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Can Ron Paul Be Tamed?

by Justin Raimondo,

February 03, 2012

You know you've hit the big time when the Establishment comes knocking on your door with an offer to sell out. It means you're drawing blood: that your campaign, or whatever, is having an effect — and not one that pleases the Powers That Be. They want to defang you, if not shut you up, and they're willing to offer you [what Satan offered Jesus](#) up there on that mountain:

"Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

If Ron Paul isn't exactly [Jesus](#), many of his supporters treat him as if he is indeed the incarnation of Liberty in human flesh: the media routinely describes them as "fanatical" — or, more charitably, "[devoted](#)" — and I don't blame them for their enthusiasm (indeed, I share it). Paul is undoubtedly a messianic figure, although he is [the last one](#) to give himself that kind of aura, and that's because we are indeed living in a time of woe, from whence a great many people are seeking deliverance. Ron is their [one hope](#), a bright spot in an ever-darkening and increasingly scary world — and our elites don't like that one bit.

What they especially don't like are his [foreign policy views](#), which are routinely described in the lame-stream media as "[isolationist](#)" — as if minding our own damned business and not trying to dominate the world would be an isolating act. And of course

none of these geniuses ever described, say, [Eugene McCarthy](#), or [George McGovern](#) as an "isolationist" – they were "antiwar" candidates because they were on the left, and because no one on the right can ever be against wars of aggression for moral reasons. Yet the 76-year-old country doctor and presidential candidate [defies](#) those stereotypes – and, in the process, delegitimizes them as standards of the American political lexicon. He has succeeded in creating a movement that truly [transcends](#) the tired old categories of "left" and "right."

This false left-right dichotomy, which does nothing to accurately map the landscape of 21st century American politics, is one of the main [weapons](#) in the War Party's well-stocked arsenal. Because whatever liberals and conservatives disagree about, when it comes time to unleash the dogs of war both the "left" and the "right" have been equal in their bloodthirstiness. To keep up the illusion of conflict, these two wings of the War Party alternate their warmongering schedules: during the Vietnam war era, it was the right that wanted to [obliterate](#) the Soviets militarily and the "left" that [took up](#) the anti-interventionist banner – although liberal support for the war made the occupation of Vietnam possible, at least initially. In the 1930s, their positions were reversed, with [conservatives](#) making the case for "isolationism" (i.e. opposition to empire-building): the warmongering was left to [the liberals](#) and the extreme left, notably the [American Communist Party](#).

In both cases, the War Party was able to take advantage of the left-right split. In the Thirties, it was the Eastern seaboard Republicans, the Wendell Wilkie group, that absconded with the GOP presidential nomination and [sold out](#) the anti-interventionist cause on the campaign trail, never pushing the issue of FDR's ill-disguised [enthusiasm](#) for getting us into the European war. After the election, Wilkie went over to the enemy completely, becoming one of FDR's biggest supporters, and a tireless advocate of "internationalism," i.e. an American empire on which the sun never sets. His book, [One World](#), is a veritable manifesto of left-sounding globaloney. Behind Wilkie were the [big investment banks](#), the Anglophile elite whose cultural loyalties – and investments in the bonds of European governments – [naturally](#) led them into the pro-war camp.

In the 1960s, pro-war Democrats played the key role in getting us into Vietnam and keeping us there long after that disaster had begun to unfold. Back then, we were all chanting "[Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?!](#)" That was what antiwar protesters were shouting in the streets as they demanded the withdrawal of US troops from Southeast Asia. Pro-war liberals, known today as [neoconservatives](#), were an ideological bulwark protecting a Democratic administration against a massive and growing antiwar movement – a role that earned them the well-deserved animus of the New Left. The little group around Senator Henry Jackson ([D-Boeing](#)) which organized the "[Committee for the Free World](#)," provided most of the intellectual firepower behind this rearguard action. After the victory of the McGovernites, they threw up their hands and joined the Republicans: today, we know them as the neoconservatives.

