

The 1990s and the Remaking of the Neoconservative Foreign Policy Paradigm

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ABSTRACT

This essay explains how neoconservative foreign policy doctrine evolved from strenuously seeking to defeat the communist enemy during the Cold War to thoroughly seeking to preserve America's newfound "unipolar moment" by constructing new enemies to defeat. It analyzes the generational transition within the neoconservative movement from the 1970s to the 1990s and its empire-building project in the post-Cold War era. Based on neoconservative publications and contributions to magazines such as *Commentary*, *The National Interest*, and *Weekly Standard* as well as the publications, reports, and statements of neoconservative think tanks (*The Coalition for a Democratic Majority*, *The Committee on the Present Danger*, *American Enterprise Institute*, *The Project for New American Century*, among others), the essay argues that the themes associated with the neoconservatives after 9/11—such as militarism, preemptive war, regime change, democratization, and unilateralism—had been rooted in the neoconservative discourse since the 1970s. It also shows that the post-9/11 neoconservative foreign policy approach was the product of neoconservative narratives during the Cold War era and after the fall of communism. (RA)

KEYWORDS: Neoconservatism, Cold War, US foreign policy, empire, 9/11 attacks

In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, the so-called godfather of neoconservatism, Irving Kristol addressed what purpose should inform the foreign policy of the United States:

“It is very difficult for a great power—a world power—to articulate a foreign policy in absence of an enemy worthy of the name. It is after all one’s enemy that helps define one’s ‘national interest’ in whatever form that definition might take” (“Defining Our National Interest” 16). Kristol’s argument is not necessarily exclusive to foreign policy, because we are defined by our enemies as much as by our friends, and by what we agree on as much as by what we oppose. Undoubtedly, animosity had always been a crucial element of the neoconservative creed. In the 1930s, neoconservatives started as leftist Trotskyists, adversaries of their Stalinist counterparts; during the Cold War years they rejected calls for coexistence, containment, and détente policies, and pushed for a hardline anti-communist foreign policy; in the 1960s, they opposed the New Left and the counterculture of the decade, as well as the anti-Vietnam war movement. Then, in the 1970s, they disowned their leftist past and merged with the Right. Although neoconservatives themselves appear relatively easy to define by their enemies, the term “neoconservatism” has proven to be a challenge. As sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset suggests, neoconservatism has always been “one of the most misunderstood concepts in the political lexicon” (29). Throughout their history, the neoconservatives never followed a strict party line, they had no manifesto or statement of principle, they carried both idealistic and realistic views; they were politicians, journalists, and academics; in their views, they tended to disagree more often than agree (Murray ix).

Still, the origins of the term neoconservative and the shared history of those who were labeled as such can help explain where they came from and why they held the views they held. When the term was first coined in the early 1970s by the socialist Michael Harrington and the editors of *Dissent* magazine, it was used to refer—in a pejorative sense—to a group of disproportionately New York Jewish leftist and liberal intellectuals,¹ who perceived the counterculture, the culture of relativism, sexual revolution, gay and feminist movements as threats to American core values. They supported the civil rights movement and the welfare

state, but argued for the limitation of social engineering and affirmative action policies, criticized some liberals' reluctance to stand up against the communist threat and the Soviet Union's expansionism, advocated American exceptionalism, and criticized what they perceived as anti-American tendencies and Marxist sympathies that emerged with the New Left, students, and anti-war movements (Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads* 18-22).

The political views of the formerly leftist future neoconservatives go back to the 1930s, and they were shaped by their personal experiences as descendants and/or students of Jewish immigrants who fled the totalitarian culture of Nazi Germany, witnessed the failure of the League of Nations to stand up against Nazism and Fascism, and admired the United States' decisive victory in World War II. In their early years, the neoconservatives were part of the Democratic Party, but when the party nominated the anti-Vietnam war advocate Senator George McGovern in the 1972 election, many neoconservatives chose to endorse the re-election of Republican nominee Richard Nixon. McGovern's campaign slogan, "Come Home America," embodied his advocacy of withdrawal from Vietnam, reduced defense spending, and a curtailment of US commitments abroad. In 1972 many neoconservatives joined in forming *The Coalition for a Democratic Majority* (CDM), which aimed to regain control of the Democratic Party from the "McGovernites" (Dorrien 166-68, Halper and Clarke 44-45). CDM became heavily involved in advocating larger political involvement in world affairs and in criticizing the calls for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union, or what the neoconservatives regarded as "spineless foreign policy" (Halper and Clarke 55). Following the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976, the neoconservatives revived the *Committee on the Present Danger* (CPD)² to be a larger and bipartisan equivalent of the CDM with similar goals, promoting a strong defense policy, combating the policy of détente, and alerting American politicians and citizens to the growing military power and aggressive behavior of the USSR (Wells 116, Vaïsse 157-58). Throughout the presidencies of Nixon, Ford, and Carter, the

