

Was his Ground Zero Mosque speech Obama's 'point of no return'?

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Obama is done. That's what both liberals and conservatives are saying. He will be a one-term president, remembered for being the first African-American in the White House – but also for being a left-wing ideologue who clumsily attempted to force America into socialism against its will.

The pivotal event in his failed presidency will be the recent speech in which he gave his endorsement of the Ground Zero Mosque, writes author J.R. Dunn – and his withdrawal of that endorsement the next day.

“There comes a moment in a failing presidency where the incumbent, through some single gesture, action, or statement, crosses a certain line from beyond which there is no return. Through his own will and behavior, he so underlines his failings, so frames his negative image, that no further action can ever erase it.”

Obama's conflicting messages on the mosque have done him in, agrees author Douglas E. Schoen. Voters are gearing up to retaliate against the president's incompetence.

“The problem,” write the liberal *Politico* magazine's John Harris and Jim VandeHei, “is that he and his West Wing turn out to be not especially good at politics or communications – in other words, largely ineffective at the very things on which their campaign reputation was built.”

Whenever Americans are looking for leadership from the president, Obama and his administration have systematically put forth conflicting and ambiguous messages, says arch-liberal Maureen Dowd. Writing in the *New York Times*, she notes “He's with the banks, he's against the banks. He's leaving Afghanistan, he's staying in Afghanistan. He strains at being a populist, but his head is in the clouds.”

Dunn is consulting editor of the conservative *American Thinker* magazine. “Fate, accident, and circumstance have nothing to do with it,” he writes. “It is the president himself who puts the period at the end of his own sentence. Such moments are obvious in retrospect, though not always at the time. With Richard Nixon, it was the ‘eighteen-minute gap.’ An oval office tape recording turned over to Judge John Sirica, who was overseeing the investigation of the Watergate incident, turned out to have a lengthy period of silence smack-dab in the middle of a conversation between Nixon and chief of staff H.R. Haldeman.”

“The White House claimed Rose Mary Woods, the president's secretary, had inadvertently hit the wrong button for those eighteen minutes. This might well have been true, but Nixon had been holding his own in the Watergate battle up to that point. The voting public viewed the uproar with bemusement rather than indignation. But the tape gap finished him. In less than a year, he was forced into resignation.

“For Jimmy Carter,” writes Dunn, “it was the ‘malaise speech’ of July 15, 1979, in which he attempted to shuffle the blame for his tepid performance as president from his own

administration onto the shoulders of the American people. Carter claimed that a national 'crisis of confidence' made it impossible for him to adequately grapple with the country's problems.

"It was America's fault, not Jimmy Carter's. The public reaction was open disgust and the abject collapse of any support for the Carter presidency.

"With Obama," writes Dunn, "we have an abundance of riches: the multiple vacations, the legal harassment of the state of Arizona on behalf of illegals, the clownish response to the Gulf oil blowout. But when historians come to select the moment when Obama went over the edge, I think they'll find the great Iftar mosque speech of August 13, 2010 hard to beat."

During a White House dinner celebrating the Muslim festival of Ramadan, the president found it appropriate to come out in favor of religious freedom.

"Not in support of Christians being attacked by janjaweed gunmen, or Bahá'ís tormented by Iranian mullahs, or Jews being stalked by assassins, or even Americans being told that they can't pray in public," writes Dunn, "but in favor of a shadowy foreign foundation with suspicious financing and disturbing jihadi connections that wishes to build a victory monument congruent to the site of the 9/11 massacre."

The public considers Obama incompetent. "Not only has President Obama systematically put forward unpopular policies and programs that are not producing real, long-lasting results that reflect the wishes of the American people," writes Schoen, "he has not generated a sense of competence in the electorate."

Schoen is a political strategist and author of the upcoming book *How the Tea Party Movement is Fundamentally Remaking Our Two-Party System* published by Harper.

"Obama's judgment and instincts have been called into question by a series of bad decisions since he has become president," writes Schoen. "Put simply, rather than emphasizing results and outcomes, he has opted for rhetorical parsing and political gamesmanship every time. Voters have grown disillusioned with the administration's reactive and seemingly hypocritical governing style, in which the notion of unity of command and a cohesive strategy have proved alien.

"Obama's flip-flopping on the 'Ground Zero Mosque' issue was no different from his handling of the Gulf oil spill," writes Schoen, "when he sought both to blame BP and assert federal responsibility."

"Nixon had suffered a reputation as a conniver," writes Dunn. However, the Watergate tape gap "fit so perfectly into that narrative, crowding out everything else.

"Carter's inept performance as president was rendered even harder to bear by his continual sanctimony. The malaise speech merely added the patina of a whiner.

