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California State University, Monterey Bay

Social and Behavioral Sciences Program

Senior Capstone: The Intellectual Precepts for the Iraq War

Prepared By:

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Abstract

The basic idea of my proposal is to explore the historical background that led to the decision to invade Iraq in 2003, focusing on the underpinnings and reasoning behind neoconservative ideology. The central question of this project is: To what extent has neoconservatism, within a historical context taking into account its origins and evolution, been used to rationalize foreign policy in recent history, eventually leading to the war in Iraq? The analysis focuses primarily on statements of official groups, as well as historical documents and literature that trace the origins of the neoconservative movement. Literature coming from the post-World War II period through the Cold War is analyzed in search of information relating to the development of the neoconservative ideology. The contemporary rationale for policy is analyzed, measured against the founding and subsequently evolving principles of the movement, as articulated by the leaders and those who have supervised the implementation of the philosophy. Research results in qualitative generalizations derived from an archival examination of primary and secondary documents and other media from the time periods of approximately the 1940s to the present. Analysis conducted explores the hypothesis that historical events relating to U.S. policy abroad and the presentation of these events at home have manifested themselves by allowing for events such as the Iraq conflict to take place.

Introduction

The overall objective of this research is to critically examine the ideology of neoconservatism and the real impact that its principles have had on the U.S. following the eventual decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003. The central question of this project is: How has neoconservatism, within a historical context, been articulated and used in U.S. foreign policy? This question also relates to the placement of neoconservatism within American political ideology, and its relation to traditional conservatism, and is rooted in the precepts of the decision to invade Iraq in 2003. The purpose of this examination is to explore the history that manifested itself implicitly through the actions of military officials, which were strongly rooted in the actions of previous thinkers and theorists in twentieth century America. My hypothesis on this topic relates to the general ahistoricism practiced by the media and the American public in failing to recognize patterns of intellectual thought manifested in recent history. My initial judgment is that thorough analysis needs to place the movement in its most veracious context. The reasons for my undertaking of this research are to establish a base of information around this highly successful movement that explains its real impact and background, and that provides insight into the functioning of our democracy. This is, I will admit, a seemingly broad interpretation of the importance of these issues, but such an interpretation is rendered necessary considering that foreign policy actions conducted, specifically in Iraq, reflect world opinion of the United States and determine the immediate course of American politics. The perceptions generated through the presentation of foreign policy actions that may have resulted from the ideology of neoconservatism have contributed to conservatism and the political climate in incalculable fashion. The research methods I

used included practices to gain and interpret knowledge in the context appropriate for this project.

Research Design and Methods

My research design was made up of general archival research tactics and hermeneutical methodology that allowed me the ability to compile information without coming to problems that could result from a research design based on more specific and singular methods. Utilizing archival and interpretive research methods essentially means using various forms of media to compile relevant information from secondary and primary source material to historiographies of particular events. Primary sources, for the purposes of this project, being a review largely of information and opinion in the context of the time it was written, are those documents and materials that were written by someone asserting a viewpoint in direct response to policies and phenomena of the time. Secondary sources, again for the purposes of this research, are defined as those which comment or analyze from a contextual viewpoint themselves, and which may or may not have ideological biases, but which assert viewpoints based on informed historical perspective. The data collected is not a random selection of materials, as there are specific arenas in which I chose to focus, and in which certain ideological biases on my part had a qualitative influence on the selection and accession of materials.

With specific regard to the accession of materials, I employed various strategies in order to access materials. One strategy consisted of examining primary documents to determine specific facts, and then using that single piece of information to expand the project to cover this single aspect. This type of contextual research was a method

employed consistently in my research. Patterns in various forms make up a significant part of the data retrieval and analysis in a project such as this. The shape of the patterns also includes factors such as assumptions, as the issue of neoconservatism is rife with implicit projections and inherent beliefs about United States policy and military projections. The presence of these assumptions was essential to recognize toward a deeper understanding of the context I sought to establish around the issues under exploration. The primary avenues to collect information online were databases through library websites, where I was able to utilize keyword searches and subject headings in order to narrow the large topical areas of discussion down to manageable areas.

Neoconservatism: A Background

Neoconservatism is a twentieth century American political construct that has asserted itself on the grandest stage imaginable with the current policy in Iraq. It is at its most basic in support of the global leadership and military superiority of the United States and essentially is against all that may temper this leadership and dominance. Considering the pervasiveness of this “ideology,” if one is in fact inclined to term it as such given the disconnection between the initial philosophy and its present implementation, there is surprisingly little in the way of pronouncements and the like as far as a quantifiable introduction to neoconservatism as a concept. Dissimilar to broad international, philosophical, and social movements, no charter or organization has acted as a liaison to disseminate information about coming political action, at least in the decades leading up to the post-Cold War period. The term originates from Michael Harrington, a socialist, who applied the term in 1970 to former leftists who decided to

partake in the rightward revolution spearheaded by the election of Richard Nixon.¹ Though that description was satirical in its application of the prefix “neo” to describe conservatives who had changed ideologies, a slightly more serious one-phrase description is Irving Kristol’s assertion that a neoconservative is a liberal “mugged by reality,” reality in his sense being the fallacy of “Great Society” liberalism as well as of compassionate interventionism in foreign affairs with a de-emphasis on the propagation of American supremacy. Examples of such interventionism include the disastrous defense of South Vietnam, and later as a prelude to Iraq, skirmishes such as the ineffective, at least to the ends of hegemony, incursions in Bosnia and Somalia.² The one individual most who represents the public presence of the ideology independent of academic and theoretical models is Irving Kristol, whose published collection of writings, *The Autobiography of an Idea*, spans his intellectual development and his conversion from a postwar liberal to a new type of hard-line ideologue, and who was a constant influence and citation in my review of neoconservative literature. Robert Kagan, a frequent collaborator with Irving Kristol’s son William, told journalist George Packer, “I am a liberal, in foreign policy. The conservative tradition in foreign policy is the minimalist, realist tradition.”³ Neoconservatism, along these convoluted lines and for the moment citing two of its most prominent proponents, is an ideology which differs from traditional economic and social conservatism and which supports military and cultural strength to the end of expansive American leadership. This ideology was disseminated from a very close-knit group of individuals, united by thoughts and proposals about the world. The volume of information that exists is daunting to anyone seeking to maintain any consistency in a

¹ Midge Decter, “Neocon Memoir,” *American Jewish History* 87, nos. 2-3 (1999), <http://muse.jhu.edu>.

² Michael Mandelbaum, “The Reluctance to Intervene” *Foreign Policy* 95, (Summer, 1994), p. 3-18.

³ George Packer, *The Assassin’s Gate: America in Iraq*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2005), 19.

portrayal of this subject matter, and further conclusions and citation of individuals will occur in following paragraphs.