political influence of neoconservatives remained unsteady, but their foreign policy stance started to take on a shape distinguishable from that of other political powers. Nevertheless, the climax of the neoconservatives' influence was reached under the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Reagan embarked on a campaign to destroy the USSR and shared the neoconservative rejection of containment and détente policies. Over his two terms in office, he appointed sixty-five CPD directors—Reagan himself was a member in CPD—in prominent positions. They were primarily active in formulating the president's defense policy (Vaïsse 187).

Between the 1970s and the 1980s, neoconservatism transformed from an intellectual trend into a political one. The majority of neoconservatives transferred to the Republican Party upholding a Wilsonian interventionist foreign policy that foregrounded several core themes, as can be deduced from their most influential intellectual work: books written by neoconservatives, their contributions in *Commentary* and *The National Interest*, as well as the reports and statements of neoconservative think tanks (mainly CDM and CPD). First, they promoted an active role for the US in world politics to preserve freedom and democracy. They were critical of isolationism, supported economic and political aid to anti-communist powers, defended US overt and covert actions to halt the spread of communism, and criticized the reluctance to rollback communist expansion in Eastern Europe and Latin America (Kristol, *Neoconservative Persuasion* 150, Burnham Chapter 14, Podhoretz). Second, they considered militarism and the extreme expression of power to be the only way to prevent war and maintain world peace. They advocated increasing nuclear and conventional military and defense capabilities and adopted a staunch stand against détente policy and the arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. For instance, during the ratification of SALT II (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks with the Soviet Union) the CPD tracked the positions of each senator individually and was intimately involved in preparing the Senate Committee Reports, which eventually led the Congress to revoke the treaty (Vaïsse and Hoover Institution 3). Third, they

believed that the character of the regimes mattered and viewed the struggle with the USSR as a struggle over ideology and values. Irving Kristol stated that “the Soviet Union is an immoral, brutal, expansionist power and has been so under successive leaderships, and that so long as it is a Soviet Union, that is, a Communist regime, it will continue to be so” (*The Neoconservative Persuasion* 210). Thus, the US foreign policy should carry a moral dimension that not only reflects liberal democratic values and principles, but also leads them to prevail (Fukuyama *America at the Crossroads* 48, Friedman 154). Fourth, the neoconservatives distrusted international organizations, believed that the United Nations was ineffective and weak in the face of emerging threats, let alone illegitimate and profoundly undemocratic³ (Vaïsse 5, Crossley 61). They also criticized the International Criminal Court, human rights organizations, and international conventions on the grounds that these organizations operated on double standards by targeting American allies while ignoring, or not paying the same attention to, the violations committed by authoritarian anti-American governments (Friedman 173-74). However, most neoconservatives exclude NATO from their critique of multilateral organizations (Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads* 49). Fifth, they emphasized the strategic and geopolitical importance of the Middle East and the protection of the State of Israel, which they considered part of Western civilization and the only democracy in the Middle East. This stand was reflected by their unconditional support of Israel and calls for halting the communist advances and armament of Arab regimes in the Middle East (Coalition for a Democratic Majority, Defense Policy Statement 2-5, 20-27, Kristol, *Neoconservative Persuasion* 200-03, Moynihan Chapter 7). Sixth, the neoconservatives acknowledged the power of propaganda in mobilizing the American public and politicians to take action against the threat of communist expansion; throughout the 1970s and 1980s, they used their presence in the media to exaggerate the threat posed by the Soviet Union. They formed alliances with like-minded political think

tanks and religious groups like the Christian Right, the Israeli lobby, and the military-industrial complex (Halper and Clarke 182, 196-97, Wells 150).

