

Foreign Policy Briefing
Guest: Daniel McAdams
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Daniel McAdams is executive director of the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity, and served for many years as foreign affairs, civil liberties, and defense policy adviser to Congressman Ron Paul.

WOODS: This item is just too juicy not to mention, even though by the time people are hearing this, the item's over a week old. I don't think this story will ever get old, at least for me. And that is that John McCain receives an award from the new government in Libya. And this new government—very, very close to the time it awards McCain this honor—institutes Sharia law.

Isn't the whole point of McCain's policy supposedly to try to keep the dangerous, extreme Muslims out of power? And yet, for some reason, he keeps on putting them in power.

McADAMS: It is funny, and you know, as noninterventionists, we don't really care what form of government they choose over there, but, the thing is, by their own standards, we have to intervene everywhere because we're going to turn the rest of the world just like us.

And, you know, everywhere people follow McCain's suggestions, disaster strikes. It wasn't that long ago, if you remember, that McCain took a trip to Syria, and his purpose was to talk with these wonderful, moderate rebels that we can safely support, and he went there and spent the evening chatting with them, and had pictures taken. But it turns out that these guys were a bunch of kidnapping thugs who were tied to Islamist militias.

So here he does it again. He goes to Libya and tries to tout the wonderful success that we've had over there, and it turns out the place is an absolute disaster. Shortly after that, as you know, there was this American—who knows what he was doing in Benghazi—but he was killed, so there is no success with these neocons.

WOODS: Don't you have the feeling that, if Obama had gone over there and touted the success, right around the time that Sharia law was established, that we would never be hearing the end of this? Right?

McADAMS: Yeah, sure. Absolutely. Absolutely.

And doesn't it make you wonder, Tom? I wonder—and I hate to be kind to Obama in so many ways—but I wonder if, unlike his predecessor, he may have learned a lesson from Libya. You know, he listened to the French going on and on about how you've got to do this. He listened to the neocons. And the place is a dump. It's a disaster. So, I'd like to think that maybe he was able to learn in office, and that's why he's been able to, so far, pump the neocons on Syria and Iran. Now I don't know, but it would be nice if it were true.

WOODS: Well, on this Iran question—I can't find it now, unfortunately, right when I'm talking to you. I want to find it, and I think it's been taken down. But I'm not crazy: I know within the past twenty-four hours it was linked on the Drudge Report. He had a series of headlines related to Iran, and he had headlines saying that Americans polled want more sanctions. I don't know if you saw that, but if that's true, if that headline is not misleading, what do you conclude from that about—I don't know—the American public, or the information that they're getting? How would you react to something like that?

McADAMS: Yeah, I have not seen that. I would like to see the poll, and I would like to see the formulation of the question. You know, way back in a previous life, I worked briefly for the Gallup organization, and I know how polls can be skewed to get certain kinds of results. Not to say that particular organization is untrustworthy, but there are certainly ways of wording a poll.

But even if it is completely on the up and up and that's the result, I think the problem is you've had propagandizing for years that sanctions are a peaceful way to get a country to do what you want. "Oh, we're not for war." And we know, through several other polls, that Americans are not in favor of war with Iran by a large margin. Unfortunately, they're led to believe sanctions are a nice alternative to war, and I don't think they've really stopped to think enough about whom sanctions really hurt. And, also, how ineffective they've been historically.

WOODS: Now, that raises the more general question of Iran and the peace agreement, because the last time you were on the program, and they were on the verge of reaching an agreement, it didn't come about until about five or six days after you and I spoke.

So now that it's out there, it's slightly old news, but I'm sure there are some people who listen to this program who didn't get all the details, or who don't know exactly what's what. Maybe you can spell out for us what exactly was decided, what the neoconservative response has been, and whether there is any merit to the neoconservative complaint about it.

McADAMS: Well, in a nutshell, what happened is basically a six-month period where we are sort of testing the waters to see if we can find some common ground. What was agreed upon was really some confidence-building measures.

The Iranians gave up a lot, and, actually, some people on our side have written some articles saying they gave up too much, including Eric Margolis, whom I think you've spoken with. Temporarily, as a show of good faith, enrichment above the five percent is suspended, work on one of these heavy water nuclear reactors that were controversial, and a few other things. The U.S. has agreed to give them back some of the money that the U.S. seized in the first place, and let them do a little bit of business internationally.