Theoretical Underpinnings – Leo Strauss

Neoconservatism is at its core a theory, which presents the rather unique challenge of defining a contemporary ideology along theoretical lines as opposed to analysis of specific policy positions. The issue of an underlying theory is not one that frequently crops up when discussing recent policy action or involvement in foreign affairs. The contrast between the two Iraq invasions illustrates this well. Consider that the 1991 Persian Gulf War was an action in direct response to the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army. Within a very short time, the George H.W. Bush administration restored stability to the region. Nothing particularly theoretical played out; realist solutions were generated to deal with an immediate problem, toward highly specific ends. Contrast this with "Operation Iraqi Freedom" in 2003. The most striking thing about this war was that it was not only directly unprovoked, but based on assumptions and strategic models. It was not a realist reaction to suit immediate political needs, and any immediate reasons were famously later determined fallacious. According to Chaim Kaufmann, former Undersecretary of Defense and highly placed neoconservative Paul Wolfowitz "came close to admitting as much in May 2003 when he stated 'We settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on, which was weapons of mass destruction, as the core reason.'"⁴ In this case, then, something other than the immediacy of the threat of economic and human loss was at work before the

⁴ Chaim Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas," *International Security* 29, no. 1(Summer 2004), <http://muse.jhu.edu>.

commencement of the Iraq war in 2003. This something was a theory; an idea about the world that asserted that this particular foreign policy action would result in an organization of policy and power that conformed most tightly to the parameters of this theory. A great many have written on the nature of this operation being theoretical and the work of the mysterious “neocon cabal,” to borrow a term from New York Times columnist David Brooks; however the question remains: what were the theories that informed the creation of this intellectual movement? Exactly what is it about them that make them so seemingly undecipherable and mysterious? Much of this information has remained hidden due to a number of factors led by intellectual laziness; however defining neoconservatism as a theory and analyzing the major thinkers cited in secondary literature as the movement’s original progenitors should not be regarded as such an impenetrably dense grouping of thought as to be impossible to unravel.

Leo Strauss, the famously inscrutable University of Chicago professor, is undoubtedly at the heart of what can be considered the origins of “neoconservative theory,” considering the adoption of his ideology by many neoconservative progenitors and the pervasive citations of his work in modern discussions of neoconservatism. A German Jewish émigré informed heavily by his homeland’s tumult following World War I, his views were complex and largely confined to his own intellectual circles. His theory is about as dense as can be imagined because of its holistic approach to the history of human philosophy; however certain tenets of his thought are consistent and unique, according to the secondary literature published on Strauss’ writings, and reveal the extent to which he has influenced modern neoconservatism.

Leo Strauss' views in opposition to liberalism in general represent the roots of the traditional neoconservative attack on the social policies of the mid-twentieth century. He believed that the American construct of liberalism, meaning a religiously and philosophically pluralistic society that instills great trust in agency and capability of the average person, was dangerous and a part of the nihilist tradition. Nihilism, from Strauss' vantage, leads to a general devaluing of religion and the aspects of culture which hold society together.⁵ This view represents a fundamental attack on the fabric of American society as defined by its founding documents asserting the vitality of diverse and decentralized expressions of religion and ideology. It is not difficult for a reader to see the inherent conflict that Strauss' opposition to modern liberalism would have with the majority of American policy, particularly the increase in social welfare and other such programs. Through such a basic understanding, one can approach his more complex views in the appropriate context.

Strauss' contribution to the theoretical approach to knowledge and intelligence in neoconservatism represents a significant and applicable link from philosophy to ideology. The modern public image of neoconservatives as something of a secret society, as is frequently espoused by critics of neoconservatism, describing those cut off from the general American discourse, is very likely a result of Strauss' theories of intellectualism. Strauss' at his most basic calls for a return to antiquity, often to the knowledge of thinkers from Plato to Germany's Carl Schmitt, who he saw as inherently covert operators who required the analysis of an informed few to determine the true beliefs of

⁵ Shadia Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

these thinkers.⁶ Strauss was himself regarded as Neo-Platonic, because of his concurrence with Plato's famous belief in the "noble lie," that being the lie told to the masses for their own end benefit.⁷ The lie-tellers in this construct are the intellectual and philosophical elite, who for Strauss included his stable of "Straussians," his students. Strauss obviously did not regard just anyone as worthy of the altar of truth; in fact he may have deliberately obfuscated his views to those whom he did not see as in line with his philosophies.⁸ Such paranoia can be understood by an analysis of Strauss as influenced by his fear of the rise of oppressive ideologies as in his homeland. Strauss' beliefs regarding the presence of an educated few making the judgments that truly matter is a theme echoed by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a former Democratic Senator from New York and frequently cited neoconservative proponent, who stated the general viewpoint that public information, though available to be decoded by anyone, was in fact "expert's art, and thus the knowledge private."⁹ This philosophical tenet has within it the seeds of what makes neoconservatism in its modern and historical constructs seem so clandestine; it is an explicit part of the acknowledged influences of neoconservatism that there is really no such thing as knowledge appropriate for public interpretation and action; the ability to see beyond what is most basic is a task best left to the experts who are able to do the interpretation its justice. There is thus a fundamental conflict here between the individualistic liberty and intellectualism of the type espoused by those as diverse as John

⁶ Jürgen Gebhardt, "Leo Strauss: The Quest for Truth in Times of Perplexity," from *Hannah Arendt and Leo Straus: German Emigrés and American Political Thought after World War II*, (New York: Press Syndicate, 1995), 81.

⁷ Shadia Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 58.

⁸ Timothy Fuller, "Reflections on Leo Strauss and American Education," from *Hannah Arendt and Leo Straus: German Emigrés and American Political Thought after World War II*, (New York: Press Syndicate, 1995), 61.

⁹ Alfonso J. D'amico, "Impractical America: Reconsideration of the Pragmatic Lesson," *Political Theory* 14, no. 1 (Feb. 1986): 97. <http://www.jstor.org>.

Stuart Mill and Antonio Gramsci and the detached elitism of Strauss. According to Irving Kristol, “he was contemptuous of the modern demagogic idolatry of the common man.”¹⁰ It is possible for a reader of literature on the subject to draw a line to the neoconservative position on Iraq, as the process of taking the ideology of the neoconservative position to the American people or even to the United States Congress with full veracity was almost assuredly not done nor seemingly considered a viable option by neoconservative figures. Neoconservatives, then, are intellectual elite in this sense, those who will potentially make the decisions for mankind that the average person is incapable of considering fully. The Straussian approach to intellectualism was applied by neoconservatives in their approach to Iraq, wherein they implicitly utilized other theoretical tenets of Strauss.

