

A Republican Game Plan

In [*The Race Card*](#), a book examining the influence of racial stereotypes in manipulating election results, Tali Mendelberg's analysis applies as well to voting patterns in general. "Norms and consciousness," she explains, are the "necessary and missing factors" in shaping electoral response. The extent to which the individual feels that his *self-understanding or desired identity* resonates with the party's implicit message and nature significantly conditions the way he votes. In other words, it is not only a question of policy compatibility but of an internal norm, a tacit or latent identification of the voter's ideal self with the party's, and its representative's, manifested character.

This is why many potential Republican voters may sit out an election or, from a reaction of frustration or resentment, cast their ballots for the opposition. For they do not see their self-image reflected in the stance of the Republican who advances such policies as amnesty for illegals, entitlement spending, pro-choice abortion, hospitality for unvetted refugees, green energy boondoggles, carbon taxes to combat non-existent global warming, and the social leprosy of Islamic accommodation. Blue Republicans only kindle a feeling of disappointment or betrayal in those who would in optimal circumstances be natural constituents.

What most politicians forget is that *the voter essentially votes for himself*. Regarding himself as insightful, trustworthy and unafraid, his candidate must strike him as replicating these qualities. Thus, a Republican campaigner who fearlessly embraces the core tenets—what we might call the intrinsic platform—of his party's history, or at the very least is not reluctant to be upfront, vocal and vigorous in disseminating his message despite the dead hand of political correctness, stands a good chance of succeeding.

Indeed, the Republicans can take a page from Donald Trump, whether or not he is a true Republican or, as some believe, a masterful opportunist, or even an inveterate bungler. His theatrical presence on the national stage has become indispensable, irrespective of his party's nomination or rejection. Trump refuses to apologize, does not cater to special interests and ethnic groups, challenges the liberal media, and refuses to bow to political correctness. Tom Trinko [puts it](#) succinctly: "Trump has shown that voters like it when Republicans don't act as though they have to be afraid of telling the truth, in harsh terms, about Democrats." This is a winning *modus operandi* and Republicans should get on board rather than, as commentator G. Murphy Donovan [deplures](#), "mimic the Democrat left" that has embraced "fiscal collapse or unilateral cultural surrender" or both.

It matters too that the Republicans project a basic seriousness and a credible degree of party amity. The merry-go-round of TV debates and state primaries can operate as a distraction, weakening party solidarity and the sense of political *gravitas*. The horses rise and fall, one rider is up, another down, until the configuration changes, and changes again. Pundits and commentators rush in where sober analysts fear to tread, contributing to a clambake atmosphere of amusement and frivolity, as if every new day were Super Bowl Sunday. Polls are consulted as if they were oracles determining the future rather than urban myths easily discredited or statistical compilations prone to daily revision like weather forecasts—or even subtle forms of agitprop by political partisans. The reign of nonsense, deception and mere diversion prevails for a time.

In this way, the bond of party coherence begins to fray in the throes of what is mainly spectacle and rough-and-tumble competition for the brass ring. Individual candidates' ambitions tend to erode the ligature of political and philosophical consensus. But the rowdy circus atmosphere does

not alter the fact that collective unity and a reversion to binding principle are necessary—especially for Republicans—if a winning candidate is to become an elected president. There is no point, so to speak, in wearing the laurel if one forfeits the crown.

Whatever the outcome of the debates and the primaries, one fact should never be forgotten. A party without a core principle is like a McDonald's [mozzarella stick](#) without the mozzarella. The disaffection which ensues is obviously bad for the brand and may be [costly](#). On any scale of personal or public practice, there is nothing more disheartening than a false promise, which often comes back to haunt the one who breaks faith. The GOP must deliver on its cardinal precepts and cleave to its roots. It should, plainly, refrain from being conciliatory about its bedrock positions and policies, it should not seek to propitiate its adversaries or make nice with the media—for example, tamely accepting hostile debate moderators from plainly inimical news organizations—and it should not be afraid of aggressive, even firebrand, public manifestations.

Some will contend that the culture war has already been decisively won by the Left and that frontal attacks or defending conservative principle are a recipe for defeat. But as the Left is largely impervious to reason and moral rectitude and should be conceived as a lost cause anyway, the hope is that there are enough undecided voters and independent-minded citizens, as well as staunch Republicans, who are sufficiently impressed by a display of courage, self-assurance and political integrity to make a difference in the electoral outcome.

