

The March 1 naming of American Enterprise Institute board member Eliot A. Cohen as counselor to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice demonstrates all too clearly that while the neoconservatives might be down, they are far from out

in terms of their near complete control of the Bush White House's foreign policy relating to the Middle East. Cohen, who has frequently been called upon to advise the White House, has been oddly described as a critic of Iraq policy despite being much more a cheerleader. Cohen's criticism has been limited to the standard neoconservative revisionist view that there were errors made by others in the occupation of Iraq, never a concession that the whole venture was itself ill-advised and ultimately catastrophic for the United States.

Cohen's appointment reportedly came about to satisfy neoconservative critics who felt they lacked a voice at the State Department. Rice would have preferred a counselor who was less ideologically encumbered than Cohen, but she was forced by the White House to accept him.

Cohen, for all his academic credentials, has demonstrated a flair for emotion-laced hyperbole. He was one of the first neocons after 9/11 calling for action against Saddam Hussein because he had "helped al-Qaeda." He has also dubbed the current conflict against terrorism "World War IV" and has called for the removal of "the mullahs" in Iran.

In July 2005, Cohen, one of only two prominent neocons with children in the military, supported his Army officer son's impending departure for Iraq in an op-ed riddled with factual errors. He asserted that Baghdad had a "desire to resume suspended weapons programs," something manifestly at odds with the evidence, and envisioned a utopian Iraq that would be a beacon for "decent government and basic freedoms" that could "inspire other changes in the Arab Middle East."

In April 2006, he led the smearing of the Mearsheimer and Walt paper on the Israel lobby with a *Washington Post* op-ed linking the piece with ex-Klansman David Duke in the very first paragraph and then dismissing it as anti-Semitic. He described the scholarship as "inept, even kooky," while making no serious effort to refute evidence of the lobby's undeniable influence. He concluded his case by punching all available hot buttons, resorting to Samuel Johnson's "last refuge of a scoundrel" and exhibiting his son, home from Baghdad to celebrate Passover with his family.

Cohen predictably dismisses the Iraq Study Group, describing its work as "fatuous." He rejects any negotiations with Iran and Syria because they "have filled ... the burn wards at Walter Reed ... and the cemetery at Arlington," an assertion that borders on fantasy.

He will join fellow administration neocons Elliott Abrams, David Wurmser, and Abe Shulsky. Abrams manipulates Middle Eastern policy at the NSC, while Wurmser does the same for Vice President Cheney. Shulsky, a veteran of the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans that lied about Iraq, now heads the Iranian Directorate, where he is presumably lying about Iran.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates, an international security consultancy.

First, to keep Russian weapons and materials of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorists and to persuade Russia to prevent potentially dangerous countries like Iran from acquiring such weapons. This means, among other things, much stronger support and funding for the Nunn-Lugar program, designed to enhance the security of Russian nuclear, chemical, and biological sites.

Second, together with Russia, to help prevent Islamist revolution and the creation of safe havens for Islamist terrorists in the Muslim regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Third, to preserve reasonably open international access to the energy reserves of Central Asia and the Caucasus. This requires not just new pipelines but also improved relations with both Russia and Iran.

Fourth, to prevent any outbreak of major new conflict within or between states in the region, with all the suffering that this would involve for the peoples concerned and all the disruptive effects this would have on the world economy and on international stability. This means the U.S. strongly opposing any Russian military intervention in Ukraine and Georgia but also refraining from trying to draw them into an anti-Russian military bloc, as both these moves are likely to lead to regional conflict.

In other words, the U.S. needs to develop a strategy toward Russia tailored to real American interests and real American strength. Surely the country that produced George Marshall, Dean Acheson, and Dwight Eisenhower must still be capable, somewhere in its being, of this kind of strategic wisdom? ■

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Auditioning Reagans

The GOP presidential contenders make their case for the Right's affection.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

AS CONSERVATIVE movement hands—old survivors and college Republicans—registered at the Conservative Political Action Conference, it was clear that Mitt Romney had turned this annual confab into a mini-convention. Around each corner of the labyrinthine first floor of the Omni Shoreham were dark haired, bright-eyed beauties handing out “Mitt ’08” stickers, and waving blue signs. The Romney campaign helped over 200 College Republicans attend.

