



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on May 23, 2011

Ron Paul Is Different

Paul is remarkably feisty for his age, but the fact remains that he is 75 years old. John McCain lost to Barack Obama in 2008 for several reasons, among which was his physical appearance. For right or wrong, ours is a hyper-imagistic age, and there are few areas of life more image-centered than politics.

There are, though, several considerations that militate in favor of a Ron Paul candidacy.

First, *in spite of* his stylistic handicaps, Paul has succeeded in resonating with significant numbers of people [from across the political spectrum](#). More interesting yet, unlike John McCain, say, who can boast of having routinely “reached across the aisle” only because he just as routinely conceded to leftist demands, Paul can claim to have inspired people to reach across the aisle *to him*. In other words, without compromising a single belief, Paul has attracted conservatives and libertarians, Republicans and Democrats, “independents” and [“moderates.”](#)



How many other Republicans own such a feat?

Second, Paul’s circumstances today are not those in which McCain found himself in ‘08. The charisma that once enraptured audiences *before* Obama became President is not likely to work as well now that people know him better. Also, McCain’s was the face of the Republican Party *at a time* when its continual repudiation of exactly those values that it claimed to champion had made Americans grow weary with it. At present, it is primarily the Democrats who are the source of Americans’ angst.

Third, Ron Paul is the one candidate who is emphatically *not* vulnerable to the charge of “flip flopping.” In 2008, he distinguished himself as the sole candidate in *both* parties to address precisely those economic issues that are now front and center. Then, [he was mocked and ridiculed](#), and by no one more fiercely than his [fellow Republicans](#).

Fourth, today, with the birth of [the Tea Party movement](#) of which he was no small inspiration, not only will Paul’s *ideas* stand an even better chance of resonating with a larger audience than he reached three years ago, but in retrospect, because of what many may judge to have been his prescience, Paul *himself* could achieve a credibility that he never had in the past.

So, why is it that the GOP establishment, including especially so many in the punditry class who



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consider themselves “conservatives,” is arguably more resistant to the prospect of a presidential ticket with Ron Paul at the top (or bottom, for that matter)?

Make no mistake about it — the stylistic concerns expressed above, if they figure at all in the deliberations of the self-proclaimed guardians of Republican orthodoxy, are negligible. Resistance to Paul boils down to the brute fact that his very existence puts the lie to the fiction that the GOP is the party of “conservative values.” There are many ways in which Paul undercuts the conventional Republican wisdom. But nothing upsets and frightens the establishment more than his views on foreign policy, for in relentlessly arguing against the enterprise of waging war to spread “democracy” in the Middle East (and beyond?), Paul exposes this project for its resolutely *anti-conservative* character.

Talking heads in the so-called “alternative” or “conservative media” regularly refer to Paul as a “libertarian.” Of course, in a sense, this is true, and Paul himself embraces this label. But they insist on calling Paul a libertarian (when they aren’t [calling him a “nut”](#)) in order to impress upon voters the idea that it is *they* who are *really* conservative, not Paul. In other words, because most people identify themselves as “conservative,” not “libertarian,” Paul’s opponents in the “alternative media” and the Republican Party hope to deceive these people into thinking that there is something “extreme” or “fringe” about his views.

Lest we fall for this nonsense, we should recall two things. First, Paul’s “libertarianism” is much more compatible with the *classical* conservative tradition of which [Edmund Burke](#) is the “patron saint” than is the [neoconservatism](#) of Paul’s Republican critics. Second, and more important, for present purposes, Paul isn’t first and foremost a libertarian, as far as governing is concerned; he is, simply, a constitutionalist. *All* of the positions for which Paul argues are rooted in his reading of the U.S. Constitution.

We would also be well served to bear in mind that, at the very least, Paul’s conception of the Constitution would prove more legible to the Founders than that advanced by today’s “conservatives.”



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