



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on January 10, 2013

Understanding Republicans' Reaction to Chuck Hagel

Neoconservative Republicans are none too pleased by President Obama's nomination of Chuck Hagel to the position of Secretary of Defense.

Anyone who has been listening to neoconservative talk radio for the last couple of days, or reading such neoconservative publications as *The Weekly Standard* and *National Review*, is all too familiar with the litany of charges of which Hagel is presumed guilty. When it comes to foreign policy, Hagel is an "appeaser," "naïve," and "no friend of Israel."

These allegations may or may not be true. What is true is that Hagel's accusers haven't even come close to substantiating any of them.

Mine is an attitude of indifference toward Hagel. To his credit, he was a trenchant critic of the Iraq War. However, he had none of the prescience of those of the war's opponents who resisted it from the outset, for Hagel initially voted for it. The point, though, is that it is his opposition to this war that first rendered him *persona non grata* to his fellow neoconservative Republicans who aggressively advocated on its behalf.

They will not publicly admit this now, obviously. After all, as the elections of 2006 and 2008 proved beyond a doubt, to say nothing of poll after poll, it was some time ago that the majority of the nation decided the Hagels of the world were correct about the war while the Kristols, Krauthammers, Hannitys, Limbaughs, and Bennetts were sorely mistaken.

The Iraq War was a foreign policy disaster of epic proportions. This is how most people view it today — even if Hagel's neoconservative critics refuse to do so.

The neoconservative's reaction to Hagel's nomination is as revealing an indication as any that the Republican Party has not mended its ways. To put it another way, it proves that America's neoconservative party is as committed to its ideology as Obama is committed to his.

Every election season, neoconservative pundits are quick to chastise as "single issue" voters those "social conservatives" who express reluctance to vote for candidates who they believe are, say, insufficiently "pro-life." Yet these same pundits show none of the tolerance, patience, or flexibility that they call for in those to whom they preach, for there is one issue on which they will not compromise.





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Of course, that issue is “foreign policy” or “national security.”

And for the neoconservative, this means the following:

First, any politician who isn’t determined to spend even more public monies on the military must be depicted as an “appeaser,” “naïve,” and, invariably, “no friend of Israel.”

Second, any politician who suggests the need for reductions in military (“defense”) spending must be characterized as an “appeaser,” “naïve,” and “no friend of Israel.”

Third, any politician who refuses to paint any Islamic militant as a “terrorist,” “radical Muslim,” or “Islamist” must be described as an “appeaser,” “naïve,” and “no friend of Israel.”

Fourth, any politician, like Hagel, who makes a point of reminding his colleagues that they have been elected to represent the people of America, not of Israel, must be smeared as an “appeaser,” “naïve,” and “no friend of Israel.”

Finally, any politician who opposes efforts to enlist the American military in the service of fundamentally transforming the planet into a bastion of Global Democracy must be decried as an “appeaser,” “naïve,” and “no friend of Israel.”

The key to understanding the neoconservative’s reaction to Hagel — as well as to understanding everything else that he does — lies in understanding his foreign policy vision and the all-importance that he attaches to it.



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