



The Republican Media, Ron Paul, and I

I recently submitted what I took to be a spirited defense of Ron Paul to a well regarded right-leaning publication — that is to say, a publication that is widely esteemed by notable establishment neoconservative Republican pundits. It was rejected. In what follows I relay my latest experience with its editors. I welcome any feedback from readers — including feedback that is critical: if I am wrong, please call me out on it. I ask only that you supply reasons for your assessment.



The Argumentative Strategy

Identify distortions; state Paul's positions; identify contradictions in his critics

In my article — “Setting the Record Straight on Ron Paul”—I pursue a simple, three-pronged strategy. Courtesy of his Republican detractors, the political horizon is replete with gross distortions of Dr. Paul's positions. I expose these distortions for what they are. Next, I reiterate what Paul has actually said on the issues. Finally, I show that by their own standards, Paul's enemies contradict themselves.

The Strategy in Action

Paul on Domestic Policy

For example, Paul's Republican rivals inexhaustibly tell us that the Texas Congressman wants to “legalize” drugs, prostitution, and so-called “same sex marriage.” As anyone who has actually listened to Paul knows all too well, this is *not* his position. Rather, it is an end to *the federal government's* intervention on behalf of these issues that he seeks. Paul, that is, believes it is *unconstitutional* for the federal government to either criminalize *or legalize* any of these activities. I observe that by the standards that his critics judge him, they convict themselves. Familiarity with elementary logic reveals in no time just how inescapable is this verdict.

Paul insists that the federal government has no constitutional authority to speak to the issues of drugs, prostitution, and “same-sex marriage.” He believes that these are issues best left to the *states* to determine. Because of this, his rivals claim that he favors their legalization. But when it comes to, say, the hot-button issue of abortion, these same Republicans — virtually all of them — are just as ready to invoke federalism as is Paul. It is the states, not the federal government, that have constitutional authority to address abortion, they claim. By their own reasoning, though, there is no way to circumvent the conclusion that they, then, must favor the *legalization* of abortion.

Such Republicans, I note, are either incapable of adhering to this most fundamental logical demand of consistency or else they are unwilling to do so. Thus, they are either intellectually or morally confused. Perhaps they are both.

Foreign Policy and Islamic Terrorism

Ron Paul's vision of terrorism generally, and the 9/11 attacks specifically, is another issue that I address



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by way of this same argumentative strategy.

Paul's nemeses repeatedly claim that he "blames" America for the Islamic violence that has been perpetrated against Americans. This is their distortion of Paul's position. In reality, Paul has "blamed" no one, short of the terrorists themselves. After all, he did vote in favor of military action against the Taliban in the days following the attacks of September 11, 2001. Least of all can he be said to have ever "blamed" America.

"Blame" is a concept located within the universe of moral discourse. Along with its complement term, "praise," "blame" belongs to the language of justification. Paul, in sharp contrast, is concerned with supplying an *explanation* when he addresses the topic of Islamic terrorism and 9/11. In other words, he seeks to justify nothing.

The distinction between explanatory and justificatory modes of discourse is another species of elementary logic. Again, that Paul's enemies do not recognize what every college freshmen enrolled in an introductory logic course is expected to recognize renders it impossible to avoid the conclusion that they are either cognitively or morally impoverished — or perhaps a little (or a lot) of both.

However, I continued, let's just say that Paul is looking to assign blame when he speaks of Islamic terrorism. According to Paul, the actions that invite Islamic violence are not those of America; they are the actions of the federal government. Surely Republicans, of all people, can understand that to "blame" the federal government for this or that is most certainly not equivalent to blaming America. Think about it: It is Republicans, both politicians and pundits, who tirelessly rail against the federal government. It was Ronald Reagan — a man who counts for no small amount of importance among Republicans — who famously said that (the federal) government is not "the solution" to our problems; all too often it is the problem itself. Does this mean that Reagan was essentially saying that America is the problem?

If Paul is guilty of bashing "America" because of his observation — one shared by, among other sources, the 9/11 Commission and the Central Intelligence Agency, including the CIA's Michael Scheuer, who presided over its Osama bin Laden unit for 22 years — that our federal government's foreign policy provoked this "blowback" phenomenon, then every Republican who criticizes the federal government for anything and everything is equally guilty of bashing America.

Paulophobic Republicans, once more, are inconsistent. But because of the glaring nature of this inconsistency, it is hard to imagine that they aren't being dishonest.

Foreign Policy and Foreign Aid

Finally, I looked at the topic of foreign aid and Israel.

