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David Frum: The view from Limbaugh-land

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DAVID FRUM

Our friends at the Corner this week administered a memorable scolding to the Cato Institute's Jerry Taylor for expressing doubts about the wisdom of accepting Rush Limbaugh as the voice and face of the conservative movement. (Michael Moynihan offers a [helpful summary](#) of the contretemps on the *Reason* website.)

[Don Martin](#): As the blog debate continued, El Rushbo himself stepped in to remind us of exactly what it is that conservatives are accepting when they follow him. [From Limbaugh's May 14 broadcast*](#):

He [President Obama] is every bit the radical leftist he's always been. This [the responsibilities of office] isn't changing his mind about anything. What is happening, if anything, is that the import of his job, you know, he's got a very fine line to walk. I was just talking about this. His base loves anything that inflames anti-American opinion. During the campaign he inflamed anti-American opinion. As a senator he voted to inflame anti-American opinion. In his early days as president he ran around the world apologizing, inflaming and encouraging anti-American opinion.

But now, I'm telling you, somebody got to him, because, look, he followed his instincts. His instincts were to release the [prisoner abuse] pictures. **His instincts were to let terrorists go in the United States on the street.** Somebody somewhere said, "Wait a minute, for your own self-preservation, you can't release these pictures. You're in the Senate, you're on the presidential campaign talking about how all this torture has ruined our image. Well, you're America now, pal. If you release the pictures, it's going to hurt you politically." Don't mistake a political calculation -- Karl Rove said the other night that this bunch spends two hours a night in the White House going over the day's polling results, to figure out what to do and where to be and what language to put on the teleprompter for The Messiah to repeat, two hours a night. So what has happened here, somebody said it's going to harm you. Remember, everything's about him. These pictures are gonna harm you. **You want to harm America, you're taking care of that domestically.** If you want to harm America, just keep doing your domestic policy and save your butt with these pictures. And don't release these prisoners. The Germans wouldn't take 'em, the French, Spain. No, to answer your question, he's not learning the truth. He's having to set himself aside in one area, and it's gotta be painful. I'm sure Michelle is giving him grief up there in the residence like you can't believe.

Those two bolded sentences highlight an increasing theme of the Limbaugh broadcast: that President Obama knowingly seeks to do harm to the United States of America. The president even wants to release terrorists to roam free in America's streets!

There was a lot of wild political hate expressed during the Bush years. I was there, I remember. But short of the crazy 9/11 denialists, no prominent liberal figure - certainly nobody as central to the left as Limbaugh is central to the right - ever accused either President Bush or

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13/05/09: Testifying before a parliamentary committee on May 12, Liberal MP Ruby Dhalla defended herself against allegations of mistreatment made by Magdalene Gordo and Richelyn Tongson, her mother's former caregivers. How did this quasi-scandal go from a private dispute to a parliamentary hearing? National Post political columnist Don Martin and Deputy Comment Editor Marni Soupcoff give their thoughts.

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Vice President Cheney of *wishing* to do harm to America. To have accused them of such a thing would have been to accuse them of treason.

And yet here is Rush saying it. Maybe he just mis-spoke, got carried away. But he mis-speaks in this way quite a lot.

A half-century ago, many conservatives followed another leader who accused the president of the day of treason. The leader was Robert Welch and the president was Dwight Eisenhower, whom Welch termed a "conscious and dedicated agent of the communist conspiracy." We all remember that Bill Buckley defied and opposed Welch. Today we admire Bill for doing it. We forget that Bill's actions nearly wrecked *National Review*, as Welch's followers canceled their subscriptions and accused Buckley himself of adhering to the conspiracy. That seems funny in retrospect, but it was not funny at the time.

The writers at NR have not forgotten this history. And yet that has not prevented us all from reliving it. I fear that the costs of indulging paranoid talk in the conservative world will be far greater than ever they were in the 1960s. Back then, sensible Republicans could ignore Robert Welch. But Limbaugh is omnipresent - and now our former vice president has told us he is to be preferred as a party leader to Colin Powell. Powell - the man who could have had our party presidential nomination for the asking in 1996! The man that Cheney's administration sent to Congress and the United Nations to make the case against Iraq in 2003, because that administration knew that Powell commanded more respect and deference than any other administration member, not excepting the president himself.