"With Obama, suspicions have involved his status as an American. The foreign parentage, the registration in an Indonesian school noting him as a Muslim, the uproar over the birth certificate aroused misgivings that, despite media scorn heaped upon those noting them, he has never quite been able to put to rest."

But with the Ground Zero Mosque speech, "his opportunities to do so are ended. Impressions trump arguments, and for most of the country, Obama will, from here on in, be a strange and untrustworthy figure – a man who does not understand what Ground Zero means to America, who utilizes American law and custom to support foreign interests, who speaks to strangers more clearly than to his own.

"Nothing either Nixon or Carter did enabled them to recover from their *faux pas*," writes Dunn. "Even as the tape gap story broke, Nixon was supervising a massive airlift of supplies and ammunition to Israel, which was involved in a life-or-death struggle against massive Arab attack

in the Yom Kippur War. It gained Nixon nothing, scarcely earning a mention amid all the public speculation about Watergate.

“Less than three months after the Carter speech, Iranian ‘students’ sacked the American embassy in Tehran, taking nearly a hundred American hostages. I can attest that I was not alone in thinking, ‘Great – and we’ve got Mr. Malaise in charge.’ The year-and-a-half-long hostage crisis hastened the collapse of the worst presidency of the later 20th century.

“The past two years,” continues Dunn, “are the best Obama will ever see. The real crises of his presidency are still to come, and they are easily visible as they move toward us – Iran, terrorism, the economy, the collapse of the national health care system hastened by his own policies. He will meet them under a cloud of his own making, attempting to overcome them as a president who takes endless vacations, who will not defend his country’s borders, who sat out the Gulf oil crisis, who overlooks the sacrifices of his own countrymen in favor of dubious foreign figures.”

The tide has gone out

“Some lines of Shakespeare occurred to me while Obama was dawdling over a response to the oil blowout. They can also serve to cover the entire morass: *“There is a tide in the affairs of men, Which, taken at the flood, leads us to fortune; Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries.*

“The tide,” says Dunn, “has gone out for Obama.

“By sending such distinctive and frequently incoherent messages,” writes Schoen, “the administration appears adrift and divided. All the while, the public has no clear idea of the administration’s specific goals and intentions, our level of commitment, and the approach we will take on Afghanistan and on other issues.

“These dual messages also ultimately reduce and minimize our country’s standing in the international community, delegitimizes our power, and reduces our influence in the eyes of our adversaries.”

Yes, Obama is done, agrees political commentator Charles Krauthammer: “Liberalism under siege is an ugly sight indeed. Just yesterday it was all hope and change and returning power to the people. But the people have proved so disappointing. Their recalcitrance has, in only 19 months, turned the 40-year liberal ascendancy predicted by James Carville into a full retreat.

“Ah, the people, the little people, the small-town people, the ‘bitter’ people, as Barack Obama in an unguarded moment once memorably called them, clinging ‘to guns or religion or’ – this part is less remembered – ‘antipathy toward people who aren’t like them.’ That’s a polite way of saying: clinging to bigotry.”

And that’s what we will continue to hear more of, says Krauthammer – liberal shouting that the reason voters have turned on Obama is racism.

However, that is completely wrong, says Krauthammer. Even so, that’s how the Obama administration and the liberal media will react.

They will attempt to intimidate us by crying “bigotry!” However, America is growing tired of the false claim.

And the fact is that the liberals just can’t stand it that the voting public persists in what the liberals consider “incorrect thinking.”

“Resistance to the vast expansion of government power, intrusiveness and debt, as represented by the tea party movement?” writes Krauthammer. That’s not the result of principles or convictions, claim the liberals! No, it’s nothing but “racist resentment toward a black president.”

The public's patience with that constant accusation is growing tired and thin. Likewise, the public's "disgust and alarm with the federal government's unwillingness to curb illegal immigration, as crystallized in the Arizona law?" says Krauthammer.

What about the public's "opposition to the most radical redefinition of marriage in human history, as expressed in Proposition 8 in California?" asks Krauthammer. The liberals can't accept that the public has morals – and is offended that liberals have attempted to use the courts to force the legalization of family-destroying policies. But, now the liberals cry, that's "Homophobia." and what about the public's opposition to a 15-story Islamic center and mosque near Ground Zero? That's "Islamophobia."

"Now we know why the country has become 'ungovernable,' last year's excuse for the Democrats' failure of governance," writes Krauthammer. "Who can possibly govern a nation of racist, bigoted, homophobic Islamophobes?"

"Note what connects these issues," continues Krauthammer. "In every one, liberals have lost the argument in the court of public opinion."

Indeed, large majorities of voters oppose Obama's social-democratic agenda, support the Arizona law, oppose gay marriage and reject the Ground Zero Mosque.

So, asks Krauthammer, "What's a liberal to do?" To defend Obama, there's nothing else to do but "Pull out the bigotry charge, the trump that pre-empts debate and gives no credit to the seriousness and substance of the contrary argument."

