



Two libertarian cheers for Donald Trump

President Obama's management of foreign policy—droning hundreds of innocent bystanders (more than did President Bush), bombing a hospital and killing 22 doctors and patients, arming ISIS terrorists —may be precipitating a realignment of Americans in their views on foreign policy.

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This month GOP presidential candidates Donald Trump and Jeb Bush debated whether George Bush kept America safe during his administration, since 9/11 did happen on George Bush's watch. It's not the kind of thing you are supposed to say, just as you aren't supposed to cast aspersions on Senator

Sen. John McCain (R-AZ)'s war record. Saying things like that are supposed to get you chased out of American political life.

But Trump keeps saying them, and he doesn't become any less popular. His poll numbers may include a swath of that 40 percent of the electorate that had simply stopped voting in Presidential elections and that previously wasn't being counted.

Trump's argument is that Bush didn't have policies to control the entry of would be terrorists into the United States. (He could have added that we seemed not to have had anti-aircraft weapons protecting the Pentagon, and as Lawrence Wright wrote in his Pulitzer prize winning book on 9/11, The Looming Tower, the earlier Clinton administration had been offered Osama bin Laden by the Sudanese government, when it had detained him, and the Clinton regime had helped make 9/11 possible by preventing the FBI and CIA from sharing information).

So far Trump's challenge has mainly been used by CNN's Jake Tapper as the second part of his audition for a better paying gig at ABC, NBC, or CBS (the first part having been his GOP debate moderation). Tapper is appealing to the Democratic Party broadcast organs by doing the regular progressive riff of invoking the oldest moral fallacy, "Eve did it too!" How can we blame Hillary for letting an Ambassador and three other Americans be murdered in Libya if we do not criticize Bush for letting 3,000 people die in 9/11?

I don't think many, outside of the hard core Democratic base of low information voters, will be fooled by Tapper's sophistry, and Rush Limbaugh thoroughly discredited his attempt at an

analogy as a craven ploy to provide cover for Mrs. Clinton before she appears at the Benghazi hearing.

The longer lasting and more interesting aspect is Trump's recurring support of parts of a non-interventionist foreign policy, including his attempt to cite evidence that he too opposed the Iraq war long before anyone else did and his call for getting out of the middle east and letting Russia be trapped in the quagmire. Trump has actually adopted large helpings of Senator

Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY)'s (and Congressman Ron Paul's) foreign policy. It's just that he did it without an ideology and without seeming petulant or anti-American. And perhaps because of this is leading in the GOP primary field with a plurality of the voters supporting him.

Let's stop and reflect on an this.

Around the world we have people most American's would like to help, in principle: Kurds, Syrian and Iraqi Christians, Ukrainians. We'd like to help them though we are already trillions in debt and we don't really want to be embroiled in foreign wars. The only argument that would really move us to intervene is that if we don't the forces attacking these people—ISIS or other terrorists, Putin and his surrogates—will find their way to the American homeland.

But what's actually been happening?

We built a multi-trillion dollar military empire and it did in fact fail to prevent 9/11. And now it is in the hands of an apparently anti-American President who is using the resources of that empire to hurt American interests. And all our allies have become reliant on American protection, which isn't actually there for them, much as if they were on the dole waiting for Obama's stimulus to finally produce for them a shovel-ready job. That protection has been outsourced to Russia. Where the working conditions will not be nearly so pleasant.

Among the orthodox libertarian non-interventionists this month, there were several conferences on foreign policy. Tuesday the Cato Institute hosted a panel, open to the public, for the book Perilous Partners, on how making allies with local tyrants may have hurt American foreign policy, followed by the second annual Cato conference on Surveillance (at the inaugural surveillance conference last year Edward Snowden Skyped in).

But there was also a panel NOT open to the public or the press, that almost no one knows about, on the threat posed by Chinese expansion, hosted by the Charles Koch Institute. One of the participants reported to me that the information presented, by PhDs who are former Marines now teaching at various military colleges, was chilling. China is building aircraft carriers and other craft, and building fake islands in international waters so it can claim those waters as part of its own territory. It's interesting that the Kochs (who do do business in Asia) sponsored this. Earlier this fall they had a panel for Congressional staffers which mainly just covered survey data on how millennials were much less willing to support an interventionist foreign policy.

It may be time for a “deconfliction” among foreign policy factions within – and outside of – the GOP. One would have to start by convincing some libertarians that supporting a smaller military and less military spending doesn't commit one to Essenic vows of celibacy and austerity – if in the world as it is now the federal government has monopolized all the weapons and other

resources one might donate to Kurds or Yazidis or Ukrainians or Poles to defend themselves, then one might want to donate them, just as one might use the public library or the public school rather than stay home and be illiterate, even while simultaneously working for expanded school choice.

And then you'd have to convince the foreign policy hawks that if they really care about America, and don't want another Obama or Biden as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and American foreign policy, they have to agree to a smaller, less expensive military and a less interventionist foreign policy, in order to get those with libertarian or non-interventionist leanings – including the Trump supporters – on board.