Paul's opponents state that he is no friend of Israel. Why? Paul, you see, wants to eliminate *all* foreign aid — which obviously includes foreign aid to Israel.

Paul opposes foreign aid for the same reason that he opposes all redistributive schemes: *It is a redistributive scheme*. But among the various forms of government welfare that prevail in our country, foreign aid is arguably the most egregious, for it requires that the U.S. government compel its own citizens — the vast majority of whom are not affluent — to part with their resources so as to subsidize the wealthy office holders of the governments of other countries.

Yet he objects to foreign aid on another ground: the subsidization of other governments makes those governments forever dependent upon those governments that subsidize them. That is, the sovereignty of a nation is compromised inasmuch as it is beholden to another.



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Now, there may be cogent reasons for why Paul may be mistaken as to what being a good ally of Israel (or any other nation) entails. But it is only ill faith that can account for why his Republican objectors would charge him with being “anti-Israel,” for Paul’s view is that a true champion of Israel (or any other nation) is one who seeks her independence. By calling for an end to foreign aid, it is exactly this for which he calls.

When we consider that it is Republicans who charge Democrats with “racism” for allegedly desiring to keep blacks dependent upon Big Government, one would think that Republicans more so than anyone else would sympathize with Paul on this topic. Yet again, Paul’s Republican enemies contradict themselves: if Paul is “anti-Israel” or “anti-Semitic” because of his desire to liberate Israel from its dependence upon Big Government, then it is Republicans, not Democrats, who are “racist” because of their desire to liberate blacks from their dependence upon Big Government. If, on the other hand, such Republicans insist that respect for persons requires that we affirm their autonomy or independence, then insofar as they want to keep Israel dependent upon the American government, it is his Republican detractors, not Paul himself, who are the real “anti-Semites.”

The Editor’s Remarks and My Response

These are the arguments that I made in my article. The editor of this reputable publication rejected it as a “non-starter.” In an unusually long email, he claimed to be “shocked” and “stunned” that I would accuse his publication of furthering distortions and lies concerning Paul. He then pointed out that while he has published anti-Paul pieces, he has also published critical pieces of all of the Republican presidential contenders.

Although he spent most of his time defending his publication against my charges, he managed to criticize my piece for its lack of “objectivity” and its “emotionalism.” Because I didn’t cite a single source, what I submitted was merely my “opinion” of what Ron Paul has said — nothing more.

The editor’s comments call for several responses.

First, it is worth noting that not once did he question either the substance or the logic of my arguments. Nor could he, for, in my humble judgment, the substance was true and the logic sound.

Second, it is true that I did not cite any sources. Yet it is equally true that most articles written in this venue, including no inconsiderable number of anti-Paul essays that had been published at this specific publication, are typically devoid of citations. Besides, those of Paul’s positions to which I spoke are public knowledge: Everyone knows what he says about the federal government and its role vis-à-vis drugs, prostitution, and marriage, and everyone knows what he thinks about foreign aid. We are also all too familiar with his opponents’ criticisms.

Third, this publication has, to its credit, published a couple of defenses of Paul. And yes, it has indeed published articles taking some of the other candidates to task. But, first of all, for every one pro-Paul piece there have been numerous critiques. This in and by itself is fair enough. What is most unfair, though, is the nature of these critiques. In fact, they can’t really be said to be critiques at all. They are, rather, the standard diet of character attacks that we have come to expect from the Republican-dominated media: Paul is “insane,” “nutzo,” and “mad.” He is a “conspiracy monger” and an “anti-Semite” who “blames the Jews” for Islamic attacks against the United States. Paul is a “racist,” a “bigot,” and a “crackpot,” someone who is little better than “an apologist for the KKK!” No other candidate comes close to suffering this same abuse.

Fourth, the editor determines that my defense of Paul isn’t “worthy” of his publication because it is not



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“objective.” At the same time, he permits the foregoing trash to make it to print.

Finally, there appears to be some confusion as to the meaning of “objectivity.” This is pardonable, for fewer words have been as mired in ambiguity as this one. If by “objective” we mean non-partisan and/or dispassionate, then I confess that my argument on Paul’s behalf was resolutely non-objective. At the same time, no argument fits this description of objectivity. If, though, an objective analysis is one that is supported by reasons that are at once true and that answer to the universal requirement of logical consistency, then my defense was most certainly objective.

Conclusion and a Call for Feedback

At least this is the case as far as I can tell. Any readers who think that perhaps I have overreacted, as the editor accuses me of doing, or who have any other thoughts about this little episode, please, let me know.



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