



Will the GOP Civil War End the Neoconservatism Ruse?

The GOP is going through a civil war. Fissures emerged last year after high-profile right-wing media figures began defecting over President Donald Trump's opposition to Jeffrey Epstein-related transparency. The president's unconstitutional and unprovoked war against Iran, launched at the end of February, brought the infighting to a fever pitch. Now the bayonets are out in full force.

The last time a rift this wide emerged in right-wing politics, a smooth-talking "former" CIA officer-turned-magazine-guru named William F. Buckley Jr. swooped in and saved the day for the neoconservative faction. At least temporarily. The current condition of the country has proven Buckley impressively wrong. And thanks to the internet, the keepers of the propaganda show are having a difficult time selling tickets.



AP Images
Neoconservative William F. Buckley Jr.

Establishment Republican media gatekeepers are now worried there's no one to fool people into disbelieving that the problem with the Republican Party is the neoconservative policies it has supported for about 80 years. There is no Buckley today, and former Buckley employee and current member of *Wall Street Journal* editorial board William McGurn is concerned no one will step in to fill his noisome shoes.

The *Journal* published this week an op-ed by McGurn called "What Would Bill Buckley Do?" The Right "is in the thick of a civil war over who represents conservatism," the former Washington bureau chief of National Review observes. "Allegations of antisemitism are flying against popular media figures, inflamed by war in the Middle East. Americans are looking to make sense of it all."

What *would* Buckley do?

First, McGurn suggests, Buckley would sympathize with Trump, because he too was called a "fascist," "racist," and even "Hitler." Second, Buckley would likely support Trump's Middle Eastern boondoggle — because he was concerned with "Islamofacism." So, basically, Buckley would be on the neocon side. This is almost certainly true.

Then [McGurn rattles off](#) a fascinating series of thoughts that illustrates the degree of disconnect that dominates the Establishment media mind:

Perhaps Bill Buckley's greatest legacy was taking conservatism from a nostalgia for the past and refashioning it into a dynamic combination of respect for the family, free-market economics and the recognition that the march of Soviet Communism had to be stopped. It was called "fusionism," and the different factions were often in tension.



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Since Buckley's arrival on the scene, the American family has consistently eroded. The number of single-parent families in the United States has doubled since the 1960s. Deviant sexual subcultures have increased in number and grown more powerful. Depression and suicide have skyrocketed. The divorce rate among Americans is almost double what it was in 1960. And just recently, the National Association of Realtors published a [report](#) showing that the share of first-time home buyers has plunged to its lowest level *on record*. Home ownership is a central component of stable families.

Respect for the family (and the traditional values necessary for the institution to thrive) hasn't slightly declined — it's fallen off a cliff. Just a few years ago, the White House was rebuking Americans who were complaining about transvestites competing in women's sports and hanging out in girls' locker rooms. Meanwhile, 60 million babies were killed in the womb over a period of half a century, thanks to a 1973 court decree saying it was perfectly fine to murder babies.

While Buckley defenders may feel inclined to blame these trends on the Left and remind me that McGurn was referring to a legacy left *to conservatives*, I remind readers that, since 1960, the GOP has held the White House slightly more than the Democratic Party. As for Congress, Democrats had a slight advantage until the 1990s, after which the power dynamics began to swing equally. Moreover, polls show that conservatives have outnumbered liberals throughout America going back decades. Bottom line: "Conservatives" have equally shared power with the Left. Yet the nation has still managed to get to a point where corporations are firing people for not believing that men can become women.

It was Buckley who said that "a conservative is someone who stands athwart history, yelling Stop." Given their advantage in numbers and equal hold on political power, what have conservatives stopped? What have they conserved? The America of the '60s is unrecognizable from that of today.

As for Buckley's spectacular "free-market economics" legacy, the reality, once again, renders McGurn's analysis fit for a work of fiction. And in this case, the GOP has been overtly complicit. Entrepreneurship, one of the most accurate gauges for assessing the health of the free market, has drastically declined over the last half-century. In 2022, congressional Republicans published a report highlighting the problem. They [concluded](#):

Entrepreneurship has declined since the 1970s, across multiple different measures — business formation, self-employment, and productivity growth. The decline in entrepreneurial innovation coincides with a more than 2 percentage point drop in average real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth.