The left-right mindset has another key advantage for the War Party: it keeps anti-interventionists out of the GOP. If the right is [inherently warlike](#), and conservatives have

a [war gene](#), then anti-interventionists have no place else to go other than the Democratic party. Which means not only that they must buy into the party's [domestic agenda](#), but also be reduced to pleading when it comes to, say, reducing the "defense" budget, or refraining from intervening to plant the flag of "[democracy](#)" in some godforsaken wilderness. Opponents of our foreign policy of [global intervention](#) are entirely dependent on the Democratic leadership to implement their agenda, and keeping these people out of the GOP has been one of the [key tasks](#) of the neocons, a job they did with some efficiency until the Ron Paul movement came along.

Paul and his movement are onto the War Party's games, and they are consciously fighting this left-right illusion — with [amazing success](#). The time is right for it: the nation faces a crisis on a scale not seen since the 1930s. Once again we face the twin specters of an [economy in collapse](#) and a [world at war](#). Paul cuts through the ideological fog and in doing so breaks with all the conventions, the worn and now useless political labels that have misled us for so long.

Smearing him [hasn't worked](#), mockery has just [added to his fame](#), and ignoring him has seriously [backfired](#) on the mainstream media, which has made itself more hated by the Republican rank-and-file than it already is — no mean feat. Their last hope is to co-opt him — or, at least, co-opt his movement. And we are seeing the first signs of such an attempt in a [front page story](#) in the *Washington Post*, which posits the existence of a "strategic alliance" between Mitt Romney and Paul.

Let's get this out of the way before we get to the really disturbing stuff: there is no such "alliance," strategic or otherwise. Reporter Amy Gardner states categorically that "Mitt Romney and Ron Paul haven't laid a hand on each other." This is demonstrably and even brazenly untrue. How does Ms. Gardner explain [this](#), and [this](#), and [this](#), and especially [this](#)? I could go on, but you see my point.

The piece goes on to note Romney and Paul "became friends in 2008," and "so did their wives." This confuses friendship with cordiality, and, again, proves nothing. Undeterred, Ms. Gardner presses ahead with the punch line:

"The Romney-Paul alliance is more than a curious connection. It is a strategic partnership: for Paul, an opportunity to gain a seat at the table if his long-shot bid for the presidency fails; for Romney, a chance to gain support from one of the most vibrant subgroups within the Republican Party."

So what's this "strategic partnership" based on? Certainly on nothing Paul has ever said or done — but the people around him are a different matter, and here's where it gets interesting. After citing various anonymous "senior GOP aides" who advise against alienating either Paul or the Paulians, we are given the following inside information:

"Romney's aides are 'quietly in touch with Ron Paul,' according to a Republican adviser who is in contact with the Romney campaign and spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss its internal thinking. The two campaigns have coordinated on minor things, the

adviser said — even small details, such as staggering the timing of each candidate's appearance on television the night of [the New Hampshire primary](#) for maximum effect."

Yes, well, so what? That's hardly a "strategic partnership": if anything, it's a tactical convenience that has nothing to do with any policy or real political issues. On this front, Romney has little or nothing to offer Paul, but that doesn't stop wily old Satan from taking Jesus up to the mountain, and offering him the following:

"Ron Paul wants a presence at the convention,' the [GOP] adviser said — and Romney, if he is the nominee, would grant it.

"What Paul and his supporters would demand, and what Romney would offer, are subjects of some speculation. One Paul adviser, speaking on the condition of anonymity to talk freely, said prime-time speaking slots for Paul and [his son Rand](#), the junior senator from Kentucky, are obvious goals. On the policy front, Ron Paul's priorities are reforming the Federal Reserve and reducing federal spending. So promises to audit the Fed and to tackle deficit reduction seriously could appease the congressman and his supporters, the adviser said.

"Less likely are concessions on foreign policy, where Paul's non-interventionist stand is at odds with that of Romney and most other Republicans."

So here is the bargain: give up [this non-interventionist foreign policy stuff](#) and we'll let you speak at the convention, maybe let your son speak – all in exchange for an endorsement of Romney. We may even pay lip service to some of your economic views: maybe we'll set up a Gold Commission, as was done [some years ago](#) under Reagan. Just shut up about foreign policy.

It isn't going to happen: unless it's a wide-open convention, Paul will not be given a speaking slot of any prominence, because he won't endorse Romney. Period. But there are other ways to influence the candidate, who is after all conducting more of an [educational](#) and movement-building campaign within the GOP, as opposed to a conventional candidate-centered campaign. In the Paul camp, the focus is on [the message](#), not the candidate – but there are ways to influence the manner in which that message reaches the general public.

