



An Honest Look at Michele Bachmann

Second only to Ron Paul, Michele Bachmann is the most consistent of the GOP presidential candidates when it comes to the subject of liberty. Her record is, for the most part, commendable. Beyond this, Bachmann strikes the unprejudiced and prejudiced observer alike as a woman of conviction, a woman with a keen intelligence, intestinal fortitude, and the ability to articulate her views with concision and clarity.



Still, from the perspective of the lover of liberty, Bachmann's positions on the issues are anything but unproblematic.

Foreign Policy

War in Afghanistan

It is one thing to have initially lent support for the invasion of Afghanistan. Our country had suffered a major terrorist attack the likes of which it had never before experienced and the government of this Middle Eastern land, we knew, was harboring those responsible for it. It is another thing entirely, however, to not only continually support our efforts to "democratize" Afghanistan, but to resolutely oppose attempts to diminish our troop presence there.

But this is exactly what Congresswoman Bachmann has done. In March of this year, Bachmann voted "NO" on removing our armed forces from Afghanistan.

Bachmann presumably agrees with Florida Republican Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who conveyed her colleagues' position on the matter. She states: "Completing our mission in Afghanistan is essential to keeping our homeland safe. This is about our vital national security interests."

War in Iraq

As for Iraq, the war was launched before Bachmann was elected to Congress. Yet she has been a vocal proponent of it. In fact, she had voted *against* a measure in May 2007 to begin withdrawing American troops from the conflict-ridden region within 90 days. The following statement issued during this congressional debate represents the view of Bachmann and her colleagues on this issue. "This legislation embraces" not only "surrender and defeat," it as well "undermines our troops and the authority of the President as commander-in-chief," and it "places military decisions in the hands of politicians rather than military commanders in the field." Worse yet, America's enemies in Iraq "view this bill as a sign of weakness." The statement concludes: "It is absolutely essential that America, the last remaining superpower on earth, continue to be a voice for peace and a beacon for freedom in our shrinking world."

Notice, as the statement's conclusion makes abundantly clear, Bachmann is indistinguishable from her



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Republican colleagues who wanted to prolong the war in Iraq in regarding the latter as part of a grand *ideological* crusade. The significance of this can't be overstated, for if American-style liberty can be said to have an arch-nemesis, it is precisely the sort of militaristic ideology that Bachmann wholeheartedly endorses.

Strangely, because it is primarily this ideology that resulted in two crushing defeats for the Republican Party in the elections of 2006 and 2008, one would think that every GOP presidential aspirant would emphatically repudiate it. But this is far from the case. As further evidence that Bachman is a true believer in it, there are other facts to visit.

Defense Spending

First, Bachmann insists that defense spending hasn't anything whatsoever to do with our "budget crisis." The Department of Defense must have "efficiency," she says, but as far as she is concerned, there is no need for any cuts in defense.

"Democratic Revolution" in Iran

Second, in June of 2009, Bachmann signed a bill expressing support for Iranian demonstrators, "all Iranian citizens who embrace the values of freedom, human rights, civil liberties, and [the] rule of law."

The Patriot Act

Third, in February of this year, Bachmann voted in favor of extending the Patriot's Act "roving" wiretaps. It is true that, by itself, this course of action on her part does not necessarily imply that she subscribes to an ideology of "American Exceptionalism" or "Global Democracy" or whatever we may want to call it. But, coupled with the foregoing considerations, it certainly lends support to this claim, for beefed up surveillance of American citizens at home is among the more notable, and notably controversial, measures appropriated by our government in its prosecution of "the War on Terror," a phenomenon that has alternately, and euphemistically, been characterized as a global "Freedom Agenda" — which in turn is, for all practical purposes, inseparable from "American Exceptionalism," "Global Democracy," etc.

Furthermore, whatever her motivations are for voting for an extension of the Patriot Act, that Bachmann would feel comfortable granting our already expansive federal government that much more authority and power over our lives, that she would have no cause for concern that this awesome power could all too easily in the future be abused by the foes of liberty, bespeaks much regarding her own relationship to the latter.

Iran

Fourth, as if we haven't already invested more than enough of our blood and treasure in our efforts to fundamentally transform the Middle East into a Western-friendly oasis of Democracy, Bachmann has advocated imposing sanctions against Iran while clarifying her openness to the possibility of using nuclear weaponry against it in the event that its government acquire a nuclear weapon for itself.

Foreign Aid to Israel

There is one final consideration that substantiates the thesis that Bachmann is beholden to an ideology of Big Government vis-à-vis foreign policy as anyone else: Bachmann has unabashedly proclaimed her support for *foreign aid* for Israel. Even the most impassioned of defenders of Israel — like Alan Keyes — have long observed that *materially* speaking, America has nothing to gain from Israel. Rather, the relationship between the two countries is essentially *moral* — that is to say,



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ideological. Now, it is one thing to recognize Israel as an ally; it is quite another matter, however, to insist that the federal government of the United States confiscate the legitimately acquired resources of its citizens in order to subsidize the Israeli government.

Yet it is upon exactly this that Michele Bachmann insists.

Domestic Policy

EPA

Domestically speaking, Bachmann's predilection for Big Government in foreign policy is not utterly devoid of a counterpart.

For instance, while she is, to her credit, adamant about trimming down the Environmental Protection Agency, she has never argued for eliminating the agency altogether. Bachmann says that by the time she is done with the EPA, it will be limited to the task of "conservation" only.

That is, it will still exist.

Marriage

As for marriage, again, it redounds to Bachmann's credit that she is as devoted to preserving the integrity of the institution of marriage as she is. However, from the standpoint of liberty, the creation of *a constitutional amendment* explicitly defining marriage as a monogamous, heterosexual activity is, at the very least, a problematic course of action. Such an amendment would usurp the right of the individual states to negotiate marital arrangements while consolidating that much more federal power.

The "War on Drugs"

Bachmann is a warrior all right. In addition to our overseas adventures, she is as well committed to fighting "the War on Drugs" here at home. From the vantage point of the lover of liberty, the task of reconciling, on the one hand, individual liberty and, on the other, the federal government's *criminalization* of harmful substances is no mean feat.

The reasons for this should be obvious.

First of all, there isn't a single substance or activity that isn't potentially harmful, and an equal number of such things that are potentially good. Once the government proceeds to dictate to American men and women — supposedly self-governing citizens — what they must and must not do, liberty is compromised. Whether the government forbids one potentially deleterious substance or a countless number of such substances, liberty is diminished.

Second, precisely because there is all manner of practices that citizens should and should not engage in, once the government seeks to determine what citizens must do with respect to any *one* of them, in principle, it can do the same with *all of them*.

Third, sensibilities vary considerably among our country's 50 states. It is bad enough that *any* government should seek to criminalize the use of a substance; it is cause for no slight measure of alarm when the *federal* government should seek to do so.

Fourth, not only has the federal government criminalized recreational drug use. It has done so *in the absence of a constitutional amendment*. Ron Paul has raised this point on more than one occasion. Whereas the federal government's prohibition of drugs is as foolish and inimical to liberty as was its prohibition of alcohol, at least the latter was achieved by way of an amendment to the Constitution. The



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former, like so many of the “wars” our government has been waging over the last sixty years, is “undeclared,” so to speak.

Conclusion

This analysis of Michele Bachmann is not intended to be exhaustive. Although she is preferable to most of her rivals in the GOP presidential primary race, Congresswoman Bachmann’s relationship to liberty remains confused.



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