

## CHAPTER 2 NEOCONSERVATIVES

### Origin of Neoconservatives

Questions which is related to neoconservatives on what it is and who run this concept have raised more criticism in terms of public opinion, media, academic study, mainly due to the invasion of Iraq, which is clearly focused on policy recommendations by neoconservatives advisors to President Bush.

Neoconservatives started in 1960s, scholars attempted to define the newly emerging term, but it had no common manifesto and could not be coherently defined.<sup>19</sup> The first generation of neoconservatives was a philosophical movement of political significance to American society in general. The founders of neoconservatives are Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Daniel Bell, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Midge Decter, Michael Novak, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Peter Berger and so on. Initially, international affairs had two defining concepts, namely staunch defense of Israel and depiction of reluctance to stand up to the evils of communism.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1980s, the House of Representative was ruled by the Republican, allowing the neoconservatives to dominate the government. This also allows President Ronald Reagan to propose an aggressive approach of military spending in response to the confrontation with the Soviet Union. After the dissolution of Soviet Union, the neoconservatives claimed what they saw as American complacency. In the 1990s, they

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<sup>19</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, "Neoconservatism: Myth and Reality," *Society* 25, no. 5 (July-August 1988), p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Stefan Halpan and Jonathan Cla. Rke, *American Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and The Global Order* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 41.

warned of the dangers of reducing both America's defense spending and its role in the world.

Neoconservatives see the world in a perspective of Thomas Hobbes's ideas regarding the condition of state of nature that perpetual militarized competition is the norm. They also believe that "community of nations is impossible where the search for a social contract or Rousseau is illusory, where trust among human beings is elusive, and where adversaries (anyone who has not share neoconservatives world view) must be preemptively crushed lest they crush you."<sup>21</sup>

Neoconservatives emphasized foreign policy, where they advocated aggressive anticommunism, U.S. global dominance, international alliances and often placed less emphasis on social policy issues.<sup>22</sup> Neoconservatives believe that human nature is innately selfish, they believe that a society with no commonly accepted values based on religion or ancient tradition will end up in a war of all against all. They also have a strong belief in the ability of the U.S. to establish democracy after a conflict. For instance, Irving Kristol's article named "The Neoconservative Persuasion", it refers to historical task and political purpose of neoconservatism, which focus on a politics to govern a modern democracy.<sup>23</sup>

### **Conservative VS Neoconservatives**

An extreme wing of the conservative dominated the Reagan administration, and most of the key Reagan players have re-emerged under the Junior Bush, who provides a new face on an old base. Although, the world has changed, their worldview has not. Presently, a notion of communist is replaced by terrorist but its ideology, imagery, and attitude are still remain. For instance, there is scant difference between 'Evil Empire' (the Soviet Union) and 'Axis of Evil' (North Korea, Iraq and Iran).

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<sup>21</sup> Joshua Muravchik, "The UN on the Loose," *Commentary* 114, no. 1 (July-August 2002), p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Chip Berlet and Matthew Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*, (New York: Gilford Press, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Irving Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion: From The August 25, 2003 issue: What it was, and what it is", *Weekly Standard* 8, issue 47 (2003), p. 26.

Conservative believes that morality of human nature is flawed and cannot be changed in any meaningful way. Conservative also believes that human often lack of inspiration to accomplish all the good they have in mind. Despite human's talent to reshape the world or to augment their own power, they utilize their talent in harmful way than good. Interestingly, conservatives can be divided in three approaches, which are traditionalism, paleoconservatives, and neoconservatism.<sup>24</sup>

*Traditionalists* can be seen in the conservative defense of the traditional family and cultivation of the older virtues and a religious sensibility. It looks back to America small towns and local communities. Traditionalist intellectuals in America tend to be more interested in culture, as well as the cultivation of a certain sensibility, than they were in mere party politics. They also have an influence on politics, but mostly by indirection. Presently, there are no real traditionalist politicians in America.

*Paleoconservatives* is contemporary version of traditionalism. This view emphasizes on anti-free trade and anti-globalism in economic policy. They say that true conservatives must oppose the status quo. In statecraft, they call for decentralism, local rule, private property and minimal bureaucracy. Paleoconservatives are generally noninterventionist arguing that American entry into foreign wars is unnecessary and unwise.

*Neoconservatives* is something rather different. It tends to associate in political aspect. It increasingly support the defense or it can be seen to support aggressive defense of Western civilization against enemies ranging from communists, libertines and lately, radical Muslims.

