

Understanding American Neoconservatism

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The world has “changed dramatically” since September 11, 2001 and as US Secretary of State Collin Powell would say, it is a “different place”.^[1] The response of the only Superpower to the apocalyptic attacks has sought to redefine international power matrix in emphatic ways. The American foreign policy since 9/11 has strayed the traditional grooves and rolls on a track that leads international community away from the consensus which defined the basic principles of international relations since the second world war.

The move from ‘soft-headed multilateralism of Clinton’^[2] to aggressive policy of containment by force rather than diplomacy was made easier by the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. It is as if an ideology seeking justification for its operationalisation was supplied with a timely excuse.

US : The Unrepentant Hegemon?

Since the end of the cold war America sought to convey an image of a reluctant and often cautious hegemon. But since 9/11 it has graduated to an unrepentant neo-imperialist power seeking proactively to restructure the unipolar world “unconstrained by the rules and norms of the international community” by arrogating to “itself the global role of setting standards, determining threats, using force, and meting out justice”^[3]. The American war against terror through a “willing coalition”^[4] seeks to alter the very basic organising principles of international order.

The strategy of “preventive” or “pre-emptive” use of force that the Americans recommend and execute emit a radical impulse that shakes the foundations of a United Nations driven international political order and consciously works towards ushering the world into an era dominated by the ideology of ‘a distinctly American internationalism’ consisting of ‘idealism without illusions’, ‘confidence without conceit’ and ‘realism in the service of American ideals’^[5]. Much before George Bush could articulate his views on a “distinctly American Internationalism” and long before the twin tower crash, Robert Kagan,^[6] a neoconservative, argued that it is time for America to establish American hegemony and a benevolent American empire. He would argue that “foreign grumbling about American hegemony would be merely amusing, were it not for the very real possibility that too many Americans will forget— even if most of the rest of the world does not— just how important continued American dominance is to the preservation of a reasonable level of international security and prosperity. World leaders may want to keep this in mind when they pop the champagne corks in celebration of the next American humbling.”^[7]

Giving vent to the idealism that inspires this Internationalist agenda one of the foremost advocates of this ideology, William Kristol[8], son of Irving Kristol(1920-),[9] the godfather of neoconservatism, would say: “A humane future will require an American foreign policy that is unapologetic, idealistic, assertive and well-funded. America must not only be the world’s policeman or its sheriff, it must be its beacon and guide.”[10] The spirit driving such an impenitent force required closer study and analysis.

Bush Jr., The Neocons and 9/11

The Presidential campaign of the Republican Party for 2000 had isolated different strands of republican conservatism which included the neo-isolationism of Pat Buchanan, ‘crabbed realism’ of many conservative congressmen (together they are termed paleo-conservatism by the neocons) and spirited ‘American internationalism’ of George W. Bush. Some conservative commentators, known as (and who also claimed themselves as) the neoconservatives, observed that Bush was closer to Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan in the true tradition of Republicanism that recognised a greater role for America in world affairs as an ‘essential part of the American greatness’.[11]

The election of George W. Bush as President encouraged the neoconservative agenda but the Americans were still skeptical about the real intent of the neocons and their agenda and Bush administration was little tentative in following its own agenda and was in fact looking for a historic opportunity to convince the Americans about the soundness of an aggressive policy enunciated by the neocons. In fact, a sharp observer of American politics, Seymour Martin Lipset had said in 1996 that Neoconservatism had “ceased to exist”. [12] Other sympathizers of neocons movement said that it was in decline because the movement was extremely fractured, splintered, in disarray and past its high-water mark and required an ‘urgent surgery’. More than surgery, like every other ideology, ‘neoconservatism’ was lying in wait for an opportune political context to assert itself.

