



Republican Hopefuls Speak

Speaking of Israel, there was a lot of speaking of Israel. Nearly every presenter promoted the United States as the protector of Israel. Naturally, there is a significant Christian undertone in the rhetoric.

While Israel has certainly been an ally of the United States in the Middle East since that nation was formed, there is an irony to the fact that candidates for the presidency of the United States would proclaim themselves friends of Israel and prove such loyalty through the promise of protection.

In fact, some of the statements made by the candidates at the RLC, though most likely born of the best intentions, would unintentionally reduce Israel to the role of a mere client state of the United States.

Whereas, a true friend of Israel recognizes that nation's sovereignty and absolute right to determine all matters of foreign and domestic policy without consideration or influence of any other nation, even one as powerful as the United States of America. To believe or behave otherwise is paternalistic and disrespectful of Israel and her people, as well as hypocritical since U.S. foreign aid, which most candidates support, undergirds Israel's enemies.

Despite the diverse topics in which occasional reference to the Constitution was made, there was no citation of any constitutional authorization for the use of American military forces in the defense of another nation — even one considered a traditional and faithful ally. No such citation was made because no such grant of power exists.

Staking Out a Position

Gary Johnson, former Governor of New Mexico and self-described libertarian, was the first candidate to make his case to the collected party faithful. With regard to Israel, Johnson made no bold declaration, saying simply that the United States “must maintain military alliances” with that Middle East nation.

Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich took the stage after Johnson, and he quickly and firmly attached himself (and by extension, the United States) to the side of those in favor of an interventionist policy regarding Israel, saying that as President he would defend Israel against all enemies, particularly against any “terrorist organization” that would threaten its borders. The crowd erupted in almost evangelical zeal at the mention of a permanent alliance between the United States and Israel.





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Next, former Godfather's Pizza CEO Herman Cain made his case for support from the party movers and shakers. Cain began his speech declaring, "I have a dream." The description Cain gave of his dream sounded more like the nightmare that is the perpetual conflict between Israel and its Muslim neighbors.

Cain dispelled potential concerns over his lack of foreign policy experience by claiming, "You don't need foreign policy experience to know your friends from your enemies." Given the prominent place Israel was given in the speeches of those candidates who spoke before him, it was pretty easy to guess what was coming next and Cain didn't disappoint. With a raised forefinger stabbing the air, Cain bellowed, "You mess with Israel, you are messing with the United States of America."

At this, the crowd went insane. Standing ovations and explosive cheers rattled the room. Admittedly, there was a smattering of boos, but it was chilling to witness the adulation and ovation at such a statement coming from a crowd of self-described conservatives. There was not only acquiescence but active desire to make the problems of Israel the responsibility of the United States.

Self-described "constitutional candidate" and Tea Party favorite Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.) temporarily forgot the document she says she cherishes by making sure not to upset the huge pro-intervention-on-behalf-of-Israel contingency. Bachmann loudly proclaimed, "I stand with Israel." She reaffirmed her dedication to the protection and promotion of Israel and her commitment to standing beside "America's greatest friend and ally."

There was one candidate who did not join the "Israel = America" parade — Texas Congressman Ron Paul. While recognizing that Israel was a traditional ally of the United States, Dr. Paul grounded his position on Israel on the principle of adherence to the Constitution. "With regard to foreign policy, we must follow the Founders and the Constitution and mind our own business." Neutrality and a non-interventionist posture is the right thing to do and will eliminate much of the reviling of the United States abroad. The contrast between Paul and his colleagues on the issue of America's protection of Israel was noticeable.

Despite his comparative silence on the Israel question, it could be argued that of all the Republicans who spoke at the RLC, Representative Paul is the truest friend of Israel as he alone recognizes that state's absolute sovereignty and right to determine its own path to peace, free from influence or interference of any other nation, including the United States of America using the club of foreign aid. He also opposes all foreign aid — including the billions of dollars lavished on regimes antagonistic to Israel.

When it comes to many key issues, Ron Paul was the only candidate whose announced positions squared perfectly with the Constitution.

Each of the candidates paid lip service to the question of the Federal Reserve, reducing the size of government, and ending the various foreign wars in which the United States is involved, and with the exception of Paul, none staked a purely constitutional position.

For example, with regard to reducing the size of government, Gary Johnson said he would only propose the elimination of two agencies: the Department of Education and Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In fact, he proposed that the federal government would give to the states a fixed welfare grant, passing on the responsibility for doling out the money to these 50 "laboratories of best practices." Far from cutting out unconstitutional entitlement programs, Johnson advocates literally passing the buck onto the states, a buck that comes from the federal government and will of necessity come with strings attached.



