

## Is Sarah Palin Too Dumb to Be President?

2010-12-06 13:50:48 by Southern

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The 2012 Republican presidential nominee-in-waiting is not very bright.

In fact, dumb as a post is a more accurate if blunt assessment..

Does this describe Sarah Palin? Yes -- if you choose to listen to the Inside-the-Beltway elites. But just in case she doesn't run for or win the nomination, don't worry. Whoever the GOP nominates will quickly assume this "too dumb to be president" role -- bestowed by many of the same people.

Why?

Because this "too dumb to be president" argument is precisely the same-old, same-old argument from liberal elites about Republican presidents or prospective presidents for decades. The argument is particularly relished when it comes to describing conservatives like the former Alaska governor. But even GOP moderates can never escape this tag once they morph from unannounced candidate (and therefore not a political threat to liberalism) to actual frontrunner, nominee or, God forbid, the actual president.

Barry Goldwater, the first modern conservative to win a GOP presidential nomination in 1964, would have been lucky to be tagged as being merely too dumb to be president. He was also said to be, according to Time magazine, "psychologically unfit to be president," "emotionally unstable," "immature," "cowardly," "grossly psychotic," "paranoid," a "mass murderer," "amoral and immoral," a "chronic schizophrenic" and "dangerous lunatic." One psychiatrist breezily announced Goldwater had a "strong identification with the authoritarianism of Hitler, if not identification with Hitler himself."

Reagan, also pegged as a war-monger, was called an "extremist" at the beginning of his political career and an "amiable dunce" just after his election to the presidency. They were a mere blip in the cascade of insults about his intelligence hurled in Reagan's direction over almost a quarter century as a serious American politician. This particular man who was "too dumb to be president" won the Cold War without, as Margaret Thatcher said, firing a shot. Not to mention launching the American economy on a path to creating some 50 million jobs over the

next three decades.

But I digress.

Perhaps the most instructive case of "too dumb to be president" is that of Gerald Ford. Elected to Congress in 1948, a man with a ready smile and outgoing personality, Ford had won rave reviews from the liberal press when he challenged the House Republican Old Guard following Goldwater's defeat, becoming Minority Leader. All the way through his House career, and on into his surprise accession-by-appointment to the vice presidency following the resignation of liberal bête noire Spiro Agnew, the moderate Republican Ford was pictured as good-ole smiling Jerry, the steady, smart House leader who had not an enemy in the world. He played golf with his old pal House Democratic leader Tip O'Neill. Just a nice, smart, swell guy, said the press.

Then a funny thing happened to good old Jerry Ford. In the wake of Watergate he became president with Nixon's resignation. Within a month he pardoned his predecessor, believing (correctly) that until the nation had rid itself of the Watergate/Nixon obsession he, Ford, would have an impossible time getting things done as president. Nothing dumb there. Ford had no sooner announced the pardon and disappeared from the television air waves than the re-positioning of Ford by the liberal media had begun. The man who had graduated from Yale Law School and been the epitome of openness and hard work was, in the blink of an eye, dumb as a post and a conniving liar to boot. Up from the mists came a Lyndon Johnson quote saying that Ford the college grid star had played too much football without a helmet. An on-camera tumble on the slippery steps leading down from the door of Air Force One led to the depiction of the most athletic president since Teddy Roosevelt as a bumbling fool. On a new program called Saturday Night Live, an unknown writer/actor named Chevy Chase rocketed to fame portraying Ford as dumbly prone to hilarious stumbles and dramatic falls over all manner of furniture. Chase anticipated the Tina Fey as empty-headed Sarah Palin routine by decades.

Then there's the Romney saga.

That would be George Romney, not Mitt, George's son.

George Romney was a liberal Republican, a spectacularly successful business executive as the chairman of American Motors. On the strength of his dazzling business career he was elected Governor of Michigan, where he became a popular political figure with both voters and the national press.

Then a funny thing happened to George Romney. In 1967 he began running for the 1968 GOP presidential nomination. The polls showed he was the man-to-beat for the nomination, the one man in the Republican Party who could take on and beat LBJ, the same LBJ who beat Goldwater in 1964 by a landslide. Then, returning from a fact-finding trip to Vietnam, Romney incautiously allowed as to how he had been "brain-washed" by the Johnson administration on Vietnam. And.... bam.

