



RESEARCH PAPER

**Neo-conservative Movement's Influence on American Policy Makers:
Militarism of American Foreign Policy**

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ABSTRACT

Neoconservative thought is a movement in America which believes on maintaining American military primacy at global level through increased defense spending. This study traces neo-conservative thought in American history and portrays its effects on American policies. This is a qualitative study which relies on books, articles and newspapers. The neo-conservative thought has deep roots in American intelligentsia. The 9/11 attacks brought the 'neo-conservative moment' in American history. This study believes that Bush's war on terror brought neo-conservative's militaristic approach to American policy. Its main elements were preventive warfare to deny rogue state's access to Weapons of Mass Destruction and regime change for democratization of such states like Afghanistan and Iraq. Neo-conservative's reliance on American power and disregard of International Institutions like UN was eminent in Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq.

Keywords: Anti-communism, Democracy, Liberalism, Neo-conservatism, Power

Introduction

Neoconservative movement has its links with liberal hawks who became disillusioned with the Democratic Party's foreign policy, cultural values of the New Left and the Great Society program. It combines elements of Marxism, Liberalism and Conservatism in varying proportions. It cannot be placed in any of these domains. Their main strands of thought were vigorous foreign policy with strong anti-communism and solid relationship with Israel. They count on American leadership for sustaining and directing international order. Originally neoconservatives were Leftists. They have their roots from East European Jewish immigrant families who were anti-Stalinist Trotskyites during the Trotskyite movement of 1930s and 1940s. Most prominent of these intellectuals were Nathan Glazer, Daniel Bell, Irving Howe, Irving Kristol and Seymour Martin Lipset.(High, 2009) Max Shachtman was the leader of neoconservatives who influenced Kirkpatrick, Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz. They formed an anti-Stalinist, anti-Soviet organization, named Social Democrats. During 1950s and 1960s, Irving Kristol and Norman Padhoretz supported civil rights movement and racial desegregation. Social Democrats disillusioned with the Democratic Party because of its less aggressive anti-Soviet policies, Johnson's Great Society Program and low defense spending. They called themselves 'new-liberals', but the mainstream Left deridingly called them 'neoconservatives'.

Irving Kristol says it is a 'persuasion' that liberalism is wrong because it is not in conformity with human and political reality. That reality is based on the selfish nature of humans. Finding morality in secular liberalism has led to moral bankruptcy. Irving Kristol defines a neo-conservatism as 'a Liberal who has been mugged by reality.'(Koek, 2014) The aim of neoconservatives was to provide moral foundations to American politics through

Christian-Judaic morality, though they themselves were not religious. So a non-secular liberal democracy could be achieved via amalgamation of Platonist thought with ready-made religious morality. There are three main principles of neo-conservatism. The first one is a strong idea of patriotism. Secondly, they reject anything resembling world government like United Nations or global rules. They believe that United Nations and NATO are on their way to becoming moribund. (High, 2009) Finally, they believe statesmen should have the ability to distinguish friends from foes. These principles have a potent element of Manichean morality and want USA to use its overwhelming power for the good of the world. That goodness is the spread of liberal democracy and individual liberties. A world safe for democracy would be a world free of wars. Individuals would compel democratic states to focus more on individual welfare than on wars with other democracies. This is the subject matter of the 'Democratic Peace Theory' which postulates that democracies do not go to war with other democracies. This Platonist desire combined with American military machine created a penchant for military solutions to the anti-democratic ills at international level. In direct opposition to the dictates of realpolitik, neo-conservatives want morality to supersede all other aspects. They abhor alliance with dictators and autocratic regimes. They want to use American power on moral grounds. According to Fukuyama, when only tool available is a hammer, then all problems are nails which need to be hit with hammer. It does not mean, they ignore soft power altogether. But they prefer unilateral military solutions to global ills. Most important ills are dictatorships and regimes which are anti-democratic and power hungry. Such regimes seek disproportionate power at the cost of their own populace and global peace. Dictators who aspire for unconventional weapons, like nuclear and biological, are of particular concern to neo-conservatives. To make world safe for democracy such regimes need to be changed through every available means available. Even military intervention is justified for such regime changes. Neo-conservatives being the moralist liberals want the spread of American values at global level. Illuminating of the world with American values will ensure American preeminence at international level.