It should be emphasized that, throughout the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, the neoconservatives modified their views on foreign policy to accommodate the nature of the enemy and global political developments. In the following, I will analyze the ideological framework of the neoconservative foreign policy paradigm in the post-Cold War era, particularly in the 1990s, with special focus on why I consider it to be a continuation of the neoconservatives' Cold War foreign policy approach.

The split between the old and the young generation

With the collapse of the bipolar world order after the fall of communism, US foreign policy confronted a new reality that required redefining its purpose. Correspondingly, neoconservatism lost its appeal. Neoconservatism was declared dead, not just by its opponents but even by many of its adherents. For instance, Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary* noted that it “no longer exist[ed] as a distinctive phenomenon requiring a special name of its own” (19), while Seymour Martin Lipset added that “the concept of Neoconservatism [was] irrelevant to further developments within American politics” (37). Additionally, Irving Kristol indicated that what was described as the neoconservative impulse or persuasion “was a generational phenomenon, and has now been pretty much absorbed into a larger, more comprehensive conservatism” (*The Neoconservative Persuasion* 349). These arguments were true to some extent, since by the end of Reagan's administration neoconservatives were fully affiliated with the Republican Party, they infiltrated conservative think tanks and publications, and became the most affluent intellectuals in the American Right (Nash 557, Ehrman 173). Neoconservatives, however, remained distinct from paleoconservatives in some regards. Unlike the latter, neoconservatives supported the civil rights movement, the labor unions, the welfare

state, and social engineering programs,⁴ and the focus of their attention was foreign policy rather than social issues—sexual deviance, pornography, abortion, and school prayer—that paleoconservatives were preoccupied with. Additionally, joining the Republican Party and embracing their conservatism did not mean that neoconservatives were welcomed or accepted by other conservative factions; they remained subject to the criticism, resentment, and suspicion of conservatives, to say the least.⁵

Historians usually argue that the neoconservative foreign policy approach in the post-Cold War era does not just distinguish the neoconservatives from their conservative counterparts, but also draws the line between neoconservative “first and second generations” and the “third generation” (see Dorrien, Vaisse, Heilbronn, and Velasco among others), that is, between the neoconservatives who gained the label in the 1970s from those who inherited it in the 1990s through family connections, and /or by working at journals and think tanks that followed a neoconservative strain of thought. In the context of this paper, I will be referring to the first and second generations as the “older generation,” while to the third as the “younger generation.”

In the fall of 1990, Irving Kristol’s newly founded magazine *The National Interest* asked “If the Cold War has ended (or for the more cautious is now ending) and the global containment of communism is no longer an urgent task what center purpose—if any—should inform America’s foreign policy for the rest of this century and beyond?” (“Defining Our National Interest” 26) The way neoconservatives approached this question shows how their belief in the political effectiveness of their hardline stand was solidified by the Soviets’ defeat. It also demonstrates how both the older and younger generation envisioned a foreign policy that is informed by the following goals: 1) maintaining the global primacy and leadership of the United States, 2) promoting the US mission to uphold democratic and liberal values, 3) protecting their

allies, and 4) preventing the emergence of new threats. However, each generation was distinct in the way it articulated and implemented these foreign policy goals.

The older generation envisioned a post-Cold War world in which the US does not seek to impose a hegemonic role, but to universalize democratic values by setting an example for the world to follow and by adopting soft power methods, such as cultural exchange, diplomacy, and economic and political pressure. They called on the US to prevent the emergence of new threats without acting as the “world policeman” (in Irving Kristol’s terms) but rather by relying on collective action and international law. For instance, Jean Kirkpatrick in “A Normal Country in A Normal Time” argued that with the collapse of communism, the US should aim to “support the US economy and work to strengthen democracy” by encouraging “democratic institutions, wherever possible,” but without seeking the “universal dominance of democracy” (42). Nathan Glazer held similar views. In his article “A Time of Modesty,” he asserted that the US should reduce its military presence abroad while continuing to promote democracy and disapprove authoritarian, dictatorial, and totalitarian regimes through diplomatic efforts, economic aid, cultural exchange, and political pressure (31-35). Furthermore, Irving Kristol suggested that American foreign policy should be driven by the intention of protecting its national interest, which he narrowed down to preventing the emergence of a hostile, competitive superpower, and to protecting countries that share American political principles and liberal values. He also argued that “monitoring and maintaining a balance of power among other nation, large and small, in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, etc. will make the United States the ‘world’s policeman’ of the status quo” (“Defining Our National Interest” 16-25). Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who once famously declared that “the United Nations is a place where lies are told” (Murray 49), grew increasingly convinced that, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the US should establish a new world order based on international law and by reviving the United Nations.⁶ In his latest book, *On the Law of Nations*, he went as far as to address the need to revitalize the

