

Forum

Formula 2008?

Republicans are running around busily supporting one candidate or another, acting like their guy's got *the winning formula* for 2008. But, if you probed their inner thoughts, you'd find yards of doubt about the particular candidate they are hinging their hopes on.

For instance, supporters of Rudolph Giuliani must be scratching their heads over the latest Wall Street Journal-NBC poll showing their candidate lagging 5 percentage points behind Hillary Clinton.

Of course, this is just a snapshot in time. But, in the background of this *leaning Hillary* snapshot is the book "Her Way," in which Jeff Gerth and Don Van Natta have given voters plenty of blasts from her past, including, illuminatingly, her failure to read the National Intelligence Estimate before voting on Oct. 11, 2002, "to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against Iraq."

While she might claim, as she did at the June 3 CNN Democratic debate in Goffstown, N.H., that she did her *dile diligente*

before voting, you can't sugar-coat her failure to read the NIE. (Nor did any of her staff have access to this classified, caveat-heavy report concerning Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program.) Her affirmative vote, Messrs. Gerth and Van Natta report she argues, is tempered by the fact that, hours earlier, on the U.S. Senate floor, she called on the president to exhaust all diplomatic means before resorting to using military force against Iraq. Yet she voted "no" on the amendment Sen. Carl Levin, Michigan Democrat, offered, requiring just that.

Mr. Giuliani gives no such tortured explanation. He told Wolf Blitzer at the Republican debate two days later on the same New Hampshire stage, if he knew then what we know today regarding Saddam Hussein's lack of WMD, he would still have taken out the Iraq tyrant. And he expressed ready

willingness to use nuclear weapons against Iran to solve the presumed diplomatic impasse with that country. Little wonder his general election poll numbers are slipping.

One candidate on the Republican side who evidences more judiciousness on these and similar foreign policy questions is James S. Gilmore, III, former governor of Virginia, 1997-2001, and chairman of the National Commission on Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction. A graduate of the University of Virginia Law School, he also served as Virginia attorney general, 1993-97.

Recently, the National Association of Pakistani-Americans hosted a fund-raiser for Mr. Gilmore — a vote of confidence that, when it comes to calming an agitated world, Mr. Gilmore gets it. He understands the need for prudent decisions that are in the best, often narrow, strategic

interest of the American people and not in the service of some broad, Wilsonian vision — and the concomitant need to exercise vigorous diplomacy to build alliances based on mutual, enlightened self-interest.

Sahar Akhtar, a professor at William & Mary and the daughter of hosts Hanif and Zahida Akhtar, introduced the "talented, charismatic" Mr. Gilmore, setting forth his breadth of official experience encompassing travel to numerous countries, including Pakistan. His record, she said, gives him a "sophisticated understanding of international affairs" and "nuanced foreign policy perspective" by which he "rightly recognizes the complexity of many global issues and is not afraid to examine all dimensions of the issues including those that have been overlooked or pushed aside for one political reason or another."

As Mr. Gilmore said: "We're in a great world challenge right now (characterized by) . . . a great deal of anger, resentment (and danger) . . . particularly acute (in North Africa, the Mid-

dle East, South Asia and the Philippines) . . . The United States has to gather itself onto the moral high ground . . . and lead its (international) friends (so they) . . . know that we are noble . . . just . . . righteous and . . . want to bring people together across the world. That would be American foreign policy when I am President."

Americans are ready for this new brand of leadership built on "virtues" such as hard work, courage, humility and decency that, as Professor Akhtar said, manifest "the best character traits of such earlier Virginia visionary presidents as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison."

Then why haven't voters taken note of Jim Gilmore? Perhaps they have yet to focus seriously on the early candidate snapshots in this fluid race. Once they do, *Gilmore's Way* will, I predict, prove refreshingly attractive.

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