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## David Brooks' Own Private Egypt



By Marty Kaplan

If only David Brooks' eligibility rules for Egyptian political candidates applied to Republicans as well.

The problem with Egypt's brief democracy, the *New York Times* columnist writes, was the wrong people were elected by the wrong people:

"Members of the Muslim Brotherhood are defined by certain beliefs. They reject pluralism, secular democracy and, to some degree, modernity.... When you elect fanatics... you have empowered people who are going to wind up subverting democracy.... Many have absolutist, apocalyptic mind-sets."

Quoting Adam Garfinkle in *The American Interest*, Brooks writes that "for this sort of person, 'there is no need for causality, since that would imply a diminution of God's power.' This sort of person 'does not accept the existence of an objective fact separate from how he feels about it.'"

"This sort of person" is a casting call for the Republican Party. People like:

- Tex. Rep. Louie Gohmert, who knows, knows, [knows](#) that Indonesian-born Barack Obama has "gone to war with Christianity"; that the Department of Homeland Security is stockpiling arms to suppress Americans; that the Boy Scouts will answer to God for allowing gay members; that America's "openly rebelling, even from the top, against God's teachings in the Bible" is a "sign," a "milestone," that our nation is headed toward the end of our existence.
- Ga. Rep. Paul Broun, a member of the House Science Committee, who [says](#) that "all that stuff I was taught about evolution and embryology and the Big Bang Theory, all that is lies straight from the pit of Hell. And it's lies to try to keep me and all the folks who were taught that from understanding that they need a savior."
- Tex. Rep. Lamar Smith, the chairman of the House Science Committee, who [denies](#) the causal connection between carbon dioxide and climate change, denies the reality of global warming and denies that regulations to reduce carbon emissions would have an impact on climate.
- Minn. Rep. Michele Bachmann, who [says](#) it's a "very real concern" that the HPV vaccine to prevent cervical cancer could lead to mental retardation. (She also calls climate change "voodoo, nonsense, hokum, a hoax.")

I have not yet begun to quote. There are plenty of other fanatics where they come from.

Writing about Middle Eastern fanatics, Brooks says "Islamists... lack the mental equipment to govern." Does he really not get that this diagnosis nicely fits the Tea Partiers, enabled by simpering colleagues fearful of right-wing primary challenges, who have ground our own government to a halt?

Brooks warns that when anti-modern, anti-pluralist, anti-secular, anti-fact candidates are elected, “they are always going to centralize power and undermine the democracy that elevated them.” Can he actually say that without thinking of the laws rolling back women’s rights that Republican governors and Republican legislators in Wisconsin, Ohio, North Carolina and Texas are railroading without due process in the dead of night? Without recalling the laws preventing young people, poor people and people of color (i.e., leaning Democrat) from voting that are being rammed through by Republican statehouses and Republican chief executives in Maine, Pennsylvania and around the country? I know that the human mind is deft at dealing with hypocrisy — cognitive dissonance is the polite term for it — but this is neurologically miraculous.

I’m no defender of Islamists, and I’m as frustrated as anyone else when an apparently democratic process lifts anti-democratic forces into power. But the place where Brooks takes his argument is a doozy, whether applied to Egypt or America:

“...[E]lections are not a good thing when they lead to the elevation of people whose substantive beliefs fall outside the democratic orbit. It’s necessary to investigate the core of a party’s beliefs, not just accept anybody who happens to emerge from a democratic process.”

So when Mohamed Morsi was elected president of Egypt, or when Hamas and Hezbollah won elections in Gaza and Lebanon, some Committee on Core Beliefs should have had a veto over the outcome? What could possibly go wrong? See under: Allende, Salvador in Chile, and Mossaddegh, Mohammad in Iran. Or Bush v. Gore. No, that’s too farfetched — Antonin Scalia et al surely decided that one totally without reference to core beliefs.

Maybe David Brooks is just laying the groundwork for a cabal of Republican elders to pay a little visit to Rand Paul if it looks like he’s on a path to winning the 2016 GOP White House nomination. But why wait? Newt Gingrich, Herman Cain, Donald Trump, Michele Bachmann and a gaggle of attention addicts who aren’t yet household names can be headed off at the presidential pass, right now, before the freakshow-lovin’ media gives them any oxygen. In earlier times, the establishment’s rationale for pushing them out of the primaries would have been that they’d be unelectable in November.

This political death panel, at least, could actually be honest about their lacking the mental equipment to govern.

*This is my column from The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles. My JJ columns just won first place for Best Columnist from the LA Press Club for southern California papers over 50k circulation. You can read more of my columns here, and email me there if you’d like.*

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