role of international law in the formation of the United States' foreign policy, considering international law as an integral component of the United States' laws (Fox 647). As it was demonstrated earlier, the older neoconservative generation considered American national interests as the basis for US post-Cold War foreign policy. This foreign policy suggested reducing the country's global engagement and its military presence abroad, and rejected launching a global mission to spread democracy. In other words, the neoconservative vision for the post-Cold war era leaned toward realism and distinguished itself from the Wilsonian interventionism it embraced during the Cold War years.

In retrospect, the younger neoconservative generation called for reshaping the new world order in accordance with American interests and democratic values as the only way to grant global peace and stability. Their vision of foreign policy was articulated within the framework of two theories. First, the democratic peace theory, which posited that a lasting peace depended on states becoming republics, with legislators to check the power of monarchs (or presidents) to make war and that democracies generally were more peaceful than authoritarian governments and that they—democracies—almost never fought other democracies (Goldstein and Pevehouse 80-81). Second, the hegemonic stability theory, which suggested that hegemony provided stability and order by reducing anarchy, deterring aggression, promoting free trade, solving, or at least, containing conflicts between smaller states (Goldstein and Pevehouse 50). The fall of Soviet communism and the emergence of the US as the world's sole superpower provided the neoconservatives with the historical moment to instigate an empire-building project, which was, in fact, no different from that of the British empire or any of the other powers that sought world hegemony, democratic peace and hegemonic stability. They relied on theories to provide an ideological base for this project, in which Islam and the Weapon State were the neoconservatives' constructed enemies, while 9/11 served as another historical moment that enabled them to implement such a plan.

The new generation takes up the torch

In his 1989 article, “The End of History,” Fukuyama—a former neoconservative—asserted that by the end of the Cold War the ideological revolution of humankind had reached its end point by the triumph of Western liberal democracy.⁷ He argued that the collapse of the Soviet Union destroyed the political and intellectual foundations of Communism; thus, the liberal understanding of justice, freedom, and equality were the “final form of human government” (3-5). In the same article, Fukuyama suggested that the only potential opposition to liberalism might come from either religion or nationalism. While the latter he argued did not have “a political program beyond the negative desire for independence,” nor did it offer a “comprehensive agenda for social-economic organizations,” the former provided both a political and a social-economic agenda. In the contemporary world, only Islam was able to offer a “theocratic state as a political alternative to both liberalism and communism” (14-15). However, Fukuyama dismissed Islam’s capability to threaten liberal democracy on the basis that Islam had no appeal in countries that were not culturally Islamic, and added that even in countries that were, liberal ideas proved to attract more adherents than staunch Islamic fundamentalist opponents (43-46). Fukuyama’s end of history argument was backed by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the anti-communist revolutions in Eastern Europe; it proved the ultimate victory of the neoconservative narrative against communism during the Cold War and provided the ideological justification for pursuing a democratic foreign policy. Thus, it linked America’s security to the spread of democracy and verified the calls of the neoconservatives’ younger generation for launching a democratic crusade. For instance, the political commentator, Ben J. Wattenberg, suggested that the purpose of the United States’ foreign policy in the post-Cold War should be a “neo-manifest destinarianism,” which he identified as America’s mission for an “American-style” democracy through the means of the military and intelligence services,