"Americans should understand that their support for American pre-eminence is as much a strike for international justice as any people is capable of making" (Kagan & Kristol, 2000)

Literature Review

Historically neo-conservatives have focused more on European affairs during the cold war. Their Trotskyite roots made them disdain any probability of unchecked preeminence of Soviet influence in Europe. Their initial stress was on domestic politics. Left's focus on social engineering through projects like The Great Society program of Johnson administration steered neo-conservatives away from them. But anti-communist sentiments remained strong and they advocated policies for vigorous military posture against Soviet Union. Eventually, this anti-communism narrative metamorphosed into anti-authoritarianism. This belief translated into disbelief on international institutions and a robust military power.

The seeds of neo-conservatives were planted in alcove number 1 of the dining hall of the City College of New York (CCNY) in West Harlem. Even before the Red Scare of 1940s, the students of CCNY were anti-communist during 1930s, because they were anti-Stalin. The prominent students of alcove number 1 were Irving Kristol, Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Bell and Nathaniel Glazer. Although they were sympathetic to Marxism but they rejected the glorification of Stalin as the personification of communist virtues and disapproved the Moscow trials and the resultant purge of Bolsheviks. Their views were primarily socialist but the course communist rule traversed in Soviet Union created rightist reaction in them. The great promise of communism and its greater failure created resentment in this circle of scholars. This led to the most important strand of their thought which is anti-communism.

After World War Two their rightward drift led them into the fold of Liberalism. Many neo-conservatives were members of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) and supported the New Deal programs and democratic candidates. ADA supported Truman Doctrine and Marshal Plan as a bulwark against the communist threat. Neo-conservatives believed pro-communist speech need not to be protected under the cover of liberal values of freedom of expression. They believed communism was not merely a form of dissent, but a road to totalitarianism. Pro-Communists should not be left guilt free as was the case with pro-Nazis during 1930s. A London based magazine 'Encounter' was co-founded by Kristol for propagation of center-left views as a counter weight to communism. He wrote

"Liberals ought to be concerned with all 'changes and reforms tending in the direction of democracy.' But it is a fact that Communism today rules one-third of the human race, and may soon rule more; and that it is the most powerful existing institution which opposes such changes and reforms as liberalism proposes." (Kristol, 1954)

Domestic political developments moved neo-conservatives like Bell and Kristol away from center-left to center-right positions. Center-left prioritized racial equality and women rights over economic development of the middle-class (mostly white). Neo-conservatives opposed this view. They wanted economic development for a strong position against communism at global level. They sniffed threat from the New Left for three important reasons. Firstly, their demands for better wage conditions would create cannibalization of the lower-middle class. Secondly, their demands would alienate southern blue-collar democrats. Thirdly, their demand for the rollback of military spending would jeopardize strong military posture against the communist bloc.

There is confusion on the actual date of the term used as 'neo-conservative'. Seymour Martin Lipset says that this term was used as a technique of 'labeling' by Michael Harrington as without this label the left-wing of the liberal movement would not have shunned its right wing. (Lipset, 1988) Their embrace by the conservative circles led to the confusion over the true viewpoint of neo-conservatives. Some saw them as rightists but in actuality almost all of them supported the welfare planning state and the New Deal policies. Although some prominent neo-conservatives like Irving Kristol did end their support for the Democrats but neo-conservatives like Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Nathan Glazer remained supporters of the Democrats all their life. Harrington refutes the claims of Lipset by saying that the term was used commonly by the editors at the 'Dissent' magazine. Unlike a political party, there cannot be one date for the neo-conservative movement because it has no charter, no chairman and no mission statement. Michael Harrington used this term in 1973 to define the ideologies of Daniel Bell, Moynihan and Irving Kristol. Irving Kristol used this term in his 1979 article "Confessions of a True Self-confessed 'Neo-Conservative'".

