



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on September 25, 2012

Romney Foreign Policy Shows Strong CFR, Neo-con Influence

Both President Obama and Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney will address the [Clinton Global Initiative](#) (established in 2005 by President Bill Clinton) on September 25, an indication that both candidates are attempting to better articulate their positions on international affairs. An NPR report on the meeting noted: “The latest polls show Obama’s numbers dropping on foreign policy. Romney is trying to exploit that weakness.”



An AP report about today’s CGI meeting at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers noted:

Following deadly anti-American protests in Muslim countries over the past two weeks, Romney was to outline plans Tuesday to rework the U.S. foreign aid system, tying development money to requirements that countries allow U.S. investment and remove trade barriers. Obama also was to address top foreign leaders, CEOs and nongovernmental organizations at the gathering spearheaded by former President Bill Clinton.

The report also observed:

Both men were drawing *contrasts* in a presidential contest in which the state of the U.S. economy has been paramount, but which shifted focus this month to foreign policy after attacks in Libya killed four Americans. [Emphasis added.]

Contrasts. In any election, the voters study contrasts in the candidates’ positions in order better to determine which candidate represents the best solutions to the nation’s current and future crises. Sometimes the contrasts are striking; at other times they are subtle. The famous [third Kennedy-Nixon Presidential Debate](#) held on October 13, 1960 is a case in point. During that debate, Charles Van Fremd of CBS News asked Vice President Nixon “a two-part question concerning the offshore islands in the Formosa Straits. If you were president and the Chinese Communists tomorrow began an invasion of Quemoy and Matsu, would you launch the United States into a war by sending the Seventh Fleet and other military forces to resist this aggression; and secondly, if the ... regular conventional forces failed to halt such ... an invasion, would you authorize the use of nuclear weapons?”

Nixon replied:

Mr. Van Fremd, it would be completely irresponsible for a candidate for the presidency, or for a president himself, to indicate the course of action and the weapons he would use in the event of such an attack. I will say this: in the event that such an attack occurred and in the event the attack was a prelude to an attack on Formosa — which would be the indication today because the Chinese Communists say over and over again that their objective is not the offshore islands, that they consider them only steppingstones to taking Formosa — in the event that their attack then were a prelude to an attack on Formosa, there isn’t any question but that the United States would then



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again, as in the case of Berlin, honor our treaty obligations and stand by our ally of Formosa.

The debate's moderator, Bill Shadel of ABC News, then invited Senator Kennedy to comment:

Now, that is the issue. I believe we must meet our commitment to ... Formosa. I support it and the Pescadores Island. That is the present American position. The treaty does not include these two islands. Mr. Nixon suggests ... that the United States should go to war if these two islands are attacked. I suggest that if Formosa is attacked or the Pescadores, or if there's any military action in any area which indicates an attack on Formosa and the Pescadores, then of course the United States is at war to defend its treaty. Now, I must say what Mr. Nixon wants to do is commit us — as I understand him, so that we can be clear if there's a disagreement — he wants us to be committed to the defense of these islands merely as the defense of these islands as free territory, not as part of the defense of Formosa.

Following the debate, the consensus of opinion of most viewers who watched the exchange was that although Kennedy and Nixon disagreed about exactly where to draw the line in the sand, the difference was not a significant one and that, in effect, the foreign policy views of both candidates were more similar than divergent. (Both men were members of the interventionist-minded Council on Foreign Relations [CFR]). This view was perhaps borne out by those the candidates turned to in order to complement their foreign policy positions. It has been written that Nixon chose Henry Cabot Lodge as his running mate because of Lodge's foreign-policy credentials. When Kennedy won the election, he chose as his Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Both Lodge and Rusk were CFR members.

Moving forward to this year's campaign, ABC News released an article on September 12 headlined "[Who's Advising Mitt Romney on Foreign Policy?](#)" that spotlighted Dan Senor, whom it described as "one of Romney's closest advisers on foreign policy." The article reported:

Last month, the *New York Times* described Senor as an "advocate of neoconservative thinking that has sought to push presidents to the right for years on Middle East policy." Senor led a foreign policy briefing for Ryan on the plane yesterday from Seattle along with Jamie Fly [CFR], executive director, Foreign Policy Initiative and Reuel Marc Gerecht from the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Looking for a moment at the [Foreign Policy Initiative](#), Wikipedia notes:

The Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI) is a non-partisan, non-profit, tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. FPI seeks to promote an active U.S. foreign policy committed to robust support for democratic allies, human rights, a strong American military equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century, and strengthening America's global economic competitiveness. The organization was founded in 2009 and is led by Executive Director Jamie Fly. FPI's Board of Directors consists of Eric Edelman, Robert Kagan [CFR], William Kristol, and Dan Senor.

[William Kristol](#) deserves special mention, due to his background in one America's premier neoconservative families. He is founder of [The Weekly Standard](#), which has been described as a "redoubt of neoconservatism" and as "the neo-con bible."

Kristol's father, the late Irving Kristol, served as the managing editor of *Commentary* magazine and has been described as the "godfather of neoconservatism." (More about neoconservatism in a moment.)

