



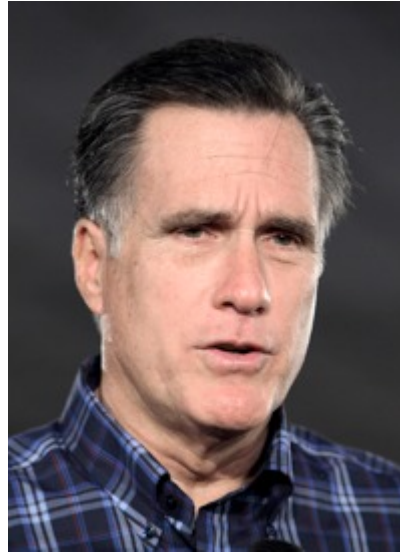
Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on November 17, 2011

Is Mitt Romney Smart Enough to be President?

Particularly in the areas of foreign affairs and domestic security, there are those making compelling arguments that perhaps the former Governor of Massachusetts is out of his league.

For example, one observer cites an appearance Romney made on the MSNBC morning show *Morning Joe*, where the panel of pundits literally mocked Romneys tilting at the Iranian windmill.

One reporter in particular commented that she thought someone of Romney's experience and his position in the Republican Party would have a more sophisticated understanding of the ostensibly delicate nature of Americas current policy on Iran.



At one point, Romney called for support for the insurgents in Iran. One problem, there is no such insurgency.

As one reporter [wrote](#) of Romney: He can fake it when it comes to giving the appearance of competence, which raises expectations, but the fade falls apart when anyone stops to consider the details.

Several sources cite various examples of Romney's lack of depth of understanding when it comes to matters of vital national interest.

In a debate held in South Carolina among the Republicans seeking the presidential nomination, Romney [suggested](#) that our economic problems with China could be solved by first, calling for a hearing by the World Trade Organization with the hope of imposing sanctions on China; and second, initiating a trade war. Said Romney: "People say, 'well you'll start starting a trade war.' Theres one going on right now, folks," he said. "Theyre stealing our jobs and were going to stand up to China."

When it comes to Afghanistan, Romney strongly advocates for the perpetuation of the illegal war being prosecuted in that nation, although he did say he would never negotiate with the Taliban, a position that *The New American* has [reported](#) is antipodean to the current stance taken by Secretary of State Clinton. American leaders have invited Taliban officials to sit at the peace table and work together to achieve an acceptable accord that would end hostilities there.

Then, there was Romney's commentary on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the United States and Russia, signed in April in Prague. Regarding an opinion piece penned by Romney on the topic, Fred Kaplan at [Slate magazine](#) remarked: In 35 years of following debates over nuclear arms control, I have never seen anything quite as shabby, misleading and lets not mince words thoroughly ignorant as Mitt Romney's attack on the New START treaty.

Regardless of the correctness of Romney's views on the issue, the criticism is mounting, and the smoke



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of shallowness is growing into a fire of foreign policy ignorance.

All of this doubt as to the firmness of Mitt Romney's grasp on international affairs flies directly in the face of the party line that propounds the proposition that Romney is the thinking-mans candidate.

Perhaps there is a certain Potemkin quality to Romney's vaunted seriousness. That is to say, is there little substantial thinking behind the often convincing facade of forthrightness and erudition?

One man certainly thinks so. After former Governor Romney declined to appear at a Republican presidential forum in Iowa, the head of the group sponsoring the event, Bob Vander Plaats, [mused](#) that perhaps Romney is not smart enough to be president.

Several key factors contribute to [Vander Plaats assessment](#) of Romney's understanding of important issues. First, the event is to be held in Iowa. In the world of political pragmatism, there is no overestimating the importance of Iowa. Iowa is an early bellwether of the strength of a candidates campaign and the small midwestern state certainly has what Vander Plaats described as national tentacles.

Second, the roster of Romney's competitors already committed to attending the [Iowas Family Leader's "Thanksgiving Family Forum"](#) is indicative of its value to voters. Newt Gingrich, Rick Perry, Herman Cain, Michele Bachmann, Rick Santorum, and Ron Paul will all be at the event.

In fairness, Vander Plaats admits to feeling dissed by Romney's planned absence at the forum, but he does have a valid historical point to make regarding Romney's campaign success.

"I think what will happen is what happened in 2008. He's been in this position before. He's been on top of polls only to find his campaign tanking and sucking air," said Vander Plaats.

"If Romney loses Iowa, I think it will be a huge dent to his campaign. It will be just like fours years ago, and New Hampshire will be up for grabs. Everyone knows he won't win South Carolina and Florida. He will not win in the South," he continued.

The latest [polling numbers](#) reveal that Romney trails Herman Cain by several points in the race to win the Hawkeye State.

What Romney might lack in brains, he makes up for in bucks. In a story providing the net worth of the GOP presidential hopefuls, [MSNBC](#) lists Mitt Romney's net worth at around \$200 million, making him the wealthiest of the Republican challengers to President Obama.

Regarding his personal fortune, MSNBC reports: "Romney made the majority of his fortune at management consulting firm Bain & Company, rising through the ranks to the top job, and at private equity firm Bain Capital, which he co-founded."

Romney's money cannot buy experience, but it can buy advertising. When the time is right, Romney can flood the airwaves with convincing images of himself, his family, and his devotion to conservative values. He has already demonstrated his deftness at trading his front runner status into free media.

Apart from buying airtime, how can Romney manage to maintain his polished persona despite obvious gaps in his breadth of understanding on key issues?

One reporter [suggests](#) a possible answer: Romney is also extremely articulate his smoothly constructed sentences, delivered with ample confidence and without hesitation, make him sound smart. More importantly, the fact that he's been running pretty much continuously for five years means that his image is not really subject to change at this point.



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Later in that same article, the author admits that despite his own misgivings concerning Romney's qualifications, he has bought into the hype:

If Mitt Romney gets to be president, he'll make plenty of mistakes, as all presidents do. But will they be the kind of mistakes that grow from being dumber than your average bear? I doubt it, but maybe that's because I've mistakenly bought in to the idea that he's the smart one.

It is unlikely that questionable policy positions and less-than-brilliant statements about foreign affairs disqualifies Romney (or any of his colleagues) from being President.

As for what does matter, however, perhaps we should turn to the words of our Founding Fathers for insight into the calibre of man (or woman) we should seek to occupy the Oval Office.

In *The [Federalist, No. 68](#)*, Alexander Hamilton writes that the chief executive should be a man preeminent for ability and virtue.

Let every American be a judge of whether the candidate of his choice fits that description recommended to us by our foresightful forebears.

Photo of Mitt Romney: AP Images



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