So, it's a good start. It's certainly not the end-all, and nobody thinks it is. But it's a good start to see. And also, it makes the neocons crazy because their argument has all along been, "You can't talk to these people." Congressman Paul did a great column a few weeks ago—the title was "You Can't Talk to Iran?"—right after the agreement was reached, and it really pulls the rug out

of their argument, you know, that these guys are insane and irrational and you can't even talk to them. So, we'll see.

The neocons are not putting this one up in the lost category quite yet, and their big, fertile territory is really the U.S. Congress. Jennifer Rubin, our favorite neocon writer—or one of our favorites—had a piece a couple of days ago in the *Washington Post*: “Congress in Revolt on Iran Deal.” And they are, on both sides of the aisle, in open revolt against the President, and they do have some pretty strong backing behind them, you know, both the Saudi lobby, which is chock full of money, as you can imagine, and the Israeli lobby, which is enormously influential on Capitol Hill. I know because I spent a lot of time working there. They have both decided to pull out all stops, and they view Congress as their last chance to thwart this deal. So, they are not conceding defeat yet.

But, just in case, Norman Podhoretz, who's the godfather of the neocons, I guess—he had a piece yesterday, I believe it was, in the *Wall Street Journal* saying we really need to bomb Iran anyway, because regardless of this deal, they just need to be bombed now with conventional weapons.

And you know what's funny about that, Tom, is that a lot of people say that the neocons are so close to Israel, and they believe they are. But what struck me in Podhoretz's column is that, in the end, he said, “Well, guess what? Obama's probably not going to do it. Hey, Israel! Why don't you guys do it? You should go ahead and try it.”

So can you think of a worse enemy, Tom? Imagine that you're at a pub, you know, and you know that's the biggest, toughest guy in the corner, and you have a friend egging you on to go start a fight with him. You know you're going to get a black eye. And so what kind of a friend would do that to a friend who's had maybe a couple too many or something? I don't know. I think people like these neocons are really Israel's worst enemy.

WOODS: I think I emailed you about this Ben Stein column I thought was funny. I guess it's funny in a macabre sense.

First of all, it was just terrible writing. Terrible sledgehammer prose. Awful. No subtlety at all. Absolutely awful. I can forgive lousy writing, though, because most people are lousy writers, but Ben Stein was going on and on about Iran, and he just said, as if it were an obvious fact, that Iran was not a signer of the nonproliferation treaty.

But the whole issue has revolved around the fact that Iran has certain rights as a signatory to that treaty! How could you not know that?

McADAMS: How could you get the most basic fact of your argument wrong? I read the column, and it was really hysterical, you know. He needed to take a deep breath.

But you're right. The center point of his column was a fallacy, so how can anything else be believed? That's the point, that Iran did sign and continues to uphold. It's never been found in violation of the treaty. It's never been found to have diverted enriched uranium for non-peaceful purposes. You know, the neocon argument is, "Oh, they could. They could someday." So it's always a preventative. We have to attack them because they could do something wrong someday.

It's back to the column that we talked about that Dr. Paul wrote. Israel as a non-signer seeks to dictate the terms to all the countries that did sign, and it's not really fair ball, is it?

WOODS: Now, is it possible to get a sense of Israeli public opinion on this matter? Because, if memory serves, in a lot of cases in the past, it turns out that the biggest loudmouths in the U.S. who claim to be pro-Israel—which, as you say, it's not so obvious that their policy would have pro-Israeli consequences, to put it mildly—are much, much more pro-war than the people who actually live in Israel. Now is that still the case? Where is Israeli public opinion on what needs to be done on Iran? Is that any different?

McADAMS: I have not seen a recent poll on that, but if memory serves, it is not in favor, in general, of an attack on Iran.

And you know what's interesting: I would assume Israelis get as much news of the outside world as the rest of us, but what's not very well reported is that outside of Israel, the largest Jewish population in the Middle East is in Iran. There are literally thousands who live there, and they have a thriving Jewish community there. They have full religious rights. Nobody wants to talk about it, but perhaps they do look over there and see that the propaganda of the warmongers doesn't seem to jibe with reality.

