



Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on March 29, 2011

## Where Haley Barbour, Sarah Palin, and Tim Pawlenty Stand on Libya

Like other Republican hopefuls for the 2012 presidential nomination, former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty articulated a response on President Obama's decision to invade Libya with American forces under the multilateral control of the United Nations and NATO. Pawlenty essentially agreed with the act of intervention, without regard to its constitutionality, but disagreed with the multilateral way in which the military intervention was undertaken, saying the decision to implement a no-fly zone may have come too late to save rebel forces from defeat.



He did, however, dismiss the need for multilateralism. "I'm not overly concerned about our popularity ratings in Europe or the Middle East," Pawlenty said at a presidential house party in his honor. "What I am concerned about is, is this nation secure."

Addressing an audience in New Hampshire, Pawlenty called Moammar Gadhafi "a confirmed terrorist, a psychopath," and asserted that Obama should be more aggressive in pushing for a no-fly zone over Libyan skies. "I would be more forward leaning than that," he said. He also asserted that Obama "seems like he doesn't have a clear sense of what he wants to do [in Libya] or America's role in it. At the same time you've got France and other countries seemingly taking a lead on the discussion." According to *Politico*:

The former Minnesota governor had harsher words for Obama's handling of the crisis in Egypt, charging the administration should have foreseen aging ruler Hosni Mubarak's eventual fall from power.

"What was the plan between an 82-year-old dictator and chaos?" he asked.

Rephrasing a familiar line of attack, Pawlenty told the audience about his international philosophy: "My basic perspective on foreign policy — this is oversimplifying it — but in the interest of time this is it: You may have learned it on the playground, you may have learned in it business, sports. You may have learned it in some other walk of life, but it's always true. If you're dealing with thugs and bullies, they understand strength. They don't respect weakness."

Pawlenty charged that Obama barely brought up the nation's two wars and national security challenges during his State of the Union address. And, the governor said, no one could get the White House to talk about the issues until the crisis unfolded in Egypt.

"There is only one person in this country that has the platform and the podium to mobilize, educate, raise awareness, remind Americans of these issues," he said. "Is it always popular? No. But he needs to step up and lead this issue."



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[Sarah Palin](#), the former Alaska Governor and Vice Presidential candidate in 2008, said she expects to see Gadhafi dead, either at the hands of the rebel forces or American and allied forces. "Gadhafi has the blood of innocent Americans on his hands," she said, referring to Libya's role in the 1988 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, that blew up Pan Am Flight 103, killing 270 people. "He needs to be held accountable for that. Though it happened all those years ago, now's our opportunity to make sure he is held accountable." She continued,

America will have failed if we turn over command and control of this mission and the mission of ousting Gaddafi is not fulfilled. It will be failure. People across the world look to America to lead on an international affair like this.

So what our president said at first, that our mission is to see Gadhafi go, he's got to go, but then we're told by one of his top advisers, the president's top advisers, saying, well, no, really, Gadhafi is probably going to prevail on this. He's probably going to prevail over the opposition. And then our president changes the tune again, saying, well, it's not our mission to oust Gadhafi. A lot of confusion.

I would like to see, of course, as long as we're in it — we better be in it to win it. And if there's doubt, we get out. Win it means Gaddafi goes and America gets to get on out of there and let the people of Libya create their own government, choose their own leader. And America, no nation building. We get out. We take care of our affairs elsewhere."

But Palin, like Obama, stopped short of explaining how the United States should extract itself from Libya. Nor did she give details about a post-Gadhafi Libya and the prospects for ensuring that a stable government emerges from the conflict.

Mississippi Governor [Haley Barbour](#) (pictured above) initially declined to criticize the President. But in a recent radio interview, he observed that the administration hasn't shown the kind of leadership other countries have always looked to the United States to provide. "We see that when you don't have strong leadership from the strongest country in the world, then everybody else scatters out and breaks up," he said.

Barbour, however, continued to express reservations about a military mission, as he did before the no-fly zone went into effect. Asking "what are we doing in Libya?" he said, "We have to be careful, in my mind, about getting into nation building exercises, whether it's in Libya or somewhere else. In fact, the Obama administration's position has been to say, 'You know, we're just one of the boys. We're not going to try to be the leader.'"

In the radio interview, Barbour questioned whether the U.S. needs as many troops as it has in Afghanistan: "I'm not saying, 'Do this, do that. What I am saying is we need to step back and take a look at what we're doing and see if we got the resources there. Is all that necessary for our mission to be accomplished?"

Of those considered "mainstream," Barbour seems to have articulated the most restrained stance toward Libyan intervention. However, his approach does not touch upon the central constitutional issues involved with the intervention: It is unconstitutional (because it is undeclared by Congress), it violates our Founding Fathers' principles regarding noninterventionist foreign policy, and it is fiscally reckless, adding millions to an ever-increasing deficit.

The only potential (he has not yet announced whether he will run in 2012) GOP Presidential candidate to articulate a constitutionally-sound answer to the crisis is Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), who quickly made



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known his opposition to U.S. intervention in Libya on the grounds of constitutionality, fiscal conservatism, national sovereignty, and proper exercise of executive authority.

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