The blogger Matt Yglesias made a telling point the other day. The assertion that Limbaugh leads the conservative movement began as a slur, an attack point. It is the weakness of our Republican elected leaders - and the indulgence of those who should be our conservative intellectual leaders - that has elevated the slur into plausible reality.

* (The broadcast also has some disobliging things to say about David Brooks and me, which I note for the sake of disclosure, but that are not pertinent to the issue discussed here.)

Newmajority.com

David Frum, resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is the editor of NewMajority.com

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by MarnieTunay

May 17 2009
2:52 PM

David Frum, you talk too much. Especially, you talk too much about Rush Limbaugh. You say you hate him - but you regularly broadcast vast quantities of his comments.

Is this one of those "frenemies" things? Do you and Rush secretly go bowling together?

Marnie Tunay

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—Free Bird

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by ZeeBC
 May 17 2009
 2:58 PM

The Dems have all the lefty TV networks in their corner and the Conservatives have Fox News and talk radio. They are petrified of Rush's radio reach and are trying to silence him with their 'Fairness Doctrine' muzzle. Obama's fawning lackeys will also keep slagging Sarah Palin as she appeals to normal Americans.

[The central premise of Frum's lazy and illogical attack on Limbaugh and the Republicans is based upon this line: "But short of the crazy 9/11 denialists, no prominent..."](#)
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michellemalkin.com/.../rush-derangement-syndrome-2

[Problem is, the United States has become a nation of "true believers" -- only, there're about a dozen "beliefs" which are supposed to be "true" but aren't. Get rid...](#)

by MarnieTunay
 May 17 2009
 3:12 PM

to ZeeBC re "obama's lackeys and the slag on Palin"

you have to admit, ZeeBC, the Trailor Park Palins have given the "lackeys" plenty of ammunition.

and if you're right that they appeal to "normal Americans" - other than the men who've been putty-fied by her figure and who haven't got the imagination to figure out what life would be like if she became president - well, if you're right about that, then you are also right that America is going to fall.

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by JEST
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 3:32 PM

David Frum, You have a short memory regarding the relentless attacks on the Bush admin by the left. And regarding BOs intentions to harm America the proof is in the pudding regardless of intention.

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 -NP Editor
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by ZeeBC
 May 17 2009
 4:05 PM

Gee I thought it was Chris Matthews there for awhile Marnie.

townhall.com/.../PrintPage.aspx

The Palins have no more dirty linen than the average Joe. Certainly way less than Barry Soetoro who the media adore. In fact they studiously avoid any mention of his beginnings, his cohorts and his mentors.

".. Obama himself comes out of the Democratic party's intensely anti-Zionist left wing. Just a few years back, he associated with voluble Israel-haters like Ali Abunimah, Rashid Khalidi, Edward Said, and Jeremiah Wright, not to speak of Saddam Hussein lackeys, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and the Nation of Islam."

www.danielpipes.org/.../obama-netanyahu-meet

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by edd333ed
 May 17 2009
 4:22 PM

"A prophet is without honour in his own country"

Frankly, Rush Limbaugh and his followers scare the hell out of me as an amateur historian. Not since the rise of Nazism has so much air and ink been devoted to 'stab-in-the-back' theories and veiled accusations of treason. I can understand why they make David nervous.

It's not enough for these guys to have a different political view. They have to demonize all opposing views -- to the point of questioning Colin Powell's patriotism and accusing a serving president of wanting to harm America.

I think the GOP needs to be clear about this. Certain

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of its members are legitimizing violence. They should be very careful what they wish for -- they might get it.

That anyone with a brain has long since decided this group is simply outside the realm of rational politics makes no difference at all to them. They don't believe in convincing you; they believe in converting you. Or slandering you. Or worse.

When David Frum gets denounced as a 'leftie' one wonders what they are taking with their Jack Daniels No.7, or whether they just take it by the gallon. Except this isn't bar talk, it's nationally syndicated broadcast media.

