

[CONSERVATISM]

GO RON GO!

The Ron Paul campaign has offered many surprises: a trove of YouTube videos, baffling songs with lyrics attempting to rhyme “Rothbardian,” even a blimp dumping tea into Boston Harbor. Some of the antics are amateurish, but many are brilliant—the record-shattering fundraising comes to mind.

Most importantly, the Paul campaign offers simple and bold answers. Asked in a debate what is the most important moral issue facing our nation, the candidate answered, “preventive war.” Questioned about his strategy for Iraq, Paul replied “Just come home. . . . This war is not going well because our foreign policy is defective.”

On domestic policy, the campaign champions the limited-government philosophy that inspired the conservative movement in its infancy. Now that movement’s leaders call Paul a “radical” and a “kook.” The founders of conservative institutions met similar abuse five decades ago. By deploying the same against the strictest Constitutionalist in the race, the mandarins of the Beltway Right have revealed themselves as usurpers. For this moment of clarity, we can thank Ron Paul.

But his appeal is not condemnation only. This quixotic, improbable, and improbably fun movement proves that political debate will not be closed forever and that old ideals can be revived. The campaign proves its own slogan: “Hope for America” indeed.

[ELECTION]

AWH, HUCKS

Mike Huckabee’s stunning rise from obscurity to the top tier of the Republican primary field is the other surprising development of this electoral season. The graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and bass guitarist for a band called Capitol Offense has relied on his



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charming personality and pluck. Huckabee hasn’t been able to write himself \$10-million checks or even hire a large staff; he cut a recent interview short in order to iron his own suit.

But with an increased profile comes increased scrutiny about his positions. When asked which people influence his thinking on foreign policy, he cited the wildly diverse group of Thomas Friedman, Frank Gaffney, and Richard Haas. It turns out that Huckabee came to his signature issue, the Fair Tax, by reading the book that touts it. On immigration, he had been known to chastise restrictionists for their uncharitable attitudes toward illegal aliens, but when pressed to provide a plan for reform, he seems to have copied and pasted the text of a proposal by Mark Krikorian—one of *TAC*’s favorite immigration-policy thinkers.

While we’re pleased to see a challenge to Bush-era orthodoxies, Huckabee’s malleability can be disconcerting, too. *The New Republic*’s Johathan Chait joked, “Lord help us if he gets his hands on a copy of *Das Kapital*.”

[TRENDS]

HARRIET WITHOUT OZZIE

For the past decade, several negative social trends that had worsened since the 1960s (crime, out-of-wedlock births)

had peaked and seemed poised to reverse. The pervasive sense of inexorable social decay—the backdrop to Sen. Daniel Moynihan’s seminal 1993 essay, “Defining Deviancy Down”—was beginning to lift.

But while violent-crime levels may still be improving, those looking carefully at social indicators see troubling signs that the decade of stabilization may have reached its endpoint.

Note the latest figures published by the National Center for Birth Statistics, analyzing U.S. natality in 2006. The percentage of births to unmarried women is up for all races and is increasing at an accelerating rate. America’s overall illegitimacy rate is now 38.5 percent, up nearly 3 percent in the past two years. The unwed birth rate among Hispanics is growing at the fastest pace of all. It now stands at 50 percent—up from 19 percent in 1980—wiping out the hope once voiced by many that Hispanics would bring America a new wave of family traditionalism. Indeed, while President Bush famously said, “Family values don’t stop at the Rio Grande,” it seems that among recent Hispanic immigrants, marriage certainly does.

Illegitimate births correlate positively with almost every bad social outcome,

from dropping out of school to involvement in crime. Yes, we know the American family is changing, that we don't live in Ozzie and Harriet's time anymore. But if that change means an ever greater number of America's children being brought up without fathers, we will have plenty of time to regret the consequences.

[WORLD]

DEMOCRATIZATION WITHOUT WAR

Hugo Chávez had been on a roll: in the past few years, the Venezuelan president—some would say dictator—has nationalized oil production, won reelection in a landslide, and played the part of the great socialist hope for the Sean Penn set. But on Dec. 2, *El Comandante* was brought down to size: the Venezuelan people rejected in referendum his proposal to rewrite the constitution to allow him to become president for life.

This was certainly a victory for Venezuela. "Twenty-first century socialism" is looking just as miserable as the 20th-century varieties, and any sign that the strongman in Caracas is being held accountable is positive. It was also a victory for America, but not in a "we win, they lose" kind of way.

Chávez has never been a serious threat to the United States, but he was often treated as a runner-up for "Axis of Evil" status by neocons who couldn't countenance a foreign leader who'd dare oppose America's war on terror and economic leadership. It was little surprise that in 2002 Washington silently cheered on (and perhaps clandestinely financed) a botched coup against Chávez's democratically elected government.

Chávez's defeat was a victory for the U.S. because it appears that a genuine opposition is forming in Venezuela and average voters—many of them poor—

showed impressive judgment in limiting the power of a would-be tyrant. And they did it all without the U.S. liberating them, nation-building, or otherwise interfering in their country.

