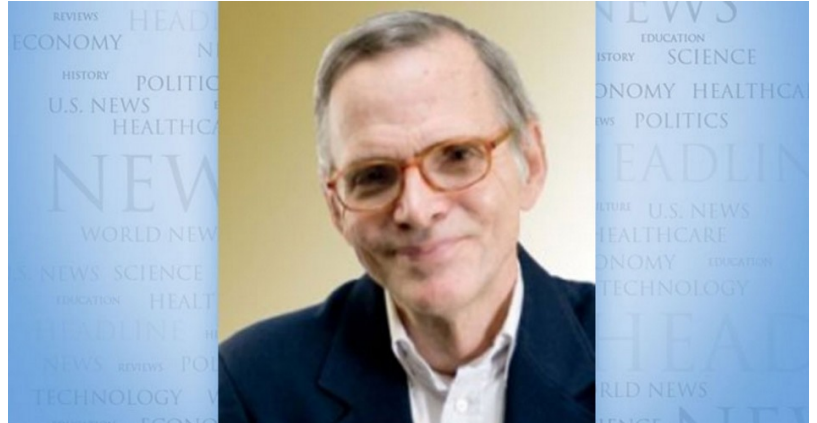




Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 20, 2013

Bill Kristol and His “Code Brown Shirt” Conservatism

The Weekly Standard's William Kristol, the ostensibly wise old sage of the Grand Old Party, has outdone himself with his recent verbal attack on fellow Republican Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky. As Joe Wolverton [wrote](#) on [thenewamerican.com](#), Kristol, speaking on *Fox News Sunday*, accused Senator Paul of “running to the left of the Obama administration.” In an opinion piece published in his magazine, editor Kristol called Paul the “spokesman for the Code Pink faction of the Republican Party.” The reference was to a women’s group focused mainly on anti-war issues.



The heroic Kristol, battle-tested in the pundit platoon during the run-up to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, preached unceasingly in his influential magazine and in his numerous TV appearances of the necessity of taking military action against the Baghdad regime. Kristol parroted the Bush administration line that Saddam Hussein had an active program of “weapons of mass destruction,” to be used, either by Saddam or a Saddam-friendly terrorist organization, against the United States or Israel or other nations either in the pro-democracy West or in the volatile Arab world in the Middle East. Kristol and his fellow dot-com, desktop warriors led the invasion from their privileged perches at their word processors, making the case again and again that the survival of America and the “free world” depended on disarming Saddam.

To be fair, Kristol and his cohorts were probably unaware of most of the dissenting intelligence reports that contradicted the administration line, though some of that leaked out well before the invasion. For instance, they were most likely unaware of [reports](#) that sources close to the Iraqi foreign minister and Baghdad’s intelligence chief told both British and U.S. intelligence officials that Saddam had no active WMD program. At the time, that may have appeared to be a false special pleading on behalf of Saddam, but it should have at least given both the White House and 10 Downing Street pause in the rush to war. No such pause was discernible.

The aerial assault (“Operation Shock and Awe”), the race across the country, and the fall of Baghdad were all very dramatic. Kristol, Charles Krauthammer, Hannity, and O’Reilly on Fox News were in their glory. Then came the long, bloody, and almost incalculably costly occupation. More than 4,500 U.S. military deaths. Hundreds of American civilian contractors killed and a conservatively estimated 100,000 or more Iraqi civilians dead. (“Shock and Awe” and the following phases of “Operation Iraqi Freedom” were not always precise in the distribution of deadly ordnance.) Millions left without homes. No weapons of mass destruction discovered.

Rand Paul was not then active in politics, save as a campaign supporter of his father, Texas Congressman Ron Paul, who opposed the war and later ran twice for the Republican nomination for president. In 2010, the younger Paul was elected senator from Kentucky, against the GOP establishment in the primary and with considerable Tea Party backing. While less emphatic than his



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father on the subject, Sen. Paul generally supports a non-interventionist foreign policy and a reduction of U.S. military commitments and troop deployments that literally encircle the globe. That is “code pink” to Washington jihadists of journalism such as William Kristol.

The remarkable thing about Kristol, Krauthammer, Hannity, O’Reilly, etc. is not how wrong they so often are, but that the proliferation of their errors has done nothing to diminish their standing in Washington punditry. Kristol is a regular panelist on *Fox News Sunday* and turns up regularly on other cable and broadcast network programs, where he issues the same kind of warnings about Iran and its nuclear program that he once pronounced against Iraq and its “weapons of mass destruction.” O’Reilly, Hannity, et al still have their TV shows and their ratings have not noticeably suffered. They still beat the war drums and call it patriotism.

Rand Paul filibustered against the confirmation of John Brennan as CIA director because he wanted assurances that no drone attacks would be directed against U.S. citizens on American soil. Issues like that appear not to interest Mr. Kristol and other champions of that peculiar brand of right-wing politics called “neoconservatism.” Neither does imprisonment of U.S. citizens indefinitely, without charge or trial, by the simple expedient of labeling them “enemy combatants” — whether or not they have ever been in combat or anywhere near a battlefield. That’s not on the “neocon” radar screen. They seem to think the Bill of Rights begins and ends with the right to keep and bear arms.

Perhaps the esteemed Mr. Kristol can tell us what color that “code” is. It certainly isn’t red, white and blue.



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