



What Ron Paul Should Say on Foreign Policy

Paul is by far the most honest of the candidates. At the same time, he is also the most unpolished. In fact, chances are better than not that the former accounts for the latter.

Substantively speaking, Paul's ideas are more cogent, and certainly more consistent with liberty, than any of those bandied about his rivals. But stylistically, he is at a disadvantage. Like or not, we are living in an imagistic age in which, as far as the electability of a candidate is concerned, style means at least as much, and often much more, than substance.



Paul, that is, needs to package his eminently sensible ideas so as to make them more palatable to both the base of his party as well as the rest of the country.

Fortunately, this is hardly as formidable a task as some may think. In fact, it isn't particularly formidable at all.

When it comes to Israel, for example, imagine something like these words springing from the lips of Congressman Paul:

"I am opposed to *all* foreign aid. What this means, more precisely, is that I oppose the practice — a practice that our Founding Fathers, those great apostles of liberty, couldn't have remotely fathomed — of the United States *government* forcing its citizens to work longer and harder so that it can confiscate their resources — their sweat, their time, and the fruits of their labor — for the purpose of subsidizing a foreign *government*. On this score, I am of one mind with millions of my fellow Americans who are equally exhausted over the fact that they are being made to part with their property and that of their families so that the rulers of other lands can live better.

"For this position, I have been maligned. You see, in opposing *all* 'government welfare,' I logically oppose foreign aid to *Israel*, our long-time ally. But in this respect, as in so many others, I have been treated most unjustly, for far from being an enemy of Israel, I am among her greatest friends. Unlike my colleagues on stage tonight, I seek Israel's *independence*. I long for her *self-reliance*. Israel indeed has 'a right to exist,' but this right in turn demands of the rest of the world, including ourselves, that it regard her as the *sovereign* nation that she is. But as long as Israel is materially dependent upon America, her sovereignty is denied."

On the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran, Paul could be just as pointed:

"I am no more comfortable with the idea of a nuclear bomb in the hands of the Iranian regime than is anyone else. A nuclear bomb is an indiscriminate weapon of mass destruction, and it is the most massive of such weapons. But before we succumb to the temptation — all too common in politics — to engage in hysterics, we should consider a few facts.

"First, we don't really know how close the Iranians are to obtaining nuclear energy. The evidence is



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sketchy. Those who insist upon the contrary speak with the same certainty, the same conviction, and the same hysteria with which they spoke a decade ago of Saddam Hussein's 'weapons of mass destruction.' Of course, we now know — and some of us argued then — that this stockpile of biological and chemical agents, *the* primary justification for a war that would last nearly nine years, *did not exist*. Hussein, some of us knew, was scarcely 'the imminent threat' that he was made out to be.

"Second, most Americans have long ago grown weary over our foreign wars. This explains in large measure why our party suffered crushing losses in 2006 and 2008. Today, over two-thirds of the country believes that the war in Iraq especially was not worth the time, the blood, and the treasure that we invested in waging it. Does the party that for the last few years has insisted that it has amended its ways now want to ratchet up another non-defensive, potentially interminable Middle Eastern war upon the same sort of questionable ground that was the basis for our nearly nine-year 'slog' in Iraq?

"Third, if, as all my colleagues seem to agree, the idea of a nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable, then what do *they* intend to do about it? Talk of 'sanctions' must be seen for the posturing that it is. 'Sanctions' do nothing but hurt the most defenseless and vulnerable of the citizens of the country being sanctioned. Far from harming dictators, the sanctions we impose upon them simply abet the harm they inflict upon their subjects. Furthermore, sanctions exacerbate what ill will already exists and *increases* the likelihood that the sanctioned nation will resort to terrorism as a response. If it is really the diminution of terrorism, and not moral exhibitionism, in which we are interested, this should be a weighty consideration.

"No, if my fellow candidates are really so concerned about keeping nuclear weapons out of the hands of the Iranian government — something about which they have been talking for *years* — then it can be nothing less than *war* that is on their minds. As President, and as a former member of the armed services, I do not share their preoccupation. Before I separate American families once more by sending the sons and daughters of our war wearied nation into but another bloody conflict, I will need a better reason than what we have been presented with thus far — even if my colleagues insist on treating it, as they treated the evidence for Hussein's 'weapons of mass destruction,' as a self-evident proposition."

On the issue of national security in general, Paul could make remarks of the following kind:

"It is often said, typically by my fellow partisans, that my position on national defense is 'weak' or 'naïve' or 'isolationist.' Of all of the slurs that have been made against me, none is further from the truth than this one. If my position is 'weak' and 'isolationist,' then that of my critics is 'bellicose' and 'imperialist.' The stone cold fact of the matter is that my view on national defense bears no resemblance at all to the caricature that my critics have created; moreover, it may very well be the case that I am *the* sole candidate in this race who takes national *defense* seriously.

"Preemptive wars, those wars we initiate against countries that have never attacked us, have nothing at all to do with *defending* our nation. To suggest otherwise is to peddle in Orwellian 'newspeak,' it is to divest our language of its meaning — a tactic of choice for dictators everywhere. Such wars are *offensive*, most definitely not *defensive*.

"This approach to national security faces two insurmountable problems.

"First, it stands in irreconcilable conflict with the spirit of our Founding Fathers, a spirit that was much in keeping with the Christian tradition's 'just war' theory. According to this perspective, it is morally permissible for one government to employ violence against the subjects of another only in order to defend itself, only if it is attacked or an attack is imminent.



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“Second, there are various contexts within which going on offense serves its purpose. Unfortunately for my critics — and the country — the context of American foreign policy is not one of them. The offensive wars in which they have engaged our country have most certainly *not* done a thing to keep us safe. Far from it: they have resulted in the loss of more American lives — the lives of our soldiers — and rendered us a greater object of hatred than ever before. Also, far from ‘*spreading* liberty,’ these offensive wars have spread chaos and destruction abroad while *contracting* our liberty here at home.

“National defense requires first and foremost that we secure *our* borders — not the borders of foreign lands. This, as President, I will do immediately, for our brave men and women who have been needlessly placed in harm’s way to ‘liberate’ others will instead be brought home to protect our liberties here.”

It would also be worth it for Congressman Paul to avail himself of every occasion to remind us that active military personnel contribute to *his campaign* more so than they contribute to *all of the other campaigns combined*. This *includes* President Obama’s campaign. If Ron Paul is “weak,” “naïve,” and “isolationist” on the issues of national security and foreign policy, then a substantial number of America’s Finest must be as well.

In my next article, I will envision Congressman Paul’s response to challenges to his domestic policy.



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