



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on January 30, 2011

Sen. Rand Paul: End All Foreign Aid

Various Israeli-lobby outlets have condemned his proposal. New York City's *The Jewish Week* [called](#) it a "toxic mix." The Republican Jewish Coalition [rejected](#) the proposal as "misguided." The *Washington Post*'s Jennifer Rubin [labeled](#) Dr. Rand Paul's remarks "neo-isolationism" and said they would be "widely condemned."



The Kentucky Senator and eye surgeon began the controversy with a [statement](#) on CNN's *The Situation Room* with Wolf Blitzer on January 26:

BLITZER: What about the \$2 billion or \$3 billion that goes every year to Israel? Do you want to eliminate that as well?

PAUL: Well, I think what you have to do is you have to look. When you send foreign aid, you actually send quite a bit to Israel's enemies. Islamic nations around Israel get quite a bit of foreign aid, too.

BLITZER: Egypt gets almost the same amount?

PAUL: Almost the same amount, so really you have to ask yourself, are we funding an arms race on both sides? I have a lot of sympathy and respect for Israel as a democratic nation, as a, you know, a fountain of peace and a fountain of democracy within the Middle East.

But at the same time, I don't [believe in] funding both sides of the arms race, particularly when we have to borrow the money from China to send it to someone else. We just can't do it anymore. The debt is all consuming and it threatens our well being as a country.

BLITZER: All right, so just to be precise, end all foreign aid including the foreign aid to Israel as well. Is that right?

PAUL: Yes.

Rand Paul apparently has the American people on his side, as he [noted](#) in his interview with Blitzer that "Reuters did a poll — 71 percent of American people agree with me that when we're short of money, where we can't do the things we need to do in our country, we certainly shouldn't be shipping the money overseas." Actually, Paul slightly underestimated the opposition to foreign aid giveaways. The Reuters poll [revealed](#) that 73 percent of the American people want to eliminate foreign aid.

Democrats also reacted against Sen. Paul's statement. House Appropriations Committee Ranking Democrat Nita Lowey issued a [press release](#) claiming, "It is shocking that Senator Paul wants our nation to renege on our commitment to a vital ally, which is necessary to assure Israel's continued qualitative military advantage in a dangerous region."

But does U.S. foreign aid enhance Israel's military advantage when the aid is given not only to Israel



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but to regimes antagonistic to Israel that collectively receive more foreign aid than Israel does? Or when foreign aid is used as a club to try to influence Israeli policies as well as the policies of other governments? Regarding the latter question, neo-conservative David Frum, — a fervent supporter of foreign aid to Israel — [candidly admitted that this is the very point of foreign aid](#) on his blog (in a column written by John Guardiano) after Senator Paul's pronouncement:

The point of foreign aid is not economics; it is geopolitics: It is intended to shape a recipient country's behavior and, quite literally, buy American influence. And it does just that. The last thing we should do then is to eliminate all foreign aid out of a myopic and shortsighted desire to save money and reduce the deficit.

If Israel were only America's ally because we give them a \$3 billion handout every year, then it would not be a true friend. The reality is almost the opposite: Foreign aid is given out for the purpose of controlling Israel rather than enriching it. Eliminating all foreign aid would not only eliminate the greater subsidies to Israel's enemies, it would free Israel to act in accordance with its own national interests.

Frum continues to [contend](#) that the nearly \$30 billion in aid to the Mubarak regime over the past 30 years will increase the U.S. role as a power-broker just as the Egyptian people are about to throw off the corrupt regime. "At least now," his blog claims, "in large part because of our aid to that country, we can shape and influence Egyptian public policy and behavior. Just imagine if we lacked this carrot how much less influence we would have there."

What [nearly \\$30 billion in American aid](#) to Egypt has purchased over the past three decades has been a tyranny that — according to [classified U.S. diplomatic cables](#) — engages in "routine and pervasive" torture and police brutality and a dictatorship that [the Oval Office continues to defend](#) even as the Egyptian regime is [dissolving](#). Clearly, the U.S. has bought influence in the Mubarak regime, but that regime has become highly unpopular with the Egyptian people and stands poised to be no longer a factor politically.

The practical political success of Senator Rand Paul's proposal to eliminate foreign aid remains questionable. James Besser [wrote](#) in New York's *Jewish Week* that he was counting on massive pro-Israel campaign contributions to keep congressmen bought: "With both parties courting pro-Israel campaign givers in advance of the 2012 elections, I'm guessing the likelihood of any big reduction [in foreign aid to Israel] this year or next isn't high."

Besser may be correct about the opposition to foreign aid cuts being bought off with campaign donations. Even the "conservative" Republican Study Committee of the House of Representatives has [failed to call for cutting any aid to Israel](#). The RSC released a [budget proposal January 26](#) calling for cuts in foreign aid across the board, including ending \$250 million in economic assistance to Egypt (the second-largest recipient), but no cut for Israel's \$3 billion annual allotment.

Photo of Sen. Rand Paul: AP Images

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