By 1970s this movement focused more on foreign policy for their goal of pro-Israel and anti-Soviet Union American policies. Some conspiratorial writers suggest that the majority of neo-conservatives were Jewish and their primary aim was the American protection of Israel. But it is apparent that many non-Jewish neo-conservatives also supported pro-Israel policies on the grounds of checking communist influence in the Middle East and Israel being the only true democratic state in the Middle East. The support of the black members of the New Left to Yaser Arafat and Nasser of Egypt was termed as racist by the neo-conservatives. It was considered a reactionary and dangerous approach. Regarding Soviet Union, many neo-conservatives rallied around Henry "Scoop" Jackson for his anti-détente and pro-Israel approach. A senator from the Washington State and a strong Democrat, Jackson espoused the cause of the neo-conservatives. He was against the trade with Soviet Union on the grounds that it would hurt American workers due to competition to American manufacturing and provide access of American technology to the totalitarian Soviet Union. He wanted the demise of Soviet Union as opposed to being propped up by American technology. He was successful in the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the Trade Act of 1974 which put a clause on not granting most favored nation status to any state not

allowing Jews to immigrate to Israel in a minimum certain number. Soviet restriction on Jewish emigration meant that Soviet Union would not be engaged in trade relations. Neo-conservatives denounced the greater concern of Republicans for relations with totalitarian adversaries like Soviet Union than with democratic friends like Israel. It showed Ford and Nixon administration's pessimism about human progress. After the defeat of Jackson at the hands of Jimmy Carter in 1976, neo-conservatives became disenchanted with the Democratic Party. Carter did try to woo them for his reelection campaign but the gulf could not be bridged. They charged Carter as a dove and denounced SALT II and selling of F-16s to the Saudi Arabia. Neo-conservatives like Kirkpatrick decisively broke from the Democratic Party and vowed to vote for the Republican candidate. Kirkpatrick became Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations. (Ehrman, 1995) Resultantly Democratic neo-conservatives dwindled. Moynihan remained senator of New York till he was replaced by Hillary Clinton in 2001 at his retirement. Kirkpatrick's argument was focused on authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. She argued that authoritarian regimes might be tenable and with the passage of time may convert to democracies. But cooperation with totalitarian communist regimes would prove counterproductive. These totalitarian states claim ownership of the whole society and try to change it fundamentally, thereby destroying the traditional balance of the society. Authoritarian states do not disturb the day to day lives of the individuals and rhythms of leisure and miseries. She says that rather than the immediate change of autocracies to democracies, USA should work for gradual transformation to democracies of such states.

Norman Padhoretz wrote that after the end of cold war, USA accepted "third-worldism" in the United Nations as propagated by the New Left. Neo-conservatives opposed this view. They became more interested in the foreign policy domain and wanted the propagation of American values and ideals at global level. They criticized the New Left's apologetic acceptance of putting blame of the problems of the Third World on the developed world. ('The Culture of Appeasement, by Norman Podhoretz', 1977) Neo-conservatives showed disapproval of the New International Economic Order of 1975 and the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of the States of 1975. They put blame of the moral decay on those liberals who accepted third worldism. Kirkpatrick said that like the New Left in the Democratic party, United Nations also betrayed its founding liberal principles because it was overtaken by the Marxian "Third World Ideology". (Kirkpatrick, 1983)

Neo-conservatives also objected to the realist paradigm of Henry Kissinger who worked both as National security Advisor and Secretary of State during 1970s. According to realism, power determines the policies of states and neo-conservatives' focus on democratic principles as the guiding light of American policies might endanger international stability. Henry Kissinger's efforts for 'détente' with Soviets resulted in Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty during 1970s. Neo-conservatives criticized Kissinger's policies tooth and nail. Their main arguments were both strategic and moral. SALT put limitation on nuclear weapons of both Soviet Union and USA, thereby constraining the nuclear deterrence of USA which could be exploited by an expansionist Soviet Union. Neo-conservatives stated that Soviet Union was not a typical state motivated by power, rather it was expansionist state. Détente with an expansionist state was an ill-conceived idea. They also feared détente could weaken USA support for Israel and strengthen Soviet support for Arab states, which did happen in 1973 war, when USA joined Soviets in cajoling Israel to a ceasefire through United Nations resolution (Laqueur, 1973).

Ronald Reagan countered this Kissinger era realist policy framework of adjusting to communist Soviet Union through the prism of power calculations. He challenged intellectual mood of accepting the status quo on moral grounds. He promised to restore hope and vowed for a national crusade to make America great again. He promoted confidence in strong American military capabilities. These attributes of his thought were essentially neo-conservative minded. He took many neo-conservatives in his administration. Neo-