A look at Reuel Marc Gerecht and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, the other organization



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mentioned by the *Times*, shows a similar neoconservative bent. Gerecht is a former director of the Project for the New American Century's Middle East Initiative and a former resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. [The Project for the New American Century](#) was co-founded by the previously mentioned neo-con William Kristol and CFR member Robert Kagan. As for the [American Enterprise Institute](#), a Wikipedia article notes:

AEI's executive vice president William Baroody Sr., "made a concerted effort to recruit neoconservatives (Democrats and urban liberals who had supported the New Deal and Great Society but had become disaffected by what they perceived as the failure of the welfare state, as articulated in the pages of journals like *The Public Interest*, and Cold War hawks who rejected George McGovern's peace agenda). He brought Irving Kristol, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Michael Novak, and Ben Wattenberg to AEI."

While these connections illustrate a definite, hardly coincidental, neoconservative influence among the Romney foreign policy team, the ABC report's compilation of Romney's "special advisers" among his foreign policy advisors — taken from Romney's campaign website — shows an interesting makeup for a "conservative" presidential candidate (We have added "CFR" next to those advisors who are members of the Council on Foreign Relations.)

- Cofer Black
- Christopher Burnham [CFR]
- Michael Chertoff
- Eliot Cohen
- Norm Coleman
- John Danilovich [CFR]
- Paula J. Dobriansky [CFR]
- Eric Edelman
- Michael Hayden [CFR]
- Kerry Healey [CFR]
- Kim Holmes [CFR]
- Robert Joseph
- Robert Kagan [CFR]
- John Lehman [CFR]
- Andrew Natsios
- Meghan O'Sullivan [CFR]
- Walid Phares
- Pierre Prosper
- Mitchell Reiss [CFR]
- Daniel Senor
- Jim Talent



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□ Vin Weber [CFR]

□ Richard Williamson [CFR]

□ Dov Zakheim [CFR]

Readers unfamiliar with the CFR should know that the organization was founded in 1921, largely in response to the refusal by the U.S. Senate to approve the treaty allowing the United States to join the League of Nations. CFR members were prominent among those establishing the United Nations near the conclusion of World War II and have also been disproportionately represented among cabinet member in both Democrat and Republican administrations since the late 1940s, particularly as heads of the State Department. As for the significance of the CFR in U.S. foreign policy, consider this list of secretaries of state who have been CFR members, with the party affiliation of the administration in which they served in parentheses following each:

□□ Edward Stettinius (D), George Marshall (D), Dean Acheson (D), John Foster Dulles (R), Christian Herter (R), Dean Rusk (D), William Rogers (R), Henry Kissinger (R), Cyrus Vance (D), Edmund Muskie (D), Alexander Haig (R), George Shultz (R), James Baker (R), Lawrence Eagleburger (R), Warren Christopher (D), William Richardson (R), Madeleine Albright (D), Colin Powell (R), and Condoleezza Rice (R). Though Hillary Clinton is not a CFR member, Bill Clinton is.

As a result of this pervasive CFR influence, U.S. foreign policy rarely changes to any significant degree from one presidential administration to another, even when the party in power changes. When Barack Obama became president, he kept on former president Bush's Secretary of Defense, CFR member Robert M. Gates, until 2011.

The foreign policy continuations from administration to administration may be obscured by campaign rhetoric, but generally vary only slightly.

A [Yahoo News report](#) on September 23 quoted President Obama's retort to Mitt Romney's criticism of his foreign policy: "So if Governor Romney is suggesting that we should start another war, he should say so."

The reporter noted: "That remark echoed suggestions from some of the president's advisers that Romney relies on so-called 'neoconservative' advisers like those who championed the war in Iraq under President George W. Bush."

As we have seen previously, Romney's reliance on neoconservative advisers — as well as CFR advisers — is a matter of fact, not a mere suggestion.

As promised, an explanation of [neoconservatism](#) is called for for the benefit of those who think that it is just a new brand of [traditional \(sometimes called "paleo"\) conservatism](#).

Traditional conservatism predominated in the Republican Party in the days when the Senate rejected the League of Nations treaty at the conclusion of World War I, and lingered as long as the political career of Sen. Robert A. Taft, who was a major proponent of the foreign policy of non-interventionism. Taft sought the Republican Party presidential nomination in 1940, 1948, and 1952, but was unsuccessful in those attempts. The political philosophy called neoconservative actually had its origins among former OSS members (the predecessor of the CIA) who gradually captured control of the Republican Party when they succeeded in gaining the Republican nomination for Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952, partially through perpetuation of the slogan: "I like Taft, but he can't win."

The New American has published many excellent articles articulating what neoconservatism is, and



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isn't. An excellent place to start is "[Neocon Control](#)," by John F. McManus.

Of particular importance is McManus' exposure of the late William F. Buckley, Jr., one of the early promoters of the neoconservative movement:

Mentioned earlier for the assistance he supplied to Irving Kristol in reshaping the thinking of prominent GOP leaders, William F. Buckley, Jr. nevertheless continued to be widely touted as the nation's premier conservative. That he spent a career shifting the thinking of many Americans toward neoconservatism and away from the conservatism held by his own father has been a carefully guarded secret. But many have already been awakened by the thoroughly documented history of the man I call the "Pied Piper for the Establishment" in my 250-page book.

One suspects that, were he alive, Buckley (who was also a CFR member) would approve of Mitt Romney's foreign policy team.

Related articles:

[Book Reveals Neo-Con Influence in GOP](#)

[National Review to GOP: "Mistake" to Honor Ron Paul at Convention](#)

[The Neoconservative Philosophy](#)

[Neoconservatives vs. Conservatives: Who Are the Real "Extremists"?](#)

Photo: Former President Bill Clinton shakes hands with Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, after his address to the Clinton Global Initiative, Sept. 25, 2012, in New York: AP

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