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When Barack Obama began positioning himself as a presidential aspirant toward the end of 2006, *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer was rather encouraging for a conservative. Obama, he wrote at the time, has "an affecting personal history." More importantly, he is much akin to another once-popular presidential aspirant, Colin Powell; both, as it turns out, are black. "Race is only one element in their popularity," Krauthammer noted, "but an important one. A historic one. Like many Americans, I long to see an African-American ascend to the presidency. It would be an event of profound significance, a great milestone in the unfolding story of African-Americans achieving their rightful, long-delayed place in American life." Though the column made a strong case for Obama's candidacy in terms of his identity, it included not a word on what he might bring to the table in terms of policy.

Less than two years later, Krauthammer was attacking those who would make the case for Obama's candidacy in terms of his identity, rather than his policies. "The pillars of American liberalism - the Democratic Party, the universities and the mass media - are obsessed with biological markers, most particularly race and gender," he helpfully explained, adding that the 2008 Democratic primary represented "the full flowering of identity politics. It's not a pretty picture."

Regardless of what views he may think he holds regarding the legitimacy of Obama's personal appeal, Krauthammer has plenty of other, presumably firmer stances on the president and his doings, and has in fact emerged as the most significant of the administration's right-wing critics. In a profile piece that made the rounds last May, Politico's Ben Smith proclaimed the Canadian-born commentator to be "a coherent, sophisticated and implacable critic of the new president" and a "central conservative voice" in the "Age of Obama;" New York Times mainstay David Brooks recently characterized him as "the most important conservative columnist right now." When Krauthammer won an award last month from Rupert Murdoch in recognition of having done a lot of whatever it is that makes Rupert Murdoch happy, Dick Cheney himself was on hand to congratulate him. In liberal terms of achievement, this is akin to winning an award from Noam Chomsky and being feted by the ghost of Louis Brandeis.

Krauthammer does indeed rank highly among today's conservative commentariat insomuch as that he does not use the term "Democrat Party" and has so far refrained from screaming or crying on television. And many of his arguments in opposition to liberalism are quite cogent, which is certainly a fine thing for an argument to be. But

When NATO sought to stave off yet another Balkan genocide by way of its 1999 air bombing campaign against Serbia, Krauthammer denounced the move as mere wide-eyed liberal amateurism on the part of Clinton, arguing that air strikes would be insufficient to force Milosevic out of Kosovo. Bizarrely enough, he tried to convince his readers that General Wesley Clark agreed with him over Clinton on the matter, quoting the then-NATO commander as telling Jim Lehrer, "we never thought that through air power we could stop these killings on the ground." But Krauthammer leaves out the rest of Clark's quote in which the general makes clear that "the person who has to stop this is President Milosevic" and that the purpose of the air campaign was to make him do just that - which, of course, it did. For good measure, Krauthammer also criticizes Clinton for playing golf in the midst of conflict ("The stresses of war, no doubt"); he appears to have changed his mind on the propriety of such things around 2002 or so.

Even after it became clear that the Kosovo campaign had succeeded brilliantly, Krauthammer was still ideologically committed to chaos in the Balkans, having also predicted in '99 that NATO involvement "would sever Kosovo from Serbian control and lead inevitably to an irredentist Kosovar state, unstable and unviable and forced to either join or take over pieces of neighboring countries." When an ethnic Albanian insurgency arose in Macedonia along its border with UN-administered Kosovo in 2001, he felt himself vindicated, proclaiming that "the Balkans are on the verge of another explosion," making several references to Vietnam, and characterizing our continued presence in the region as a "quagmire." The violence ended within the year, having claimed less than 80 lives. Kosovo has since joined both the IMF and the World Bank; Macedonia is preparing for membership in NATO.

Like many others who had cried apocalypse in Kosovo, Krauthammer bumbled into our two more recent military adventures in a haze of amnesia and inexplicable self-regard. He ridiculed *New York Times* contributor Johnny Apple for writing an article to the effect that Afghanistan may develop into a "quagmire" and another one in which Apple proposed that coalition forces might have to contend with guerrilla fighters in Iraq. Krauthammer himself hailed the Iraq conflict as "the Three Week War;" when those allegedly improbable guerrillas did show up and U.S. reconstruction efforts were revealed to have been thrown together by Liberty University grads, Krauthammer responded with studied sarcasm. "Every pundit, every ex-official and, of course, every Democrat knows exactly how it should have been done," he wrote, before going on to explain how it should have been done. He concludes the 2003 column by suggesting that if "in a year or two we are able to leave behind a stable, friendly government, we will have succeeded. If not, we will have failed. And all the geniuses will be vindicated." Two years later, Krauthammer followed up by admitting to his failures and acknowledging the predictive superiority of his opponents. Just kidding. Instead, he denounced retired military figures like John Batiste as the "I-know-better generals" for second-guessing Rumsfeld, whom he continued to support after even William Kristol had begun calling for the defense secretary's resignation. When the surge was proposed, Krauthammer came out against the idea, explaining in a 2007 column that the strategy "will fail" due to the perfidy and incompetence of the Maliki government.

Our columnist hasn't fared much better in the realm of domestic predictions. In his aforementioned column on Obama - the one in which he praises the senator's blackness, not the one in which he blasts everyone else for praising the senator's blackness - our columnist explains that, should he run, "he will not win. The reason is 9/11." In the meantime, he says, the White House will probably go to a Republican - "say, 9/11 veteran Rudy Giuliani." Krauthammer also warns that the "reflexive anti-war sentiments" of the left "will prove disastrous for the Democrats in the long run - the long run beginning as early as November '08."

Though well up to speed on his nonsensical predictions quota, Krauthammer would still be in danger of losing his parking spot at The Weekly Standard if he failed to turn out the occasional bit of hypocrisy. In the wake of the Virginia Tech massacre, he appeared on Fox News to point out the inevitable Muslim connection:

Krauthammer: And he did leave the return address 'Ismail Ax.' 'Ismail Ax.' I suspect it has some more to do with Islamic terror and the inspiration than it does with the opening line of Moby Dick.

Brit Hume: Which was, "My name is Ismael."

Close enough, Brit. But in a column that appeared two days later, Krauthammer denounced "the inevitable rush to get ideological mileage out of the carnage" and called for taste in the aftermath of tragedy. "Perhaps in the spirit of Obama's much-heralded post-ideological politics we can agree to observe a decent interval of respectful silence before turning ineffable evil and unfathomable grief into political fodder."

Anyway, there you go. That's Charles Krauthammer.