

PALIN AND THE PRESIDENTIAL

I'm still synthesizing what to make of last night.

But I have to say I disagree with some of the early conclusions that Palin was a net negative for McCain. Here, for example, is Ambinder's description of Palin's role in McCain's loss:

Sarah Palin. Polling shows that she drove some voters away from Sen. McCain and to Barack Obama. Voters judged her to be too inexperienced to be president. Also, instead of appealing to independents, she became a polarizing figure. ALSO – her persona highlighted McCain's age and health since she could have taken over. ALSO – her selection killed the "inexperience" argument against Obama.

Clearly, she was devastating in some states—a large number of voters flipped from McCain to Obama based on Palin's presence on the ticket. But in some states, she made the difference between McCain winning (or losing narrowly) and losing big. The AP reports that nation-wide evangelicals made up a quarter of the turnout—which may well mean that evangelicals turned out in greater numbers, both in relative and absolute numbers, than they did in 2004. And in states like North Carolina, Georgia, and Indiana, they made up a greater proportion of the electorate.

In other words, in states with large African-American and evangelical populations (though there is overlap of course), high white evangelical turnout may have kept McCain in the race. That may have been racism. But I doubt they would have turned out as enthusiastically without Palin as a draw.

Palin clearly was toxic for McCain in places

like WI, MN, MI, and PA. But at the same time, Palin's ability to attract evangelicals at high rates saved this from being a blowout. She certainly hurt him in the mountain West. So at that level, she was a factor in enough states to give Obama a close win.

But she also prevented this race from being a huge blowout.

Oh, and she has saved Don Young's job and may well have saved Uncle Toobz' job, for the moment.