



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on February 23, 2011

## Voices of Moderation

Moderation — at least verbal moderation — is suddenly in vogue.

President Obama's rhetoric has moderated, even if his policies and practices have not. Among Republicans, voices of moderation are warning that the party cannot win elections without having a "big tent" and reaching out to Hispanics, for example. Recently, talk-show host Michael Medved has suggested that Rush Limbaugh and Sarah Palin should moderate their attacks on Obama.



Moderation is fine — if it is not carried to extremes. But some moderates seem to think that it is always a good thing to tone down your words. Yet history shows that muffling your message can mean forfeiting many a battle to extremists.

No one has had more of a mixed and muffled message than Senator John McCain, which is why Barack Obama is President of the United States.

Republican moderates warn their fellow Republicans that they need to move away from the Ronald Reagan approach, in order to attract a wider range of voters. But Ronald Reagan won two consecutive landslide elections — and he couldn't have done that if the only people who voted for him were dedicated conservatives.

What Reagan had was a clear, coherent and believable message. Even voters who did not agree with him 100 percent could respect that and prefer it to the alternative.

He didn't have to offer earmarked goodies to each special group, in order to get their votes. Pandering can gain you some votes but lose you many others.

After the tragic murders and attempted murders in Tucson, some Democrats and the media have promoted the notion that sharp political criticism somehow provoked the shootings. There is not a speck of evidence to support that notion.

Such evidence as there is points in the opposite direction, because the individual charged with the crime did not follow talk radio or Sarah Palin.

This same political game was played after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, which was blamed on the "hostile" conservative atmosphere in Dallas. But the atmosphere in Dallas did not kill JFK. A bullet from a far-left kook killed him.

The criticism-causes-violence notion plays right into the hands of those Democrats who have done outrageous things in Washington, and who now insulate themselves from the outrage they provoked by equating strong criticism with fomenting violence.

Apparently some moderate Republicans don't realize that you can't buy your opponents' assumptions



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and then try to oppose the conclusions that follow.

Conservative talk-show host Michael Medved recently criticized Sarah Palin, Rush Limbaugh and Dinesh D'Souza for depicting Barack Obama as someone who does not love this country, and who is deliberately doing things to undermine it, at home and abroad. Medved declared, "it's particularly unhelpful to focus on alleged bad intentions and rotten character when every survey shows more favorable views of his personality and policies."

Are public opinion polls the way to determine the truth? If so, we can all outsource our thinking to Gallup and Zogby.

Michael Medved also cites other presidents of the past, whose errors or even sins did not mean that they were unpatriotic. But does anyone seriously believe that this tells us anything about Barack Obama, one way or the other?

Like some others, Michael Medved seems to think that Obama's pragmatic desire to be re-elected means that he is not an ideological extremist. But Hitler and Stalin were pragmatic and that did not stop them from being extremists.

Finally, there is the argument that Republicans will have a harder time winning the next election if they are "perceived as running against the presidency." But Rush Limbaugh and Dinesh D'Souza are not running for office, and it is not certain that Sarah Palin will be either.

And nobody is running against "the presidency." They will be running against Barack Obama.

Are we not to consider a possibility with deep and painful implications for the future of this nation, for such feeble reasons as these? Or just because moderation is a Good Thing?

*To find out more about Thomas Sowell and read features by other Creators Syndicate columnists and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com). Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. His Web site is [www.tsowell.com](http://www.tsowell.com).*

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