Most crucially, whomever it eventually nominates, the GOP must absolutely cease being the “party of stupid,” consistently playing to the Liberal/Left and more intent on destroying itself than demolishing the Democrats—assuming that it really cares about winning, a moot consideration given its track

record.

Coming out on top in 2016 *is* a feasible proposition. The Clinton machine and Sanders' hat-dwelling rabbits are certainly redoubtable foes. The machine, however, seems to be seizing, as Hillary has to deal with the damaging fallout from her inordinate speaking fees, her [intimate relation](#) with Muslim Brotherhood-tainted and double-dipping Huma Abedin, and the ongoing "[server](#)" controversy. Sanders' legerdemain and undeliverable promises present a more formidable challenge, given the corruption of his Labor-and-Education Union backers on the one hand, and the ignorance and credulousness of today's student generation on the other. In the current cultural context, the GOP must take seriously the influence of a gerontocratic millennial like Sanders, in my estimation a new breed of politician, and respond with caracal agility.

As Roger Simon [admonishes](#) in his summary of the February 13, South Carolina GOP debate: "The Republican candidates are running against a likely criminal and a fuddy-duddy socialist who would blow our economy to smithereens. But there was barely a word about this from any of the candidates. Big mistake. They should be rehearsing now for the general election—show us who can win against their true adversaries and spend less time bashing each other." *Ipse dixit.*

Consequently, the Republican message must repeatedly stress that free stuff ultimately has to be paid for, that food stamps are not edible, that money cannot be printed indefinitely, and that high taxes lead inexorably to the shrinking of the middle class and the flight of investment capital and jobs. Of course, Republicans will also be preaching to a large constituency of self-interested time-servers and economic illiterates who do not understand where their future advantage lies. But the message may "take" among a portion of an adversarial target audience—those who worry about future employment or who are still capable of rational thought—if it is clearly and simply articulated and

relentlessly hammered home.

Republicans could point out, for example, that Walmart, unable to absorb wage hikes, is [set to close](#) 154 stores in the U.S., affecting 10,000 workers, that in the wake of an exorbitant [UAW labor deal](#), Ford is moving an assembly plant to Mexico, and that GM is doubling its \$5 billion investment in that country. Even more critically, they must gently but convincingly administer the bitter truth of looming fiscal implosion, when no one will be spared. Rep. Dave Brat, a former economics professor at Randolph-Macon College, has [done the math](#): In eleven years America is scheduled to go broke. The GOP must show, precisely and patiently, that such developments are a natural consequence of socialist thinking and statist policy-making, leading to the dwindling of the money supply and the contraction of the labor market, and in the long run gravely impacting the voter who has signed on to the program.

It follows that in addressing the electorate, the GOP must treat potential voters as intelligent agents, reminding them that liberal economist and Obama hireling [Jonathan Gruber](#) prided his success in passing Obamacare on “the stupidity of the American voter.” Republicans, on the other hand, should express, if only as a matter of expedience, their faith in the ability of the American voter to master political and economic arguments, keeping in mind Tali Mendelberg’s study of the unconscious or subliminal vote in *The Race Card*.

In the last analysis, sound fiscal principles regarding taxes, minimum wages, debt repayment, national solvency, and viable entrepreneurship are Republican strong points, going back to the days of cost-cutting Calvin Coolidge, one of America’s best if unsung presidents. These principles should not be watered down to promote a dubious strategic calculus; they are intrinsic to the general Republican platform and need to feature in its overall conceptual framework.

When we consider what the Republicans have had on offer for the last eight years—the most robotic presidential contender ever witnessed in John McCain, a terminally agreeable Mitt Romney repeatedly curb-stomped by Obama and an aggressive media, and a Dem-compliant Congress—it's evident they are in trouble. In the aftermath of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's untimely death, one many wonder whether a Republican-dominated Congress will have the backbone to reject [Obama's forthcoming replacement](#) to the vacant seat, if he or she proves unsatisfactory. Republicans desperately need to get "game." "Game" needs to become a central component of the Republican game plan.

If the GOP follows a coherent script, eschews politics as usual, avoids tearing itself apart in factional disputes and personal vituperations, scraps the craven and misguided appeasement strategy, respects the voter, and manages to rally convincingly behind its chosen standard bearer, it stands a decent chance of outperforming either of the ethically debased, wizened and intellectually moribund Democrat contestants for the presidency.

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