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The Myth of the Interventionist Revival

By Justin Raimondo

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A lot of the criticism of Rand Paul’s anti-interventionist foreign policy pronouncements, as well as his high profile opposition to the NSA’s spying on Americans, is couched in terms of “that was then, this is now.” The argument goes something like this: with ISIS on the rise in the Middle East, and in light of effective fear-mongering by government officials and their media echo chamber, Sen. Paul’s views are out of fashion. In a piece confidently entitled “Rand Paul Just Sacrificed His Presidential Campaign For His Libertarian Principles,” Peter Weber, senior writer and “curator” of *The Week*, opined:

“[H]is chances of becoming the 2016 Republican nominee just went from unlikely to long-shot.

“Shutting down American espionage and surveillance capabilities, even for a few days, is too off-brand for the GOP — especially at the moment.

“Paul is ‘a niche candidate of a shrinking niche, because events are not playing out the way he anticipated two years ago when he began running for president,’ George Will said on Fox News Sunday. ‘The world looks much more dangerous than it did,’ and ‘literally cashing in’ on his ‘conscientiousness as a libertarian’ really ‘muddies the waters’ of his intentions.”

Paul’s intentions should be clear enough, even for someone such as Will who sees everything through Beltway lenses: the junior Senator from Kentucky intends to dismantle the

unconstitutional surveillance system that was secretly foisted on the American people in the dead of night and roll back if not entirely reverse the dangerous foreign policy that served as its rationalization. Aside from that, however, the idea that Paul represents a small and somewhat precious minority is another instance of Will's myopia: he really ought to get out more.

A new poll shows that the American people side with Paul – and that includes Republicans. The GOP “elders,” aptly embodied by Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell and John McCain, sought to renew Section 215 of the Patriot Act – which had been interpreted by the FISA court and our government to allow for universal (or “bulk”) surveillance – a position held in this poll by a mere 12 percent. *More than twice* as many – 27 percent – take Paul's position: let it expire. That includes Republicans as well as Democrats. A plurality – 47 percent – want to “modify,” i.e. limit in some way, the government's surveillance powers, and again Republicans are right up there with Democrats in their opposition to the McConnell-McCain spy-on-everyone stance.

Furthermore, the two constituencies Paul is targeting are the strongest in their desire to completely abolish the system that allows our government to spy on its own people without probable cause: 30 percent of young people and roughly the same number of self-described “Tea Party” Republicans take this position.

“A shrinking niche”? Perhaps at the Washington cocktail parties where Will canoodles with his fellow Beltway insiders – but out in the real world, not so much.

On the foreign policy front, a CNN/ORC poll shows the majority of Americans oppose John McCain's one-size-fits-all prescription: boots on the ground. Fifty-five percent oppose sending US troops back to Iraq, while 43 percent are in favor. There is no partisan breakdown but the Rasmussen poll, traditionally tilted in favor of Republicans, shows even more decisively anti-interventionist numbers, with only a third saying we should send in the troops and the rest saying we should not — in spite of the War Party's best efforts to convince Americans otherwise. As Rasmussen puts it:

“The survey of 1,000 likely U.S. voters, taken May 19 and 20, shows a dip of support for US troops joining a military coalition in Iraq, falling to 35 percent this month from 40 percent two months ago and from a February high of 52 percent.”

This despite their opinion, measured in the same poll, that ISIS is gaining ground.

So what does all this mean?

It means, first of all, that the Establishment pundits are wrong – as usual. They're wrong about universal surveillance and they're wrong about the direction of US foreign policy: and, what's more, they're a tiny minority. These people live in a bubble, ensconced in a web of presuppositions that assume that they – and people like them – are responsible for running the world. It's the culture of conceit, and its inhabitants are so isolated from reality that they might as well be living on another planet.

These poll numbers also mean *we are winning*. Antiwar.com's message of peace abroad and liberty on the home front is more popular than ever – no matter what the Washington know-it-alls say. The American people have learned their lesson, even if the elites haven't – they don't want to go back to Iraq, they don't want to invade Syria, and this in spite of a massive propaganda campaign designed to scare them into supporting yet another war in the Middle East.

Similarly, unlike the political class, Americans *do* mind if their own government spies on them: they don't trust the liars and frauds who inhabit the higher reaches of the spying apparatus, and they support and appreciate Sen. Paul's heroic stand against Big Brother.

Yes, we're winning – but this is no time to rest on our laurels. Far from it!

The tide is turning in our favor – that is, in favor of a more rational and peaceful foreign policy, and in support of our much-abused Bill of Rights – and this means *we must push harder than ever*. If we take advantage of this newfound momentum, we can take the prize – i.e. we can marginalize the War Party and its authoritarian fellow travelers, and push them to the very fringes where they've always belonged.

But we can't do it without your support. We here at Antiwar.com have been fighting in the trenches for peace and liberty since 1995, warning of the dangers of “preventive” war and battling against the incursions on our constitutional liberties we knew were sure to come as a consequence of those wars. The War Party, with its tremendous – effectively unlimited – resources has always had the advantage, but as I've shown above all their money and their dominance in the “mainstream” media hasn't convinced the American people to go along with their schemes. And that is our great advantage and the key to our victory – provided we use it.

In the darkest days of the post-9/11 era, when war hysteria was at its height and many people were afraid to raise their heads for fear of being targeted by the government, I *knew* this day would come. I knew the tide would eventually turn and that we'd be able to retake the ground that had been lost. Now I'm asking you to help us reclaim what has been stolen from us – our freedom from government surveillance, and the right to live in peace.

Our Spring fundraiser is still going – we haven't made our goal quite yet. I'm asking you to help put us over the top, so we can put this fundraiser behind us and get on with the job of effecting a sea-change in our foreign policy of global intervention. Your donation is 100 percent tax-deductible: **please make it today.**