conservatives are religious minded nationalists who believe on the moral duty of USA to defend freedom worldwide. They presuppose in case of American inaction, no other state would be able to defend free world. Reagan followed an offensive neo-conservative approach towards Soviet Union by increasing defense spending and activist global policies. He was careful to not harm American interests by committing to Vietnam style war. He supported dictators in other countries and increased the cost of socialist guerrilla warfare in respective states. He allied with dictators like Pinochet in Chile and Galtieri in Argentina. His support for proxy wars increased cost of USSR involvement thereby stretching their economic potential to the limit. Soviet attack on Afghanistan proved to be its Achilles heel. USA supported military dictator of Pakistan, General Zia ul Haq, for sustained Jihadist warfare in Afghanistan. Jihadists were trained, financed and organized by the American support to Pakistan's agencies. Reagan also supported anti-communist efforts in Nicaragua, Angola, El Salvador and Cambodia. American strategy of bleeding USSR with a thousand cuts worked perfectly with Soviet retreat in 1987 and eventual demise of USSR in 1991. It is to be noted that support for dictatorships was not in line with neo-conservative ideas of democratic freedoms worldwide. But Reagan believed those Dictatorships were potential democracies because they had capitalist economic models.

Neoconservative Rise to Power and American Militarism

Neo-conservatives have a liberal ideology based on capitalism, freedom, democracy with a strong dose of Judaic-Christian morality. They are staunch nationalists and have firm belief on American superior capabilities, in short American exceptionalism. Their rise of influence in American political scene has historically seen America on warfare. They base their liberal ideas on realist grounds. Their advocacy for strong military build-up for supporting and protecting the free world shows both side of their ideology. During Reagan administration America initiated Strategic Defense Initiative for large-scale military modernization. Many neo-conservatives were advisors in Reagan administration like UN ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle and Assistant Secretaries of State Paul Wolfowitz and Elliot Abrams. Their influence was evident in Reagan Administration. ('The Rise of the Neocons', n.d.) During 1980s, America militarily intervened in Panama for removing her Dictator Noriega, which led to a war in 1990. In 1983, America and allied forces attacked Grenada out of fear increase in influence of USSR and Cuba in the Caribbean. A Marxist coup was the initiating factor in Grenada. After a couple of months of the war, support among American public for the war decreased. They feared that war could drag on like the one in Vietnam and eventual death of about 4 million people there. In 1986, America bombed Tripoli in Libya in response to Colonel Gadhafi's support for anti-American groups and terrorists worldwide. Gadhafi supported Palestinian Liberation Army in Palestine. He tried to acquire nuclear bomb. USSR built a nuclear research facility in Libya. Increase in tensions between Libya and America led to their naval skirmishes in the Mediterranean Sea in 1981 and 1986. Gadhafi responded to these defeats by bombing a Disco in Germany where USA troops bore the main brunt. America responded by aerial bombardment. During the Lebanese civil war of 1982, America intervened to stop fighting between Israel and Palestinians and to keep nationalist and fascist Christian Gemayal family in power. USA wanted to block a Syrian backed president succeed in Lebanon because that would have increased Soviet influence in the region. Additionally a stable Lebanon might be a potential oil supplier for USA. American public criticized sending troops to Lebanon. Almost 200 American troops were killed in a suicide bombing in Lebanon. There were loud calls to bring soldiers home but a militarist Reagan would persist to complete his aims. However, four months later in early 1984, he would withdraw troops from Lebanon. During Iran-Iraq war of 1980s, America supported Iraq to penetrate the regional dynamics and check Soviet influence.

The influence of neo-conservatives waned during 1990s. With the advent of George H.W. Bush, neo-conservative grand dreams of remaking the world waned. He was a so-called

Realist. He promised Reagan era conservative continuity. Some prominent conservative advisors in his presidency were Dick Cheney and Colin Powell. There were gigantic events during his tenure like falling of Berlin wall, disentangling of Soviet Union and First Gulf war. He was put to scathing criticism for raising domestic taxes and cutting military spending by the no-conservatives. Both were their close to heart ideals. During Gulf War, his decision of not occupying Iraq for regime change was also criticized by the neo-conservatives. They charged him of backtracking and putting lives of anti-Saddam elements like Kurds and Shiites at the mercy of Saddam, who brutally crushed them after the Operation Desert Storm. During Clinton era, neo-conservatives focused more on intellectual infrastructure. Wealthy patrons like Rupert Murdoch and Roger Hertog funded think tanks like American Enterprise Institute and media outlets like Wall Street Journal and The Weekly Standard. These institutes provided a new generation of neo-conservatives. This new generation established a think tank, Project for a New American Century (PNAC) (1997-2009). Its research reports called for vigorous foreign policy coupled with military modernization to do constabulary functions for the free world. (Project for the New American Century/Foreign Policy Initiative/, 2000) Its open letter to President Clinton in 1998 opinionated policy making circles to enact Iraq Liberation Act. This letter called for the overthrow of Saddam Husain.

