



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 13, 2015

Paul Opposes Nation Building, but Would Create a New Kurdistan

Kentucky Senator Rand Paul's plan to create new a country of Kurdistan came less than two weeks after the likely GOP presidential candidate told a cheering crowd at the Conservative Political Action Conference he believes in a national defense "unencumbered by nation building."

"Part of the problem is the Kurds aren't getting enough arms," Paul said in an exclusive interview with Breitbart. He called for delivering weapons directly to the Kurds for the fight against the Islamic State, rather than sending them through Baghdad. "But I would go one step further," he added. "I would draw new lines for Kurdistan and I would promise them a country."



The region called Kurdistan spans portions of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and a small part of Syria, where Kurdish people have lived since ancient times. Paul acknowledged that redrawing national boundaries to create a new nation "is a little easier to say than it is to actually make it happen, because in order to actually draw a new country you'd have to have the complicity of Turkey and probably Iraq a little bit as well. There really is no Syria to be complicit with, but there is just a little piece of Syria — Kobani and in there is predominantly Kurdish. I think if you did that and could get peace between the Kurds and the Turks, and then the Turks would actually fight if the Kurds would give up any claim to Turkish territory."

There are some big "ifs," "ands," and "coulds" in that sentence, to go along with the breezy dismissal of Syria as a non-entity. To be sure, Syria is torn apart by civil war and Islamic State territorial gains, but there remains a regime in Damascus that it is still recognized as the sovereign government of Syria. The Obama administration may still have Syrian regime change as one of its goals, though that's a form of interventionism Paul has denounced in the not-so-distant past. On CNN last June 22, Paul warned that ousting President Bashar al-Assad could turn the country into a "Jihadist wonderland."

"It's now a Jihadist wonderland in Iraq," he added, "precisely because we got over involved, not because we had too little involvement." In his CPAC speech on February 27 Paul drew a loud ovation from a largely young and libertarian crowd [with the following comments](#):

At home conservatives understand that government is the problem, not the solution. But as conservatives, we should not succumb to the notion that a government inept at home will somehow become successful abroad — that a government that can't even deliver the mail will somehow be able to create nations abroad. Without question we must be strong. Without question we must defend ourselves. I envision an America with a national defense unparalleled, undefeatable and unencumbered by nation building.



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The knock on the U.S. Post Office seems gratuitous, since it may reasonably be argued that mail service is more consistent than Senator Paul's foreign policy statements. His new zeal for Middle East mapmaking is causing some consternation in conservative and libertarian circles where the Kentucky senator has often been applauded for his cautious attitude about foreign interventions and his opposition to, yes, "nation building."

"There's nothing quite so interventionist as redrawing the map of another country and creating a new state," noted Daniel Larison at *The American Conservative*. "There doesn't seem to be any compelling American interest in having an independent Kurdistan, and at least one formal American ally still has very strong objections to it. It's not at all clear that formally splitting up Iraq aids in the fight against ISIS." It's unlikely that the nations encompassing Kurdistan would agree to it and, said Larison, a "landlocked state whose independence would be opposed to one degree or another by its most important neighbors is not likely to be a very successful one, and in that case it would probably become a dysfunctional international or U.S. ward."

The United States surely doesn't need another dysfunctional government to look after. (The one we have in Washington is problem enough.) Paul's proposal also puts him on the side of some strange ideological bedfellows. The Kurdish Worker's Party (member shown collecting tolls) was founded in 1978 with the goal of creating an independent Marxist-Leninist Kurdistan. Its military wing, known as the People's Defense Force, has been listed as a terrorist organization by several nations and international organizations, including the United States, NATO, and the European Union. Other left-wing parties active in the region include the Kurdistan Toilers' Party and the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party.

James Walker at the libertarian Reason.com recalled the late Senator Eugene McCarthy's wry observation about blaming the world's problems on British mapmakers, who carved countries out of their dying empire with no regard for whether the new boundaries made sense. "I can't say I have much faith that mapmakers based in Washington would do a more impressive job," Walker wrote, "and I have even less faith that it would be worth any ordinary American's while to get tangled up in the conflicts that would inevitably follow."

Antiwar.com editor Justin Raimondo had already decried "Rand Paul's Munich" after Paul joined the band of 47 Republican senators who signed Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton's letter to Iran's leaders advising that any agreement between the Obama administration and Baghdad over Iran's nuclear program might be jettisoned by the Republican Congress. "In signing the Cotton letter he's become the Neville Chamberlain of the liberty movement," Raimondo wrote of Paul, claiming the libertarian and Tea Party hero "clearly lacks the character it takes to be President of these United States — the *sense of conviction* that is the essence of leadership, whether in politics, commerce, sports, or any human endeavor." (Emphasis in the original.)

That doesn't mean, of course, that Paul can't win the GOP nomination, and possibly the presidency, without the unqualified support of the paleoconservative and libertarian Right. But he's not likely to win much support from party hawks and hyper-interventionists among "mainstream Republicans," many of whom have already dismissed him as an "isolationist." The senator has generated a lot of interest and attention by his efforts to form a coalition of old-line antiwar conservatives and young libertarians attracted to his opposition to domestic government surveillance and his positions on issues such as liberalization of marijuana laws, prison reform, and combatting sexual harassment and abuse in the military. While he may not have lost a portion of that support with his sudden new zeal for nation



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building, he has at least weakened it.



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