


are close to \$20 billion and Barack Obama's is \$28 billion. The neoconservative solution is to encourage programs where individuals can shop around and choose their own schools, and where education dollars follow students. This does not call for increased funding.

In healthcare, Clinton would spend \$110 billion compelling all Americans to sign up for comprehensive, rather than catastrophic, insurance coverage, whether they want it or not. Obama's health plan would "only" cost an additional \$50 billion to \$65 billion. Under

health insurance policy from private companies to meet their needs, in the same way that they buy home and car insurance. Republicans would remove current regulations that forbid companies from competing across state lines, to encourage more companies to offer plans. In that way, when individuals change jobs, they would not lose their insurance.

As Milton Friedman wrote, those who promote more government control do it with the best of intentions. Yet who can deny that the vast public housing projects in major cities led to crime and urban decay, and that children trapped in inner-city schools without the freedom to choose other schools are doomed to a poor education? Some report that even Medicare, with its ceilings on physician and hospital reimbursement, offers a lower level of care to senior citizens.

The coming presidential election will be a referendum on neoconservatives' domestic policy proposals. Never has the line been drawn so clearly between higher taxes and more government spending, and lower taxes and more individual choice. It's up to the American public to decide the preferred course of action. 

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both plans, employers who do not provide health insurance for employees would pay extra taxes for the public plans.

The neoconservative proposals espoused by Republicans are a dramatic contrast. Rather than require businesses to pay extra taxes, they propose to delink health insurance from employment completely. Instead, people would each have a \$7,000 tax credit to choose a

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## Neoconservatism: Past and Future

*Damon Linker*

It has been an eventful decade for neoconservatives — the intellectuals who have long advocated the use of American military force to spread democracy around the world and whose ideas are often credited with (or blamed for) inspiring the Bush administration's controversial response to the September 11 terrorist attacks.

When the decade began, the neocons enjoyed little political influence. As early supporters of John McCain in his 2000 run for the White House, leading neocons such as William Kristol and David Brooks found themselves knocked out of the loop when their preferred candidate lost out to George W. Bush in the Republican primaries. Inclined at the time toward caution and restraint in international affairs, Bush stood at the opposite ideological pole from the neocons, whose hostility to the new president boiled over within months of his inauguration. After Bush and his Secretary of State Colin Powell negotiated a peaceful resolution to a standoff with China over an American spy plane that had been forced to land by a Chinese fighter jet, the neocon *Weekly Stan-*

*ard* magazine ran an editorial titled "A National Humiliation." Its authors (Kristol and Robert Kagan) implied that the new president should have been willing to go to war with a nuclear-armed nation of 1.2 billion citizens for the sake of saving face.

That was in April 2001. The horrific events of five months later would provide the occasion for a rapprochement between the ideological adversaries. Suddenly bellicosity seemed like good sense, just as the neocons had long maintained. The neocon case for military aggression was remarkably simple: Fighting a series of wars would be good for the U.S. both at home (where the ascendancy of martial virtues like honor and sacrifice would drive out the moral decadence of the post-1960s culture) and abroad (where our nation's murderous enemies would be vanquished and the seeds of democracy planted in their place). American militarism would thus also be good for the world, which badly needed American leadership to enforce order and punish injustice. The only people to lose out in the new

*Damon Linker, a senior writing fellow in the Center for Critical Writing at the University of Pennsylvania, is the author of The Theocons.*

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American century would be murderous tyrants and thugs, especially in the Muslim Middle East. For a stunned administration, having just presided over the most spectacular and deadly attack on civilians in American history, the neocon foreign policy vision provided appealing moral and strategic clarity.

The U.S. and the world have been contending with the consequences of that clarity for the past six years. Reviewing the sobering events of these years, one might expect that neoconservative ideas would be almost totally discredited. But remarkably, the ideology has thus far emerged from the debacle of the Iraq War unscathed. President Bush's approval ratings may be irreversibly mired in the low 30s, but the neocons have managed to transform foreign policy thinking in the Republican Party so completely that neoconservatism currently reigns unchallenged in the party's Washington establishment.

Nearly every GOP candidate for president in 2008 sounded neoconservative themes, with three of them (Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney, and John McCain) hiring leading neocons to head their foreign policy teams. The result was a primary campaign marked by an astonishing display of rhetorical grandstanding, as each candidate struggled to appear the toughest and most likely to expand the war to Iran. If the GOP's nominee, John McCain, wins the presidency, we have to assume he will follow the advice of his neocon advisors and seek to realize their ongoing vision of a Middle East radically transformed by American military might.

There is more variation in foreign policy thinking on the Democratic side of the aisle, yet there, too, neoconservatism has made surprising inroads. Hillary Clinton's advisors on international affairs (e.g., Richard Holbrooke, Sandy Berger) would not describe themselves

as neocons. But in the months before the spring 2003 invasion of Iraq, most of them, along with the candidate herself, supported President Bush's drive toward war.

If Clinton and her advisors have backed away from their pre-war positions, they have done so mainly out of a conviction that the myriad problems with the post-invasion occupation of the country flowed from Bush administration incompetence. The chaos and bloodletting that have torn Iraq apart for much of the past five years should be blamed, in other words, on the poor execution of a fundamentally sound policy. Had this policy been pursued by a more capable team, it likely would have succeeded.


Not all Democrats share a confidence in the efficacy of using military force to spread democracy. Barack Obama, for example, has surrounded himself with advisors (including

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*If the GOP's nominee, John McCain, wins the presidency, we have to assume he will follow the advice of his neocon advisors.*

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Anthony Lake, Susan Rice, and Zbigniew Brzezinski) who opposed the Iraq War from the beginning, believing that the goals of the invasion were muddled and overambitious. That the Bush administration subsequently proved to be inept at managing the occupation undoubtedly made things worse than they had to be, but the root cause of the chaos could be found in the neoconservative assumptions that guided the president's decision to go to war in the first place.

Whether and to what extent these assumptions continue to guide American foreign policy in years to come will largely depend on the outcome of the 2008 presidential election. 

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## Neoconservatism: Tragedy & Farce

*Jonathan Schorsch*

Perhaps I am just another angry critic but it seems to me that neoconservatism (1) has little that is Jewish about it and (2) has little to do with liberalism. Definitions mean everything, of course, but history here is less important than phenomenology. An overwhelming majority of American Jews opposes neoconservatism, which has, for decades, associated itself with the more conservative

sectors of the Republican Party. Neoconservatism has either formulated or supported pretty much everything the second Bush administration has promoted.

This administration has combined the worst of the conservative and liberal traditions. It assumes that government is good only for waging foreign wars and that "The only legitimate function of government is the defense of

*Jonathan Schorsch is assistant professor of Jewish studies in the Religion Department at Columbia University.*

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