Has anybody viewed Visconti's 'The Damned' lately? Any Republican with money or power should do so, and think about it, before they go the way of the German rich. It is not yet too late to abandon the crazies.

by hazlitt
May 17 2009
4:26 PM

David

Having covered all of LBJ and all of Nixon in an era where we had more access, I may be qualified to advise you to devote less space to fighting the internal Republican battle. The GOP, thanks to the greed and idiocy of Bush and co-President Cheney, is dead for at least a generation, regardless of who succeeds McCain. Try to focus more on the huge issues of Canada-US relations which embrace, among others, the Arctic, going green, Afganistan-Pakistan, and relations with China, Russia and India.

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by Quig
May 17 2009
4:40 PM

Mr. Frum considers himself one of the conservative intellectual "elite".

[Click here to get started.](#)

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It galls him that more Americans listen to and believe Rush Limbaugh than bother reading David Frum.

And what, pray tell, is so unthinkable about "...questioning Colin Powell's patriotism and accusing a serving president of wanting to harm America. "?

by iamtom
May 17 2009
5:03 PM

ZeeBC,

I thought the book deal was Sarah had to read one by 2012.

by Free Bird
May 17 2009
5:06 PM

Wow. I thought Limberger was just plain funny and an embarrassment to the Republicans, but he's a nutter, and quite possibly dangerous. I love the fact that he is the face of the Republican party, I'd like to see many terms of Democrat leadership; but even for me, he's so distasteful that it's bordering on the 'not even funny anymore'.

by Free Bird
May 17 2009
5:12 PM

Quigly, are you suggesting that you believe Colin Powell and Barack Obama are both anti-American? Ohhh-Kayy. Man-oh-man, there are some paranoid fruit cake conservatives out there. I suggest that you turn off Radio Rush and get out a little more often to

see the real world. It's not nearly as bad as you think.

by Matt W.
May 17 2009
5:16 PM

Mr Frum:

If, like Rush, you believe turning the US into a nanny state like Europe or Canada is harmful then it's not much of a stretch to accuse Obama of trying to harm his country.

by pomona71
May 17 2009
5:22 PM

You might spend a little more time commenting on the dangerous deification many Democrats have shown to Obama. Supporters of Hilary and other Democratic contenders are vilified as traitors to the chosen leader. No criticism is allowed of some of the most radical policies to be proposed in the history of the US. The cap and trade climate bill a case in point. Pure politics passing off as climate change legislation. The danger is with the people who have the power Frum, not the commentators of those who don't. Comment on them if you think you have something to contribute.

by ZeeBC
May 17 2009
5:26 PM

Not since the rise of Communism has the farleft scared the hell out of me. Who is advocating violence edd? Name them.

If you think that Mugaberizing the green back is not harming America, if belly laughing at that jerk Wanda Sykes's "I hope his kidneys fail." supposed funny but racist sick joke is A-OK then you are part of the problem.

I guess dismantling all the safeguards Bush put in place after 9/11 is not harming America? Why did the jerk Messiah reverse himself on releasing those photos?

The two main reasons offered are he is protecting Pelosi and his original position was a smokescreen to appease the far-left. A distant 3rd was protecting the soldiers.

by ZeeBC
May 17 2009
5:42 PM

latimesblogs.latimes.com/.../6a00d8341c630a53ef01157082e793970b-500wi

Eat your heart out Iamtom.

When the ever popular Sarah turned down a book deal for \$11 million people snickered. They aren't laughing too much now.

by MarnieTunay
May 17 2009
6:02 PM

to ZeeBC, I have no idea who Chris Matthews is.

re your claim that "the Palins have no more dirty linen than the average Joe:"

Oh, sure, ZeeBC - "the average Joe" has been found guilty of abusing his legislative power:

en.wikipedia.org/.../Sarah_Palin

And "the average Joe" is cozy with crazy Kenyan witch-hunters:

fakirscanada.blogspot.com/.../sara-palin-and-witch-

[hunter.html](#)

To Iamtom re your: "I thought the book deal with Palin was that she had to read one..."

Good one! LOL

Marnie Tunay

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by Quig
May 17 2009
6:06 PM

Free Bird: Learn to read AND comprehend; it's not really multitasking and even a leftard should be able to do it.