Within a media cycle the brilliant business executive and innovative Governor of Michigan had become -- you guessed it -- an idiot too dumb to be president. The dumb-as-a-post tag hung

around his neck by a media concerned that old George was making just a little bit too much progress and that Tricky Dick, as they called Richard Nixon, would be easier to beat. Romney was finished. His last stint in government was not the White House but the Department of Housing and Urban Development, in Nixon days the equivalent of political Siberia.

What does any of this have to do with Sarah Palin? As the New York Times Magazine recently noted, there is a caricature now abroad in the land of the former Alaska governor "as a vapid, winking, press-averse clotheshorse." In other words, Sarah Palin is an idiot. Dumb as a post. Too dumb, but of course, to be president.

This mother of five with a successful marriage, the woman who, without benefit of a famous name or marriage, has been elected successively to positions as city council member, mayor, president of the Alaska Conference of Mayors, served as the appointed (by the then-governor) chairman of the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission before being elected governor herself -- this before becoming only the second woman to be tapped for a major party vice-presidential nomination, a successful author and bona fide TV star like Reagan -- this is the woman who is now presented by everybody from GOP Establishment types to liberal enemies as just a vacant Barbie-style version of other men who were too dumb to be president. Goldwater? Romney? Ford? Reagan? Kemp? Bush 43? Bush 41? Like them all, Sarah Palin is just too dumb to be president.

To ask why so many elites dismiss Sarah Palin as dumb is to ask not only the wrong question but to willfully ignore a by-now very, very distinct pattern. It is, yes, a pattern of modern media treatment with prominent Republicans that is discernible as far back as Dwight Eisenhower. But in fact what some call Palin Derangement Syndrome is merely the modern face of elitist arrogance that has been present since the evolution of America itself as just one more colonial outpost of the British Empire.

No less than George Washington was denied a commission in the British Regular Army as a young man because he was seen by British elites as a more spectacular example of what Washington biographer James Thomas Flexner called "the incompetent provincial soldier." It wasn't simply that American colonists couldn't cut it professionally, in this view, it was that those who ran and served in the British Regular Army were, don't you know, just so much smarter than their American-born subjects. In a word, the British elites of the day were snobs. And they looked at young George Washington, already a young man of considerable military experience, as just too dumb -- not to mention unworthy -- to be a commissioned officer in the British Regular Army.

The British, famously, learned the hard untruth of this some twenty-plus years after haughtily refusing to give Washington a commission he had manifestly earned as an officer of the colonial militia. Washington may have been too dumb to serve in the British Regular Army but he wasn't too dumb to be the winning general of the American Revolution.

But the arrogant attitude, the we-is-better/smarter/more plugged-than-thou approach to life remained in some sectors of American life even as the British retreated, humiliated at the hands of Washington.

In terms of the American presidency and those who wished to run for the job, the first American to seriously face this too-dumb-and unworthy attitude was the man now considered the co-founder of today's Democrats. That would be Andrew Jackson.

Facing John Quincy Adams for the presidency in 1824, the Jackson-Adams battle was infinitely more than a battle between two men of differing political views. Adams was American Establishment Royalty, a category already well come-to- life by the time this son of Founder and ex-president John Adams began his career. At an early age, freshly graduated from Harvard, Adams was set on a path well-salted by elitists of the day. He was elected to the Massachusetts State Legislature, served as a diplomat or Minister in the Netherlands, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain. He was elected to the U.S. Senate, served as a Professor of Rhetoric at Harvard, where he was known for speaking fluent Latin and reading the Bible in Greek. By the time he faced Jackson he was James Monroe's Secretary of State.

Jackson was everything Adams was not. A rough-and-tumble frontiersman, spottily educated but enough to become a country lawyer, he was the embodiment of what was then seen as the American Western frontier. His fame came from his role in the American military, a brutal Indian fighter who emerged as the hero of the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812. Briefly a U.S. Senator, Jackson was rough-hewn and plain-spoken, like Palin the very embodiment of everything the refined fledgling Eastern Establishment of the day simply could not abide.

After losing to Adams in a hotly controversial 1824 election settled in the House of Representatives (which Jacksonians dubbed "the corrupt bargain"), Jackson roared back in 1828 to serve two presidential terms as the bane of the American Establishment, launching among other things a successful war on the Bank of the United States, roughly speaking the Federal Reserve of its day. He was decidedly anything but too dumb to be president, and in fact well outranks Adams in those historian-generated "great presidents" ranking lists.