through diplomacy, and cultural and economic imperialism (51-55). In *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny*, Joshua Muravchik explained why the promotion of democracy should form the basis of the foreign policy of the US. He stated that "we should concentrate on continuing to spread democracy in a post-Communist world for three good reasons The first is empathy with our fellow humans Second, the more democratic the world, the friendlier America's environment will be. . . . Third, the more democratic the world, the more peaceful it is likely to be" (8). Muravchik contended that after World War II, Germany and Japan were examples of the effectiveness of military intervention as a method of democratization. He claimed that "if in the future as in the past the US finds itself drawn into a military occupation for reasons of self-defense or collective security, then it should not forgo the opportunity to build democracy in the country under its sway" (117). By replacing America's national interests with the promotion of democracy as the main objective of the US foreign policy, and by calling for a more active role for the US in world politics, the younger generation's position was closer to the view embraced by their forerunners in the Cold War period. Furthermore, the new generation's foreign policy pledged to maintain the United States' newly achieved primacy around the world. They drew from the theory of hegemonic peace by arguing that preserving and maintaining the United States' position as the single-pole power is the only guarantee of world stability. For instance, in "Universal Dominion: Toward a Unipolar World," Charles Krauthammer stated that "American disengagement in a post-Cold War world" would threaten the "structure of peace," while the "deployment of American power" is crucial to maintain "global stability" (48). In "The Unipolar Moment," he suggested that "American preeminence is based on the fact that it is the only country with the military, diplomatic, political and economic assets to be a decisive player in any conflict in whatever part of the world it chooses to involve itself" (24). Krauthammer, who coined the term "Weapon State" and was among the first to present Iraq as a global threat, stated that "[r]elatively small, peripheral and

backward states will be able to emerge rapidly as threats not only to regional but to world security. Iraq, which (unless disarmed by Desert Storm) will likely be in possession of intercontinental missiles within the decade, is the prototype of this new strategic threat, which might be called the "Weapon State" (30). He suggested that "[w]ith the rise of the Weapon State, there is no alternative to confronting, deterring and, if necessary, disarming states that brandish and use weapons of mass destruction" (32). He asserted that the 1991 Gulf War proved the US global leadership and capability to preserve the world order while the United Nations proved to be "guarantor of nothing" (24-25). Thus, Krauthammer's insistence on the US acting unilaterally to deter and disarm Weapon States, along with calls for democracy promotion, constituted the neoconservative case against Iraq a decade later. However, Iraq was merely a target in the neoconservative post-Cold War order. The main objective was to achieve what William Kristol and Robert Kagan described as the American "benevolent hegemony," which is the only "reliable defense against a breakdown of peace and international order" (23). They argued that "[h]aving defeated the "evil empire," the United States enjoys strategic and ideological predominance. The first objective of US foreign policy should be to preserve and enhance that predominance by strengthening America's security, supporting its friends, advancing its interests, and standing up for its principles around the world" (20). They also pointed out that the United States' foreign policy should aim to preserve this hegemony by pursuing a "Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy of military supremacy and moral confidence" (23). Their policy relied on three principles: 1) building up and maintaining American military supremacy by increasing defense spending and securing dominance in the leadership of NATO, 2) promoting American values of democracy, freedom, and free-market abroad, through economic aid and political pressure as well as pursuing policies "ultimately intended to bring about a change of regime," and 3) involving American citizens in understanding the United States' global mission and the moral clarity that drives its foreign policy (18-32). In other

words, the younger generation reintroduced the Cold War foreign policy approach by replacing the communist threat, maintaining the balance of power with the need to deter any threats, and preserve the position of the US as a sole power. Nevertheless, in the absence of urgent and actual rivals, the promotion of democracy while preserving “American hegemony” were not sufficient to convey a neoconservative foreign policy.

Harvard political scientist and former national security adviser Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilization* provided the neoconservatives with yet another threat that would enable them to put their theory into practice a decade later. Huntington posited that a “clash of civilization” will be the basis of future global conflicts and identified Islamic-Confucian civilizations as chief adversaries of Western civilization. His thesis succeeded in presenting the clash with Islam as inevitable, thus providing a potential threat that justified the neoconservatives' call for dominance and hegemony. Huntington's thesis was influenced by the writing of the influential Orientalist, Bernard Lewis, who anticipated a confrontation between the West and Islam as early as 1964 (Trumpbour 93).⁸ In “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” in 1990, Lewis stated that “[i]t should by now be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both.” Unlike Huntington, who argued that the US should maintain a high level of militarization but avoid intervention in civilizational conflicts, Lewis supported the idea of remaking the political culture through force (Ahmad 73-74, Halper and Clarke 334). The neoconservative Daniel Pipes was another historian who replaced Communism with Islam as the global foe. In “The Muslims are Coming! The Muslims are Coming!” he characterized Islam's threat to western civilization by the growing military capabilities in Muslim majority countries, stating:

