



Political Mind Games

By now, it is high time that Republican voters recognize these claims for the manipulative devices that they are.

That there is some ingredient of truth in each of them is undeniable. But whatever truth exists is commingled with a much greater degree of error.

Each presidential election, like every national election, is indeed of great importance; after all, it is upon such elections that the fate of a nation depends. Yet when every such Election Day is said to be *the most* important of all time, when each election is depicted as if it is our very last chance to save our country from self-destruction, it becomes difficult to avoid the impression that our commentators have taken a page from Chicken Little's book.



Yes, there is no perfect candidate. But this should not be the pretext by which our "conservative" pundits try to convince us — and themselves — to vote for such thoroughly imperfect candidates. In a primary contest especially, when some candidate are less — far less — imperfect than others, it is particularly disingenuous to argue in favor of the more flawed candidate over the less flawed, for then voters have a choice.

As a general rule, candidates should be judged according to a constellation of considerations, not their position on any one issue. But, first of all, this is a *general* rule; it admits of exceptions. For example, if a candidate believes that "national security" requires us to launch a full-scale nuclear war the moment that he is inaugurated, then we should see to it that that candidate is never inaugurated. His position on *this* one issue should be treated as a *decisive* strike against him.

Secondly, those Republican commentators who chide, say, evangelical Christians for their refusal to endorse a candidate for his unacceptable stance on abortion are hypocritical. It isn't that the evangelical Christian is a stubborn "one issue" voter that disturbs these commentators; it is the fact that the evangelical Christian attaches paramount importance to *this issue* that so incenses them. When it comes to the issue of "national security," however, these pundits whistle an entirely different tune: Any candidate who isn't zealous about supporting Israel via American tax dollars and furthering the project to impose Democracy upon the planet they treat as persona non grata.

There are still more ways in which Republican commentators seek to manipulate their audiences.

Right now, the media would have us believe that the GOP's presidential primary race is a contest between two front-runners, Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich. This may very well be true, although it is worth noting that as of the time that I write this, Ron Paul has come within a single percentage point of tying Gingrich in Iowa. Paul is in third place in national polls, but at this time, national polling means



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virtually nothing. What matters is how each candidate places in the critical caucus states, and Paul is more than holding his own. At any rate, he is doing significantly better than the “frontrunners” of this race’s past: Michele Bachmann and Rick Perry, not to mention Tim Pawlenty and Herman Cain.

And he continually leaves Rick Santorum and Jon Huntsman in the dust. Importantly, Paul does all of this *in spite of* the mistreatment to which the media routinely subjects him.

Still, let’s just say that Romney and Gingrich *are* our two front-runners. As Congresswoman Bachmann astutely brought to our attention in the last debate, the two are for all intents and purposes ideologically indistinguishable from one another. Her moniker, “Newt Romney,” beautifully captured this truth.

Although both Romney and Gingrich are *equally* devoted to an ideology of Big Government, each seeks to show that he is more “conservative” than the other. Although each has a notorious reputation for “flip flopping” on a plethora of issues, each tries to show that he is less of a flip flopper than the other. Although both are establishment Republicans, each attempts to prove that it is the other who is *the real* establishmentarian.

These theatrics are laughable when it is politicians who engage in them. When, though, it is the members of the media who do so, it is at once irresponsible and pathetic.

Recently, Mitt Romney said that he believes that Newt Gingrich should return all of the money (at least \$1.2 million) that he earned as a “consultant” (read: lobbyist) for the quasi-governmental agency, Freddie Mac. In response, Gingrich fired back that Romney ought to return the money that *he* earned shutting down businesses and laying off employees while running Bain Capital.

Now, it is true that there is no parity between Gingrich and Romney in this respect. As Charles Krauthammer and other Romney supporters have correctly noted, our free-enterprise system — what they insist on calling “capitalism” — consists in some businesses succeeding *and* failing, and Romney was simply playing the role of “the capitalist” in separating the chaff from the wheat, so to speak. Gingrich, in stark contrast, was a Big Government lobbyist.

But for Romney’s apologists to then remark that Gingrich’s criticism of the former is something that only a “socialist” could have articulated — to suggest, that is, that Gingrich’s comment is morally and politically indefensible because of its “socialistic” trappings, is just insincere.

These same Republicans — Krauthammer, Hugh Hewitt, and Romney himself — are not now nor have they ever been the devoted “capitalists” who they currently make themselves out to be. *Anyone* who favors government subsidies, whether for “public education,” ethanol, banks, college and healthcare costs; *anyone* who favors requiring Americans to purchase a private good (e.g., medical insurance); *anyone* who favors a central bank and the printing of a currency unimpeded by any sort of standard, is no champion of the free market. To put it another way, if we want to call Gingrich a “socialist” — and I have no objection to this at all — then we have no logical option but to call Romney, Krauthammer, Hewitt, and all establishment or conventional Republicans the same.

Romney, we are now told by the likes of Sean Hannity, Dick Morris, and, of all people, Ann Coulter (!), is *really* “conservative.” He just “fooled” (read: deceived) the voters of Massachusetts while running for office there. Just two years ago Ann Coulter spoke to a CPAC convention. She pleaded with her audience to encourage Chris Christie to run for the presidency in 2012. If not, she said, Romney would be the nominee, and we would surely lose to President Obama.



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Now, all of that has suddenly changed as Coulter endorses Romney.

So, Romney really is a “conservative.” What about Gingrich? Well, Gingrich is a real “conservative” also. Yes, he is a serial adulterer, and yes, he endorsed a leftist Republican in a relatively recent special election in New York, supported health insurance mandates while Speaker of the House, and not long ago appeared in an ad with Nancy Pelosi as the latter sought to promote cap-and-trade. But Gingrich now admits to having been wrong about all of this.

The guy says that he is sorry. What more do you want?

Liberty-loving Americans have to become truth-loving Americans as well. It is time that we begin to recognize this drivel for what it is.



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