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Report: 'It Has Been Difficult' To Differentiate Romney's Foreign Policy From Obama's

By Ben Armbruster on May 31, 2012 at 11:59 am

Mitt Romney's foreign policy is in tatters. His "quite far to the right" advisers are divided. The candidate has a tendency to needlessly "hyperbolize" his rhetoric and his positions on national security issues are often confusing and incoherent — which may explain why some GOP foreign policy experts aren't hurrying to endorse Romney or why the campaign "doesn't really want to engage these issues."

There's also perhaps another reason. It doesn't appear that Romney has any idea how to set himself apart from President Obama's foreign policy, as the Los Angeles Times put it today:

Romney has roughed up Obama with a hawkish tone — at times bordering on belligerent. Yet for all his criticisms of the president, it has been difficult to tell exactly what Romney would do differently.

He has argued that reelecting Obama will result in Iran having a nuclear weapon — without explaining how. He has charged that Obama should have taken "more assertive steps" to force out the repressive regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad — but has said he is not "anxious to employ military action." He accused Obama of tipping his hand to the Taliban by announcing a timeline for withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, but also accepts the 2014 timeline.

And it almost seems as if the Romney campaign is looking to Obama for guidance. Soon after a report surfaced that the the Obama administration is considering the approval of arms transfers to Syrian rebels via Arab allies, the former Massachusetts governor announced that he would do the same (however, Obama administration officials publicly oppose militarizing the conflict any further at this point).

The Times points out that one key difference has been on military spending. Obama pushed through nearly \$500 billion in cuts over the next ten years (with Congress adding another \$500 billion), although military spending will continue to grow in that same period. Romney, however, plans to (needlessly) increase defense spending by nearly \$2 trillion with no plan on how he will pay for it.

“A lot is made of Romney’s tough talk with respect to Russia and Iran and China, but even there it’s not like I see a dearth of toughness on the part of President Obama,” Cato Institute foreign policy expert Christopher Preble told the Times. “As a challenger, for someone like Mitt Romney, it really is incumbent on him to draw distinctions and differences. He doesn’t. It allows people to paint with a broad brush [what] they would guess ... his response would be.”