

Carly Fiorina as Contender for the Presidency: The GOP's "Female Ticket"

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Global Research, April 14, 2015

Region: [USA](#)

In-depth Report: [U.S. Elections](#)

"Hillary [Clinton] likes hashtags. But she doesn't know what leadership means." – Carly Fiorina, Feb 26, 2015

Carly Fiorina is doing her bit to make things on the GOP side of politics interesting for the White House contest. She has been deemed an "underdog," which, in political circles, is somewhat better than being seen as a stellar prospect even before the sun has risen. Fiorina lacks the boom element of fellow Republican candidates, but that may well be to her advantage.

The Republicans are hoping that she will be able to put the wind up Hillary Clinton's sails. According to Craig Robinson, the former political director of the Iowa Republican party, "She's the most aggressive Republican candidate when it comes to someone attacking Hillary Clinton" (*The Guardian*, Mar 31). There are no gender divides, no risks of falling into the chasm of sexist denigration here. Hillary against the men is one thing; against a female GOP opponent, quite another matter.

A recent move is afoot to heap much upon the former First Lady's efforts to make it to the White House, with the heavy artillery being directed by Fiorina. "Yes, she's had a lot of impressive titles, but a position is just a position – it's all about what you do in it, and I think her time in the position of secretary of state is demonstrably one that lacks accomplishment but that it also has some real blemishes on it." [1]

The traditional ground here is what Clinton supposedly did – or did not do – in a range of areas. There was the Benghazi incident, which always seemed to jar with the GOP. There was the misunderstanding about Vladimir Putin ("there no way a red reset button is going to work"), which is hardly improved upon by Fiorina's odd reflections on colour, buttons and a supposed understanding of the Slavic inner beast. Clinton is also accused of letting the relationship with Israel slide into discomfort and suspicion.

Then there are various instances of hypocrisy, of which the Clinton Foundation is rather good at. Explain, Fiorina challenged at the Conservative Political Action Conference held in February, "why we should accept that the millions and millions of dollars that have flowed into the Clinton Global Initiative from foreign governments doesn't represent a conflict of interest." [2]

Well, that's all rather understandable, if you reflect upon the vast creation of the Clinton political machinery, fuelled for decades on double-speak, contradiction and dirty money. At least Fiorina picks up on the antics of Clinton, tweeting on the one hand "about women's rights in this country" while taking "money from the governments that deny women the

most basic rights.” A somewhat dishonest way of pocketing the proceeds, with Fiorina sounds almost envious.

What ideas of novelty will Fiorina be offering? Well and good to be the nagger of the political scene, the negative critic, the savage counter, but platforms and self-reflection also count in the policy stakes. Potential zingers are already being readied for firing.

Fiorina, for one, has her own eye towards emancipating a few more Wall Street wolves, wishing to abolish reforms of the financial sector while paying tribute to the God of the invisible yet rather aggressive hand. The 2010 Dodd-Frank legislation is the satanic spawn of a regulatory mind, and she wishes to neuter it by way of swift abolition. Showing that history is not necessarily important for anybody in particular, notably the GOP, Fiorina ignores the reason the rules were introduced to begin with, and argues that they do not work. Forget any preventive measures regarding a financial crisis, or a meltdown inflicted by roguish carelessness. White collar criminals, convicted or otherwise, will be rejoicing.

“Let’s start by making sure that the 26 regulatory agencies that were supposed to be overseeing the financial system that were supposed to be predicting the financial crisis – 26 of them all missed it. We haven’t even started to look at that problem.” Fine stuff, till you realise that advice, warnings and concerns about an imminent crisis during the first decade of 2000 were treated as Cassandra-like evocations of a disturbed, killjoy mind.

Fiorina attempts some understanding of how best to combat “crony capitalism” but struggles to understand its links to the US political system. The connections between government and the private sector are matters of record in Washington, D.C., with the latter sinking spreading its octopi like influence across a range of corporate, military and financial deals. There is no cleaning up to be done, because there is a general feeling that all functions smoothly in a republic that has seen better days.

Interestingly enough, Fiorina is right to suggest that, “Bigger government creates more crony capitalism” but that is to miss the point that all governments since Clinton have expanded even as they have been condemned. Under Bush, government hardly shrank, and sweet deals were done between officials and private sector interests. Attacking small government remains a fashionable nonsense.

Shrinkage – at least an inflicted variant of it on the workplace – is certainly something Fiorina believes in. Her six-year tenure at Hewlett-Packard was marked by savage cuts – the laying off of 30,000 employees provided Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) ample ammunition in her re-election campaign in 2010. In 2005, she was ousted by the company’s disgruntled board. An air of ecstatic relief pushed shares of HP (Research) up 6.9 per cent. “The stock is up a bit on the fact that nobody liked Carly’s leadership all that much,” suggested analyst with Fulcrum Global Partners, Robert Cihra. This may prove that Fiorina has more in common with Clinton than she wishes to admit. Both risk doing well in the anti-popularity stakes.

Sexist forays of the sort *The New Republic* has dabbled in, calling Fiorina “Sarah Palin 2.0,” are misguided. But Fiorina is not, for all her underdog credentials, a vast improvement upon candidates in the GOP flock.[3] She is certainly no Sarah Palin, but she may well prove to be another scarecrow in the realm of dull-witted Republican policy. The sell, in the end, is what will matter.

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Notes

- [1] <http://crooksandliars.com/2015/04/mika-brzezinski-gives-carly-fiorina-big>
- [2] <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/02/carly-fiorina-hillary-clinton-womens-rights-115543.html>
- [3] <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/121480/carly-fiorina-new-sarah-palin>

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