Today, many Muslim governments dispose of large arsenals; the Iraqi military, for example, has more tanks than does the German and deploys the sort of missiles banned from Europe by the Intermediate Nuclear Force treaty. Middle East states have turned terrorism into a tool of statecraft. About a dozen Muslim states have chemical and biological war capabilities. Impressive capabilities to manufacture a wide range of materiel have been established in Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and Indonesia.

Pipes read the growing number of Muslims in Western societies as the “subversion of western civilization from within,” which, whether through immigration or the naturally high birthrate among Muslims, would impose a threat by increasing the political power of Muslim minorities spreading non-western traditions and lifestyles, he argued. Fukuyama’s, Huntington’s, Lewis’s, and Pipes’s exaggerated views concerning the Islamic threat were regularly circulated among neoconservatives and championed in the pages of the magazines *Commentary* and *The National Interest*. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the neoconservative rhetoric fueled every media outlet and unleashed an anti-Muslim chauvinism that cultivated public support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁹

The neoconservative foreign policy, however, was not adopted by decision-makers, as its tenets had no place in the relatively stable era of the 1990s. The only direct attacks against the US were those against the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the 1993 New York World Trade Center bombing. The small scale of the attacks and the fact that they were carried out by non-State actors (that is, terrorist organizations) did not mount the need to launch a massive military response at the time. Nevertheless, the US took the lead in responding to several global events that threatened its national interests and world peace. The most important

of these were the first Gulf War (1991), and the wars in former Yugoslavia. Along with the lessons neoconservatives learnt from the American victory of the Cold War, these conflicts strengthened the neoconservative belief that power was the only effective way to protect American interests. The US air force and technology proved their effectiveness in achieving a decisive victory in these conflicts, whereas diplomacy and international agreements were ineffective in preventing countries from acquiring mass destruction weapons even when they were threatened by US sanctions. Additionally, the post-Cold War conflicts proved that the US could not rely on international organizations to preserve world peace and stability. These conflicts also showed the extent to which international organizations proved to be incompetent, weak, and easily manipulable by other powers. For instance, the war in Bosnia had raged for three years before the US decided to interfere by arming the Bosnian Croats, launching airstrikes against the Serbs, and deploying its troops on the ground. On the other hand, the Desert Storm operation, which the US led from the beginning, lasted for five weeks before the Iraqi army was forced to withdraw from Kuwait.

Toward a new neoconservative century

In 1997, William Kristol and Robert Kagan founded a new neoconservative think tank, *The Project for the New American Century* (PNAC), whose statement of principle echoed the founders' neo-Reaganite foreign policy approach. It wished to "make the case and rally support for American global leadership," which it thought could only be guaranteed through pursuing a "Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity." PNAC was formed to examine the United States' defense plans and resources and to build upon the founding of another neoconservative document, the *Defense Policy Guidance (DPG) FY 1994-1999* (1992), a defense policy report that was drafted by prominent neoconservatives under the administration

of George H. W. Bush. After this was leaked to the press, the DPG received a lot of criticism, so the administration issued a revised, less provocative version (Halper and Clarke 145).

The original DPG draft called for the US to protect the strategic position it had achieved by defeating the Soviet Union through 1) preventing the emergence of new rivals, 2) maintaining the world stability by precluding the possibility of any hostile power dominating a region critical to the United States' interests and by reducing the sources of regional instability, 3) cooperating with and assisting democratic powers, most notably in Europe and Israel, 4) expanding the democratic "peace zone" by establishing new democratic forms of government and open economic systems, 5) maintaining a highly capable military power, 6) preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them (1-46). In addition, it asserted the United States' right to act "independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated," and it was accompanied by scenarios for potential wars against states that sought to acquire nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, including one for a second Gulf war against Iraq (Keller).

