

Neoconservative convergence...by Greg O'Keefe

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, July 27, 2005

<http://politicsrespun.org/2005/07/neoconservative-convergence/>

Krauthammer's [Neoconservative Convergence](#) makes two interesting points that need to be reinforced among some readers. (not you of course)

One,

The question of alliances with dictators, of deals with the devil, can be approached openly, forthrightly, and without any need for defensiveness. The principle is that we cannot democratize the world overnight and, therefore, if we are sincere about the democratic project, we must proceed sequentially. Nor, out of a false equivalence, need we abandon democratic reformers in these autocracies. On the contrary, we have a duty to support them, even as we have a perfect moral right to distinguish between democrats on the one hand and totalitarians or jihadists on the other.

In the absence of omnipotence, one must deal with the lesser of two evils. That means postponing radically destabilizing actions in places where the support of the current non-democratic regime is needed against a larger existential threat to the free world. There is no need to apologize for that. In World War II we allied ourselves with Stalin against Hitler. (As Churchill said shortly after the German invasion of the USSR: "If Hitler invaded hell I would make at least a favorable reference to the devil in the House of Commons.") This was a necessary alliance, and a temporary one: when we were done with Hitler, we turned our attention to Stalin and his successors.

This is part of an argument that Stephen, among others, and I have when discussing U.S. foreign policy. Should the U.S. cozy up to dictators and tyrants? No. Should they do so when pursuing a greater evil? Yes. After the U.S. eliminates the jihadists, nihilists and totalitarians, then we can move on to the next level of problems states/people.

Two,

Another important sign of the maturing of neoconservative foreign policy is that it is no longer tethered to its own ideological history and paternity. The current practitioners of neoconservative foreign policy are George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, and Donald Rumsfeld. They have no history in the movement, and before 9/11 had little affinity to or affiliation with it.

The fathers of neoconservatism are former liberals or leftists. Today, its chief proponents, to judge by their history, are former realists. Rice, for example, was a disciple of Brent Scowcroft; Cheney served as Secretary of Defense in the first Bush administration. September 11 changed all of that. It changed the world, and changed our understanding of the world. As neoconservatism seemed to

offer the most plausible explanation of the new reality and the most compelling and active response to it, many realists were brought to acknowledge the poverty of realism—not just the futility but the danger of a foreign policy centered on the illusion of stability and equilibrium. These realists, newly mugged by reality, have given weight to neoconservatism, making it more diverse and, given the newcomers' past experience, more mature.

What neoconservatives have long been advocating is now being articulated and practiced at the highest levels of government by a war cabinet composed of individuals who, coming from a very different place, have joined and reshaped the neoconservative camp and are carrying the neoconservative idea throughout the world. As a result, the vast right-wing conspiracy has grown even more vast than liberals could imagine. And even as the tent has enlarged, the great schisms and splits in conservative foreign policy—so widely predicted just a year ago, so eagerly sought and amplified by outside analysts—have not occurred. Indeed, differences have, if anything, narrowed.

This is not party discipline. It is compromise with reality, and convergence toward the middle. Above all, it is the maturation of a governing ideology whose time has come.

Krauthammer dispels the myth that Bush, Cheney and Co. are Neocons. James Mann, in his excellent book *The Rise of the Vulcans*, also dispels the myth citing that the true Neocons in the administration are Wolfowitz and Perle. If proximity to the President is everything in Washington and Wolfowitz is now head of the World Bank, and Perle sits on the Defense Policy Board, is it now the ideas of the Neocons and not the Neocons themselves that have currency with the current administration? Can we now dispense with the myth?

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