Yet for every Romney action there was an equal and opposite reaction. In the tradition of anti-Kerry kitsch, volunteers passed out neon orange and yellow flip-flops with Romney’s name on them, and a man dressed as “Flipper” the dolphin walked around telling anyone who had ears to hear, the truth about Romney.

The youthful rally atmosphere was punctured early and often by notes of distress and despair. Before lunch on the first day, Richard Viguerie, the king of New Right activism and direct-mail fundraising, railed against the corruption of Republicans who “spend and spend and spend our children and grandchildren’s inheritance all for the sole immoral, corrupt purpose of holding onto power.” Viguerie challenged those present to withhold all financial support from the RNC and from the top-tier candidates he deems insufficiently conservative, Rudy Giuliani, John McCain, and Mitt Romney.

As top CPAC donors lined up in front of Secret Service members and metal detectors to hear the vice president, the Leadership Institute gathered two-party malcontents into an unscheduled event.

Rep. Ron Paul’s speech left no part of the federal government unscathed. His soothing Presbyterian lilt couldn’t disguise the radical nature of his message. “The Constitution says you can only mint currency from gold and silver, so I don’t even believe in the Federal Reserve,” he said, almost as if he were explaining basic arithmetic to a first grader. But the crowd seemed to understand that this man was calling for a revolution. They whooped, cheered, and begged him to announce his candidacy for president. Paul kept his cool, and disappeared for the rest of the conference.

After such a strong dose of libertarian tonic, Tom Tancredo sauntered in to inform his supporters that he had just put out an excellent Romeo y Julieta cigar to be there. His tone suggested that he had forgiven the crowd for the offense. He gave an extemporaneous speech on the cult of multiculturalism and the coming difficulties in stopping the passage of amnesty. The fresh-faced troops leaned into his every word. If he had asked them to burn down the building, there is no doubt the Omni would have been consumed by flames within an hour. But Tancredo just wanted another cigar. As he exited the building, a group of young, tough-minded organizers approached him. “Congressman, we have a lot of good people in South Carolina, but the Brownback guys are snapping up a lot of people too. What are you going to do?”

“We can’t compete with \$100 million campaigns,” he replied, “We’ll just do what we can and put the rest in God’s hands. That’s all we can do.” The slightly

dejected entourage walked slowly to the hotel lobby to make party plans for the night.

Tancredo returned the next day to speak from the main stage. To a crowd wearing stickers with a line through “Rudy McRomney,” he denounced not only “hyphenated Americans” but also hyphenated conservatives—“Neos on one side, paleos on the other. Compassionate conservatives here and now common-sense conservatives.” For Tancredo, these ideological deformations had only given us tax increases, entitlement expansions, and Nancy Pelosi as speaker of the House. “Conservatism doesn’t need an adjective, it needs a leader,” he thundered. Calling on conservatives to examine closely those who would court them, he aimed his rhetorical arrows at Romney: “conversions happen on the road to Damascus, not on the road to Des Moines.”

While candidates like Duncan Hunter and Mike Huckabee were received warmly on day two, Rudy was the big-ticket item. Lines to get in stretched through the hallways. Inside, the foot soldiers of the movement crowded in with the elite—imposing men with Confederate flag lapel pins next to David Brooks, fresh from filing his weekend column, and Terry Eastland, publisher of *The Weekly Standard*. As Giuliani entered stage right, hundreds of cell phones held aloft snapped grainy pictures of America’s mayor.

Rudy came prepared. Acknowledging his differences with the crowd on social issues, he intoned, “We agree on 80 percent, disagree on the other 20 percent. I