

A Crazy US Establishment Demands “Sanity”: “Do Not Elect a Rogue President from the Right or the Left”

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With ever-growing hysteria, the Establishment is begging, cajoling and warning American voters not to elect a rogue President from the Right or the Left, neither Donald Trump nor Bernie Sanders, but to accept instead one of the “sane” mainstream options. Yet, the unspoken truth is that the American Establishment has been off its rocker for decades.

It was, after all, Official Washington’s Establishment – led by the neoconservatives and their sidekicks, the liberal interventionists – that embraced President George W. Bush’s catastrophic invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, as costly as that decision was in terms of blood and money and cascading chaos – now destabilizing Europe – the Wise Men and Women imposed virtually zero accountability on themselves or other chief culprits.

Indeed, many of the same neocons who architected the Iraq disaster are listed as top foreign policy advisers to the “sane” candidates, such as Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush. And Hillary Clinton not only voted for the Iraq War but seemed to learn no lessons from what she only grudgingly acknowledged was a “mistake.” As Secretary of State, she sided with Democratic “liberal interventionists” to engineer another “regime change” in Libya that has led to another failed state, further spreading chaos across the region.

A “sane” Establishment, one that truly cared about the interests of the American people, would have undertaken a serious self-examination after the Iraq War. Yet, there was none. Rather than cleaning house and banishing the neocons and liberal interventionists to the farthest reaches of national power, the Establishment rewarded these warmongers, ceding to them near-total control of American foreign policy thinking.



Image: David Brooks, conservative columnist at The New York Times.

If anything, the neocons and liberal hawks *consolidated* their power *after* the Iraq War. By contrast, the foreign policy “realists” and anti-war progressives who warned against the invasion were the ones cast out of any positions of influence. How crazy is that!

It was as if supporting the Iraq War was the new initiation rite to join the Establishment’s elite fraternity of worthies, a kind of upside-down application of rewards and punishments that would only make sense at the Mad Hatter’s tea party in Alice’s Wonderland.

In a sane world, the publishers of The New York Times and The Washington Post would have purged their lead editorial writers who had advocated for the catastrophe. Instead, the Post retained its neocon editorial page editor Fred Hiatt – and nearly all of its pro-war columnists – and the Times even promoted liberal interventionist Bill Keller to the top job of executive editor *after* it became clear that he had been snookered about Iraq’s WMD.

Similar patterns were followed across the board, from The New Yorker on the Left to The Wall Street Journal on the Right. Pro-Iraq War writers and commentators continued on as if nothing untoward had happened. They remained the media big shots, rewarded with book contracts and TV appearances.

The same held true for the major think tanks. Instead of dumping neocons, the center-left Brookings Institution went off in search of neocon A-listers to sign, like Robert Kagan, a co-founder of the Project for the New American Century. The ultra-Establishment Council on Foreign Relations recruited its own neocon “stars,” Max Boot and Elliott Abrams.

And what did this year’s “sane” presidential candidates do as the deadly and dangerous consequences of neocon thinking spread from the Middle East into Europe? They pledged fealty to more neocon strategies. For instance, Establishment favorite, Sen. Marco Rubio, is advocating more “regime change” tough talk and more [expansion of U.S. military power](#).

‘Stay Sane’

Nevertheless, when New York Times conservative columnist David Brooks [urges](#) Americans to “stay sane,” he is calling on them to support the likes of Rubio and reject the likes of Sen. Bernie Sanders, who had the sanity to vote against the Iraq War, and billionaire Donald Trump, who also questioned the wisdom of the war.

Brooks lamented that his favorite Rubio had resorted to some populist rhetoric of his own recently, but added: “Marco Rubio has had a bad month, darkening his tone and trying to sound like a cut-rate version of Trump and [Ted] Cruz. Before too long Rubio will realize his first task is to rally the voters who detest or fear those men. That means running as an optimistic American nationalist with specific proposals to reform Washington and lift the working class.”



Image: Graphic in Sen. Marco Rubio's plan for spending more on a U.S. military build-up.

Yet Rubio [led the parade](#) of dancing candidates who performed at the so-called "Adelson primary," seeking to win the favors of gambling billionaire Sheldon Adelson by vowing to fully sync U.S. policies in the Middle East with positions favored by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (whereas Trump refused to toe that line). And Rubio's warmed-over right-wing, [trickle-down economic orthodoxy](#) is sure to do little to help working- and middle-class Americans.

Brooks offers some dubious history, too, writing

"In every recent presidential election American voters have selected the candidate with the most secure pair of hands. They've elected the person who would be a stable presence and companion for the next four years. I believe they're going to do that again."