The broad application of Straussian thought is apparent in U.S. conduct in Iraq if a reader understands the most salient aspects of Strauss’ views on societal solidarity. Strauss’ legacy is of opposition to modern liberal democracy, tyranny, and in the case of Iraq, “the primacy of the regime to shaping the way of life of the city.”¹¹ The connection to the idea of regime change has been made by neoconservatives in the wake of the US invasion of Iraq, however such a direct connection between Strauss and Saddam may not be salient; the real significance is based in Strauss’ beliefs about the inherent problems with diversity of thought with respect to the centrality of national unity. The assumption of American supremacy inherent in neoconservatism and the ability to project this to maximum effect must be predicated on a state with great solidarity, as allowance for pluralistic forms of dissent erodes unity and allows for enemies to emerge who challenge the order of the good. According to Klaus J. Milich, this view is heavily informed by

¹⁰ Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea*, (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 8.

¹¹ Kenneth R. Weinstein, “Philosophic Roots, The Role of Leo Strauss, and the War in Iraq,” from *The Neocon Reader*, ed. by Irwin Stelzer (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 206.

Strauss' German Jewish background, as the Weimar republic of his youth did not, in Strauss' view, do an acceptable job of tempering the presence of Nazis and Communists.¹² This is significant in that in Strauss' time, when he was at his influential peak with his students, the threat of revolution and opposing competing ideologies presented themselves manifestly in comparison to recent times. It is difficult for the passive consumer of contemporary politics to make connections between the Weimar Republic of Strauss' youth and regime change in Iraq; however the recognition of such a relationship to the Straussian legacy must be the focus of a genuine historical analysis of neoconservatism and the role that Leo Strauss' views on political society played in these events.

When examining Strauss in the hopes of determining his influence on neoconservatism, it is important to separate the classical philosophical notions of his works from the modern application that has relevance to the topic at hand. Strauss was first and foremost a philosopher, a man interested in the whole history of human thought and who carried with him influences far too diverse to deconstruct in the hopes of determining one specific viewpoint on contemporary issues of social policy and foreign relations. The linking of Strauss to neoconservatives often functions to perpetuate the neoconservative mythology, as in much of the references made to him in literature opposing to the war in Iraq, which allows individuals to invoke simply the terms "Neocon" or "Straussian" and believe they understand the underpinnings of neoconservatism. It is difficult to imagine the apathetic and frequently uninformed

¹² Klaus J. Milich, "Fundamentalism Hot and Cold George W. Bush and the 'Return of the Sacred,'" *Cultural Critique* 62, no. 1 (2006): 104. <http://muse.jhu.edu> .

American public being able to comprehend the minutiae and subsequent influence of a dense intellectual theory such as that of Leo Strauss. However, as long as an attendant part of Straussian ideology is as present as it has been in American political action, such information attains the level of import. Theory, of course leads to its application to thought to modern schema, and the application of theory in the case of neoconservatism, though certainly not entirely informed by Straussian ideology, began its ascent following World War II as the long period of the Cold War in world politics began. The recognition of Straussian theory as such rather than as a road map or bible of neoconservatives is to understand the indirect and complex role that Strauss has played in modern neoconservatism.

A Brief History of Literature

Neoconservative writings, evidenced by an analysis of their substance and frequency, have been a consistent and influential part of American politics for decades. If discussed at all, there are certain inherent qualities of neoconservatism in its original forms that are regarded as givens by modern discourses in political literature. These include the qualities of disaffected liberalism and the American immigrant form of Judaism, which infuses much of the literature produced up until idea became action in the 1970's. In addition, the themes of anti-communism, opposition to the New Left and the radicalism of the 60's and 70's, and the increasing support of American hegemony leading up to the 1990's are fruitful areas of neoconservative thought in the post-World War II period.

The Jewish origins of neoconservatism, cited often by modern writers, often are referenced in opposition to perceived elitism. The base reality is, despite the voluminous rhetoric, that neoconservatism is at its origins a product of Eastern Jewish intellectuals. The origins of neoconservatism as a critical discourse in American can be traced to and through Irving Kristol given the singularly revealing documentation he has shared in his attempts to acquit neoconservatism as an effective and credible ideology. There were certainly others involved in the initial stages of the formation of the ideology; however Kristol is one who has made clear his lineage and his explicit role in the genesis of the established form of published neoconservative ideology. His personal intellectual history, detailed in *The Autobiography of an Idea*, reveals the importance of *Commentary* magazine, a publication traditionally focused on issues of the Jewish community. The publication was essentially a Jewish intellectual journal increasingly radicalized by a new group of thinkers that were decidedly the products of their time and collective social histories as Leninists and Straussians, according to biographical information. The explicit Zionism and ideological opposition to the Islamic societies which surround Israel that typify much of the more modern neoconservative rhetoric obviously have their roots in these writings¹³; however initially this shared history seemed to have more of an effect on the small group of people who began to dominate this publication. *Commentary* not only provided an outlet for Zionist frustrations, but also began the developments of virulent anti-Communism that would remain a hallmark of neoconservatism.

The anti-Communism amongst neoconservatives was influenced primarily by the capitalist-socialist discourse which still dominated much social theory at the time, and Kristol's frequent ultimatums regarding the necessity of stamping out opposing economic

¹³ Review of *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America*, <http://muse.jhu.edu>.

and social ideologies, present in *The Autobiography of an Idea*, are a strong component of the zero-sum approach that neoconservatism is renowned for. To cite but one famous example, Kristol commented in 1952: “For there is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy; he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesman for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing.”¹⁴ The emergence of *Commentary* as an increasingly noteworthy publication gave the ideological proponents of the new neoconservative principles the opportunity to participate in greater proportion in national political discussion; however the mainstream acceptance or even awareness of neoconservatism was not understood fully outside its own limited circles.

Leading out of the incubation period in the 1940’s, largely in Eastern intellectual circles, which was led by the Jewish intellectuals and the proponents of broad anti-Communism, other general themes emerged which drew from the events occurring in the world. The resistance to left-wing activism by students and expounders against traditional US practices was typified by work such as Midge Decter’s “Letter to the Young (and to their parents).” The wife and mother of neoconservatives Norman and John Podhoretz, respectively, she railed against the “age of Aquarius” in mostly predictable, general terms. The areas of American social society and the Cold War will later be explored in greater detail; however other areas of opposition made themselves present with the emergence of what has been termed “global civil society” in the 1970’s. The multinational flavor of this new movement was opposed by those such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who railed against the UN Resolution drafted at the global Women’s Conference in the mid 1970’s which was interpreted by him and others to state that

¹⁴Ronald Radosh, “The Legacy of the Anti-Communist Liberal Intellectuals,” *Partisan Review* 67, no. 4.

Zionism was a form of racism.¹⁵ Throughout such specific events, the literature reveals that neoconservatives maintained their academic focus, often discussing esoteric notions about American history and democracy absent the prisms of current events; a luxury afforded an ideology that did not carry with it the responsibility of acting out policy officially. This would of course change when neoconservatives rose to positions of power in the 1970's and directly participated in Cold War policy.

