

# ***HEGEMONIC OBSESSIONS***

## ***Gary Johnson's Foreign Policy Is All Over the Map***

**By Harrison Moar, on April 20th, 2012**

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Until recently, Gary Johnson, the presumptive Libertarian Party presidential nominee, has been clear on his foreign policy views. He has argued for the removal of troops in [Afghanistan](#). He was against [intervention in Libya](#). He is not in favor of the drone wars in [Pakistan and Yemen](#). Johnson justifies his views by pointing out that none of these countries pose any military threat to the United States. Johnson has said:

Given trillion-dollar deficits, [America simply cannot afford to be engaged in foreign policy programs that are not clearly protecting U.S. interests](#). There is nation-building and rebuilding to be done right here at home.

And yet, when asked in a [recent interview with the Daily Caller's Jamie Weinstein](#) about his foreign policy, Johnson delivered only confusion. He reiterated his opinions of U.S. involvement in the Middle East, but he added: “[that] he supports the U.S. mission to help capture Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army.” In other words, Johnson is against intervention except when it is for [humanitarian reasons](#).

If elected, one of Johnson’s top priorities is to cut government spending. He argues that U.S. debt is too high and a reduction in spending is long overdue. When one fifth of the U.S. budget is spent on military and defense, a large part of lowering overall spending is cutting back on military expenditures. Johnson has said:

Nearly half of all the money spent world-wide for military purposes is spent by the U.S....With an unsustainable national debt and an economy on the ropes, [we neither can nor should be picking up half the world's defense tab](#).

Consistency appears to be a problem for Johnson.

It is paradoxical of Johnson to say he wants spending cuts overall, whilst wanting to spend money on humanitarian wars. All military interventions come with a hefty price tag. In war, there is no discount for good intentions. Deploying troops to combat “terrorism” in central Africa is no different from sending troops to Afghanistan to fight the War on Terror. The Constitution says that the U.S. government should provide for common defense—it does not say that the U.S. is obligated to meddle in the matters of fragile nations.

Johnson is distinguishing between different cases of intervention, arguing that some instances are more justifiable than others. For his libertarian supporters, the issue is clear. The military is a vehicle for defense and protection of their rights and military action beyond these reasons is unjustifiable. The U.S. should not intervene when there are no immediate national security threats at stake. Chris Preble, Vice President of Foreign Policy at the Cato Institute, summed up the libertarian stance on humanitarian intervention well:

Our government is supposed to act in our common defense, not the defense of others. It does not have the explicit authority to embark on missions to serve the needs of people in other lands.

To top it all off, Johnson is factually incorrect. To say that the Lord’s Resistance Army is “the ‘worst terrorist’ group in the world” is a gross exaggeration. [The LRA is a small and weak army.](#) Kony’s group is concentrated in a single region and no signs indicate that it has the incentives or capabilities to move beyond these parameters. Due to the army’s physical and geographical limitations, the extent to which the LRA can raise havoc remains miniscule. As a politician, Johnson should check his facts before advocating policy. He should also ask himself: How can the LRA possibly be “the worst” terrorist group in the world when [Ugandans themselves feel more threatened by their national army than by Kony’s army?](#) Likewise, all American voters should be asking Johnson how capturing Joseph Kony is an American security interest.

Johnson represents the ideologies and principles upheld by the Libertarian Party and many Americans. He should recognize that he is damaging his credibility among this bloc of voters when he confuses policy. If Johnson’s overarching goal is to capture the majority of the vote, then it should be in his own interest to remain consistent and abstain from confusing voters.