



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on July 18, 2015

Does Rand Paul Want War With Iran?

Presidential candidate and self-described “constitutional conservative” Rand Paul has apparently changed his opinion on the best approach to dealing a nuclear-capable Iran.

In a statement on his Facebook page posted soon after the announcement of the agreement signed by the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany) and Iran, Paul came out against the pact:



The proposed agreement with Iran is unacceptable for the following reasons:

- 1) sanctions relief precedes evidence of compliance
- 2) Iran is left with significant nuclear capacity
- 3) it lifts the ban on selling advanced weapons to Iran

I will, therefore, vote against the agreement.

While I continue to believe that negotiations are preferable to war, I would prefer to keep the interim agreement in place instead of accepting a bad deal.

Just hours before Paul’s post, President Obama mentioned the senator in a statement praising the Iran deal.

“It’ll be interesting to see what somebody like a Rand Paul has to say about this,” the president said in an interview with the *New York Times*. “I think that if I were succeeded by a Republican president — and I’ll be doing everything that I can to prevent that from happening — but if I were, that Republican president would be in a much stronger position than I was when I came into office, in terms of constraining Iran’s nuclear program.” he added.

Although Paul has routinely recommended an anti-interventionist foreign policy (set out succinctly in his speech delivered in February 2013 called “Restoring the Founders’ Vision of Foreign Policy”), he has adopted some stances the Founders wouldn’t exactly recommend.

Regardless of his understanding of our Founders’ foreign policy positions, Paul has made contrary statements on the issue of Iran and the threat that nation could pose if in possession of nuclear weapons.

In 2007, in an interview with Alex Jones while on the campaign trail with his father, Ron, Rand said, “If you look at it, intellectually, look at the evidence that Iran is not a threat.”

“Iran cannot even refine their own gasoline,” he added for effect.

Later, Rand Paul admitted:

Even our own intelligence community consensus opinion now is that they’re not a threat. My dad says, they don’t have an air force! They don’t have a navy! You know, it’s ridiculous to think that they’re a threat to our national security. It’s not even that viable to say they’re a threat to Israel.



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Most people say Israel has 100 nuclear weapons.

In a statement to the Daily Beast, Rand Paul's senior campaign adviser explained his boss's apparent about face:

Foreign policy should reflect events and events change. Senator Paul has always thought Iran getting a nuclear weapon was a bad idea and dangerous. But over the last eight years, as Iran has made progress in their nuclear enrichment program, it's become more of a threat. Not allowing your opinions to reflect changing threats would be foolish.

Given the libertarian leanings of much of Paul's base of support, it could be more foolish to be seen by them to be taking a pro-war position on the Iran question.

The Daily Beast article points out the potential pitfalls if Paul moves toward the political middle.

"Whether compromise is a wise strategy for Paul in the primary is uncertain. Paul is currently polling at 6.6 percent — behind Jeb Bush, Donald Trump, Scott Walker, Marco Rubio, Ben Carson and Mike Huckabee. Paul is not going to vault back into the top tier by siphoning off votes from more establishment candidates, whose supporters will never buy him as one of their own. And he won't mobilize his libertarian base by taking them for granted."

Perhaps most notably (and noteworthy) of all the reports of Paul's apparent "flip-flop" is that of notorious neo-con and war hawk David Frum. In an interview published in *The Atlantic*, Frum gushed over the likely blowback from Paul's opposition to the Iran agreement:

In the middle of Obama's tenure, Rand Paul achieved for himself a standing within the GOP that eluded his father by focusing less on international security and much more on domestic surveillance. So long as Congress was debating NSA and TSA, rather than Russia and Iran, Paul found a considerable constituency inside the party for his distinctive ideology. Now the spotlight shifts to Iran, Russia, and nuclear proliferation. Paul will either find himself isolated with the old Ron Paul constituency — or he'll have to find some nimble way to jump to the 'anti' side of the Iran deal. (Perhaps he will emphasize the slight to Congress it represents?) If he opts for the latter approach, however, he becomes just another Republican voice among many competing to voice their opposition, and one less powerful and credible than, for example, Ted Cruz will be.

Respected journalist Justin Raimondo commented on Frum's prediction:

While Frum is wrong that supporting the deal would've confined Paul to his father's constituency — polls show [65 percent](#) of Republicans supported the negotiations, and [a third support a deal](#) — he is dead right about the consequences of Paul opposing the deal. The "libertarian-ish" Senator from Kentucky is just another Ted Cruz, albeit less loud (and with [less book sales](#)) than the Canadian performance artist-cum-politician.

Perhaps the most discomfoting aspect of Paul's policy shift is what may have been the impetus for it. The Daily Beast reports:

In an interview with *The Today Show's* Savannah Guthrie in April, the same day two attack ads were released tying him to Obama on the issue, Paul said, "2007 was a long time ago and events do change over long periods of time. We're talking about a time when I wasn't running for office, when I was helping someone else run for office."

Changing one's mind based on changing world conditions, may not only be forgivable, but it may be wise. Changing one's mind to improve his political fortunes, however, could be the unpardonable sin to



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the faithful libertarians and non-interventionists who long for the return of a candidate who will remain true to the anti-war gospel.

Photo of Sen. Rand Paul: AP Images



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