Following the concurrent fall of Reaganism and Soviet Communism from power in the early 1990's, neoconservatives attempted throughout the 1990's to return to the period of decisiveness the 1980's had brought and where their goals were most in reach.¹⁶ Unrest in Latin America, the rise of extremist Islamists in Iran and the greater Islamic world, and the continued battles with the USSR throughout the period created a scenario by which the neoconservative ideology of American supremacy reached peak salience. The lack of idealistic solidarity and the inherent tumult that these other powers wrought, not to mention the fear they instilled in the American people, created the scenario by which an ideology advocating broad military supremacy made great strides. The end of the Cold War and the ending of the Republican administrations which had a willingness to employ and give credence to neoconservatives, led to the need of neoconservatism to assert its new course.¹⁷ This new course of modern neoconservatism has become a hotbed of controversy as it has led into the 2003 Iraq incursion, however it is necessary to explore the historical progenitors and provide insight into the past events which, have influence on decision making whether appropriately documented and acknowledged or

¹⁵ Peter Beinart, "Wrong Man for the UN," *Washington Post*, March 22, 2005, page A17.

¹⁶ Robert Kagan "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1996), <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=276&prog=zgp&proj=zusr>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

not. The brightest and most directly relevant of these progenitors is the specific policies with which the neoconservatives approached the USSR, which as previously mentioned were undertaken in the 1970's with respect to direct policy action.

Neoconservatism and the Cold War

Neoconservatism, as its influences go, is intertwined with the Cold War, and more specifically the hard-line American approach to dealing with the USSR, as is demonstrated in numerous works of neoconservative proponents. While issues at home such as the antiwar movement regarding Vietnam and the counterrevolution of Richard Nixon certainly galvanized the neoconservatives, the Cold War was the event that shaped the formulation of policies designed to project the maximum of American power in the face of direct threat. The actual implementation of policymaking apparatuses in the case of the Cold War in the 1970s differed from the previous analytical and philosophical works produced by the neoconservatives, and thus represents the first direct application of what can be termed neoconservative theory into policy. Ideas regarding Cold War policy and neoconservatism, similarly to the present manifestations of neoconservatism in Iraq, may have some basis in reality; however there exist revealing ways in which neoconservatives approached the Cold War. The reliance on a theoretical model in opposition to objectivity and realism carries explicit comparison to events in Iraq, a conclusion that can be derived from an examination of official policy apparatuses, primarily Team B.

Team B, a Ford-era group that represented the neoconservative tenets with respect to policy towards the USSR, was commissioned by CIA director George H.W. Bush,

more because of criticism that his agency was “ failing to give enough weight to darker interpretations of Soviet intentions,”¹⁸ than because he believed in the cause of the anti-Soviet crusaders. This new group would provide information on the darker side of Soviet intentions, whether or not it found credible evidence. The immediate reaction of the anti-Soviet hard liners was caused in large part by the foreign policy reign of Henry Kissinger, principal *bête-noir* of the neoconservative persuasion. Kissinger’s approach of nonabrasive personal politics with regard to the Cold War undermined the necessity of winning the epic battle for humanity that the Cold War represented to neoconservatives.¹⁹ Team B was in many substantive ways similar to the modern movement to instigate war against Saddam Hussein; though obviously in the case of the Cold War the plans and/or threats of Team B and the Committee on the Present Danger were unrealized.

Team B’s origins are most instructive to an understanding of the groups context and modern parallels. Team B was suggested and or/insisted upon by a group of virulent anti-communists led by Albert Wohlsetter of the University of Chicago. Wohlsetter had been a student of Leo Strauss just a few decades previous, and Wohlsetter himself mentored a new generation of neoconservatives, most notably Paul Wolfowitz. Wolfowitz ended up on the ten-member board of Team B, recommended by Zionist future anti-Soviet hawk Richard Perle, which produced criticisms that the CIA was mired in a failure of intelligence rooted in over reliance on technology rather than the rhetoric of Soviet leaders.²⁰ The effect of this action was the setting of an official precedent that

¹⁸ James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 73.

¹⁹ Henry Kissinger, “Between the Old Left and the New Right, *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 1999), <http://www-stage.foreignaffairs.org/19990501faessay983/henry-a-kissinger/between-the-old-left-and-the-new-right.html>.

²⁰ See Don Oberdorfer, “Report Saw Soviet Buildup for War,” CIA declassifies Controversial 1976 “Team B” Analysis, *Washington Post*, October 12, 1992, p.A11.

allowed open questioning of the CIA whenever Team B saw fit to challenge the agency's coloring of foreign threats. Wolfowitz revealingly stated later: "Team B demonstrated that it was possible to construct a sharply different view of Soviet motivation from the consensus view of the analysts."²¹ Richard Pipes, an accomplished and award-winning historian of pre-Soviet Russia and the 1917 Revolution, also became a part of the group, though his credentials as a neoconservative and his motivations are far murkier than Wohlsetter's and the other hard-liners that advocated Team B's actions. Richard Pipes' opposition to the Soviets may be due to his disdain for the Soviet experiment's disconnect from Russia's grand history; his son Daniel has essentially taken him one step further by advocating against militant Islam a "tough, indeed aggressive stance to undermine or eradicate the militants and the states that supposedly fostered them."²² That Pipes' son would adopt such neoconservative rhetoric is emblematic of both the familial ties in neoconservatism's origins and the relationship between American policy toward the USSR and the subsequent similar policy toward the Middle East following September 11, 2001. Such direct personal connections in the genesis of Team B underscore the relationship that the fight against Soviet tyranny in this instance has with the similar movement to reestablish American power vis-à-vis Iraq.

The group's output is of course the quantifiable aspect of any relationship to neoconservatism and Iraq. The team's mission, though not through the official channels of announcements and public relations in keeping with the culture of public and media that permeates neoconservatism, was to drum up marginally relevant charges against the

²¹ Jack Davis, "The Challenge of Managing Uncertainty: Paul Wolfowitz on Intelligence Policy-Relations," *Studies on Intelligence* 39, no. 5 (1996).

²² Zachary Lockman, "Critique from the Right: The Neo-conservative Assault on Middle East Studies," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 5, no. 1 (2005), 91. <http://muse.jhu.edu>.

USSR as representing a battle-ready stance. The intensity of the USSR's commitment to military readiness and close competition with the United States have rarely if ever been in doubt by analysts and even critics of Team B, however there is little to suggest that any of Team B's findings were valid with respect to imminent nuclear threat. The veracity of the reports is best illustrated by an observation of Team B's analysis of the Soviet ideology of militarism, which lazily cherry picked quotes from Marxist and Leninist literature, showing both a lack of scholarship and the utilization of similar tactics to the purported polar opposite of American goodness, the Soviets themselves.²³ The notion of Team B's neoconservatives that the original analysis and intelligence work of the CIA was fatally flawed and coming from a minimalist, non hostile position is consistent with the ways in which mainstream intelligence regarding Iraq was misrepresented; one of the most glaring of many examples being the claim that Iraq had attempted to acquire uranium from Africa.²⁴ Team B represents a historical reference point to modern neoconservatism extremely effectively because of such similarities.

