talk and have a good time. So sad!"

On Friday, Trump warned, "As to the U.N., things will be different after Jan. 20th," referring to the day he takes office.

The decision by the Obama administration to abstain from Friday's U.N. vote brushed aside Trump's demands that the U.S. exercise its veto and provided a climax to years of icy relations with Israel's leadership.

Trump told The Associated Press last December that he wanted to be "very neutral" on Israel-Palestinian issues. But his tone became decidedly more pro-Israel as the presidential campaign progressed. He has spoken disparagingly of Palestinians, saying they have been "taken over" by or are condoning militant groups.

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