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## A Textual Analysis of Security: The Republican Platform as Propaganda

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Abstract. This article comments on international security appraisals and pledges contained in the United States (US) Republican Party platform at the 2000 Republican National Convention.

"People want to know what a party stands for and what a candidate stands for, and that's why the platform is important." So says a US Republican Party representative. "The 2000 Republican Platform is a common-sense conservative document based on common-sense conservative principles." So states a Republican Party news release. It is in this spirit that IBPP provides the following textual analysis of the Republican platform and chooses to temporarily ignore those analysts who discount the import of platforms beyond political and electoral impact on a campaign.

The platform stipulates that "The [present] administration has cut defense spending to its lowest percentage of gross domestic product since before Pearl Harbor." Given that the current gross domestic product is much higher than before December 1941, defense spending can still be higher even with a lower percentage of that product. Also, without a statement about what year's dollars are being comparatively used, one cannot assess the validity of whether defense spending has increased or decreased in terms of what a dollar could and can buy. In addition, even if defense spending is lower today, the nature of the threats and opportunities from which defense spending should stem certainly has changed through time--thus leading to the appropriateness of either higher or lower spending at various points in time. Moreover, the use of the phrase "before Pear Harbor" is propagandistic and generative of innuendo that the administration's spending is likely to be antecedent to another surprise military attack.

"The current administration has...sent American armed forces on...missions without clear goals...favorable rules of engagement, or defined exit strategies." Most of these missions have been humanitarian and peacekeeping in nature. Publicly formulated clear goals and exit strategies often work against the success of these missions by telegraphing how the forces' hands are tied and--in advance--how long they will be deployed (and how long adversaries have to "act good.") Also favorable rules of engagement in terms of license to possess and execute overwhelming lethality again mitigate against mission success which makes such missions extremely complicated. This Republican platform plank is more likely a barely veiled attack on committing to humanitarian and peacekeeping activities, not to how professionally they have been planned and carried out.

"America is currently without defense against [ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction and there's been a] failure to guard America's nuclear secrets [and, thus,] one of the greatest security defeats in the history of the US." Security experts consensually agree that the lack of defense and the counterespionage shortfalls are bipartisan failings--if they are failings at all. For example, there are many experts who are vehemently against ballistic missile defense because of its financial and political costs and putative technological impossibility. The defenses against biological and chemical weapons--in a terrorism mode--may also be impossible to develop for technological and logistical reasons. And espionage can not be prevented, but only minimized.

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As can be seen, from these three sets of examples, the Republican platform is not crafted to facilitate clear understanding of security issues, but is instead long on expressing ideology and attempting to achieve political advantage. This may not be surprising, but is this what the party and the platform stand for? Is this common sense and principle? In a few weeks, the Democratic Party will have its chance to emulate or contrast with their main political adversaries. (See Excerpts from platform approved by Republican National Convention. (August 1, 2000). *The New York Times*, p. A16; George, A. L. (1956). Prediction of political action by means of propaganda analysis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 20, 334-345; Herma, H. (1943). Goebbels' conception of propaganda. *Social Research*, 10, 200-218; Lasswell, H.D. (1927). The theory of political propaganda. *American Political Science Review*, 21, 627-631; Pratkanis, A. R., & Turner, M. E. (1996). Persuasion and democracy: Strategies for increasing deliberative participation and enacting social change. *Journal of Social Issues*, 52, 187-205; Republican National Committee at <http://www.rnc.org>.) (Keywords: Ballistic Missile, Defense Spending, Espionage, Republican Party, Security.)