It gets worse:

Around the same time entrepreneurship and GDP growth began to slow in the 1970s, government activity became increasingly hostile to economic expansion — new regulatory activity peaked, and government spending passed the threshold where it becomes a net-drag on economic growth.

Notice when the drop-off began. Notice when the Supreme Court issued its homicidal *Roe v. Wade* ruling. Those happened after Buckley arrived on the scene to "save" conservatism. And whom did he save it from? As many *TNA* readers know, the Buckley myth includes his heroic vanquishing of The John Birch Society (JBS). The story was that the Birchers were threatening the credibility of the GOP with



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their kooky “conspiracies.” In stepped Buckley, who used his media clout to discredit the JBS and kick them out of the mainstream GOP.

The JBS “conspiracy,” in a nutshell, is that a diabolic network of international “Insiders,” with tentacles inside the United States, were carrying out a subversive plan to destroy individual liberty; shatter the American free-market, free-enterprise system; and create a slavish one world government. That conspiracy, people now realize, is obviously true. Welch was right, Buckley was not.

Buckley’s brand of conservatism was a ruse — all talk and no walk. It created the perception that Republicans stood in the way of secularism and statism. But in reality, the foreign wars drummed on, the debt kept climbing, and Big Government kept getting fatter while eating away at our individual liberties. And complicit in all this has been the GOP. JBS President William F. Jasper noted back in 2010 (as well as many times since and before) the damage Buckley’s brand of “conservatism” has wrought, writing:

Genuinely conservative Republicans, as well as Tea Partiers, Libertarians, and Independents of varied hues, have come to realize that George W. [Bush] and his GOP enablers in Congress are but the latest in a long line of Republicans stretching back to [Presidents Dwight] Eisenhower and [Richard] Nixon who talked the talk but never walked the walk when it came to fulfilling GOP campaign pledges and party platforms concerning rolling back the statist accretions that have been plaguing our Republic, eroding our freedoms, and destroying our prosperity since (at least) FDR’s New Deal. Through the past half century, Buckley and *National Review* have been the chief enablers of this “revolution within the form” inside the Republican Party and the establishment-approved “conservative movement.”

[Jasper went on](#) to indict Buckley’s faux conservatism by citing, well, Buckley:

In one of his earliest public essays, “A Young Republican’s View,” Buckley proffered a very unconservative (even anti-conservative) argument. Since America and the West were faced with a dire existential threat from the Soviet Union and communism, said Buckley, “We have to accept Big Government for the duration — for neither an offensive nor a defensive war can be waged ... except through the instrument of a totalitarian bureaucracy within our shores.” In order to fight communist totalitarianism, according to Buckley, one must accept Big Government and adopt totalitarian ways.

This is similar to Trump’s recent defense of Section 702 of the FISA provision, which essentially allows the government to spy on Americans without a warrant. It’s for our safety, for our good. Trump [said](#), “I am willing to risk the giving up of my Rights and Privileges as a Citizen for our Great Military and Country!”

French philosopher Albert Camus famously said, “The welfare of the people in particular has always been the alibi of tyrants.” FISA is another reminder that Republicans are just as complicit in the rise of statism as are Democrats. This is neoconservatism at its finest.

The GOP doesn’t need another Buckley. It needs a Robert Welch, a visionary who understands the problem accurately — and the remedy even better. Fortunately, Welch left a legacy in the JBS that has



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the potential to usher in national restoration. But it will take work and dedication. It will require of the American people that they turn away from neoconservatism and embrace the values and principles of the Founding Fathers — Americanism. Those ideas proved immensely beneficial for the first half of the American experiment. And the degree to which we still enjoy liberty and prosperity is due to what remains of the original American ideals. It's time to vanquish neoconservatism and usher in an era of less government and more responsibility.



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