In the post-cold war era, neo-conservatives basked in the triumphant American power. They believe in the 'End of History' thesis of Francis Fukoyama, that American democratic system had dominated the globe for good due to its perfection. Western technological innovations and freedoms in socio-economic domain inspire the world towards a liberal democratic world order. Liberal democratic order is the pinnacle of human civilizational attainments. Western conventional thinking is confident that democratic systems would spread to the whole globe when viewed from Kantian cosmopolitanism and Doyle's 'Democratic Peace Theory', but forceful directional change of states to democracies shows the taste of neo-conservative mind. After the 9/11 attacks on American homeland in Pentagon and World Trade Center, US policies show strong flavor of neo-conservative underpinnings. This is the reason for calling those years as the 'neo-conservative moment' in American history. Their thought shows disregard for international institutions. They do not want constraints on the 'exceptional' American power to cause democratic change in the world. They reject liberal internationalism and favor regime change in states like Iran, Iraq, North Korea and China. Realist underpinnings for apparent moral purposes are highly apparent in their thought. Their main focus was on rogue states with potential access to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), which could challenge American primacy. But after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, they quickly attributed Islamic militancy in the Muslim world as the main challenge to American security. They failed to see American policies abroad which caused resentment in Muslim peoples like American support for Israel and the House of Saud etc. They interpreted rise of militancy to the soft American policies of 1990s. According to them America showed inadequate military response during terrorist attacks like American withdrawal from Somalia after death of American soldiers, Saddam remaining in power in Iraq, attacks on World Trade Center in 1993 and terrorist assaults on American bases in Saudi Arabia, USS Cole in 2000 and American embassies in Africa in 1998. American failure to project its power led to the emboldening of terrorist networks, ultimately resulting in attacks of 9/11.(Norton, Kagan, & Kagan, 2002)

Neo-liberals want the projection and protection of American empire through international institutions and soft power. Neo-conservatives want the same result through hard power and military means. The events of 9/11 created a fertile ground for neo-conservative ideas to get hold of American official policy. National Security Document of 2002 by Bush administration rolled out the blueprints of neo-conservative project. During 1990s neo-conservatives wrote against the New World Order of peace. They preached that America should seize the 'unipolar moment' for projection of American values.(Krauthammer, 1990) America makes safe the world from its power and in return world works according to the rules made by America. In reality world order is framed by

American rules and America should be prepared to enforce those rules. (Krauthammer, 1990) Neo-conservatives consider multilateralism of the senior Bush and Clinton era distastefully sour. The commitment to use the actual power is their primary desire. The so-called war on terror made this desire a reality through the 'Bush Doctrine'. The main features of the Bush Doctrine are unilateralism, preventive war and disregard of international institutions- major elements of the neo-conservative movement. At West Point Bush made the seminal arguments on June 1, 2002

"We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systematically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long" ('Bush, "Graduation Speech...", "Speech Text', n.d.)

He went on to elaborate the moral foundations of his purported strategy by saying

"Building this just peace is America's opportunity and America's duty. From this day forward, it is your challenge as well, and we will meet this challenge together. You will wear the uniform of a great and unique country. America has no empire to extend or utopia to establish. We wish for others only what we wish for ourselves—safety from violence, the rewards of liberty, and the hope for a better life." ('Bush, "Graduation Speech...", "Speech Text', n.d.)

American presidents have a history of grounding their hard power strategies on the moral absolutism like Truman, Reagan etc. Bush introduced the policy of preemptive force though in reality it was a policy of preventive force which is greater in degree and magnitude. Binding this hard power policy with moral foundations so openly shows the neo-conservative nature of his policy. Previous presidents were not so blunt in their openness to the usage of military power of America.

National Security Strategy document of 2002 opens with a triumphant tone of American liberal democratic values in the twentieth century. This is a theme close to heart of the neo-conservatives. It calls upon the freedom loving world to unite against dangers to liberal values.