Ron himself is [incorruptible](#): indeed, he is far more [radical](#) on foreign policy than I ever expected him to be. When the subject is economics, he [always](#) brings it back to foreign policy, pointing out the [indissoluble link](#) between a free and growing economy and a peaceful foreign policy. He is [constantly](#) saying that if only we would get rid of the Empire, we could begin to reform our domestic entitlement programs and deal with all the problems we have right here at home.

They can't influence Ron – but they can influence his organization. Gardner reports that after Ron's son, Rand, won the Kentucky primary against an Establishment opponent, "Then, quite strangely, the establishment and the Pauls came together":

"At [Sen. Mitch] McConnell's request, the National Republican Senatorial Committee sent an adviser to Kentucky to watch over Rand Paul's general-election campaign — 'to be the grown-up in the room,' according to one Washington Republican who spoke on the condition of anonymity to talk candidly.

"The adviser, Trygve Olson, developed a friendship with Rand Paul, and the two realized that they could teach each other a lot — to the benefit of both candidate and party. Olson showed Paul and his campaign establishment tactics: working with the news media, fine-tuning its message. And Paul showed Olson — and by extension, McConnell — how many people were drawn to the GOP by his message of fiscal responsibility.... And at Rand Paul's suggestion, Olson joined his father's presidential campaign this year, basically to do what he did for Rand: help bring the Paul constituency into the Republican coalition without threatening the party. It's probably no small coincidence that the partnership helps Rand's burgeoning political career, too."

Who is [Trygve Olson](#)? A former official of the [International Republican Institute](#) (IRI), a tax-funded "regime-change" operation under the rubric of the National Endowment for Democracy, Olson was involved in several of the "[color revolutions](#)" that swept Eastern Europe and the central Asian former Soviet republics during the Bush years. [This New York Times](#) article reports on his activities in Belarus meddling in their internal politics and plotting to overthrow its thuggish President, Alexander Lukashenko: he also played a part in stirring up similar trouble on Washington's behalf in Serbia and Poland.

[At a meeting](#) of the [New Atlantic Initiative](#), another semi-official interventionist outfit, in 2004, Olson appeared on the same podium as various government apparatchiks of the old Cold Warrior/Radio Free Europe type, who gave seminars on the ins-and-outs of successful "regime change." While others gave talks on Lukashenko's "links" to Saddam Hussein and Israel's other enemies in the region, Olson gave a presentation on polling results in the country. A particular area of concern was the possibility of an economic or political union with Russia, which was seen by the participants as the main threat to "democracy" and Europeanization in Belarus. And while meddling in Eastern Europe appears to be his specialty – his wife, [Erika Veberyte](#), served as chief foreign policy advisor to the Speaker of the Lithuanian parliament – [this biography](#) on the web site of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University says:

"Mr. Olson has helped advise political parties and candidates in numerous countries throughout the world including nearly all of Central and Eastern Europe, Indonesia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Venezuela, and Serbia."

The "[color revolutions](#)" of the Bush era were brazen attempts to overthrow regimes deemed unfriendly to the US, and absorb the scattered pieces of the former Soviet Union into the Western sphere of influence. Of course, these efforts all backfired: in Georgia, for one example, our chosen candidate set up a [veritable dictatorship](#), jailed his opponents for "[treason](#)," and [launched](#) a [disastrous](#) war against Russia. In [Ukraine](#) and [Kyrgyzstan](#), too, our sock puppets set themselves up for a backlash: both US-installed regimes have since been ousted, either by being unceremoniously voted out of office or by force. In

Venezuela, the US government has long sought to overthrow the blustering caudillo, Hugo Chavez, and our meddling has [only played into his hands](#), enabling him to muster nationalist resentment against the democratic opposition. The same is generally true elsewhere. These "strategic" deployments of "soft power" never work, and wind up [hurting our interests](#) rather than advancing them.

