



# Romney's Foreign Policy Views Comfort, Unsettle GOP

by ARI SHAPIRO | *May 31, 2012*

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney picked up two big endorsements this week from GOP foreign policy luminaries: former Secretaries of State Condoleezza Rice and George Shultz.

At this point in the presidential race, endorsements are pretty routine. But these particular endorsements are important, since Romney has encountered some skepticism from foreign policy experts in his party.

Some Republicans expected the long, bloody wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to alter their party's traditional interventionist view. Those Republicans are disappointed in Romney.

Christopher Preble, vice president for defense and foreign policy at the libertarian Cato Institute, says when he scans Romney's list of foreign policy advisers, he gets worried.

"I've not found a single person that's advising Mitt Romney that has exhibited any doubts or second thoughts about the war in Iraq — whether that was a good idea — at a time when most Americans have come around to the point of view that it was a mistake."

And the reverse is also true. Many senior officials from the George W. Bush years feel comfortable with Romney, says James Lindsay, director of studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

"If you look at Republicans who want to see the vigorous application of American power around the world in various hot spots, they see a lot to like in Gov.

Romney, because he has so many so-called neoconservative advisers," Lindsay says.

### **'Catching A Lot Of Heck'**

One of those Bush Republicans is Rice. At an exclusive Romney fundraiser in California on Wednesday night, she praised Romney's belief in American exceptionalism. There was no public appearance.

Rice's praise is noteworthy mostly because it came shortly after a very public critique of Romney from her predecessor. On MSNBC, former Secretary of State Colin Powell accused Romney of going too far to the right.

"He's been catching a lot of heck from the more regular GOP foreign affairs community," Powell said.

In 2008, Powell endorsed Barack Obama. He has not endorsed anyone yet this election cycle, but he was unabashedly critical of Romney.

"For example, when Gov. Romney not too long ago said the Russian Federation is our No. 1 geostrategic threat — well, c'mon, Mitt. I think that isn't the case," Powell said.

Powell also criticized Romney for filling his campaign with neoconservative advisers.

Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution thinks that concern is misplaced. "I don't think we're hearing a lot of talk from any of the major Romney advisers about the 'axis of evil' or other kinds of pre-emption concepts that were very prevalent a decade ago with President Bush," he says.

### **'A Strong America'**

Besides, O'Hanlon says, a long list of advisers really doesn't tell you that much about the kind of advice a presidential candidate is getting.

"Campaigns are notorious for involving a lot of people in some small to modest way to create a sense of team and to avoid too much sniping from those who feel

left out — and to get the occasional good idea from someone whose role overall is quite limited."

What does reflect on the candidate is his own statements.

Romney has been vague about what he would do in Syria, Afghanistan and other important global hot spots. He has been unequivocal about his belief in a big military.

"We choose that course in America not so we just win wars, but so we can prevent wars," he said in San Diego on Monday. "Because a strong America is the best deterrent to war that ever has been invented."

That has been a central tenet of mainstream Republican philosophy for decades. And Romney promises it will remain true if he's in the White House.