

Bill Kristol and the Project of the New American Century (PNAC): Still Paid to Talk About Politics Despite Poor Record

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Global Research, July 03, 2014
[FAIR](#) 1 July 2024

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Religion](#)

*A showdown from the [June 29](#) episode ABC's *This Week* went viral, as *Nation* editor Katrina vanden Heuvel decided to confront ABC pundit and *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol over his stance on the Iraq War:*

And I have to say, sitting next to Bill Kristol, man.... I mean, the architects of catastrophe that have cost this country trillions of dollars, thousands of lives, there should be accountability.

We should not-if there are no regrets for the failed assumptions that have so grievously wounded this nation, I don't know what happened to our politics and media accountability. But we need it, Bill, because this country should not go back to war.

We don't need armchair warriors.

It's clearly a good thing that someone like Kristol is being held accountable for his Iraq advocacy. In the late 1990s, he helped found the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), a think tank that played a [critical role](#) in planning and selling the Iraq War. His magazine was similarly devoted to the cause (Extra!, [9/09](#)), including making the claim that Iraq and Al-Qaeda were in cahoots (Extra!, [1/04](#)).

So kudos to vanden Heuvel for confronting Kristol.

But the more fundamental question to ask: Why is Bill Kristol sitting there in the first place?



Image: Bill Kristol - Is there a law that requires him to appear on national television? (cc photo Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia)

This is not to say that people with Kristol's political views should be banished from television studios. But very few people are paid serious money to talk about politics on television. Kristol, despite exhibiting poor judgment about politics and world affairs over the course of his career, is one of them. He was disastrously wrong about Iraq, has a poor record of making predictions about electoral politics (FAIR Blog, [10/20/08](#)), once went on TV to praise a George W. Bush speech he helped write (P.U.-Litzers, [12/20/05](#)), was a key early supporter of making Sarah Palin a vice presidential candidate (New Yorker, [10/27/08](#)), and so on.

But he's never been at a loss for work. He was an ABC pundit in the 1990s. Then he shifted over to Fox News Channel for about a decade. For a brief time, he was a columnist for the New York Times—a strange choice, given that he supported a Justice Department investigation into the paper's journalism (New York Times, [1/13/08](#)). When he left Fox in 2013, Kristol seemed to be a free agent, until ABC decided in February of this year to make him a contributor (TVNewser, [2/3/14](#)).

But why? This Week executive producer Jonathan Greenberger was quoted by TVNewser saying that "Bill makes our outstanding team of contributors and analysts even stronger," and that he is an "original thinker with a unique perspective."

There are plenty of unique, original thinkers who would be willing to talk about politics. Instead of hiring any of *them*, ABC pays someone who has been wrong about many things when it mattered. Indeed, on Kristol's first appearance back on ABC, he offered a totally misleading rant in defense of New York City's stop-and-frisk police tactics (FAIR Blog, [8/20/13](#)).

The issues Katrina vanden Heuvel raised about Kristol's record should have been important to any news outlet considering hiring him. A reasonable assessment of his record would have led them to hire someone else.

The only other possibility is that ABC is being forced to comply with a law that requires Bill Kristol appear on national television. If that's not the excuse, then what is?

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