The modern incarnations of neoconservatism, illustrated by the previous case of Daniel Pipes and many other such generation-gap bridging neoconservatives such as William Kristol, Robert Kagan, and John Podhoretz, son of Irving Kristol collaborator Norman Podhoretz at *Commentary*²⁵, have effectively used cold-war rhetoric and replaced the USSR as the enemy with the much more amorphous and ambiguous concept of terror, and the Middle East in particular. This allows for a resurgence of *Commentary*-era Zionism, considering Israel's position in the midst of radical Islam, however the

²³ John Prados, "Team B: The Trillion Dollar Experiment." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*, vol. 49, no.3, (1993), <http://search.epnet.com>.

²⁴ George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>, January 28, 2003.

²⁵ Jim Lobe, "All in the Neocon Family," *Alternet*, March 27, 2003, <http://www.alternet.org/story/15481/>.

salience of the connection between the Cold War of the 1970's and the perceived unipolar but increasingly globalized scene of today has presented the types of problems that may be intrinsic to the application of a mostly unchanging ideology to alternate circumstances. However, neoconservatism has not been entirely confined to the area of broad foreign policy. The integration with social conservatism and its attendant modern reliance on the principles of Christian fundamentalism is an unavoidable aspect of the neoconservative ideology that warrants exploration.

Neoconservatism, Conservatism, and American Society

The ideology of neoconservatism is by no means restricted to foreign policy, and certainly by no means restricted to conduct regarding the nation of Iraq. The aspects of neoconservatism dealing with American culture relate to the simultaneous rise of the religious right along with the supremacist foreign policy goals of neoconservatism on a global scale. Much of this work was something of a side project to the large scale goals of global prominence, but the consistency with which traditionally defined neoconservative thinkers viewed social and cultural issues adds these areas as a part of neoconservative ideology. Influential culture related works were published long before any manifestation and implementation of the ideology on world affairs had taken place.

The role of American primacy is central to cultural observations and recommendations by neoconservatives, and represents the most truly “conservative,” in the traditional sense, aspect of the neoconservative mind. It seems that the underlying theoretical assumption that America is in a position of unprecedented power, influence, and righteousness is predicated on the society being desirable; neoconservatives

frequently champion the American forms of democratic freedom. These views, as can be demonstrated from literature review, are clearly at odds with policies of social welfare and aid. Irving Kristol makes several stunning claims in a short essay titled *The Conservative Welfare State*. He advocates discrimination as “absolutely necessary” as a part of welfare reform, and states that men “have no entitlement whatever to welfare.”²⁶ Kristol believes in Social Security and Medicare; however he feels that the welfare is to be applied on a highly specified basis, which makes gender discrimination part of the explicit policy of the federal government. Traditional conservative opposition to social welfare is supported by neoconservatism in that it erodes national unity and consequently American primacy.

Neoconservatives in general oppose social welfare and civil rights, and the use of candid rhetoric detailing the damage these policies can do indicates the deep conservatism and opposition to liberalism inherent in these views. Daniel Patrick Moynihan stated explicitly the problem he feels that black America poses to the continuance of effectively dominant American institutions. He asserts, “The family structure of lower class Negroes is highly unstable, and in many urban centers is approaching complete breakdown.”²⁷ It is important to note that Moynihan in 1996 voted against the implementation of the Welfare Reform act that codified his earlier stance, though his influence is significant given the citations of his work in this area.²⁸ This type of rhetoric, absent the employment of anachronistic terminology, is not dissimilar to the

²⁶ Irving Kristol, “A Conservative Welfare State,” from *The Neocon Reader*, edited by Irwin Stelzer (New York: Grove Atlantic, 2004), 148.

²⁷ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” excerpt published by the Office of Policy Planning and Research (March 1965).

²⁸ Arlington National Cemetery Website: <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/dpmoynihan.htm>, accessed 04/29/06.

ideology that has been espoused ever since the civil rights era by conservative politicians. It is however, important to make the distinction with the Southern democrats who similarly converted to a new conservatism around this era; such individuals are not neoconservatives, and neither are the religiously motivated Republicans of the 1980's. The public confluence of neoconservatism with such groups is perhaps a product of the misleading nature of the term itself; neoconservatives are not simply the new form of prototypical conservatives in America, but rather a specific subset of ideologues. Quite clearly, however, the neoconservative position of making explicit reference to the problem areas in denouncing the social welfare of the civil rights era placed neoconservatism further and further from the left as time went on.

The eroding of public morality and solidarity is the primary concern of neoconservatives with regard to culture and behavior, and help explain the rise of neoconservative thought as a part of traditional conservatism. The decline of morality seems to arise not so much as a warning against the horrors of the afterlife as one encounters in Christian doctrine, but as a warning against the loosening of societal solidarity and strength that results from moral and social ambiguity. In the aptly titled "Pornography, Obscenity, and the Case for Censorship," Irving Kristol asserts that "in [the older idea of democracy], the people took some care not to let themselves be governed by the more infantile and irrational parts of themselves."²⁹ An observer can draw the parallel from this idea to the convergence of moral fundamentalism in the 1980's; both neoconservatives and evangelicals share the idea of a clean, moralistic society, though for different reasons. In the case of neoconservatism, these feelings arise

²⁹ Irving Kristol, "Pornography, Obscenity, and the Case for Censorship," *New York Times Magazine*, March 28, 1971.

from historical and philosophical notions about the quality of society, though the difference with evangelism is tempered by the realization that censorship and regulation have the same result whether the imposing ideology has its background in Strauss or the Old Testament. In a piece authored by longtime neoconservative activist James Q. Wilson, “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety,” the case is made not only for increased police patrols, but also for the reassertion of localized control over crime and disorder. Wilson supports “citizen action without substantial police involvement,”³⁰ along with other such ideas in reference to the idea of citizen militia, a traditional second-amendment supported conservative argument. This type of rhetoric may be consistent with the Nixon/Eastwood era of law and order, but again suppositions are supported by reference to former incarnation of American democracy, namely in Wilson’s case that “the police role had slowly changed from maintaining order to fighting crimes.”³¹ The reference to the purity of America that is necessary for the propagation of neoconservative ideals appears again with Jeane Kirkpatrick who asserts that “As long as the United States was perceived as a virtuous society, policies that enhanced American power were also seen as virtuous.”³² On the surface these forms of neoconservatism would seem to meld together with modern forms of conservatism espoused first by Richard Nixon. The difference is simply the academic level at which neoconservatives are operating; rather than reactionary diatribes against the morally decadent 1960’s and 1970’s, these works are informed by philosophical and political notions, absent of religion in most cases, about the erosion of American society that can occur as a result of

³⁰ Jame Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1982.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Jeane Kirkpatrick, “Neoconservatism as a Response to the Counter Culture,” from *The Neocon Reader*, ed. by Irwin Stelzer (New York: Grove Press 2004).

allowing various social ills. What these works do show, however, is that neoconservatism was not a wholly independent ideology from the increasingly “traditional” conservatism of the fundamentalist right, but shares some important ideas that allowed for the convergence of conservatism into the apparatus that allowed for the neoconservative-backed Iraq invasion of 2003.

