



## Book Reveals Neo-Con Influence in GOP

Tom Pauken, a lawyer and conservative political activist hailing from Texas, wrote *Bringing Home America: How America Lost Her Way and How We Can Find Our Way Back* for the stated purpose of critiquing how the George W. Bush administration squandered the political capital that Goldwater/Reagan conservatives had built over three decades. Pauken served as chairman of the Republican Party of Texas from 1994 to 1997, which was both before and after George W. Bush became Governor of Texas. Years earlier, he served on the transition team of President-elect Ronald Reagan and was appointed by President Reagan to head ACTION, where he worked to rein in the agency.



Pauken is obviously more than an observer regarding the impact Reagan or the Bushes have had on the conservative movement. However, his book is not a political tell-all, and those who read it with that assumption in mind will be disappointed.

Pauken is an outspoken critic of the neo-conservative movement and a respected traditional Republican. Yet, ironically, in the first chapter of his book, he credits not just traditionally minded conservatives (e.g., Barry Goldwater) but neo-conservatives (e.g., William F. Buckley) for helping to shape his political philosophy.

The book is divided into two sections, “How America Lost Her Way” and “How We Can Find Our Way Back.” Early in the book, Pauken describes how, under the Presidencies of Johnson, Nixon, and Ford, many Americans were becoming fed up with liberals. This led to the election of Ronald Reagan whose influence, according to Pauken, peaked during his first term in office. Pauken writes: “For all practical purposes the post-Reagan era had been a disappointing period for American conservatives who once seemed to be on the verge of restoring and revitalizing a nation that had lost its way in the 1960s and 70s.”

He adds: “In one sense, success led to our downfall. When conservatives made the Republican Party the majority party in America, the opportunists, pragmatists, and phony conservatives moved in and took control of the Republican Party, and of the conservative movement itself — all in the name of ‘conservatism.’” He points out that conservatives should not support candidates for the Presidency just because they happen to be the lesser of two evils. He continues: “Nor should we remain silent when a bunch of phony conservatives calling themselves neoconservatives hijack the conservative movement and use them to provide their ideological agenda.”

Why were the hijackers so successful? Pauken’s points would have been strengthened if he had shown how Presidents Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush appointed neo-conservatives from the world-government-promoting Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) for high-level administration



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positions. But Pauken does emphasize that Ronald Reagan should not have chosen George H. W. Bush — who was both a director of the CFR and a member of the Trilateral Commission — as his running mate.

The two most engaging chapters in the book are “Hijacking the Conservative Movement” and “The Neoconservative Conquest of American Foreign Policy.” Pauken’s description of Karl Rove as having a huge influence in getting George W. Bush elected twice and in using Machiavellian tactics to promote his strategy is of interest. His comments on Rove make evident Rove’s devotion to the neo-cons while an advisor to Bush and afterward.

In addition to giving Rove credit for Bush’s success, Pauken likewise opines that Vice President Dick Cheney was the principal power over foreign policy in the Bush administration, and also very much a neo-con. Most readers of *The New American* will also remember Cheney as a CFR member and director.

Pauken credits Reagan with holding down spending and praises his economic policies as something to duplicate. But his assessment is rosier than the reality. The federal budget grew during the Reagan Presidency, and President Reagan himself acknowledged that he was only slowing down future growth in spending, not cutting spending in the absolute sense. As he stated on February 18, 1981, “It’s important to note that we’re only reducing the rates of increase in taxing and spending. We’re not attempting to cut either spending or taxing levels below that which we presently have.” In fact, though as a presidential candidate Reagan had called for abolition of the Departments of Education and Energy, as President he proposed one budget after another calling for billions of dollars of spending for these departments. And he also supported increasing the national debt ceiling, which during his first year in office was raised above \$1 trillion for the first time. Pauken’s view of Reagan may square with the image many good, fiscal conservatives have of him, and it may also square with his rhetoric, but it does not square with reality.

Pauken yearns for the Goldwater/Reagan days with obvious sincerity. He refers to the conservative movement coming of age in the 1950s and 1960s and advocates the principles of limited government, opposition to international communism, and support of traditional values.