In a nutshell, conservative and neoconservatives may agree on a principle, but disagree on what policy should flow from them. For example, they may agree that the ideas of Western civilization are the best of all modern models for society. They may agree that liberal democracy is the best form of government and capitalism is the best economic system. They may also agree that Western practices need some sort of defense against some foreign ones. However, the means to achieve their goals are

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<sup>24</sup> Irwin Stelzer, *The Neocon Reader* (USA: Grove Atlantic, 2004), pp. 216-231.

different. Neoconservatives would call for aggressive efforts to spread Western civilization into the rest of the world, while the conservative would not.

Evidently, both conservatives and neoconservatives favor robust military. However, most of conservatives utilize military capability for interventional purpose in terms of nation building. Neoconservatives share their view differently. The post September 11 campaigns against regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate that the neoconservatives is not afraid to force regime change and reshape hostile states in the American image. Neoconservatives believe the U.S. must do whatever it takes to end state-supported terrorism. This means an aggressive push for democracy in the Middle East. Conservatives, particularly in the isolationist wing, view this as an overzealous dream with nightmarish consequences.

However, neoconservatives view of aggressive means to achieve its goals also has a criticism that it may underestimate the importance of respecting local custom. It might forget difficulties inherent in its democratization. Democracy cannot be imposed and local tradition cannot be safely eradicated by force. It might overestimate America's capacity for action. Despite their large population and wealthy, their resources are limited. Therefore, they will do more harm than good if they use them too extensively outside the borders.

### **Neoconservatives at the present**

*"[President Bush is] an engaging person, but I think for some reason he's been captured by the neoconservatives around him."*

--Howard Dean, U.S. News & World Report, August 11, 2003

Neoconservatives has a long life since 1970s. However, neoconservatives under Bush Administration has been criticized that it is more aggressive than his predecessors. In addition, it is a hawkish, which is very close to realism. It might be September 11 that caused the U.S. to actively retaliate terrorism. Post Cold War,

Neoconservatives favors an aggressive hawkish by using a notion of preemptive military action to legitimize their aggressive actions against their enemy.

Modern neoconservatives tends to rely on those assumptions. A belief deriving from religious conviction that the human condition is defined as a choice between good and evil. The true measure of political character is to be found in the willingness of the good to confront the evil. An assertion that the fundamental determinant of the relationship between states rely on military power and the willingness to use it. For military power, the U.S. perceives itself as unipolar power, seeing the use of military force as the first choice, not the last option of foreign policy.<sup>25</sup> In addition, a primary American overseas interests focus on the Middle East and global Islam.

Presently, neoconservatives emphasizes on how to increase the U.S. capabilities to expand the scope for American military intervention around the world.<sup>26</sup> Neoconservatives insists that the U.S. foreign policy should pursue the objective of preserving and enhancing the predominance of the U.S. capabilities along with strengthen America's security, support its friends, advance its interests, and stand up for its principles around the world.<sup>27</sup> Neoconservatives also believes that the U.S. should not be ashamed to use its unrivaled power and it is necessary to promote its values around the world. At this stage, it was seen that the U.S. need to cultivate the U.S. empire. Moreover, neoconservatives views modern threats facing the U.S. that they can no longer be reliably contained and therefore must be prevented, sometimes through preemptive military action.

For dealing with the Middle East, according to the article named 'The Neoconservative Movement' contributed by Francis Fukuyama, referred to the war on terror that is a classic-insurgency war but it is being played out on a global scale. It mentioned that the war in Iraq is incredibly difficult to fight because it must somehow

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: knopf, 2003), p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion," p 15.

<sup>27</sup> William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Plicy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (July-August 1996), p 20.

destroy the enemy without alienating the broader population and making things worse. It also mentioned an interesting recommendation that to counter insurgency requires a tricky mixture of precisely targeted force, political judgment, and extremely good intelligence.<sup>28</sup>

Most neoconservatives shares unwavering support for Israel, which they see as crucial to the U.S. military sufficiency in a volatile region. They also see Israel as a key outpost of democracy in a region ruled by despots. Believing that authoritarianism have allowed anti-Americanism to flourish in the Middle East, neoconservatives advocates the democratic transformation of the region, starting with Iraq. They also believe the U.S. is unnecessarily hampered by multilateral institutions, which they do not trust to effectively neutralize threats to global security.

It is apparent that neoconservatives has significant presence in the administration of George W. Bush. It has found its purpose in the shift from the threat of Communism to the threat of Islamic terrorism. The administration undertook an invasion of Afghanistan shortly after September 11 attacks, to remove the al-Qaeda-supporting Taliban from power. The administration also began planning and obtaining political and diplomatic support for an invasion of Iraq, citing Iraq's dictatorial government, support for terrorism, purported links to al-Qaeda, work on chemical and nuclear weapons, and refusal to abide by U.N. resolutions regarding inspection of weapons programs.

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<sup>28</sup> Gary Rosen, *The Right War: The Conservative Debate on Iraq* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 181-183.