It is one of the more puzzling oddities of the modern *mélange* of today’s neoconservatism that its advocates have for the most part held to the positions of the radical Christian views that typify the far right, going far beyond the previous neoconservative tenets. Previous neoconservative ideas primarily advocated social solidarity and public morality in academic terms rather than the abject death of civil society that Christian conservatives often proselytize publicly. Often divorcing themselves from the academic discourses discussed earlier, post-Reagan neoconservatives often find themselves advocating for nearly all of the major tenets of conservatism, whether the neoconservative foreign policy or the socially extreme policy of Limbaugh and O’Reilly. It is no secret that the Republican Party has a unified nature to it that represents its main advantage over the Democratic left. However, issues relating to the social permissiveness of abortion, homosexuality, and the advocating of a more unified Church and State puzzle when considering how these issues are seemingly unrelated to the projection of American government abroad that is the public definition of neoconservatism following the invasion of Iraq. This may well be an indication that the former leftists that make up neoconservatism are simply not aligned at all with any semblance of liberalism that they may have embraced following World War II; however the more credible argument is that attaining power for the neoconservative persuasion

required alliances with structures and ideologies with broad public appeal. A cursory examination of the work by the Project for the New American Century finds no fiery works denouncing homosexuality or abortion, an indication that the base of neoconservatism does not acknowledge or endorse socially conservative policies at home despite the necessity that these policies have had to the end of allowing neoconservative foreign policy to rise to the top of U.S. politics. The seeming implausibility of the American people electing a party espousing broad theoretical positions about global affairs shows that the integration of neoconservatism within the broader modern conservative movement was perhaps the foremost reason for the ideology's rise to power. Through analyzing the domestic social aspects of the neoconservatives, the reader can glean some sense of the underlying motivations, but the question remains whether these older works represent an integrated part of the ideology or the cultural musings of those with bigger things on their minds. The modern forms of neoconservatism, maintaining focus on the traditional aspects of the ideology, obviously paint a more accurate portrait of the present state of neoconservatism than religious fundamentalism. The traditional neoconservative form asserted itself in the 1990's in official capacities, leading to the implementation of the ideology's modern forms.

Modern Incarnations: The 1990's

The 1992 Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), supervised by Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, provides a relevant distillation of the actions of the neoconservative movement in the past decade and a half, and specifically following the Cold War. The document states rhetoric of American primacy and exceptionalism that

typifies the modern neoconservative: “In the Middle East and Southwest Asia, our overall objective is to remain the predominant outside power...and to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would be sufficient to generate global power.”³³ The document, according to the biographer of George W. Bush’s war cabinet, James Mann, was in fact not written by Wolfowitz but by Zalmay Khalilzad, an aide to Wolfowitz, and a demonstration of the fluidity of the ideology considering how it could be attributed to any number of individuals despite its revolutionary considerations. Further, as journalist George Packer has asserted, “The DPG was a document of Cold Warriors, the hard liners of the 1970’s who rejected accommodation with the Soviet Union.”³⁴ The preliminary document was leaked to the *New York Times*, which contributed heavily to the decrease in intensity that marked the DPG’s final release. After the publishing of preliminary reports, the DPG was “roundly criticized in the [George H.W. Bush] White House and in foreign capitals.”³⁵ It seems that the neoconservative ideology, as it was taking its 1990’s form, was rejected as being far too extreme in its hard-line isolationism to be acceptable in the climate following the disintegration of the USSR. Khalilzad’s draft, rewritten by Wolfowitz aide Lewis “Scooter” Libby, nonetheless contained “key concepts that others would invoke over the coming years,”³⁶ according to Mann. The first foray into the neoconservatism that would inform the policy in the Middle East to almost exclusive degrees in the coming years was in place in official language, and set to be put into action within an undetermined time frame.

³³James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 210.

³⁴ George Packer, *The Assassin’s Gate: America in Iraq*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2005), 21.

³⁵ Patrick E. Tyler, “Pentagon Blocks Goal of Dropping New Superpowers,” *The New York Times*, May 24, 1992, <http://www.yale.edu/strattech/92dpg.html>.

³⁶James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 213.

Following such a vital document was the 1994 Republican Revolution, spearheaded by House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Gingrich's Contract with America, which spelled out militarist policies that was "designed to address concerns that readiness [of the military] has suffered because defense spending has been cut too far and too quickly in order to pay for expensive social programs."³⁷ This is the primacy theme of modern neoconservatism leading up to the Iraq war; the reassertion of the lost focus on military readiness, preparedness, and expected dominance as was more the focus when prospects for a long apocalyptic war with the USSR were front and center. The document has provisions "restricting multi-national and UN control of U.S. troops"³⁸, setting the stage for the unilateral invasion of Iraq that would ignore the United Nations and the wishes of other nations that were traditional U.S allies. Provisions in the document call for a reorganization and reallocation of defense monies: "significant increases in defense funding may be necessary in the future to maintain a capable force."³⁹ Though much of this document is in challenge and strategic response to President Bill Clinton, the defense portion of the document would seem to have been heavily influenced by neoconservative policy hawks, as indicated by their previously described positions on the military. Following this, neoconservatives continued their attempts to influence policy through a more public channel.

The establishment of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) codified in official letterhead the articulation of neoconservatism (the term is not used by the group) in its most modern incarnation, and provides the organized collection of

³⁷ *Republican Contract with America*, 1994, Washington D.C., <http://www.house.gov/house/Contract/defensed.txt>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

personalities and ideology that was missing in previous decades. The thinkers and writers that comprise this collective are a who's who of Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Bush Administration figures and confidants. They include Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and William Kristol, William Bennett, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and many others.⁴⁰ Those knowledgeable of daily political news in recent years are aware of the organization and its purported influence. Unfortunately, real examination of the information the group has put out is lacking in the extreme. Chaired by William Kristol, the organization's publications span the web of modern media that conservatism has created for itself, including the Rupert Murdoch-owned *Weekly Standard*, and well-placed editorials in major national newspapers such as the *Washington Post*, as evidenced by documentation on the group's web site. The group's 2000 opus, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, crystallizes the views of the modern neoconservative most completely given the breadth of the personalities behind its production. The report contains the same military-building rhetoric of the Contract with America, with the added emphasis of "performing the 'constabulary' duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions," and "fighting and winning multiple, simultaneous major theater wars."⁴¹ The directness of such reports and the organized and powerful personalities associated with this group underscore its vital importance to modern neoconservatism and policy.

