



Written by on January 12, 2009

Why Ron Paul Opposed the Gaza Resolution

On its surface, the resolution sounds reasonable, since there is no doubt that of the two antagonists in the Gaza conflict, Israel is a modern, civilized nation with strong Western ties and values, and Hamas is little more than a renegade terrorist organization shunned even by many moderate Palestinians.

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However, when the measure was being debated in the House, Rep. Ron Paul (R.-Texas) rose and addressed Rep. Pelosi in opposition to the measure. A transcript of the congressman's remarks can be found at his website and video footage of similar remarks Rep. Paul made on the floor of the House can be watched on YouTube (below):



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Z6vMAoFwf4>

Congressman Paul began: "Madame Speaker, I strongly oppose H. Res. 34, which was rushed to the floor with almost no prior notice and without consideration by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The resolution clearly takes one side in a conflict that has nothing to do with the United States or U.S. interests."

During the two minutes allowed to him, Rep. Paul articulated his [reasons](#) for opposing the resolution, even though he sympathized with the plight of Israelis who had been subjected to rocket attacks by members of Hamas. He stated: "As an opponent of all violence, I am appalled by the practice of lobbing homemade rockets into Israel from Gaza. I am only grateful that, because of the primitive nature of these weapons, there have been so few casualties among innocent Israelis."

Rep. Paul continued: "The resolution in fact will lead the U.S. to become further involved in this conflict, promising 'vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.' Is it really in the interest of the United States to guarantee the survival of any foreign country? I believe it would be better to focus on the security and survival of the United States, the Constitution of which my colleagues and I swore to defend just this week at the beginning of the 111th Congress."

Yet if Israel is one of the few pro-Western nations in the Middle East and is a partner in securing the integrity of the Holy Land for free access by all persons of Judeo-Christian religious heritage, why shouldn't the U.S. government express at least nominal support for the state of Israel? Why would Rep. Paul oppose the resolution? His history as a congressman provides the answer: Dr. Paul is a strict constitutionalist. His view of the Constitution and how it should be interpreted are virtually indistinguishable from the generation of Americans who created the Constitution.

Our nation's Founding Fathers did not believe that the United States should take sides in foreign



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disputes. For example, President George Washington, in his Farewell Address, stated: "A passionate attachment of one Nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite Nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest, in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification."

President Thomas Jefferson extended Washington's ideas in his March 4, 1801 inaugural address: "peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none." In 1823, President James Monroe articulated what would come to be known as the Monroe Doctrine: "In the wars of the European powers, in matters relating to themselves, we have never taken part, nor does it comport with our policy, so to do. It is only when our rights are invaded, or seriously menaced that we resent injuries, or make preparations for our defense." And while he was Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams once said: "Americans should not go abroad to slay dragons they do not understand in the name of spreading democracy."

Those beliefs of our Founding Fathers about what U.S. foreign policy should be were reflected in our Constitution, which does not provide for our nation to officially display favoritism for one nation over another. A strict constructionist view of the Constitution (i.e., that where the Constitution is silent, no power exists) is reinforced by the 10th Amendment, which provides that all powers not delegated to the United States (federal government) by the Constitution are reserved to the states or to the people.

However, many people today (including members of Congress) regard the wisdom of our Founders as being archaic. On October 3, 2002, Rep. Paul — in an attempt to hammer home the point that only Congress has the power to declare war — made a motion to declare war on Iraq. The chairman of the House Committee on International Relations, Henry Hyde, rejected the motion by declaring:

There are things in the Constitution that have been overtaken by events, by time. Declaration of war is one of them. There are things no longer relevant to a modern society. Why declare war if you don't have to? We are saying to the President, use your judgment. So, to demand that we declare war is to strengthen something to death. You have got a hammerlock on this situation, and it is not called for. *Inappropriate, anachronistic, it isn't done anymore.* [Emphasis added.]

With Dr. Paul's track record, one should not conclude from his opposition to H. Res. 34 that he is unsympathetic to the plight of the people of Israel, who must live under the constant threat of attack from much larger, yet technologically inferior, neighbors. Many of those same hostile neighbors, not so incidentally, have also been the recipients of U.S. aid, perhaps indicating that strict adherence to our Constitution, in the long run, might benefit Israel, as well.

It is only human nature to sometimes favor one foreign nation over another in our hearts and minds. But Rep. Paul seems to have taken to heart George Washington's advice against allowing "Sympathy for the favorite Nation" to become official U.S. foreign policy.

— AP Images



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