My beliefs were not part of the question. I put it to you that NO proposition is "unthinkable".

I further put it to you that some of the actions by both these individuals have been harmful to the USA. Whether or not they were done "knowingly" is arguable.

by ZeeBC
May 17 2009
6:30 PM

Get with the program Marnie.

[mainstreamiowan.blogspot.com/.../too-little-too-late-palin-found.html](#)

Chris Matthews is the farlefts attack dog, much like Keith Olbermann.

by Quig
May 17 2009
7:07 PM

Olberman merely salivates when "O" speaks.

Mathews has a "tingling feeling" run up his leg!

by Nath_BC
May 17 2009
7:32 PM

It is just not Limbaugh who is an idiot, but a whole host of others, a minority no doubt but loud mouths that have taken over the party, and unless reasonable people stand up there shall be no main stream of Republican Party. What most don't seem to understand is that Limbaugh and others on the Radio are simply trying to make a living by appealing to ignorant and stupid that is good news because will keep the Democrats in power in perpetuity unless reasonable leaders stand up and take control? The road show they had put up with recent losers has been a disaster. But David you are no genius or original thinker and usually as in this post a copy cat of others ideas some time reasonable men but more often of the lunatic fringe. You don't seem to understand that you are not wanted and should look at some other line of work.

From the childish comments above I note that the usual idiots are mouthing off again like bloody idiots they are, I would say Zee continues to lead the pack of socialist and communists.

by rexx1
May 17 2009
7:39 PM

Must be a bad time to be a Republican. Every time I see that right wing extremist and all around sociopath Dick Cheney on TV talking up the wonders of torture, it reminds me why people don't trust Americans. I still

am not used to seeing the guy in sunlight, I expect him to burst into flames.

Limbaugh is just an entertainer in the same vein as Vince McMahon is with professional wrestling. Lots of bluster and screaming at people and it guarantees an audience of people with short attention spans and disposable income, two things that their advertisers love.

I saw a clip of Cheney saying that Limbaugh is a better Republican than Powell on the net recently and had myself a good chuckle. Decorated war hero, strong family values, a lifetime of public service, well spoken, respected and respectful versus a thrice married chicken hawk, drug abusing loudmouth..... no wonder the party is going to hell.

The republicans used to be the party of guys like Powell, now they're given the bum's rush for not marching lockstep.

Maybe a third party in that country will finally take root.

by James F. Blake

May 17 2009

8:35 PM

I used to buy into all this stuff. I loved Rush Limbaugh. I bugged and bugged politicians and bureaucrats to let Fox News Channel into Canada. I have voted Conservative all my life. Then, a nice fellow in Texas named Alex Jones showed me how wrong I was.

The whole left / right thing is a fraud. Our leadership in Canada and the U.S. is not the Conservatives or Democrats. Our alternatives are not the Liberals or the Republicans. Our countries - like those around the world - are run by globalist organizations like Bilderberg, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, among others. Rush used to say they didn't exist, despite the National Post columnist bio showing Conrad Black as a member of Bilderberg's steering committee. Now Rush says they are irrelevant.

Neocons like Frum and Limbaugh (among others) exist to divide us. It's time we learned who our real enemy is and take control of our sovreign countries.

Rush, please go back to your medicine cabinet.

by EdNigma

May 17 2009

11:25 PM

"I saw a clip of Cheney saying that Limbaugh is a better Republican than Powell on the net recently and had myself a good chuckle."

Probably because you forgot that Powell endorsed Obama.

Which, of course, makes him a better Republican than Limbaugh...

But then given the banalities of your post, it's hardly surprising that such simple facts confuse you.

by EdNigma

May 17 2009

11:41 PM

Apparently Frum has forgotten the Uighurs planned release into America, or the 1.8 trillion dollar deficit or the ten-plus trillion Obama foresees added to the debt

when highlighting Limbaugh's words. Cause obviously they're not terrorists, nor is having an enormous debt is detrimental to the American economy...

But why bother with the absurdity of content or context in the middle of a pathetic rant.

by LoveUnity
May 18 2009
12:15 AM

Sorry rexx1, it's not about personal characteristics even though many have no more to offer than personal attacks.