WOODS: All right, let's switch gears a little bit and talk about China and the U.S.

Recently China asserted its authority over some islands, and the U.S. sent some ships over there. Something like that. I'm sorry I'm so vague on the details, but all my time is spent recording home school videos for Ron Paul [TW note: see RonPaulHomeschool.com], so barring a nuclear holocaust, I generally don't know what's going on in the world these days. So that's why I have you come on here, to tell me what's happening.

McADAMS: Well, you're doing the Lord's work with that, that's for sure.

WOODS: Thank you.

McADAMS: Well, you know China has asserted a security zone over this group of islands that have been in dispute between China and Japan for quite a number of years. And, as such, they are basically a bunch of rocks, not worth anything, but there are mineral rights and these sorts of things, so somewhat significant. There have been territorial disputes between China and Japan. There's a lot of animosity between the two countries. But what the U.S. did is, seeing

that China has declared that, they flew several B-52 bombers through this security zone without letting the Chinese know, and it's an absolutely provocative move, just daring the Chinese to stand behind their designation of this as a security zone.

It's absurd for the U.S. to get in the middle of this dispute between the two countries and risk a nuclear war over a couple of rocks in the South China Sea or whatever. And we hear, just this week, Japan and South Korea are going to be holding military joint exercises in the regions in the area as well.

It's so unnecessarily provocative. It really is, as Dr. Paul says, an example of the moral hazard of the U.S. security guarantee. You know the only reason Japan and South Korea feel they can try to provoke and try to kind of poke at China is that they have the U.S. military behind them. So, if we didn't have this empire, if we didn't have these bases all over, and if we didn't make guarantees to countries like South Korea and Japan, they'd have to be a lot more careful in the way they behave, particularly in their own regions.

WOODS: I want to say something else about China, though. I want to get your thoughts on, in general, the long-term relationship between the U.S. and China.

I recall vividly that in the 1990s, after communism more or less collapsed, it really was true that the neocons needed to find some new enemy, and until 9/11 they really hadn't succeeded in making Islam the new enemy all that plausibly. Not enough people cared about an embassy being bombed here and there, or the *U.S.S. Cole*. So they focused a lot on China. "China is the next enemy, and you are a naive idiot if you don't see that. Eventually, this is going to turn into a showdown between the U.S. and China."

What do you think? And are you a naive idiot to think that coexistence between the U.S. and China might be possible?

McADAMS: It's funny that you mention that. I remember back in the late '90s and the early 2000s, a lot of the then-big neocon writers like Bill Gertz and others were coming out with these endless stories about the rise of China, and how we need to be terrified of China. So you are absolutely right. They couldn't stand not having a bogeyman.

But what's interesting is that the U.S. relationship with China is stable because we need each other. We need each other economically. We do business together. As Dr. Paul always says, if you do business with a country, if you do business with an individual, you are much less likely to want to kill that person, or invade that country.

So this is the beauty of a market relationship, and it also has proven what we free marketers have said all along, which is that exposure to market activity will make a society less statist over time. Look at China. In many ways it is much more capitalistic than the United States is. It's much more pro-market than we are. Much less regulation. You know you have this sclerotic,

old communist party that seems to control things, but it really is the people in business who control the country. So it's a success for our philosophy, I think.

WOODS: I think from the neocon point of view, though, the mere fact that China is a growing and very substantial power, and obviously intends to be more and more influential in Asia—the very fact that it increases its military budget—is viewed by the neocons as per se “aggressive.”

So, yeah, they may have some pro-market developments, but it seems like anybody who is a regional power or has the potential to become a regional power is just in and of itself a threat to the hegemonic power, the U.S.

McADAMS: It is viewed that way, and it does make you wonder why we do have so many ships and bases and things over there. What purpose does it serve? China certainly, as you say—this is not an endorsement of China—but China does have legitimate security concerns, and a lot of those are brought upon them by the U.S. security policy in the region. This pivot toward Asia, the different U.S. military commands that focus on the region. So probably there would be a lot less militarism on the Chinese part, if the U.S. would simply pull out and pull back.