[MEDIA]

OPRAH HUGS HAWKS

Millions are apparently pleased that Oprah has deigned to descend from the mountaintop of daytime television to help Americans choose their next president. They might pause if they saw the segment of her show excerpted on "Buying the War," Bill Moyers's excoriating documentary on the performance of the American media during the months prior to the invasion of Iraq. The program, first broadcast last spring on PBS, spares almost no one in a position of power in the American media. But because Oprah has gone into the business of candidate selection and is likely the most influential media figure in America, her views merit a special look.

Moyers records an October 2002 Oprah show with guests Judith Miller and Kenneth Pollack speaking with certainty about Saddam's WMD programs. An Ahmad Chalabi flack also talks about how much the Iraqis hoped for an American "liberation." When an audience member meekly questioned the trio, Oprah cut her off with a dismissive "We're showing you what is."

It's a short segment, and the picture of Oprah silencing a woman raising legitimate questions is a drop in very large lake. But it's a helpful corrective to those viewing Oprah as some fount of political wisdom. ■

In keeping with our usual publication schedule, *TAC's* editorial offices will be closed for the next two weeks in celebration of Christmas. We will return to print on Jan. 17.

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[brains we don't trust]

Declaring Forever War

Giuliani has surrounded himself with advisors who think the Bush Doctrine didn't go nearly far enough.

By Michael C. Desch

LIKE MOST AMERICANS, I knew little about Rudolph Giuliani, save that he had been the very successful mayor of New York City catapulted to iconic status for his cool-headed demeanor after the Sept. 11 attacks. I was curious about where he stood as a presidential candidate, so in April 2007, I joined nearly 3,000 other Texas A&M faculty and students to hear him speak.

After saying some nice things about his host, President George H.W. Bush, Rudy launched into a stemwinder about the "war on Islamic fundamentalist terrorism" that basically repudiated everything the former president stood for in his foreign policy. Moreover, in the space of 40 minutes, Giuliani never once mentioned Osama bin Laden, the man who masterminded the attack on his city.

I was so appalled by the mayor's simplistic message that terrorists were attacking us because they "oppose our freedom and ... want to impose their ideology on us" that I ignored protocol and challenged him during the Q&A. To the accompaniment of hisses from the rabidly pro-Rudy students, I reminded the mayor that Islamic fundamentalists in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and elsewhere in the Middle East have taken our side against al-Qaeda at various times. Like the students, Hizzonor was not amused, and I got five minutes of unvarnished Rudy chiding me for just not getting it.

To the cheers of the partisan crowd, Giuliani argued that my "failure to see

the connection between Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups [was] a recipe for disaster." In his view, the campaign of radical Islamic terrorism began back in the 1960s and 1970s and included things like the Black September attack upon Israeli Olympic athletes at Munich in 1972. He ridiculed my call to disaggregate the terrorist threat, saying it ignored the fact that Yasir Arafat, whom, he lamented, we helped win the Nobel Prize, was responsible for "slaughtering 29 Americans" over the years. I learned later that Giuliani was so annoyed by my hectoring that he complained about it at the reception after the talk. He was reportedly shocked to learn that I was not some lefty professor but a member of the faculty at the Bush School.

After this disheartening experience, I decided to look more closely at what Giuliani was saying about foreign policy and who was advising him. What I found alarmed me: Rudy's performance here was no aberration. Those who thought George W. Bush was too timid in the conduct of his foreign policy will find a champion in Rudy.

The Giuliani campaign was slow to articulate a detailed foreign policy. Through the summer of 2007, it was content to offer platitudes among the mayor's "Twelve Commitments" such as, "I will keep America on the offense in the Terrorists' War on Us." But by the fall, the candidate published a major piece in *Foreign Affairs* that outlined

his agenda. Explicitly rejecting realism, he instead sounded the tocsin: "Civilization itself, and the international system, had come under attack by a ruthless and radical Islamist enemy." Giuliani warned, "the terrorists' war on us was encouraged by unrealistic and inconsistent actions taken in response to terrorist attacks in the past. A realistic peace can only be achieved through strength."

Had I been more attentive over the years, I might have been less surprised by the mayor's hard-line neoconservative stance. I had forgotten that while U.S. attorney in New York, Giuliani tried to close the PLO's New York office. As mayor, he made headlines in 1995, when he had Arafat ejected from a concert at Lincoln Center. In a speech to the Republican Jewish Coalition this fall, Rudy pointed to this incident as emblematic of his leadership style: "I didn't hesitate, like Hillary Clinton hesitates to answer questions on what she's going to do about Iran. I didn't seek to negotiate with him, like Barack Obama would do or says he'd do with these people. I didn't call for a team of lawyers to help me. ... I just made a decision. See, I lead. That's what [being a] leader is about."

To the extent that a mayor of New York has a foreign policy, it needs to be loudly supportive of Israel. In a speech at the 2004 Republican National Convention, Giuliani struck the "Israel's war is our war" note by claiming that the war on terror began in Munich in 1972. His