



## **As the Donald turns: Let's see if Trump can talk his way out of this one**

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The Best Defense is a Good Defense: Now that the debate is over, my analysis is that the Donald made a wise decision to stop "looking presidential" and stay on the attack.

He clearly was uncomfortable in the last debate. This time around he never let up on Hillary Clinton. The result was a much better performance. The headlines were about a lot of topics, not just those 2005 comments.

But if the mainstream media were doing their job the headlines would have been about some major admissions by Clinton. The most obvious is that still she wants risk war with Russia by imposing a no-fly zone over Syria (see below.)

The other is that she doesn't have the slightest clue about energy policy. Toward the end of the debate, Clinton stated "we are now for the first time ever energy-independent."

This is a major gaffe, a double gaffe in fact.

The first is her amazing ignorance of the fact that we were an oil exporter up through the 1950s. How can you have served as a senator and not know that?

The second is that we of course are still a major importer of oil. Go to [the Energy Information Administration site](#) and you'll see oil imports run more than five million barrels a day.

Hillary certainly should have. Here we have a woman who wants to shut down the coal industry and switch us all to unreliable and costly alternative energy - and she doesn't even know we are still importing a huge share of our energy.

I have no idea how the mainstream media can ignore such a gaffe. Now back to our regularly scheduled program:

I think I can state without fear of contradiction that this is the most entertaining presidential election in any of our lives.

And it just keeps getting better.

Those revelations about Trump's remarks as he was preparing to go on a TV show in 2005 would have finished off a lesser man.

But Trump seems determined to ride it out if the statements from Rudy Giuliani on the Sunday morning talk shows are any indication.

At one point Rudy rather craftily brought up "The Confessions of St. Augustine," a book with which every Catholic-school kid is familiar.

In it, the future saint spends his youth carousing while telling God "Make me a better person - but just not yet."

Trump's not Catholic, so it's a stretch for him to claim a conversion.

On the other hand, he's had a conversion of a different sort:

He used to be a TV star and now he's a politician.

Here's my confession: I have never seen that silly show he starred on. I also had no idea what "Access Hollywood" was until this scandal broke.

But even by the standards of television, it's stupid for a guy to brag about his attempted sexual conquests while wearing a microphone.

And it's even stupider to boast about trying to seduce a married woman - and failing.

The best you can say in defense of the Donald is that this all came as part of a rant about the ridiculous things a TV star can get away with.

Well, a politician can't get away with them.

I've interviewed hundreds of them and I've never seen one try this sort of stunt, even while drinking.

The Donald doesn't drink, so he has even less of an excuse.

And then there's the way the Donald once again succeeded in driving bad news about Hillary out of the headlines.

That was the recent revelation by Wikileaks that she had talked about wanting to see European-style "open borders" eventually.

(Here's a good point-by-point summary that shows what Hillary would be defending if the Donald hadn't driven it out of the headlines.)

The Clinton crowd is trying to dismiss these allegations as propaganda, perhaps Russian-inspired.

And if the Donald had kept his big mouth shut, the pressure would be on Clinton to either confirm or deny that and other comments about how cozy she was with the Wall Street crowd she claims to oppose.

But the headlines are full of stories about the Donald's past boasts instead of Hillary's hidden views.

The big challenge tonight for the Donald will be refocusing the debate on the issues.

In the New York Post, old political pro Ed Rollins has six suggestions no how he might be able to do so. Among them is "Shift to issues. Talk about the economy and creating jobs. He's got to show the contrast between him and Hillary."

Of course, the Donald was doing good in the last debate when he focused on the economy and jobs. But then he let Hillary get him off-topic by bringing up birtherism and beauty queens and other matters irrelevant to the issues.

I'm sure the mainstream media will find a way to distort Donald Trump's big speech on foreign policy, but he again proved he is the candidate who wants peace with Russia and in the Mideast

Another point on which the Donald should hit the Hillary is foreign policy.

Trump made a great point a few weeks ago when he proclaimed that Clinton "never met a war she didn't want other Americans to fight."

As Doug Bandow wrote in Forbes at the time, "her proclivity for promiscuous war-making has attracted the support of leading Neoconservatives, including some architects of the disastrous Iraq war, which as Senator she voted to authorize."

Of course, the current mess in Syria derives from Clinton's time as secretary of state when she pioneered the disastrous idea that the U.S. should work to depose Bashar Assad.

Jeb Bush wants to set up a no-fly zone to defeat an enemy that has no air force; compared to him Donald Trump is a foreign-policy genius.

And she has supported imposing a no-fly zone there, even though the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recently told Congress that would mean war with Russia.

Bandow quotes his Cato Institute colleague on Clinton's insane insistence on U.S. military interventions:

"As my Cato Institute colleague Christopher Preble pointed out, 'Clinton supported every one of the last seven U.S. military interventions abroad, plus two others we ended up fighting.' For instance, while First Lady she pushed for U.S. intervention in the Balkans—attacking the Bosnian Serbs and then Serbia. She was an enthusiastic war advocate, explaining: 'I urged him [her husband] to bomb.' Alas, Bosnia remains badly divided while Kosovo has turned into a gangster state which, according to the *New York Times*, is 'a font of Islamic extremism and a pipeline for jihadists.' Oops."

That's the choice. More pointless war. Or a president who can't keep his hands to himself.

Well, we survived one of them. But could we survive his wife?

That's the issue and if Trump had mastered the art of message discipline, he could have kept Clinton on the defensive in the prior debate and he could do so this evening as well.

Instead he resorts to ranting, as he did while chatting with Billy Bush.

That's what got him into this mess. Can he get out?

The Republican Party better hope so. Top Republicans are talking about replacing him on the ticket. But that's naive to the point of being childish. This is not one election. It's 50 elections. There is zero chance of pulling off a switcheroo at this late date.

Mike Pence did well on domestic issues in that vice-presidential debate; but on foreign policy he didn't even seem to realize he was backing Hillary Clinton's liberal internationalist position as opposed to Donald Trump's "America First" policy

Of course if these revelations had come in the primaries, Trump would have been a goner.

But he also would have been a goner if the GOP brass had united behind a candidate with a realistic chance of winning.

Instead they tried to foist another Bush off on the American public, despite the fact that the prior two Bushes squandered every aspect of the legacy of the last successful Republican president, Ronald Reagan.

That may explain why nearly three-quarters of Republicans want to keep Trump on the ticket even as the party elite wants to ditch him.

It's too late for that. Party leaders might as well shut up, sit back and enjoy the show.

I certainly will.

Also - Cousin Billy, How Come You Never Call? I have no idea just how close Billy Bush is to cousin Jeb. But imagine for a moment that Billy had given Jeb a call around this time last year and told him to check up on that conversation he'd had with Trump in 2005.

If that tape had been released back then, Trump's campaign would have been strangled in the cradle and the race would have been between Jeb and the rest of the field.

But Billy never called. As to why, perhaps he was ashamed of his role in the conversation. He's taking a lot of heat for it.

But I suspect this will be a good career move anyway.

After all, he's no longer the least famous of the Bush boys.