



Written by [Eric Egan](#) on February 17, 2014

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When Republicans Changed

NeoConservatives: Changing American Politics is a new DVD produced and released by The John Birch Society available at [JBS.org](#). It features John Birch Society CEO Arthur R. Thompson and John Birch Society President John F. McManus as narrators and guides throughout. The mini-documentary explains the history of neoconservatism and the confusing effect that it has had on our American political landscape, as well as how America got into these politically confused times, where America is headed, and, most importantly, how America can exit from its self-destructive mode.



NeoConservatives does a good job of repudiating the perceived political reality that holds that Republicans promote conservative ideals and legislation and Democrats put forth liberal, big-government agendas. The actual political reality is that on core issues, the two parties are woefully in agreement. These agreed-upon (yet strangely untrumpeted) issues include working toward never-ending foreign entanglements, super-sizing the federal government, advancing questionable economic policies, and perhaps most alarmingly, treating the U.S. Constitution as a flexible document. Indeed, it seems that if Democrats and Republicans opened a circus, the U.S. Constitution would be their dutiful contortionist, guaranteed to increase ticket sales for their large-tent event even when the typical donkey and elephant tricks fail to do so.

The irony is not lost upon the producers of the video that, regardless of party affiliation, presidents have, for a while at least, broken their oaths to defend the Constitution, while weakly insisting that they have been defending the Constitution. To make this point, the educational video begins with an expertly crafted opening montage made up of news footage of every president from Jimmy Carter to Barack Obama taking the oath to uphold the office of president and “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution.” Notably, everyone who holds elected office in our nation, and some who hold unelected ones, is required to take a similar oath. Whether there is some overarching conspiracy to ignore the Constitution, whether they have the best intentions, or whether they merely get hung up on the to-the-best-of-my-ability part and have pathological self-confidence issues, somewhere along the line they almost all seem to forget that oath.

Neoconservatives Get the Nod

As you might guess from the title, *NeoConservatives* blames neoconservatives for Republicans’ lack of adherence to conservative, constitutional principles. It also points out exactly when neoconservatism gained a tipping point in influence: a Republican conference in May 1991. At that point “Republicans became Republicans first and conservatives second” en masse. This was proudly proclaimed in a *Wall Street Journal* article by Irving Kristol, the “godfather of neoconservatism,” who chaired that conference.



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Label manipulation is the neocons' favorite and most effective *modus operandi*. By convincing Republicans to be Republicans before being conservative, it was relatively easy to convince party supporters to throw their collective weight behind issues, bills, and even ideas that just years before would have stuck in the throat of any true conservative. Changing the taste of the candy slowly while keeping the wrapper the same seems to be a very capable psychological tool in the world of *realpolitik*.

Perhaps one of the oddest and most telling twists and shifts of public perception of the liberal-conservative paradigm is that conservatives are perceived today as the pro-war faction. This was not traditionally the case, as was apparent in the days leading up to WWII. It was Republicans (the conservatives) who were the "isolationists" (a deliberately misleading and derogatory label applied to noninterventionists) and Democrats who wanted to go to war for "American interests" (a rapidly moving target that couldn't be hit with a nuclear bomb).

In pointing out the history of neoconservatism, the video points out facts that should make it evident to any Republican that neoconservatism is diametrically opposed to conservatism and Americanism, highlighting the deep intellectual connection between neoconservatives and Leon Trotsky. Trotsky was one of Lenin's and Stalin's close collaborators, and many of the early neophytes of neoconservatism were steeped in Trotsky's theories on internationalism. This is not to say that neocons are precisely communist, but the roots are there. Owing to these roots, they view the subsidiarity of the federal government to the states and the people, as espoused in the Constitution of the United States, as quaint at best. At worst, they view it as something dangerous that must be stamped out at whatever the price, even our freedom. The *realpolitik* methods of the neoconservatives, such as using media outlets as propaganda machines, were learned from their communist roots.

NeoConservatives informs us very well of what neocons are and where they come from, and it also tells the audience how to identify neocon political candidates: namely by how they vote, not how they speak. Indeed, judging politicians on what they say instead of what they do is precisely how we got into this mess. Just because a politician says he is a conservative and just because other politicians agree that he is a conservative does not make him a conservative. (If you disagree with that, by the way, I know a solid "conservative" politician named Chris Christie who has a bridge to sell you.

Enemies and Education

Because there is danger of despair for true conservatives when trying to win over the Republican rank and file against the GOP leadership, a group that has an enormous advantage over their opponents because they have deep pockets and access to lobbyist funds, *NeoConservatives* offers a way to build hope. The primary way is by educating people on important issues (the first being the Constitution). To this end, Thompson and McManus inform us about the Action Education Programs on JBS.org. On the right side of that website, there is a slide show that, when clicked on, will take the site visitor to a list of various issues for which The John Birch Society has developed an action plan. Merely publishing good information will not get the job done. The information must be placed in the hands of others, who then must be motivated to become involved in the freedom fight as part of a concerted action program to effect real change. That's what The John Birch Society is all about.

Thompson and McManus also engage in a little necessary label defining themselves. The JBS is not liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat, but constitutionalist. This is important to note because, in a world where political labeling paradigms often shift, it is imperative to choose a label that



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is more or less self-defining. The etymology of the term “constitutionalist” is much more self evident and less flexible than “Republican” or “conservative.”

At a little over 22 minutes in length, *NeoConservatives* goes by at a quick clip, and the production value is quite good for a piece that is intended primarily as an educational tool and not entertainment. Of course, the educational value of the DVD is precisely why everyone should own *NeoConservatives*. It can be used either as a quick reference or to hand out to friends who are unaware of the murky political landscape that thrives under a veneer of black and white. It is up to us to defend the Constitution, even if that means defending it from the neocon ringmasters in D.C.

NeoConservatives: Changing American Politics is available now at www.JBS.org. (See ad on page 1.)



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