



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 3, 2011

Palin Parts Ways With Neoconservative Advisers

Former presidential hopeful Sarah Palin has tried her hardest to divest herself of her neoconservative reputation in the months following the McCain/Palin campaign. As a prominent favorite of the Tea Party movement, she began to sound more like a constitutionalist, although traces of neo-conservatism could still be detected in her speeches of recent weeks. That may be about to change, however, as Palin has reportedly “parted ways” with the neoconservative foreign policy advisers who have been writing her speeches and advising her on policy since she joined McCain’s campaign.



Palin aide Tim Crawford confirmed that Orion Strategies Randy Scheunemann and Michael Goldfarb are no longer working for her PAC. Crawford indicates that they parted on good terms. Scheunemann released an email statement regarding the split that reads, I very much enjoyed my time working with Governor Palin and wish her and her family all the best. If she decides to run for any office again, she will be a formidable candidate.

The two advisers have been replaced by Peter Schweizer, a fellow at the Hoover Institution and regular blogger for Andrew Breitbart’s Big Peace. Schweizer works alongside Marc Theissen, a former Cheney aide, in a speechwriting business, and has written several of his own books.

Politico explains the political implications of the team change:

The personnel shift carries an ideological charge. Scheunemann, the former executive director of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, is a longtime neoconservative stalwart, as is Goldfarb, a former reporter and protégé of *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol. They crafted for Palin a policy platform and voice reflecting an eagerness to use American force. The pair, who helped Palin with press and debate prep in 2008, were also something of Palin’s last link to Washington’s political establishment.

Palin already seems to have diverged from that aggressive foreign policy in a speech she delivered yesterday, wherein she condemned the Obama administration for its involvement in Libya and outlined a significantly more cautious use of military power.

Palin articulated very different sentiments on Iran, however, in a December 21, 2010 op-ed piece in *USA Today* entitled, *It’s Time to Get Tough with Iran*, in which she warned of the dangers Iran poses to both the United States and Israel. She claimed that the existing sanctions against Iran do not go far enough because they are incapable of truly crippling Iran’s economy, adding:

Much more can be done, such as banning insurance for shipments to Iran, banning all military sales to Iran, ending all trade credits, banning all financial dealings with Iranian banks, limiting Iran’s access to international capital markets and banking services, closing air space and waters to



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Iran's national air and shipping lines, and, especially, ending Iran's ability to import refined petroleum. These would be truly crippling sanctions. They would work if implemented.

The New American's Jack Kenny [analyzed](#) Palin's proposals and determined that any actions on the part of the United States that would shut off Iran's access to refined petroleum and interfere with its shipping lanes would rightly be considered an act of war. He asked:

At a time when the United States is still engaged in two Middle East wars and our military is stretched to the breaking point, why is Palin urging policies that would put us on a path to war with a nation larger and more formidable than either Iraq or Afghanistan?

If Palin's policies in the Middle East were indeed influenced by her neoconservative advisers, analysts wonder what impact Schweizer may have on her philosophies. *Politico* indicates that Schweizer has a more skeptical view of the use of American force and promotion of democracy abroad. For example, on the Obama administration's support for the Egyptian rebels, Schweizer has written:

Egypt does a lot of things wrong, but they have also been pro-American on a lot of levels. When protests broke out in Iran earlier during his tenure in the White House, Obama was not willing to openly back them, at least until he came under considerable fire. But now he is supporting them in Egypt?

Likewise, Schweizer has articulated skepticism over American involvement in Libya, even comparing it to Vietnam.

Whether Palin's team change will mark a transition in her foreign policy remains to be seen. One thing is certain, however. As a potential GOP presidential contender in 2012, she must decide which foreign policy she will embrace, [neoconservative](#) or [paleoconservative](#), and quickly.

Photo: Former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin waves during a fund raiser at Colorado Christian University in Lakewood, Colo., on May 2, 2011: AP

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