With such explicit militarism by such influential figures, the connection to Iraq is obvious; not only is the theoretical justification present in PNAC reports, but calls for specific actions are spelled out. Additionally, the report refers to the goal of the US in the

⁴⁰ Project for the New American Century, *Statement of Principles*, <http://newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm>.

⁴¹ Project for the New American Century, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>.

21st century as to preserve “*Pax Americana*,” and exploiting the transformation of war, referring possibly to computerized superiority rather than the foot soldiers currently fighting in Iraq. It is important to recognize that this modern incarnation of neoconservatism is attacking new problems from a somewhat historical perspective; it’s as if these neoconservatives of the early 21st century are referring to what they themselves would have advocated as post-Soviet policy during the Cold War years. As such, there is a lacking theoretical justification; the goal is simply maintenance of a status quo that sees the US in temporary but inevitably declining dominance over world affairs. The problem is that the ultimate goal, the ending of Soviet tyranny, has been achieved and replaced with the goal of ending tyranny in general and promoting democracy and Americanism across the globe, a much larger task. The focus on Iraq following the Gulf War has more to do with cleaning up a mess that left the US in a less than totally dominant position over Saddam Hussein rather than Iraq being the genuine “worst tyranny” or most critical strategic focus. The PNAC published letter to Bill Clinton advocating “a long term goal of removing Saddam Hussein from power,”⁴² shows in its calling for of multilateralism and UN cooperation how muddled the Iraq policy in fact was, and how this invasion may have spelled the end of effective implementations of neoconservatism. The invasion itself, however, may not have been possible absent the rise of conservative media informational structures, which gave voice to the ideology as well as instant credibility.

Media as a Forum

⁴² Project for the New American Century, *Letter to President Clinton*, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm>.

The role of the mass news media in the rise of neoconservatism has certainly not been a small one. This issue has gone largely ignored in relation to its massive cultural and political significance, but the media's shift to the right since the Nixon administration has been both demonstrable and quantifiable; coherent articulations of the rise of conservative media such as Eric Alterman's *What Liberal Media?* and David Brock's *The Republican Noise Machine* offer, though in a partisan Democrat manner, a history of how the media has been co-opted by a collective reaction against the "liberal bias" seemingly on full display late in the Vietnam War. Faced with misinformation regarding weapons of mass destruction and terrorist connections voluminously confirmed to be false⁴³, the cowed "balance" of the media in the case of the Iraq war has led to not only the domination of conservative perspectives but to a lack of accountability. The first and most basic cause of the failure of the media to recognize the circumstances and situation that America found itself in with regard to Iraq is the media itself, and the organizational structure of conservatism in general and its demonstrated tendency to integrate neoconservatism.

A holistic analysis of the conservative media can lead to definitive conclusions regarding the presence of neoconservative ideology in traditional channels, and such informed analysis of evidence leads one to the true role of media in neoconservatism's rise. *The Weekly Standard* magazine, edited by William Kristol and Fred Barnes, offers a modern media vehicle by which the proponents of neoconservatism have achieved their stated goal of invading Iraq, and through which an understanding of how the unification of media and ideology can bring about such results. The product of Rupert Murdoch's

⁴³ Central Intelligence Agency. *Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq's WMD, 2004*. Washington DC: GPO, 2004.

News Corporation, *The Weekly Standard* and its journalistic sibling *The New York Post*, not to mention nearly all of talk radio and influential editorial pages nationwide led by *The Wall Street Journal*, offer a supposed conservative counterbalance to the leftist mainstream.⁴⁴ Kristol, the intellectual heir to the mantle of neoconservatism given his public face, access, and genealogy, is also a frequent contributor to Murdoch's *Fox News Channel*. The conservatism and ideological zeal of these structures is well known, however when considering the specific principles of neoconservatism, their unity with the traditional forces of conservatism can be seen as the primary driving force behind this new media dominance.⁴⁵ *The Weekly Standard* did not appear on the scene through its mantra of finishing off Saddam Hussein as would seem to be the case if one listened to the uninformed rants of many on the Left, but was the product of a decades long movement of conservative information that had created a niche for neoconservative hawks. Funded by John Olin, Richard Mellon Scaife and other crusty billionaire activists⁴⁶, the right wing ideological machine offered the intensity of domestically polarizing morality into the American mindset, and with it came the neoconservatives who had attained prominence starting with Nixon and Ford. There may be no large "neoconservative media," but the structures of conservative media are such, that the ideology is often given a voice anyway. Neoconservatism's aforementioned integration with conservatism is a primary driver of this informational capability.

Those deemed the intellectual "neoconservatives" rarely are identified as such in the media today; not only do official groups such as PNAC not use the term but a cursory

⁴⁴ Jonathan Kay, "Media Matters," *Commentary* 120, no.1, (2005), <http://search.epnet.com>.

⁴⁵ Erik P. Busy and Paul D'Angelo, "Democratic Realism, Neoconservatism, and the Normative Underpinnings of Political Communication Research," *Mass Communication and Society* 7, no. 1.

⁴⁶ Eric Alterman, *What Liberal Media?: The Truth About Bias and the News*, (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

examination of major papers would show a lack of such identification, owing to the stigma of the terminology. The direct access of these types of individuals to the channels of modern information, however, is not necessarily the point. The media has implemented a system in recent history wherein the binary nature of American politics has been so ingrained into the consciousness that the alliance of these particular types of individuals with the “right” can be seen as the means by which they are able to disseminate their ideology, and in their case this ideology is frequently a neoconservative one. The organization, funding, and earnestness of the Right in the media is in contrast to the disorganized and confused left, evidenced by and cursory look at the content of talk radio, television, or newsprint.⁴⁷ This allows for the inherent imbalance of a discourse that only allows for two viewpoints, no matter the positions or qualitative representations. The presentation of generally conservative viewpoints leading up to the invasion of Iraq often, intentionally or not, brought with them the propagation of the intellectual strategy that the removal of Saddam Hussein was vital to American interests no matter the rationale for war.⁴⁸ The continued insistence on this idea despite the contrary evidence places such ideology as part of the general position of the Right, and thus the media has had an ingrained neoconservative position within nearly all foreign policy debates and analyses.

An Informed Perspective: Neoconservatism and Iraq

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was most assuredly a neoconservative act. Consistent with Strauss, the intellectual justification was made covertly and with

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ingrid A Lehmann, “Exploring the Transatlantic Media Divide over Iraq,” *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10, no. 1 (2005): <http://scholar.google.com>.

mendacious information designed to carry out goals with maximum efficacy.⁴⁹ Consistent with cultural policies, it was intended to maximize the presence of American style democratic freedom abroad.⁵⁰ Consistent with Cold War policy of Team B, the planners of the war utilized lofty policy positions in order to counter domestic and global resistance to its policies and claims.⁵¹ These linkages delineate an independent ideology that is far more quantifiable than it would initially appear to the modern observer of policy schema. Neoconservatism does exist independent of conservatism and the separation and classification of it as an ideology is what affords the informed analyst the ability to make the connections to Iraq. The connections having been established, conclusions can be drawn from this material that illuminates how neoconservatism has been affected by events in Iraq, and such an informed perspective attains great value in a modern context.