He then warns against the advent of big-government conservatism with interesting documentation. He quotes a 2003 column appearing in the *Wall Street Journal* by Fred Barnes, executive editor of *The Weekly Standard*, the leading neo-conservative magazine. In that article, Barnes noted with approval that the Bush administration believed “in using what would normally be seen as liberal means — activist government — for conservative ends. And they are willing to spend more and increase the size of government in the process.” Moreover, Barnes acknowledged, “big government conservatives are favorably disposed toward what neoconservative Irving Kristol has called a ‘conservative welfare state.’”

Pauken rightfully condemns the Barnes/Kristol variant of “conservatism.” He could have appropriately added (but didn’t) that Irving Kristol (father of Bill Kristol, founder and editor of *The Weekly Standard*) is not just another “neo-conservative” but is credited with coining the term neo-conservatism — and, even more startling, was a longtime admirer of communist Leon Trotsky.

Both Barnes and Bill Kristol are frequent guests on the FOX News Cable network whose owner is Rupert Murdoch (CFR). Pauken writes that “Kristol persuaded media magnate, Rupert Murdoch, to provide huge subsidies for Kristol’s new opinion magazine, *The Weekly Standard*.”

Pauken is quite persuasive in documenting the neo-con conquest of American foreign policy, especially



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in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. He begins by saying that by the standard of the just-war theory, the United States made the correct decision to deny Osama bin Laden and his Taliban allies sanctuaries in Afghanistan. But Iraq, which did not harbor al-Qaeda and did not attack us on September 11, was a different matter. He writes, "The neoconservatives ... were so obsessed with accomplishing their long standing objective of ousting Saddam Hussein from power that they lost sight of the more important goal. Moreover, they were now well positioned both within and outside the Bush administration to persuade the President and the American public of the necessity of launching a preventive war in Iraq."

In fact, as far back as 1997, Pauken describes how Bill Kristol established his Project for the New American Century to promote military action to overthrow Hussein. Pauken named some of the prominent neo-conservatives who signed the letter including Bill Kristol, Bill Bennett, Paul Wolfowitz, James Woolsey, John Bolton, Robert Kagan, Elliot Abrams, and Richard Perle.

The author correctly contends that the Bush administration was heavily influenced by neo-conservatives both in and out of government. Two prominent supporters of the neo-con philosophy were Gary Bauer and John Hagee. Pauken notes that it is odd that these Christian pastors, who should understand and support just-war principles, fully embrace the neo-con party line on Iraq and even want to expand the war to Iran. One of many ill effects of our Iraq military action has been the increased danger to their Christian brethren in that tragic part of the world.

Further illustrating our failed policy in Iraq, quotes from a former ex-CIA analyst, Michael Scheuer, from his book *Imperial Hubris* on why we are losing the War on Terror: "U.S. forces and policies are completing the radicalization of the Islamic world, something Osama bin Laden has been trying to do with substantial but incomplete success since the early 1990s. As a result, I think it is fair to conclude that the United States of America remains Osama bin Laden's indispensable ally."

Pauken also points out that our counter-productive intervention in Bosnia led to the transfer of power in Kosovo from the Christian Serbs to the radical Islamic Kosovo Liberation Army. Thus, our neo-con foreign policy helped create a power base for radical Islam in the Baltics.

Pauken offers one definition of neo-conservatism by quoting British philosopher John Gray who wrote, "In its enthusiasm for revolutionary change, neo-conservatism has more in common with Jacobinism and Leninism than with neo-liberalism or traditional conservatism." In other words as Pauken asserts, "the neoconservative goal of imposing democracy everywhere in the world is the kind of utopian vision generally associated with the left. It is akin to the Marxist objective of creating a 'perfect world,' a 'heaven on earth' if you will."

The second half of the book discusses our present economic peril and its causes, the coarsening of our culture, and the need to restore traditional values. He also advocates a new strategy for addressing the radical Islamic threat — with Putin's Russia as our ally, notwithstanding the ruling Russian elites' terrorist, communist connections, which presumably Pauken is unaware of.

But despite the book's flaws, it is still very much worth reading in this reviewer's opinion since it will help the reader better understand the neo-conservatives, the grip they have on the conservative movement, and why the grip must be broken.



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