



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on October 21, 2011

Ron Paul Drives the Republican Debate Agenda

Ignoring Ron Paul

In 2007 and 2008, all of the establishment candidates for the Republican nomination asserted that the economy was on a sound footing.

Asked about the status of the economy in an [October 9, 2007 presidential debate](#) by CNBC commentator Maria Bartiromo, Kentucky Senator Fred Thompson, a former movie actor who had just entered the presidential race as the presumed frontrunner, said: "I think there is no reason to believe that we're headed for a recession. We're enjoying 22 quarters of successive economic growth.... I think if you look at the short term, it's rosy. I think if you look at a 10-year projection, it's rosy." Fellow frontrunner and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney followed, agreeing with Thompson. Although Romney acknowledged in a nod to the local audience that "Michigan is undergoing a one-state recession," he added that "the rest of the country is growing and seeing low levels of unemployment."



Only Ron Paul [claimed](#) during that debate that the recession was already emerging and would only get worse: "Today, this country is in the middle of a recession for a lot of people. Michigan knows about it. Poor people know about it. The middle class knows about it. Wall Street doesn't know about it. Washington, D.C., doesn't know about it. But it's because of the monetary system and the excessive spending. As long as we live beyond our means we are destined to live beneath our means."

As of January 10, 2008, the Republican Party's other frontrunner and eventual nominee, John McCain, was still denying the looming recession. John McCain, asked about the strength of the economy in a South Carolina debate, [replied](#), "I don't believe we're headed into a recession. I believe the fundamentals of this economy are strong, and I believe they will remain strong."

Again, Ron Paul replied to McCain in the same debate that the looming recession was a *fait accompli*. [Paul said](#), "To solve this problem, you have to understand why we're in a recession. I believe we're in a recession. I think it's going to get a lot worse if we continue to do the wrong things that we've done in the past, that it's going to be delayed, just as what happened in the Depression. But you have to understand that over-stimulation in an economy by artificially low interest rates by the Federal Reserve is the source of the recession. The recession has been predictable."

Ron Paul Dominates



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History has demonstrated that Ron Paul was completely right in his economic analysis, based upon his study of the free-market, [Austrian-school economics](#), while all the GOP frontrunners of 2008 were completely wrong. Indeed, as Ron Paul warned, the Federal Reserve has continued to suppress interest rates to zero up until this day (just as the Federal Reserve did to a lesser degree during the Great Depression), and the economy has not experienced the typical 3-5 percent annual GDP growth Americans have been accustomed to during most economic recoveries.

The usually humble Ron Paul has been forced to acknowledge his accurate predictions and analysis publicly. [Ron Paul told Bloomberg.com](#) for June 27, 2011, "In the debates last go-around, if I brought up monetary policy they literally would laugh or snicker," he said. "I don't think that's there anymore because people are realizing the current system isn't working that well."

Thus, it should hardly be surprising that many of the Republican candidates for President are concocting talking points in which they claim they are reading Austrian-school economic texts and are critical of the Federal Reserve Bank. Minnesota Representative Michele Bachmann has claimed she takes texts authored by Austrian-school economist Ludwig von Mises [to the beach](#) to read and favors an audit of the Fed. Texas Governor Rick Perry has claimed that he was most [influenced by](#) Austrian-school economist Frederick von Hayek, and [called](#) Federal Reserve Bank Chairman Ben Bernanke guilty of "treasonous" behavior for printing more money. Even former Federal Reserve official Herman Cain has recently publicly [favored an audit](#) of the Fed, to the point where he has recently [flip-flopped](#) on the issue. He had opposed an audit of the Fed as recently December 29, 2010 on the *Neil Boortz Show*, when he said, "I don't know why people think we're going to learn this great amount of information by auditing the Federal Reserve.... We don't need to waste money with another commission or an audit."

Representative Paul has for years sought an independent audit of the Federal Reserve Bank, winning the cosponsorship of his bill from every Republican in the House and a third of the Democrats back in 2010. While the audit was substantially watered down in the conference committee version, an audit of sorts was eventually signed into law. The Government Accountability Office audit revealed in July 2011 that the Federal Reserve Bank had [secretly lent some \\$16 trillion](#) to U.S. and foreign banks since 2008, more money than all other federal spending during the same time period.

As Ron Paul's opponents mimeograph his talking points, this trend has even attracted notice from Ron Paul's critics, such as Brent Budowsky of *The Hill*. Budowsky concluded, "Ron Paul is wrong, dead wrong, fatally wrong, disastrously wrong and catastrophically wrong to attack the concept of using monetary policy, properly applied, and to use fiscal policy, properly applied, to increase growth and create jobs during a recession or depression." But nevertheless, [Budowsky notes](#) that the entire Republican Party is imitating him, at least in part:

When Republican House Speaker John Boehner (Ohio) and Majority Leader Eric Cantor (Va.) threaten the Fed if it tries to help the economy with monetary policy, their low-concept imitation of Ron Paul is economically ignorant and historically unprecedented. When Republican candidate Rick Perry threatens the Fed with charges of treason and comes close to threatening violence if the Fed chairman visits Texas, his polyester impersonation of Paul makes him intellectually and morally unfit for the presidency.... When the books are written, one story of the 2012 campaign will be the full magnitude of influence that Ron Paul has achieved over Republican economic policy. For better or worse, it is an enormous achievement for Paul that his lifetime body of work is now a consensus policy of the Republican Party.... Ron Paul has won the debate within the Republican Party and is now dominating the debate in Republican circles.