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With the forthcoming formation of NAFTA-like regional trade zones — the North American Union (NAU) and Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), for example — The New American asked Johnson whether he favored the creation of those extra-constitutional, sovereignty-stealing trade blocs. Johnson replied that he originally supported NAFTA, but upon finding out that it was not free, but “corporatist,” changed his opinion. As for future measures, he would evaluate them individually and decide whether or not to sign them into law based on how free they really are. Not the firm “no” constitutionalists would prefer on such a fundamental issue to our freedom.

Speaking of our involvement in several conflicts, Johnson insisted that as President he would “get our troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan tomorrow.”

Newt Gingrich announced what would be his administration’s first-week policy program. First, he would pass a tax cut. Second, he would “create 25 million jobs.” This would bring a concomitant benefit of increasing federal revenue as workers would be paying payroll tax. Next, he would eliminate the capital gains tax and cap the corporate tax rate at 12 percent.

All of these points, as well as most of the ideas fomented by other presenters and candidates, they kept reminding attendees, are policies that Ronald Reagan would embrace. Throughout this meeting, and reaching its apex with Newt Gingrich, there was an almost reverent display of palaeolatry with regard to Ronald Reagan. From the team vetting the people’s executive orders to the imprimatur of his policy platform, the name of Ronald Reagan was invoked again and again and again.

Far from a revolution, the speakers, prominent and lesser known, at the Republican Leadership Conference promised what amounts to a clever rebranding of the same old establishment principles that have eviscerated our Constitution.

Herman Cain followed suit by enumerating the first five things he would do as President to right the economic ship:

- Max 25-percent tax on income of all corporations and individuals;
- Eliminate the capital gains tax;
- Suspend taxes on foreign repatriated profits (“Let that money come back home”);
- Provide a real payroll tax holiday for every worker and business in America for a year;
- Except for the payroll tax holiday, make all other tax cuts permanent.

The long-shot presidential hopeful then explained why he will work so hard to become President: “People are sick and tired of Washington, D.C., not solving their problems.”

On this point, Cain seems to miss the core principle of conservatism: People want government out of their lives altogether. The people are not sick and tired of Washington’s failed attempts to solve their problems, *they are sick and tired of Washington, D.C., believing it has the right to solve their problems.*

Greeted by enthusiastic cheers of “Ron! Ron! Ron!” Congressman Ron Paul stepped to the podium and declared, “Great news for the cause of liberty — the country is coming our way!”

As if reading from the constitutionalist playbook, Ron Paul set out four areas where Americans must make “strides toward liberty”:

- End the spate of worldwide, no-end wars.
- Realize that the key to our economic crisis is “too much spending, too much debt, too much



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borrowing.”

- “Audit the Fed and in due time, abolish it.” “You can’t print paper money in secrecy and pretend it’s the creation of wealth.” The Fed can create and spend more money than Congress. Curbing spending is one thing, but if we don’t eliminate the Fed, we won’t touch the problem. “We will pass the ‘Audit the Fed’ bill,” Paul promised.

- Get our freedoms back. This declaration was met with raucous applause from the dozens of mostly young people waving blue and white “Ron Paul 2012” signs.

Turning to foreign policy, Dr. Paul grounded his position on the principles of constitutional adherence. “With regard to foreign policy, we must follow the Founders and the Constitution and mind our own business.” Neutrality and a non-interventionist posture is the right thing to do and will eliminate much of the reviling of the United States abroad. “We must never,” Dr. Paul said, “go to war carelessly.”

There are, of course, times when we must commit ourselves to the prosecution of war. Ron Paul recognizes this irrefutable fact and succinctly explained his position: “If we have to go war, declare war, win it, and get it over with.” Paul closed this segment of his address by announcing the “Foreign Policy Golden Rule: What would we think if people did that to us?”

In a remark likely to please many readers of The New American, candidate Paul declared, “We are being governed by the UN. It is a good reason to support my bill to get us out of the UN, the IMF, and the World Bank.”

Finally, Congressman Paul reminded the audience: “Liberty comes from God, not government.” He stated that we have too many laws, too many regulations, and too many people willing to vote for people who perpetuate the present condition.

The penultimate presenter Friday, June 17 was Congresswoman Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.). Setting the tone for her milquetoast brand of constitutionalism, the Congresswoman described an Oval Office meeting with President Obama wherein the President said that the key to helping our elderly is adherence to the mandates of ObamaCare. Bachmann then lamented that Medicare might go broke. She rebuked President Obama for not “intending to save” Medicare. Is this self-declared constitutional candidate begging to save a government program, authorization for which exists nowhere in that document?