In language similar to that of the DPG and the neo-Reaganite foreign policy article, the PNAC report, *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces, and Resources for a New Century* (2000) readdressed the global leadership position the US had achieved by defeating and discrediting communism. It also provided a modified understanding of the United States' strategy to preserve *Pax Americana* in the new century based on the experience drawn from the United States' leadership in the Gulf War of 1991, and the conflicts in former Yugoslavia (Bosnia 1992-1995) and (Kosovo 1997-1998). According to this strategy, the main threat to American peace was posed by rogue powers, namely, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Syria, and Lybia, who had or sought to have ballistic missiles, nuclear warheads, or other weapons of mass destruction. The strategy argued that it was essential for the US to retain sufficient capabilities and military preeminence in strategic locations in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East, in order to be able to rapidly deploy troops and win multiple simultaneous large-scale wars, and

to triumph over hostile powers by using force to change their regimes if necessary. Furthermore, it stated that chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs of “rogue states” must be confronted by pre-emptive actions even before an imminent threat materializes (Weisman, Kagan, Gary, and Donnelly).

PANC’s active work and connections with journalists, politicians, defense contractors, and pressure groups in Washington, and its use of “a few in-depth studies and monographs in addition to the famous ‘letters’ that helped bring it to public attention” (Vaisse 230) played a vital role in the emergence of a new, stronger than ever neoconservative network, and reflected the complete “generational transition” the neoconservatives had gone through (Halper and Clarke 99). By the end of the 1990s, neoconservative leadership had no longer been assumed by the Cold War warriors (Irving Kristol, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Norman Podhoretz, Natan Glazer, Jeane Kirkpatrick, among others), but by their heirs and pupils (Robert Kagan, William Kristol, Joshua Muravchik, Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Charles Kruthmier). PANC, the *American Enterprise Institute*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *The National Interest* took the place of *Commentary* and *The Public Interest* as prominent neoconservative platforms.¹⁰ Backed by the work of PANC and other conservative think tanks, the neoconservatives were eager to maintain the hegemonic moment the US achieved in the 1990s. Generating an ever-present sense of danger, advocating military primacy, and demonstrating a willingness to use force—even if in a preemptive manner—they attempted to uphold the conditions of American hegemony.

Conclusion

Some argue that despite being largely identified with neoconservative principles, the foreign policy of the US put in place in response to the 9/11 attacks was profoundly different from what neoconservatism stands for (Murray, Fukuyama). They base their claim on the fact

that in the post-Cold War era the old generation of neoconservatives supported a more realistic foreign policy approach, which did not call for launching a democracy crusade or acting unilaterally; unilateralism, democracy promotion, benevolent hegemony, preemptive war, and regime change were not part of their discourse. With or without using the same terminology, the elements of neoconservative foreign policy during the Cold War, advanced by the CPD and CDM and neoconservative writings in *Commentary* and *The Public Interest*, were similar to those the neoconservatives propagated in the DPG and PNAC, *The National Interest*, *Commentary*, and the *Weekly Standard* in the post-Cold War era. The neoconservative Cold War foreign policy was centered on building up US military capabilities to be able to deter and combat the communist threat and to protect freedom, democracy, and liberal values. Their rejection of the Arms Control talks, *détente*, their isolationist and containment policies, their embrace of the moral mission of the United States are further characteristic elements of their foreign policy creed. Much like the older generation, the younger generation of neoconservatives held a Manichean view of the world as a venue of the fight between good and evil, wherein the US and her allies constitute the good half, while all their rivals are evil. Both generations considered international organizations incompetent and ineffective, and insisted on increasing the United States' military and defense capabilities to protect the US and its allies. Both supported a global mission to promote American values of freedom and democracy and to roll back the power of evil (communism during the Cold War, rouge/Weapon States in the 1990s, radical Islam in the aftermath of 9/11). Furthermore, both considered the Middle East and protecting the state of Israel as vital for US interests.