It's unclear how far back in time Brooks is going. Is he acknowledging that the American voters actually favored Al Gore in Election 2000 although the Republican majority on the U.S. Supreme Court decided to give the White House to the untested and unreliable George W. Bush? Is Brooks saying that Bill Clinton had more "secure" hands than George H.W. Bush in 1992 and that the radical right-winger Ronald Reagan was more "stable" than Jimmy Carter in 1980?

Indeed, the rapid divide of the United States into a land of haves and have-nots can be traced back, in large part, to Reagan's economic policies of massive tax cuts primarily favoring the rich – and thus incentivizing greed – and his disparaging the role of democratic governance, which is the only force that can truly counter the power of the wealthy elites.

Since Reagan's presidency, Republican orthodoxy has been to enact ever more generous tax cuts for the rich while freeing them from government regulation or "red tape." Republicans along with Establishment Democrats – most notably President Bill Clinton – also favored "free trade" that led major corporations to shift their industrial jobs to Third World low-wage countries.

This combination of tax cuts for the rich, "free trade" for multinational corporations and disdain for "big government" intervention to protect average citizens – along with technological advances – has savaged the Great American Middle Class, which was largely created by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs and the major infrastructure investments after World War II. Under President Dwight Eisenhower, the top marginal tax rate for the richest Americans was 90 percent, essentially enforcing an American egalitarianism.



Image: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt at a press conference.

The abandonment of those hard-earned lessons from the Great Depression — a reversal accomplished primarily by Reagan, Clinton and George W. Bush — returned U.S. income inequality to levels not seen since the Wall Street Crash of 1929.

The Trump phenomenon can only be understood by factoring in the frustration and fear of the white working class that has shifted Republican since the 1960s because of anger over the Democrats supporting equal rights for blacks and other minorities. But those working-class whites now sense that the GOP leadership is selling them out, too, by favoring the ultra-rich donor class and willing to sacrifice their sons and daughters to implement unrealistic neocon foreign-policy schemes.

So these downwardly mobile white Americans are in rebellion and have embraced billionaire Trump, who rejects politics as usual and understands something of their blue-collar mindset because of his experience on popular reality TV shows.

Democratic Populism

Something similar is happening on the Democratic side through another imperfect vessel, Bernie Sanders. Democratic progressives see the consequences of a steady retreat by mainstream liberals on economic and foreign policy issues since Reagan's election.

Rather than fight to convince the white working class about the need for democratic governance, Bill Clinton and other neo-liberals fashioned a strategy of catering to Wall Street and other rich donors by offering "free market" financial deregulation and "free trade" deals on manufacturing.

Sanders represents the first candidate for president in recent memory who has offered a full-throated defense of government as a necessary counter-balance to the power of the rich over both the economy and the electoral process (though President Obama has paid some lip service to those principles).

By contrast, Hillary Clinton represents a continuation of the cozy relations between the so-called New Democrats and the wealthy power centers of high finance and big corporations. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[The Clintons' Paid-Speech Bonanza](#)."]]



Image: Sen. Bernie Sanders and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at a Democratic presidential debate sponsored by CNN.

She also advocates foreign military interventions in line with what the neocons have sought as they demand U.S. fealty to Israeli interests. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Hillary Clinton Seeks Neocon Shelter](#)."]]

As a senator, Clinton voted for the Iraq War – and as Secretary of State, she sided with the neocons and their “liberal interventionist” allies in escalating the war in Afghanistan, in engineering a bloody “regime change” in Libya, and in pushing for a direct U.S. military intervention in the Syrian civil war (via the creation of so-called “safe zones”).

Though Sanders’s foreign policy positions can be [something of a muddle](#), he is generally more skeptical about U.S. military adventures than Clinton.

So, who are the crazy ones here? Does it make more sense to follow Hillary Clinton’s Establishment-friendly positions on issues from Wall Street regulation to Syrian military intervention or to support Bernie Sanders’s more aggressive strategy against income inequality and less aggressive approach toward foreign conflicts?

Similarly, on the Republican side, is it nuttier to back Rubio and other Establishment favorites who would effectively let Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu set U.S. policy in the region, even if that means invading Syria and accepting permanent warfare – or Trump who suggests letting the Russians and Iranians share the burden of battling Islamic extremists?

Clearly, the Establishment would have a stronger case if it hadn’t led the United States into one catastrophe after another, while refusing to hold its own representatives accountable.

There is the old line about insanity being defined as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. What David Brooks and other Establishment figures are demanding is that the American voters keep electing the same system-approved neocon/neolib presidents again and again and expecting something better for the nation.

Is that “staying sane” or “staying insane”?

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, America’s Stolen Narrative, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

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