The same scenario was painted with regard to Social Security. Bachmann accused President Obama of wanting to bankrupt Social Security and turn his back on our seniors. But Bachmann quickly rode to the rescue: “We will not allow President Obama’s version of socialized medicine to exist in this country!”

Apparently, however, we will allow the Republican version of socialized medicine and retirement to exist in this country. And if anyone threatens it, Republicans will attack that person.

In describing her plans to cut spending, Michele Bachmann said she would “cut spending for NPR, cut spending for Planned Parenthood, and cut spending for the bullet train to nowhere.” Not exactly the aggressive reduction of government one would expect from the “darling of the Tea Party.”

Finally, turning to foreign policy, Bachmann informed President Obama, “You do not win the War on Terror by closing Guantanamo Bay. You don’t win the War on Terror by reading Miranda rights to terrorists.” Tragically, Bachmann made no reference to the Constitution, likely because the two previous statements demonstrate her misunderstanding of the core principles of our founding document.



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As a matter of fact, despite enveloping herself in the parchment of the Constitution, Michele Bachmann sounds less anxious to restore our Republic to its constitutional footings than to becoming President. Her tone and pantomimed intensity remind one of what the ancient historian Plutarch recorded that Caesar once said about Brutus: "I know not what this young man intends, but whatever he intends he intends vehemently."

Straw Poll

Apart from the pitches of the slate of presidential contenders, one of the most anticipated moments of the RLC was the announcement on Saturday of the results of a straw poll conducted by organizers of the event.

In a big win for the Congressman from Texas, Ron Paul received one and half times the number of votes of the second place candidate — Jon Huntsman, the former Governor of Utah.

The top four vote getters were Rep. Ron Paul (612 votes), Jon Huntsman (382 votes), Rep. Michele Bachmann (191 votes), and Herman Cain (104 votes). None of the other candidates (Romney, Palin, Gingrich, Pawlenty, Santorum, Johnson, Roemer) garnered above 100 votes.

As for the poll itself, delegates at the convention were asked, "If the primary election for president were held today, for whom would you vote?" The candidates on the ballot, listed alphabetically, were Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Jon Huntsman, Gary Johnson, Thaddeus McCotter, Sarah Palin, Ron Paul, Tim Pawlenty, Buddy Roemer, Mitt Romney, and Rick Santorum.

Dr. Paul's victory was not without controversy, however. Friday night after Herman Cain's speech, some of Cain's supporters openly accused the very vocal Ron Paul contingency of booing the former pizza executive. The following day, when the results of the straw poll were announced, many of those same detractors were heard complaining that the poll was fixed, accusing Paul's campaign of stuffing the virtual ballot box.

Another rumor buzzing through the venue on Saturday concerned the fact that there was a noticeably large pack of blue-blazered college Republicans scurrying around the Hilton Riverside. Word began to circulate that the Huntsman campaign bought tickets for these youthful backers and actually bussed in a large group of college kids to inflate their man's vote total. In response to questions about the accusation, the Huntsman people "did not deny" spending money to boost his performance in the poll.

In fairness, Jon Huntsman's second-place showing was surprising given the fact that at the time of the straw poll, Huntsman had not yet declared his candidacy and he was a no-show at the New Orleans event.

Members of the Huntsman camp that were at the venue explained that their man's absence was the result of a cold that was keeping him down. While the support the former Governor of Utah received in the straw poll may be indicative of things to come, no endorsement is more telling than the gushing praise he received from the ultimate establishment man, Dr. Henry Kissinger. Kissinger told a group at a recent book signing that, regarding Huntsman, "I think he's intelligent, well-poised. [He] did a good job in China. [He] certainly makes a good candidate."

Finally, with the unqualified exception of Ron Paul, the message delivered by the GOP hopefuls was that, despite their claims of being "conservatives" and "constitutionalists," if any of them were to be elected to the presidency, the result would be at most a modest reduction of the size of government, the continuing prosecution of the Global War on Terror, the perpetuation of the unconstitutional and



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unchecked power of the Federal Reserve, the expansion of the American Empire through participation in numerous far-flung armed conflicts, and the continuing distancing of the federal government from its constitutional moorings. Admittedly, this decline perhaps would proceed at a slower rate than under a second Obama administration, but the final result would be the same: the disregard for the timeless principles of limited government and separation of powers, and the extended embrace of statism, albeit under a new party banner.

Photo of Ron Paul: AP Images



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