Indeed, writes Krauthammer, "When the tea party arose – a spontaneous, leaderless and perfectly natural (and traditionally American) reaction to the vast expansion of government intrinsic to the president's proudly proclaimed transformational agenda – the liberals cast it as a mob of angry white yahoos disguising their antipathy to a black president by cleverly speaking in economic terms.

"Then came Arizona. It seems impossible for the left to believe that people of good will could hold that: illegal immigration should be illegal."

As for same-sex marriage in California, "is it so hard to see why people might believe that a single judge overturning the will of 7 million voters is an affront to democracy?" asks Krauthammer. And why can't liberals understand that "seeing merit in retaining the structure of the most ancient and fundamental of all social institutions is something other than an alleged hatred of gays – particularly since the opposite-gender requirement has characterized virtually every society in all the millennia until just a few years ago?"

Smug accusations of prejudice

"And now the Ground Zero Mosque. The intelligentsia is near unanimous that the only possible grounds for opposition is bigotry toward Muslims," writes Krauthammer. "This smug attribution of bigotry to two-thirds of the population hinges on the insistence on a complete lack of connection between Islam and radical Islam, a proposition that dovetails perfectly with the Obama administration's pretense that we are at war with nothing more than 'violent extremists' of inscrutable motive and indiscernible belief."

The public just doesn't swallow any of the whitewash. As a result, "the Democrats are going to get beaten badly in November," writes Krauthammer. "Not just because the economy is ailing. And not just because Obama overread his mandate in governing too far left.

"But because a comeuppance is due the arrogant elites whose undisguised contempt for the great unwashed prevents them from conceding serious thought to those who dare oppose them."

“Liberals are frantically trying to explain away Obama’s problems,” writes conservative columnist Jonah Goldberg. “Some want to protect their investment in Obama, and some want to protect their investment in liberalism. So some claim that his mistakes stem from not being progressive enough.

“What’s clear right now is that the president who claimed to be the personification of a world-historical moment is lost.”

“Obama’s ability to connect with voters is what launched him,” writes Mort Zuckerman. “But what has surprised me is how he has failed to connect with the voters since he’s been in office. Now people stop listening to him. He punted on the economy and reversed the fortunes of the Democrats in 365 days.”

Zuckerman is chairman and editor in chief of *U.S. News & World Report* and publisher of the *New York Daily News*. He is a trustee of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Washington Institute for Near East Studies and the International Institute of Strategic Studies.

“I’m very disappointed,” he writes. “We endorsed him. I voted for him. I supported him publicly and privately.” Obama “misjudged the character of the country. He didn’t get it. He was determined somehow or other to adopt a whole new agenda. This health-care plan is going to be a fiscal disaster. Most of the country wanted to deal with costs, not expansion of coverage. This is going to raise costs dramatically.

“In the campaign, he said he would change politics as usual. He did change them. It’s now worse than it was. I’ve now seen the kind of buying off of politicians that I’ve never seen before. It’s politically corrupt and it’s starting at the top. It’s revolting.

“One business leader said to me, ‘In the Clinton administration, the policy people were at the center, and the political people were on the sideline. In the Obama administration, the political people are at the center, and the policy people are on the sidelines. I think he’s already laid in huge problems for the country. It’s very sad. It’s really sad. The political leadership of the world is very, very dismayed. He better turn it around.

“The Democrats are going to get killed in this election.

“It’s really interesting because he had brilliant, brilliant political instincts during the campaign. I don’t know what has happened to them. It’s unbelievable. Everybody says so. You can’t believe how dismayed people are. That’s why he’s plunging in the polls. If he continues on the downward spiral he is on, he won’t be reelected.

“It’s almost as if President Obama’s agenda includes provoking anger at himself,” says radio host Michael Reagan. “And it’s not just Republicans he’s provoking. It’s just about anybody who crosses his path. Long-time liberal Democratic Congressman Charles Rangel is a case in point. The veteran Harlem congressman reacted to criticism from the president, who called on him to ‘end his career with dignity,’ by remarking that Obama hasn’t ‘been around long enough to determine what my dignity is.’ He added sarcastically that it’s more likely to be the other way around over the next two years, predicting the time will come when it will be he who will have to protect the president’s dignity.”

And now, notes Reagan, the American people see Obama “taking opposite sides over a two-day span, Obama first indicated opposition to the building of a mosque on the edge of Manhattan’s Ground Zero, and the next day opposed the idea.

“After voicing his support Friday night, he reversed himself after his remarks sparked a firestorm of criticism.”

“Having taken both sides on the issue,” notes Reagan, “he managed to anger both supporters of the mosque and its opponents.”

And in the process, he has lost whatever credibility that he had left.