WOODS: What are you guys keeping an eye on these days over at the Ron Paul Institute? What stories are you following most closely?

McADAMS: Well, I'm really fascinated with what's happening in Ukraine, because there are so many elements, so many things to be disgusted about. And once again, U.S. policies, for all of the optimism that we have about the President's policies toward Syria and Iran, are making absolute hash of Ukraine.

As you know, a couple of weeks ago, the Ukrainian government decided at the last minute it was not going to go ahead and sign an association agreement with the E.U. It wanted to continue talks with Russia, to see which would be a better trade deal. The Russians were in favor of Ukraine being sort of in between the two, but the E.U. was being sort of a jealous god, as it tends to do, and wanted all or nothing.

There continues to be an enormous protest in the streets, particularly in Kiev and the western part of Ukraine, which is much more pro-Poland. There is essentially a huge Polish population there, and the western part wants to be part of the E.U. Well, into all of this, as usual—if you remember back in '04, the U.S. basically financed the Orange Revolution, which brought in these wonderful pro-market people, who ended up absolutely destroying the economy. The U.S. is involved again. They've been spending millions of dollars on the opposition in Ukraine. They've been propping up these parties, and now they're all in the streets, and American and European bureaucrats and politicians are going to Kiev, joining protesters who are openly calling for the overthrow of the government of Ukraine.

Can you imagine what would happen in the U.S. if, say, 50,000 people were marching in front of the White House calling for the overthrow of the American government, and there, leading the

way, was a Vladimir Putin? You know, or a Rouhani? Or someone like that. A foreign political leader. It's just unheard of, yet we believe we have the right to do this to other countries. It's just so absurd.

The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland, who was one of the worst humanitarian interventionist neocons—she's literally down in the so-called Freedom Square right now, handing out cookies to these protesters and these people who are seeking to overthrow the government. So it really is—it's just an awful thing, and you have all these loser E.U. politicians whose parties have been defeated in parliaments—Saakashvili from Georgia. He's not E.U., but many others—Kaczynski from Poland—are down there leading the protest.

So it really is unseemly what's happening in Ukraine. And some people will argue, "Well, these people are fighting for their freedom. They want to be Western-oriented." But the thing, Tom, that always really bothers me about this: so there are large protests in the street, there are a lot of people who disagree with the government decision, but 50,000 or 100,000 people in a country of 48 million, they get to decide?

They've already had an election, a government has already been elected. Do you get to change a regime because you get a few thousand people in the streets? Is that democracy, or is that a mob? So it raises very troubling questions. What if 200,000 people marched in Washington to take away our Second Amendment rights? Is that legitimate because, gosh, that's a lot of people? It's very disturbing.

WOODS: Well, if I'm understanding this correctly, when the Ukrainians decided they weren't so keen on being associate members of the E.U., the accusation came down that, well, they're being pressured and bullied by Russia not to do it, as if it's just sort of obvious that everyone in his right mind would want to join the E.U., so there must be some sinister force at work stopping you.

McADAMS: It reminds me of the old archetypal European aristocrat who carries about in such an aristocratic manner, but when you really scratch the surface, you find out the guy's completely broke, and that's the E.U. right now. They've spent millions propagandizing the Ukrainian people about how they should join the rich West, but look at Spain: 50 percent unemployment in some sectors. Look at France. Look at Italy. Look at Greece. You know, it's almost comical. And as you point out, everyone is saying, "Well, Russia is bullying Ukraine into avoiding an E.U. agreement." But who's doing the bullying? It's all of these European and American politicians and diplomats out in the streets of Kiev, which is so unseemly, and so outrageous.

WOODS: Well, Daniel McAdams, we're just about out of time. But I want to remind people, here we are getting to the end of 2013, and as people are thinking about their end-of-year contributions, I hope they will keep in mind the important work that the Ron Paul Institute is doing—ronpaulinstitute.org is the website. If you're looking for a worthy organization that will not blow your money on limousine rides and stupidity, but will actually get a point of view out

there that will not be heard otherwise, then please keep the Ron Paul Institute in mind. Daniel, thanks for being here today.

McADAMS: Thank you so much, Tom.