"The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. In the twenty-first century, only nations that share a commitment to protecting basic human rights and guaranteeing political and economic freedom will be able to unleash the potential of their people and assure their future prosperity. People everywhere want to be able to speak freely; choose who will govern them; worship as they please; educate their children—male and female; own property; and enjoy the benefits of their labor. These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society—and the duty of protecting these values against their enemies is the common calling of freedom-loving people across the globe and across the ages." ('The National Security Strategy 2002', n.d.)

It considered main threat from non-state actors with potential access to the Weapons of Mass Destruction. America proclaimed to deny the arising of such a calamitous scenario through preventive force. America declared war against such actors anywhere in the world.

"Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us." ('The National Security Strategy 2002', n.d.)

Bush waged wars on Afghanistan and Iraq which were considered as a threat to human freedoms. The document declared

“Today, humanity holds in its hands the opportunity to further freedom’s triumph over all these foes. The United States welcomes our responsibility to lead in this great mission.”(‘The National Security Strategy 2002’, n.d.)

Bush mainly focused on Middle Eastern region- an area of much interest for the neo-conservatives. Lewis- a neo-conservative said that Middle East’s main problem arises from the unresolved clash of identities due to imperial demarcation of states over the preceding centuries. The solution to this problem is either Islamic system or democratic system which is incongruent and incompatible with each other. America’s main position was status-quo oriented like American withdrawal after pushing Saddam out of Kuwait. Clinton’s main approach was also sanctions- not regime change. In Lewis’ view, it was a ticking time bomb. Huntington’s thesis was that the conflict between major civilizational ways of life was imminent and he put Islamic civilization as incompatible with the western civilization. A nuclear Iran can challenge American dominance through Islamic front. Neo-conservatives like Podhoretz voiced for stern action to stop Iran going nuclear. They feared it could pose a challenge to the democratization of the Middle East by checking American influence in the region. Israel being the only democratic country in the region would be under dire military and political pressure in such a scenario. Podhoretz called for destroying Iran to stop it creating an ‘Islamofascist’ world order. (‘The Case for Bombing Iran’, 2007) Bush also spoke about the Islamic militant’s desire for creating a caliphate which could rally the Muslim world from Indonesia to Morocco to their cause. (*Bush Warns of ‘War on Humanity’*, 2005)

Conclusion

To conclude, neo-conservatives main tenets are American nationalism with religious flavor, commitment to spread of American liberal values, greater military spending for maintaining American preeminence, low domestic taxes, traditional ways of life, capitalism, free enterprise and most importantly, an open disregard of international institutions and rules. They believe on ‘American exceptionalism’ which have a moral duty to make the world free from tyranny and terrorism. They have used their superior organizational skills to maximize their influence at American policy making process. Some criticize their Jewish connections to the interests of Israel. Neo-conservatism is not a theory with fixed principles or a political party with a stated manifesto and leadership. It is a movement with loose membership. The main leaders of this movement are Irving Kristol and Leo Strauss. Straus’s students like Paul Wolfowitz or Dick Cheney were the people who guided American unilateral exercise of power under the leadership of George W. Bush from 2002 onwards under the label of ‘war on terror’. American attacks on Iraq were not covered by the United Nations resolution under Chapter seven which sanctions military actions. American allies like European powers and NATO were not taken onboard. America unilaterally declared war on Iraq under the charge of Saddam’s assistance to Al-Qaeda and development programs of Weapons of Mass Destruction. This era is called the ‘neo-conservative moment’ in American foreign policy history.

Realists like Mearsheimer criticized American war on Iraq and the unilateralism in general. Mearsheimer feared American offensive military posture would force militarization of its adversaries for their survival. America disregard of allied states’ opinions would make them suspicious of American intentions. Additionally, it would erode American soft power globally. He criticized oversized influence of Israeli lobby and the danger it poses to American influence in the Middle East. (Mearsheimer, 2006) Neo-liberals called for adherence to international rules and organizations. Americans never found any Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq. Some critics point to American desire for Iraq’s energy resources as the main reason of Iraq war. Neo-conservatives fundamentally misjudged the aftermath of Iraq war. Saddam was holding a tedious balance among sects and regions. American

overthrow of Saddam destroyed that balance which led to bloodbath in Iraq. Neo-conservatives could not foresee that democratization is a process which cannot be implanted by a foreign country like American attempts in Iraq. During the second tenure of Bush neo-conservative influence started to wane with the dismissal of Donald Rumsfeld. Realist principles became prominent in Bush policies in the face of his decreasing public ratings.

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