The point?

What began with the blistering fight between Jackson and Adams has in one fashion or another rooted itself in today's world as an ongoing battle between the American Liberal Establishment, its media acolytes (what Palin refers to as the "lamestream media") and American conservatives.

If Andrew Jackson was pilloried in the day as little short of a hot-tempered barbarian from the frontier who was not good enough or smart enough to wipe the soles of John Quincy Adams' fancy Boston boots, since at least 1952 the image of the dumb-conservative or dumb Republican has become the modern telling of this tale.

Successively Republicans as varied as Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Barry Goldwater, George Romney, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Dan Quayle, Bob Dole, Jack Kemp, George W. Bush, John McCain and now Sarah Palin have been presented as some version of the following: bumbling and unimaginative (Eisenhower), a tricky, un-classy smear artist unworthy of being on the same stage as the polished liberal champion JFK (Nixon), a shockingly unstable dumb idiot with psychiatric problems (Goldwater), dumb as a post

(Romney), dumb jocks (Ford and Kemp), a lightweight (Bush 41), a vapid pretty-boy (Quayle), a boring, clueless old man from Kansas (Dole) and run-of-the-mill dumb idiot with degrees from Yale and Harvard who was really dumb because he loved the Forbidden Culture of Texas (Bush 43). McCain, like Romney and Ike, was a media hero until he became a serious potential president -- at which point he suddenly morphed into a dumb mad-hatter with a lobbyist mistress, a Barbie-like vice-presidential nominee, and a thing for grilling steaks on a grill in the Arizona desert. The latter of which was so drearily middle-class.

Which is to say, the treatment that is now being prepared for Palin if she decides to make a run for the 2012 presidential nomination is nothing new if you are a Republican, much less a conservative. You are simply too dumb to be president.

What is particularly amusing is the GOP political-consulting complex circling the wagons to protect their fortress, as reported before Thanksgiving by Politico. Based on all this history, just who is it among the prospective 2012 candidates that they think will escape the "too dumb to be president" treatment Palin will undergo were she to run? George Romney's son Mitt, like his father a successful businessman turned governor? Mike Huckabee? Or a Pawlenty, Daniels, Barbour, Rubio, Perry, Jindal etc., etc., etc.?

Dwight D. Eisenhower was a hero-general of World War II, the man who organized D-Day, the successful invasion of Europe -- yet he was mocked from one end of the country to the other as nothing more than a bumbling, unimaginative fool. With the greatest of respect to all those under consideration for 2012, there is not an Eisenhower at the starting gate.

Whoever emerges as the winner of the 2012 GOP nomination is in reality in line to be Palinized. Painted as the next Republican too dumb to be president.

Is Sarah Palin dumb?

Of course not. What a dumb question. It's also the wrong question. Who's asking this question is a better question. And how dumb are they to be asking it? Or worse, dumber by simply asserting it as fact.

The only people who are dumb -- really dumb -- are those inside the Republican political-consultant complex who think that by nominating someone other than Governor Palin they will have a nominee capable of avoiding this particularly dumb fate.

The Republican nominee for president in 2012 is being prepared by the American liberal media to be presented as a woman -- or man -- who is too dumb to be president. It is a preposterous proposition on its face, all on the list being, like Palin, people of enormous accomplishment in life. It is even more preposterous in the face of the utterly laughable idea -- now validated by the actual results of the 2010 elections -- that the Harvard-trained President Obama has been some sort of a whiz-bang genius in the White House. With unemployment riding perpetually just shy of double digits, the nation's treasury massively in debt to the tune of trillions, with all this "outreach" to Islamic countries who still inspire would be bombers and terrorists -- the real question may be "is the someone too dumb to be president already president?"

But no one in the liberal media will ask this of any liberal president. Republicans and conservatives only need apply for the "too dumb to be president" title.

That's the game. It's an old game.

And the absolute last person who should pay any attention to this very old game -- and who is, one suspects, as repeatedly demonstrated by her seriously accomplished life and record, far too smart to play it -- is:

Sarah Palin.

Someone who is decidedly not too dumb to be president.

If she wants to be.

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