



Exploring the Republican Paradox

There are two current, mutually reinforcing illustrations of this paradox. The first is the response on the part of Republicans to Newt Gingrich's latest remarks. The second is the response of those same Republicans to Ron Paul's presidential candidacy. We shall look at them in this order.

Last weekend, while on *Meet the Press*, Gingrich not only refused to endorse Paul Ryan's plan to reform Medicare, he also explicitly and unequivocally rejected it. "I don't think right-wing social engineering is any more desirable than left-wing social engineering," the former Speaker of the House asserted. Whether "radical change" is imposed via "Obamacare" or courtesy of plans authored by a "conservative" like Ryan, Gingrich is equally opposed to both. "I'm opposed to Obamacare, which is imposing radical change, and I would be against a conservative proposing radical change."



As if this wasn't enough to convince the GOP faithful that Gingrich is no conservative, he then turned around to advocate a "variation," as he characterized it, of the controversial "individual mandate" that is among the most salient of the constitutionally dubious aspects of the much dreaded "Obamacare."

The swiftness with which legions of the Republican Party faithful have declared Gingrich a faux conservative is a puzzling phenomenon, for many of the same "conservative" voters who are now slamming Gingrich have supported and continue to support Republicans — whether George W. Bush, Mike Huckabee, Sarah Palin, etc. — whose political differences with Gingrich are, for all practical purposes, negligible. We have no reason for believing that a President Gingrich would govern any less — and any more — "conservatively" than a President Bush, President McCain, President Santorum, President Huckabee, President Romney, or President Palin.

Each will be just as enthusiastic as all of the others to grow the military ever more for the sake of furthering the crusade to export "Democracy" to the Middle East and beyond. And when it comes to domestic policy, none will express any enthusiasm in the least over the prospect of truly weakening the federal government by *eliminating* the leviathan of entitlements and bureaucracies of which it consists.

There is another reason why the Republican voter's demand for *truly* "conservative" candidates can't but engage the intellectually curious. This brings us to Ron Paul.

Paul is the one presidential candidate in the current Republican field who most certainly does promise to govern *more* conservatively—and dramatically so — than all of the rest, for he is the only person resolved to honor the Constitution and its *original* design for America. That is, he is the only person



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with the determination to bring about *the restoration* of the old Constitutional Republic that “conservatives” *claim* they desire.

Moreover, Paul has been billed “*the Godfather*” of the very Tea Party movement with which the Republican Party has labored tirelessly to align itself ever since it first emerged but two years ago.

While Paul may or may not be the sole or even primary progenitor of the Tea Party movement that some have depicted him as being, there are few who would be comfortable denying that he *is* indeed among the sources of inspiration from which it arose. And there is no one who can credibly deny that the ideas for which Paul argued a few years ago and for which he was roundly ridiculed by his Republican colleagues *are* for the most part the ideas that define the Tea Party and the whole political climate today.

Simply put, there is no one in the Republican primaries whose vision of the Constitution and the Republic whose terms it delineates approximates more closely than Paul’s that of the Founders.

In spite of this, it is a virtual certainty that he will *not* receive the GOP’s nomination.

So, what accounts for this paradox that is all too seldom unpacked?

The truth is that the “conservative” Republican suffers an identity-crisis — and Paul, perhaps even involuntarily, draws his attention to it.

Effortlessly, Paul at once exposes two dirty little secrets about his fellow partisans. The first is that they are virtually interchangeable *with one another* with respect to domestic and foreign policy issues. The second is that they are virtually interchangeable *with Democrats* when it comes to these same issues.

In short, Paul puts the lie to the Republican fiction that the Republican Party is America’s “conservative” party.

Someone like Paul makes many Republicans uncomfortable with themselves. He beckons them to revisit their “conservative” identity. But introspection is hard work and most people prefer to avoid it. Thus, they would rather attack, ridicule, and otherwise marginalize those who challenge them. Conversely, they would prefer to associate with those who reinforce the myths that they have come to accept about themselves.

This, I surmise, is why Republicans reject a political conservative or “constitutionalist” like Paul when they have the opportunity to endorse him. It is *this* that accounts for why they fool themselves and one another into believing that there are gradations of “conservatism” among candidates who for all intents and purposes are indistinguishable from one another — and their Democratic rivals.



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