It's about ideas and the political actions they engender, like Obama heading for a much further advanced version of hell.

by LoveUnity
May 18 2009
12:37 AM

Bombast and such is pretty irrelevant to the fact there are elements in the Republican Party who do not appreciate the RACISM of a Colin Powell who would vote for the other guy mostly on the basis of skin color.

by EyeDubya
May 18 2009
1:18 AM

MarnieTunay,

Are you serious!? You don't know who Chris Matthews is? Wow!!

by LoveUnity
May 18 2009
1:30 AM

Not everyone watches a lot of tv - it may be more profitable to read, eg. web pages.

by ZeeBC
May 18 2009
1:37 AM

Arlen Spector lost his seniority when he defected to the farleft. Jon Huntsman didn't defect but decided to serve his country. He speaks the language for one thing. He is a Mormon so probably figured he would run into the same roadblocks Romney did. Obama's crew is so short of talent he is forced to offer positions to qualified Republicans. A decent amount of time has to pass before Obama rewards Colin Powell with a plum job. The optics would be bad for a hasty appointment. If Obama were half a Statesman he'd complete what GW Bush failed to do. Pardon Conrad Black and Scooter Libby. Dumping released Gitmo terrorists into Virginia while doing diddly squat about American injustice is in itself a crime.

by ZeeBC
May 18 2009
1:49 AM

That is how I discovered the jerk. Nobody watches NBC. Bloggers posted articles and video's of the jerk mouthing off. YouTube skits of Olbermann by Ben Affleck are priceless.

by rexx1
May 18 2009
10:46 AM

LoveUnity

Personal characteristics are everything. Ideology is what what weak minded people use to keep themselves from using their own free will and all that entails.

Powell is a real man. I am not one prone to hero worship, but Powell is a dude I would follow down a barrel of a gun any day. If he says the Republicans have lost their way then I have to listen. He can drink from my canteen any day.

To say that he voted based on colour of skin is both stupid and insulting to someone who is a legit badass that Powell is.

The Republican Party of today reminds me of the movie "Idiocracy", if you haven't seen it, I highly recommend it.

by rexx1
May 18 2009
10:57 AM

Ednigma

Powell endorsed Obama because only a fool would back a ticket with Palin on the card.

Powell is no fool. Country ahead of party is what a patriot is all about.

by STUG
May 18 2009
12:21 PM

Congratulations David - we need more gutsy Buckleys, Brooks and Frums!

by enkephalon
May 18 2009
12:41 PM

The central premise of Frum's lazy and illogical attack on Limbaugh and the Republicans is based upon this line:

"But short of the crazy 9/11 denialists, no prominent liberal figure - certainly nobody as central to the left as Limbaugh is central to the right - ever accused either President Bush or Vice President Cheney of wishing to do harm to America. To have accused them of such a thing would have been to accuse them of treason."

And it is that line more than any other that insults the intelligence of anyone following politics for more than the last 3 months. Does Frum take us all for fools? Does the guy really expect us to forget the vicious, unhinged and accusatory froth-at-the-mouth rants of prominent liberals Al Gore, Jimmy Carter, both Clintons, Reid, Pelosi, Ted Kennedy, John Murtha, Rahm Emanuel, Howard Dean, Paul Begala, Shrum, Carville, Sharpton, Jesse Jackson and Michael Moore, let alone hundreds of lower level bloviating idiots such as Al Franken, Randi Rhodes, Rachel Maddox, John Stewart, Garofalo, and Cindy Sheehan?

Absolute rubbish.

It's long past time for you to follow your ideological friends Spector and Powell over to the dark side, David. You've lost whatever your credibility you once possessed as a conservative, so you may as well make the switch official.

by Free Bird
May 18 2009
12:41 PM

I agree with 'Country before Party'. What is being a part of a political party all about anyway? Loyalty to the greedy (Cheney), stupid (Bush), and bizarre hate mongers (Limberger); is obtuse at best.

Maybe being a good Republican means blind support of every party mouth piece, no matter how corrupt, inept or unsuitable they are. Powell is better than that.

I gave up on Party politics a long time ago. Each politician has to earn my current support.

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