



## **Johnson: Imperfect, but not flawed**

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When I was sitting down, thinking about what to write for this week's editorial, my father stepped into my room to ask me what was wrong with Gary Johnson. Prepared for the worst after the "What is Aleppo?" scandal, I asked what exactly he meant.

Apparently, Johnson could not name a single current foreign leader. That seemed too stupid to be true. A quick Google search confirmed that, while almost every major news agency was running with that headline, the truth is that Johnson could not name a current foreign leader that he respected.

When allowed to expand to one that was still living, he settled on Vicente Fox, the former president of Mexico, though he could not remember his first name.

While I'm reasonably certain that I could name more political leaders than most people in my life that aren't my professors, if I were asked the same question, I'd be just as stumped as Johnson was for two reasons.

The first and most basic, is that from a libertarian perspective, no head of state in the Western world is worthy of respect. While the political right is certainly making gains across the world – most memorably in England with the successful Brexit referendum – no other movement represents gains for right-libertarianism as much as they do for right-wing populism.

The slow rise of the right is a reaction to the fact that the dominant ideology of the post-USSR Western world has been globalism and liberalism, be it in media, in academia or in government.

The fact that a self-declared socialist had a legitimate chance of taking a major-party nomination for the presidency demonstrates that the pink tide is approaching the high water mark here as well. For Johnson to name a leader he liked, he had to turn his gaze southward to Mexico.

The second reason is, when one considers the politics of countries in Latin America or Africa, odds are strong that any leader is going to be problematic. I can say with relative certainty that the only reason that Johnson knew Fox was a safe answer is because the Cato Institute – one of the largest libertarian think tanks in the country – semi-regularly brings Fox to speak at their events, as I learned when I saw him give a speech at the International Students for Liberty Convention in 2015.

This, of course, is not to say that leaders of first-world countries are without sin. But even if Johnson could have wracked his brain to think of any living center-right leader of a developed country, the result would have been exactly the same.

Every CNN, NBC and Huffington Post journalist would have immediately looked that leader up on Wikipedia so they could tell us every flaw and crime of which that leader had been accused and that Johnson must admire. And if they found none, they would have settled to hype up the stunning fact that an octogenarian Latin American Catholic did not have progressive views on LGBT causes. Just see what happened when Donald Trump, when asked, said that a foreign leader he respects is Vladimir Putin.

It is a strange game, where you lose whether or not you choose to play.