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Ron Paul Ridiculed on Foreign Policy

Just as critics laughed at or ignored Representative Paul in 2007-08 on the economy, they did the same on foreign policy. Fox News' Chris Wallace mockingly asked the following question of Paul at a University of South Carolina presidential debate on May 15, 2007: "Now you say we should pull our troops out. A recent poll found that 77 percent of Republicans disapprove of the idea of setting a timetable for withdrawal. Are you running for the nomination of the wrong party?" The question ended in audience laughter at Paul.

Representative [Paul replied](#) straight-faced: "But you have to realize that the base of the Republican Party shrunk last year because of the war issue. So that percentage represents less people. If you look at 65 to 70 percent of the American people, they want us out of there. They want the war over."

Foreign policy weariness was a big part of the reason Obama was elected in 2008, and it's still true. Recent polls indicate that 62 percent of Americans want more cuts in troop levels in Iraq and Afghanistan than what President Obama has promised. Even a majority of Iraq and Afghan military veterans now agree it's time to come home. Only a third of Afghan and Iraqi veterans say the wars were "[worth fighting](#)."

Flash forward to 2011, and candidates are singing a different tune. At a [debate on June 13, 2011](#) in Manchester, New Hampshire, even traditionally interventionist candidates sounded like Ron Paul:

Mitt Romney: It's time for us to bring our troops home as soon as we possibly can, consistent with the word that comes to our generals that we can hand the country over to the Taliban military in a way that they're able to defend themselves. Excuse me, the Afghan military to defend themselves from the Taliban. That's an important distinction.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich: I think that we need to think fundamentally about reassessing our entire strategy in the region. I think that we should say to the generals we would like to figure out [how] to get out as rapidly as possible with the safety of the troops involved.

[Paul responded](#) to Gingrich and Romney at that debate, both of whom said they would follow the advice of their generals: "I wouldn't wait for my generals. I'm the commander in chief. I make the decisions. I tell the generals what to do. I'd bring them home as quickly as possible. And I would get them out of Iraq as well. And I wouldn't start a war in Libya. I'd quit bombing Yemen. And I'd quit bombing Pakistan."

Paul's issue-based dominance over the debate agenda in Manchester, New Hampshire, sent the guardians of GOP establishment interventionism into conniptions. Over the next week, Senators John McCain of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina [loudly criticized](#) what they labeled the "isolationist wing" of the Republican Party for controlling the debate.

The Washington Post's [Marc A. Theissen fretted](#) June 20, "In the GOP debate, we saw a similar failure of leadership on the part of the Republican candidates. Not one stepped forward to argue for success in Afghanistan or to lay out a vision for a vigorous conservative internationalism — and some, like Mitt Romney, pandered to perceived isolationist sentiment by talking withdrawal instead of victory. This is troubling." Theissen is an official of the war-mongering American Enterprise Institute and a former speechwriter for George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld.

Romney had backpedaled by the time of the August 13 debate in Ames, Iowa, [claiming](#) in Ames that troops should only be withdrawn "according to, as I said in that last debate, according to the time table



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established and communicated by the generals in the field. And those generals recommended to President Obama that we should not start drawing our troops down until after the fighting season in 2012.”

But Ron Paul’s call for ending wars — which, in the wake of the death of Osama bin Laden, are no longer focused upon punishing the 9/11 perpetrators — remains the primary U.S. foreign policy issue.

Paul’s anti-war message was partly ignored for partisan reasons in the 2008 campaign; he was campaigning in the Republican primary against an Iraq War being waged by a sitting Republican President who was still popular with Republicans. Moreover, in 2007, President Bush’s “surge” policy in Iraq appeared to be succeeding. Today, the Iraq War continues and American soldiers continue to die there, though at a lower rate than previous years, but without any clear withdrawal strategy by the Obama administration. And the Afghan War continues with increased casualties and without any clear exit strategy.

Perhaps the biggest part of the reason Ron Paul is no longer alone in calling for bringing America’s soldiers home from wars abroad is the death of Osama bin Laden. It was never clear that a full-fledged war was needed to bring bin Laden to justice; indeed, bin Laden was destroyed by a small strike force rather than a broader war. In the wake of bin Laden’s death at the hands of U.S. special forces, there’s no clear and compelling national security reason to be engaged in the same broad-based combat abroad in Iraq and Afghanistan that failed for 10 years to bring him to justice.

Paul told CNN’s Candy Crowley on June 5, 2011, “You know, they mocked me for my foreign policy and they laughed at my monetary policy. No more. No more. The people are coming over here. So, I would say whatever happens is going to be good because the people have woke up.”

Ron Paul has been right all along on the two most important issues of our generation, the economy and foreign wars. But in 2008, all of the planets seemed aligned against him. In the 2012 cycle, the planets appear to be aligned in his favor. That’s a theme that official Ron Paul campaign blogger Jack Hunter has noticed. “Only Ron Paul comprehensively represents the direction most Americans have been trending politically,” Hunter noted October 1. “Paul hasn’t moved toward the American majority; Americans *en masse* continue to move toward Paul.”

It’s this very same trend that has led Fox News personality Juan Williams to write, “It is becoming increasingly clear that we are living in a time when Republican politics are being shaped by a 75-year-old, 12-term Texas congressman with a son in the Senate.... If you have not been paying attention, it is time to look around and realize that we are living in the political age of Rep. Ron Paul.”

— Photo of Ron Paul: AP Images



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