In the absence of what Irving Kristol might call an "enemy worthy of the name," the adherents of the neoconservative vision for a post-Cold War foreign policy fell into two camps. The older generation advocated for a more realist foreign policy that concentrated on protecting American national interests and reducing international involvement. The younger generation

leaned toward a more ideological foreign policy; they believed that the advancement of democracy should be the main issue in the foreign policy of the US and launched a campaign in search of potential enemies. Despite their attempt to portray Iraq's Saddam Hussein as a prominent and immediate threat, in reality, Iraq was a relatively small country exhausted by economic and military sanctions, bruised by eight years of war with Iran, and crushed by the US and its allies in the 1991 Gulf War. However, the neoconservative discourse in the 1990s—their fear of the threat of Islam and the Weapon States—eventually constituted the basis for the foreign policy that was implemented in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Besides the loss of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of lives due to the Global War on Terrorism, the US wars drained the American economy and disrupted the oil market. The hegemonic stability theory proved invalid, as the dominance of a single great power did not contribute to bringing about order or peace. The US exported terrorism rather than democracy, expanded the scope of destruction rather than stability, created a new refugee crisis rather than new markets, and empowered nationalism and illiberalism rather than global collaboration. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US had its moment indeed: liberal democracy was more attractive than ever and the world looked to American leadership and guidance. Yet the US did not “commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example,” as Quincy Adams predicted. Instead, the neoconservatives took the lead and turned the new American century into the century of America's decline.

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Notes

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¹ We cannot discuss neoconservatism without mentioning the most famous neoconservatives: Irving Kristol, Seymour Martin Lipset, Sidney Hook, James Burnham, Daniel Bell, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Nathan Glazer, Midge Decter, Max Kampelman, Charles Krauthammer, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Joshua Muravchik, Michael Novak, Richard Perle, Richard Pipes, Norman Podhoretz, Eugene Rostow, Ben Wattenberg, Paul Wolfowitz, and John Bolton.

² *The Committee on the Present Danger* was originally created in 1950 to mobilize support for a strong internationalist defense policy during the Korean War and to advocate for countering the danger posed by growing Soviet military power. In his famous article “Sounding the Tocsin,” Samuel F. Wells Jr. provides a comparative account of the committee’s advocacy to expand military spending in 1950 and in 1976 to fend off the Soviet threat.

³ They disapproved of the practice of granting member states the same rights in the UN General Assembly, regardless of their size, the nature of their political regime, and their actual power, and also of the UN giving the right of veto to the totalitarian China and Russia.

⁴ Although the neoconservatives supported the welfare state, they were critical of Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society” programs for being bureaucratic and interfering with the individual’s affairs (I. Kristol, *Neoconservative Persuasion* 150).

⁵ For further discussion of conservative criticism of neoconservatism, see Kirk, Niemeyer, and Buchanan.

⁶ Senator Moynihan’s views were demonstrated by his opposition to the Iraq invasion, which he considered as a violation to international law 1991 (Moynihan Chapter 12).

⁷ Francis Fukuyama regarded himself as a neoconservative. He served under Paul D. Wolfowitz at the State Department, and frequently wrote in *Commentary*, *The National Interest*, and *The Public Interest*. After the invasion of Iraq, in 2004, Fukuyama declared that neoconservatism under the Bush administration had evolved into something he could no longer

support or identify with (*America at the Crossroads* xi). Furthermore, he offered a comprehensive critique of neoconservatism in his *America at Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and Neoconservative Legacy*, and suggested that the US foreign policy should take what he defined as a Realistic-Wilsonian turn, a combination of neoconservative idealism and realpolitik (x-xii).

⁸ During the Cold War Era Lewis suggested that Islam might be a driving force to advance the spread of global communism in the Middle East and described how a call for “a communist Jihad” might strike a responsive note amongst Muslims (Trumpbour 93-101).

⁹ Much has been written about the rise of Islamophobia in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks, the contribution of the neoconservatives to the intellectual rationale of anti-Muslim discourse, and the mobilization of public opinion to back the war effort. See, for instance, Kumar, Qureshi and Sells.

¹⁰ The neoconservatives also have a large network of connections with other liberal and conservative media outlets such as *Encounter*, *The New Leader*, *American Scholar*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Foreign Policy*, along with *TV Guide*, *Reader’s Digest*, *Fortune*, *Business Week*, and *US News & World Report* (Halper and Clarke 47).

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