The Iraq invasion itself, more so than any historical or contextual perspective, is becoming the public definition of neoconservatism, despite the complexity of the ideology and the realities of its tenets. A highly influential op-ed by the *New York Times*' resident conservative David Brooks asserts that "if you ever read a sentence that starts with "Neocons believe, there is a 99.44 per cent chance that everything else in that sentence will be untrue."⁵² This idea, albeit in this case a reaction to persistent criticism through the use of sarcasm, speaks to the idea of a lack of a cogent and consistent neoconservative position. The Iraq war, decidedly unpopular and regarded negatively by

⁴⁹ Chaim Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004), <http://muse.jhu.edu>.

⁵⁰ Jay Winik, "The Neoconservative Reconstruction," *Foreign Policy* 73 (1988). <http://scholar.google.com>.

⁵¹ *The Power of Nightmares: The Rise of the Politics of Fear*, DVD, Directed by Adam Curtis (London: BBC Video, 2004).

⁵² David Brooks, "The Neocon Cabal and other Fantasies," in *The Neocon Reader*, ed. by Irwin Stelzer, (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 41.

the public,⁵³ has not led to the public blaming of neoconservatives seemingly only because of the demonstrated fact that the ideology is not adequately defined publicly. The covert nature of neoconservatism, rooted in Straussian thought, perhaps limits the public culpability to some degree, however that the Iraq war introduced many to neoconservatism for the first time certainly limits the ideology's efficacy. Iraq, then, is the most vital assertion of neoconservatism in its modern form.

Iraq has become a flashpoint considering that the neoconservative movement is tied inextricably to this war. Even many influential Republicans, many of an advanced age reared in previous eras, have decried and been nothing less than greatly disturbed by the actions of this seeming new guard,⁵⁴ and even former neoconservative Francis Fukuyama has published a book highly critical of the Iraq policy. This intensely contentious climate has diluted the conceptual framework of neoconservatism to the point where a consistent definition and attendant explanation are elusive absent holistic analyses such as the one ostensibly presented here. A significant reason for this, of course is the previously demonstrated merger of foreign policy neoconservatism with American Christian fundamentalism, and the puzzling confluence of these disparate ideologies. As the personalities who plotted Iraq as the next logical step in the making of the "new American century" continue to be unavoidably enmeshed in the complex, perhaps decades-long process of the reconstruction of that nation, the ability of the movement to perpetrate further actual policy or military action will likely be mitigated substantially. With the popularity of the War's advocates in the Bush administration well known, from

⁵³ Adam Nagourney, "Poll Gives Bush His Worst Marks Yet," *New York Times*, May 10, 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/10/washington/10poll.html>.

⁵⁴ See Pat Buchanan, *Where the Right Went Wrong: How Neoconservatives Subverted the Reagan Revolution and Hijacked the Bush Presidency* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2004).

the previously cited poll and others, political reality with respect to future electoral prospects may diminish neoconservatism overall.

In an academic sense, it may be the case that the Iraq war not only spells the end of neoconservatism in a public sense in reference to the possibility of policy implementation, but also shows that the parameters of the ideology simply are not conducive to application in the modern world. Events since the invasion such as the Abu Ghraib disaster and the continued lack of international support⁵⁵ that was previously assumed through the powers of economic and military coercion underscore the fact that, following the USSR's collapse, the United States simply did not slide into the role of the only superpower for years to come by default. This is certainly not historically unprecedented, as in cases such as Britain's involvement in the Suez crisis and the French in Southeast Asia to cite two relatively recent incidences; however the highly ingrained "fact" presented consistently in America that the United States is the world's sole superpower following the Cold War may take some time to untangle. The future of Iraq as a nation really is irrelevant to the way neoconservatism is perceived; Robert Kagan and William Kristol themselves asserted that the rebuilding of the nation's infrastructure is the focus rather than the now discredited reasons for the invasion⁵⁶, meaning that neoconservatism has stepped aside following the invasion as economic forces become the focal point. The strategic doctrine of unilateralism implicitly present in documents asserting the neoconservative position have been proven to be untenable and unpopular given domestic and international distress, and the Bush administration's insistence on

⁵⁵Carolyn Skorneck, Nather, David, Schatz, Joseph J., Graham-Silverman, Adam, "Iraq Supplemental Will Pass, But Many See Well Going Dry, *CQ Weekly* 61, no. 37, <http://search.epnet.com>.

⁵⁶ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "The Right War for the Right Reasons," *The Weekly Standard*, February 27, 2004.

referring to the invading force as a “coalition of the willing” is an indication that a public strategy of unilateralism is not feasible. In some ways the Bush administration has indicated that it is not at all tied at the hip to neoconservatism, as evidenced by William Kristol’s criticisms of the Defense Department⁵⁷, and that if given the opportunity to correct its horrendous standing with the public, it will distance itself from its neoconservative roots, voluntarily or not.⁵⁸

The neoconservative model is expressly based in the Cold War mindset, and it may take some time for the realization that this mindset has lost salience to trickle down through the intellectual establishment. This may be an entirely different subject as far as explaining adequately how the U.S. has and will continue to lose the power of economics and leverage and will deal with this future, but in reference to neoconservatism, it is instructive to making an educated guess based on the historical perspective and intellectual underpinnings that have led to the current scenarios. The debate about the present and immediate future state of the Iraqi people actually is providing something of a cover for the real issues facing America, namely those of the ways in which power can be projected in the future. Simply letting the process play itself out could and almost certainly will result in bloodshed, and thus waiting to for events to determine the course is not a part of an intelligent solution. The critical overall importance of fully understanding the contextual reasoning and purpose behind neoconservatism is the only adequate method that can be used to improve future scenarios of emerging ideologies. These ideologies could be classified as those in which a group seemingly comes out of

⁵⁷ William Kristol, “The Defense Secretary We Have,” *Washington Post*, December 15, 2004, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A132-2004Dec14.html>.

⁵⁸ Jay Solomon and Neil King, Jr., “As Neocons Leave, Bush Foreign Policy Takes Softer Line,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 6, 2006, p. A1-A17, <http://search.epnet.com>.

nowhere with projections of solutions for the problems of the modern world, something of a *deus ex machina*, whether the problem at hand be authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, or other problems. The failure of mankind to recognize the importance of context and reasoning on such a consistent basis, however, does not bode well and should be recognized as among the great failures of human civilization.

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