

# Neocons Sensing Neocon Revival

By Carl Franzen on September 29, 2009 3:13pm

Don't look now, but after a brief exile, neoconservatism may be mounting a comeback...or so claim some conservatives, anyway. Leading the pack today is Wall Street Journal columnist [Bret Stephens](#), who says the hawkish political philosophy that guided the Bush administration to glory holds growing allure for those dissatisfied with Obama. Stephens is not alone. With the administration facing major foreign policy challenges, a number of right-leaning pundits are making the case that neoconservatism is out of the dog house. Next challenge: convincing anyone else. Columnists debate whether or not neoconservatism should be given another look.

- **"Faith in Power" Is Better Than "Hope"** Characteristically unmoved by Obama's appeals to wayward nations, the Wall Street Journal's [Bret Stephens](#) claims neoconservatives had it right to begin with. "As the pendulum has swung to a U.S. foreign policy based on little more than the personal attractions of the president, it's little wonder that the world is casting about for an alternative. And a view of the world that understands that American power still furnishes the margin between freedom and tyranny, and between prosperity and chaos, is starting to look better all the time. Even in France."
- **"Clear-Eyed Analysis" Is Better Than "Wishful Thinking"** At Commentary, [Jennifer Rubin](#) concurs, chiding Obama for waffling: "Past experience, current geopolitical realities, historical precedent, and common sense are nowhere in evidence. Instead we get gauzy rhetoric and undiluted faith in talking to those who plainly don't want to talk to us (or who would be happy to talk while doing precisely what they want to anyway). And there's plenty of stalling. So it seems that 'realism' boils down to wishful thinking and a heavy dose of procrastination."
- **Liberal Jews Are Making a Mistake** Writing for the American Thinker, [Larry Greenfield](#) pays homage to two leading Jewish neoconservatives, Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, arguing that their views have become central to modern conservatism and inviting "liberal jews" upset with Obama's Middle East policies to embrace them. "Neoconservatism should be analyzed and respected on its own merits as a rich and deep contribution to modern conservatism," Greenfield writes. "The case study of neoconservative patriarchs Kristol and Podhoretz inspires celebration and contemplation. May the religious season upon us invite their stubborn American Jewish ideological opponents to seek some penitence as well."
- **The Neocon's Rising Star** The New York Times' [Mark Leibovich](#) profiles Dick Cheney's daughter Liz as an incipient neoconservative icon, defending the Bush administration's use of waterboarding and her father's controversial record. Leibovich hints that Liz may soon run for office, although she has not committed to anything yet: "What is clear is that Ms. Cheney, at a minimum, has become a rallying point for conservative views on national security. In a broader sense, she is being promoted as a rising star of the Republican Party, one who is hardly shying from the Cheney brand."
- **Look Who's Talking** [Philip Weiss](#) rounds up recent neoconservative opinions on Iran and systematically pummels each in his Mondoweiss blog. The Atlantic's own [Andrew Sullivan](#) is likewise unimpressed: "What the neocons do not seem to be able to grasp is that America's open hand to Iran is not weakness, but strength. It calls their bluff, has refocused global attention on the real problem - not American hegemony but Tehran's insanity, and has moved the ball further forward than at any time under Bush and Cheney."

- **What Does the Term Even Mean?** asks Cato's [Justin Logan](#), who also analyzes recent neoconservative writings in search of unifying theoretical tenets. He finds the material largely self-contradicting, "incoherent," and intellectually dismissive: "It's something of a parlor game in IR [International Relations] to debate whether neoconservatism is its own IR theory; whether it's a theory at all, of anything; whether it's really just liberalism; et cetera, but what would be really good to have is a clear statement that could be scrutinized on its own merit. Until then one is left guessing or, at best, turning up weird conspiracy theories about Leo Strauss and the University of Chicago on the internet."

## The Debate

- [The Neocons Make a Comeback 46](#) Bret Stephens, The Wall Street Journal
  - [What's "Realism" Then?](#) Jennifer Rubin, Commentary
  - [Liberal Jews and the Legacy of Neoconservatism](#) Larry Greenfield, American Thinker
  - [New Cheney Taking Stage for the G.O.P.](#) MarK Leibovich, The New York Times
  - [The Neocon Panic, Ctd 9](#) Andrew Sullivan, The Atlantic
  - [Neocons Push Regime Change at Gunpoint, Again](#) Philip Weiss, Mondoweiss
  - [On What Larger Theory Is Neoconservatism Based?](#) Justin Logan, Cato Institute
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