Another aspect of these "soft power" deployments is the inevitable involvement of the American intelligence community in [some form](#) or other, engaging in covert operations with no real congressional oversight and without the knowledge or consent of the American people. This can lead to all kinds of abuses that inevitably impact on our domestic politics – an area where the CIA is supposedly forbidden from entering, although that has never been the case.

In the *New York Times* piece on the Belarussian operation, the reporter describes a meeting attended by Olson and Belarussian dissidents as "a meeting of the freedom industry," a telling description because that's exactly what it is: an industry, one in which Olson is a player. It's the "regime change" industry that has flourished in this country ever since the start of the cold war. The necons played a key role in staffing the organizations and semi-official front groups into which billions of our tax dollar flowed: Reagan gave the [National Endowment for Democracy](#) to them as a sort of playground, where they were out of the way and free to think they had some real influence on the administration. In the post-cold war world, the NED took on added importance – and more tax dollars – as the US tried to cash in on the Soviet collapse by sponsoring "color revolutions" throughout the former Soviet bloc. It didn't matter that the very reason for launching these cold war institutions was no longer in existence: as one needn't explain to a Ron Paul supporter, government programs have a life of their own, and killing them is akin to driving a stake through the heart of a vampire – a difficult and often impossible feat.

So we have a major player in the "regime change" industry as a "senior advisor" to the Paul campaign: and not only that but a pedagogical relationship between Olson and Rand Paul. The latter has presumably learned from the former why draconian sanctions on Iran – deemed an "[act of war](#)" by his father – are a good idea and ought to be supported. Paul recently joined ninety-nine other similarly clueless US Senators in [voting "aye"](#) on what is in effect an economic blockade against Iran.

The Establishment's strategy is clear: get to the father through the son, whose political career can be imperiled by the GOP elders, like McConnell (although that didn't stop Paul from getting elected over McConnell's [opposition](#)). If the Paul campaign is "infiltrating" the GOP, as Gardner puts it, then the GOP Establishment is intent on infiltrating the Paul campaign at the highest levels.

So if you wondered why the official Paul for President campaign ads devote almost no time to foreign policy issues, then perhaps now you have your answer. Of course, that hasn't stopped several independent political action committees from making [strong anti-](#)

[interventionist statements](#) on Paul's behalf: but still, that this end run is even necessary raises all sorts of questions, one of which is surely the exact nature of Olson's role.

The libertarian movement has been through this sort of thing before. Back in 1980, the Libertarian Party's presidential candidate, [Ed Clark](#), and his handlers at the Cato Institute, tried to pass off libertarianism as "low tax liberalism." The scheme failed miserably: as Murray Rothbard put it at the time: "They sold their souls for a mess of pottage, and then didn't even get the pottage!" A similar effort to sell libertarianism as a marginally less belligerent version of conservatism isn't going to do much better – and certainly Paul himself would have nothing to do with such an effort. As we all know, however, Paul isn't a hands-on manager: he tends to trust people to carry out his wishes. That hands-off tendency has gotten him in trouble before.

The GOP Establishment fears – and, yes, [hates](#) – Ron Paul, and they have good reason to feel that way. It is hardly beyond comprehension that they would attempt to influence – and, ultimately, derail – the campaign and the movement it represents in this covert manner. I don't think they are stupid enough to believe they can somehow finagle Paul into endorsing Romney, or whoever the GOP candidate might be: what they rightly fear, however, is that the Paul campaign will not end in Tampa – that Paul will launch a third party bid.

That's what this wheeling and dealing, these shadowy movements in the background, are all about. Whether they will succeed remains to be seen. The signs, however, are not good. Gardner cites [Jesse Benton](#), Paul's campaign manager, as saying:

"You can dress in black and stand on the hill and smash the state and influence nobody, or you can realize the dynamics and the environment and get involved in the most pragmatic way to win minds and win votes and influence change. That's what we're trying to do."

This is the classic argument for a sell out. The irony is that there is nothing pragmatic about it. The American people stand [shoulder to shoulder](#) with Ron when it comes to foreign policy, as every poll has shown. The question is whom do the Paulians want to "influence" – the American people, or the very Establishment they've been fighting all these years? The alternative to standing on a hill and making a fashion statement isn't selling out libertarianism's [anti-imperialist heritage](#): it's making that heritage understandable and attractive to the American majority, which is already with us in spirit.