

Neocon Kagan Endorses Hillary Clinton

Exclusive: Hillary Clinton's cozy ties to Washington's powerful neocons have paid off with the endorsement of Robert Kagan, one of the most influential neocons. But it also should raise questions among Democrats about what kind of foreign policy a President Hillary Clinton would pursue, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Prominent neocon Robert Kagan has endorsed Democrat Hillary Clinton for president, saying she represents the best hope for saving the United States from populist billionaire Donald Trump, who has repudiated the neoconservative cause of U.S. military interventions in line with Israel's interests.

In a Washington Post op-ed published on Thursday, Kagan excoriated the Republican Party for creating the conditions for Trump's rise and then asked, "So what to do now? The Republicans' creation will soon be let loose on the land, leaving to others the job the party failed to carry out."

Then referring to himself, he added, "For this former Republican, and perhaps for others, the only choice will be to vote for Hillary Clinton. The [Republican] party cannot be saved, but the country still can be."

While many of Kagan's observations about the Republican tolerance and even encouragement of bigotry are correct, the fact that a leading neocon, a co-founder of the infamous Project for the New American Century, has endorsed Clinton raises questions for Democrats who have so far given the former New York senator and Secretary of State mostly a pass on her pro-interventionist policies.

The fact is that Clinton has generally marched in lock step with the neocons as they have implemented an aggressive "regime change" strategy against governments and political movements that don't toe Washington's line or that deviate from Israel's goals in the Middle East. So she has backed coups, such as in Honduras (2009) and Ukraine (2014); invasions, such as Iraq (2003) and Libya (2011); and subversions such as Syria (from 2011 to the present) all with various degrees of disastrous results.

Yet, with the failure of Republican establishment candidates to gain political traction against Trump, Clinton has clearly become the choice of many neoconservatives and "liberal interventionists" who favor continuation of U.S. imperial designs around the world. The question for Democrats now is whether they wish to perpetuate those war-like policies by sticking with Clinton or

should switch to Sen. Bernie Sanders, who offers a somewhat less aggressive (though vaguely defined) foreign policy.

Sanders has undermined his appeal to anti-imperialist Democrats by muting his criticism of Clinton's "regime change" strategies and concentrating relentlessly on his message of "income inequality" for which Clinton has disingenuously dubbed him a "single-issue candidate." Whether Sanders has the will and the time to reorient his campaign to question Clinton's status as the new neocon choice remains in doubt.

A Reagan Propagandist

Kagan, who I've known since the 1980s when he was a rising star on Ronald Reagan's State Department propaganda team (selling violent right-wing policies in Central America), has been signaling his affection for Clinton for some time, at least since she appointed him as an adviser to her State Department and promoted his wife Victoria Nuland, a former top aide to Vice President Dick Cheney, to be the State Department's chief spokesperson. Largely because of Clinton's patronage, Nuland rose to assistant secretary of state for European affairs and oversaw the provocative "regime change" in Ukraine in 2014.

Later in 2014, Kagan told The New York Times that he hoped that his neocon views which he had begun to call "liberal interventionist" would prevail in a possible Hillary Clinton administration. The Times reported that Clinton "remains the vessel into which many interventionists are pouring their hopes" and quoted Kagan as saying:

"I feel comfortable with her on foreign policy. If she pursues a policy which we think she will pursue it's something that might have been called neocon, but clearly her supporters are not going to call it that; they are going to call it something else."

Now, Kagan, whose Project for the New American Century wrote the blueprint for George W. Bush's disastrous Iraq War, is now abandoning the Republican Party in favor of Hillary Clinton.

Though Kagan's Post op-ed is characteristically erudite with references to Greek mythology and the French Revolution, it presents a somewhat skewed account of how the Republican Party lost its way. In Kagan's telling, the problem emerged from its blind hatred of Barack Obama's 2008 victory, "a racially tinged derangement syndrome that made any charge plausible and any opposition justified."

The truth is that the Republican Party has harbored ugly tendencies for decades, including the red-baiting McCarthy era of the 1950s, Barry Goldwater's hostility

to civil rights laws in the 1960s, Richard Nixon's "Southern strategy" in 1968, Ronald Reagan's appeal to racial bigotry in the 1980s, George H.W. Bush's race-baiting "Willie Horton commercials" of 1988, and the GOP's more recent support for a New Jim Crow era hostile to black voting and to social programs along with the party's anti-Latino bigotry and hostility to immigrants.

As a Reagan apparatchik who continued to rise with the neocon tide in the 1990s and early 2000s, Kagan doesn't take the Republican exploitation of American fears and prejudices back that far. Instead, he starts the clock with Obama's election, writing, "there was the party's accommodation to and exploitation of the bigotry in its ranks. No, the majority of Republicans are not bigots. But they have certainly been enablers.

"Who began the attack on immigrants, legal and illegal, long before Trump arrived on the scene and made it his premier issue? Who was it who frightened Mitt Romney into selling his soul in 2012, talking of 'self-deportation' to get himself right with the party's anti-immigrant forces?

"Who was it who opposed any plausible means of dealing with the genuine problem of illegal immigration, forcing Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) to cower, abandon his principles, and his own immigration legislation, lest he be driven from the presidential race before it had even begun?

"It was not Trump. It was not even party yahoos. It was Republican Party pundits and intellectuals, trying to harness populist passions and perhaps deal a blow to any legislation for which President Obama might possibly claim even partial credit. What did Trump do but pick up where they left off, tapping the well-primed gusher of popular anger, xenophobia and, yes, bigotry that the party had already unleashed?"

In that sense, Kagan argues that "Trump is no fluke. Nor is he hijacking the Republican Party or the conservative movement, if there is such a thing. He is, rather, the party's creation, its Frankenstein monster, brought to life by the party, fed by the party and now made strong enough to destroy its maker."

An Issue for Democrats

While Kagan's op-ed surely makes some accurate points about Republicans, his endorsement of Hillary Clinton raises a different issue for Democrats: Do they want a presidential candidate who someone as savvy as Kagan knows will perpetuate neocon strategies around the world? Do Democrats really trust Hillary Clinton to handle delicate issues, such as the Syrian conflict, without resorting to escalations that may make the neocon disasters under George W. Bush look minor by comparison?

Will Clinton even follow the latest neocon dream of “regime change” in Moscow as the ultimate way of collapsing Israel’s lesser obstacles – Iran, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Palestinian resistance? Does Clinton have the wisdom to understand that neocon schemes are often half-baked (remember “the cakewalk” in Iraq) and that the risk of overthrowing Vladimir Putin in Moscow might lead not to some new pliable version of Boris Yeltsin but to a dangerous Russian nationalist ready to use the nuclear codes to defend Mother Russia? (For all Putin’s faults, he is a calculating adversary, not a crazy one.)

The fact that none of these life-and-death foreign policy questions has been thoroughly or intelligently explored during the Democratic presidential campaign is a failure of both the mainstream media moderators and the two candidates, Sanders and Clinton, neither of whom seems to want a serious or meaningful debate about these existential issues.

Perhaps Robert Kagan’s endorsement of Hillary Clinton and what that underscores about the likely foreign policy of a second Clinton presidency might finally force war or peace to the fore of the campaign.

[For more on the powerful Kagan family, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“A Family Business of Perpetual War.”](#)]

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).