The 9/11 provided the neocons with that historic opportunity.[13] And they have seized it in the most effective manner and changed the contours of American diplomacy and foreign policy. In fact the globalised informal network[14] through which the contemporary form of terrorism moves has made it legitimate for US— as the most visible target of terror— to expand its area of intervention and some Americans even characterise the American war on terror as a Third World War’[15]. From attack on Afghanistan and Iraq to intervention in Middle East and also unfolding of policy initiatives in Asia Pacific, the neocons have unashamedly pursued a strategy that projects US as the sole force in the international arena guiding relations among nations and aims at promoting American values throughout the world[16].

What is Neoconservatism?

The neocons may be a familiar force in American political scene but intellectuals and analysts in rest of the world are trying hard to fathom the intellectual energy that sustain and justify the American ‘will to power’ (to quote the famous phrase of Nietzsche). Yet of course, it is not Nietzschean nihilism that characterises the American assertiveness, the compulsive acrobatic overreach to preempt strikes on its culture, its civilization, its values and its people; to scare away the terrorists planning any further surprise. It is a strange blend (or brew?) of political conservatism, Christian rightism, Trotskyism and, an all-American nationalism.

This spurious combine has been there in the American political horizon since the 1960s—right since the Vietnamese engagement. The hold of radical liberalism on popular consciousness in America had disturbed many conservatives. The domestic opposition to American war efforts especially when America at war had worried them very much and a strong pro-American conservative faction among the intellectuals muted by the surrounding clamour for pulling out of Vietnam began looking for the causes of such a phenomenon. They drew heavily on classical theories of dissent and revolution and subscribed to the view that it was justified not to rise in revolution against even the most unjust of governments.

This reaction to radical liberalism had drawn quite a diverse group of concerned intellectuals together—Trotskyites, right wingers of all shades, nationalists, and political conservatives—to reflect on the theme of violent political protest and they were firmly together in their rejection of radical opposition for they held that such position wrecks the foundations of the state and problematises the very context that disregards human freedom.

American Conservatism

In fact, Americans, as conservatives, have shuttled between John Locke and Edmund Burke. As Lockean, they would believe in contractual government, i.e., the Declaration of Independence and subsequent Constitution, and hold on to the idea that it is legitimate to rise in armed rebellion if the government breaks the contract. But the sway of Burke is also very much there which persuades them to believe that armed revolutions are never justified, not even when the governments are deemed to be thoroughly unjust. Burke's conservatism is both informed by and resonates with the philosophy of Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas. Saint Augustine would say that all governments as human mechanisms are imperfect and do not deserve public obedience and do not merit allegiance of the subjects, but still citizens have an absolute obligation to submit to unjust regimes. Similarly, St. Thomas would say that all human laws are derived from natural laws and can never equal them and thus their legitimacy is questionable, yet, there is a general duty of obligation even to unjust laws.[17]

The Vietnam Factor

The aversion to radical politics acted as the core idea uniting a disparate band of intellectuals who had sympathy for left, toed a liberal agenda in politics and economy and sometimes shared the guilt complex of many fellow Americans in the Vietnam debacle. But as the movement became radicalised afterwards, they were disillusioned with liberalism and held it proper to fight the radicalisation of liberalism. They championed an ideology, which wore conservative trappings and was soon known as neoconservatives.[18]

As a new shade of conservatism[19] and as a new political ideology it slowly ate into the core of traditional or what many call today “paleo-conservatism” and through its well-calibrated appeals for all classes it managed to come up as a ruling political ideology in the American political scenario in recent years. People all over the world now know this expanding constituency as ‘Neoconservatives’ or in its acronymic form as ‘neocons’. One of the neocons, Mark Gerson, would like to put his ‘ism’ this way: “neoconservatism is marked by strong anti-Communism, a deep appreciation of America, a critical celebration of capitalism, a stress on the importance of religion and virtues, a sense of tragedy about the effects of social action and a constant aversion to individualistic heresies—either on the libertarian right or the licentious left.”[20]

Neocon Agenda

Soon their reflections on other aspects of public policy— social, economic, theological, political, juridical etc.— started providing basis for the growth of a distinctly different political ideology. They are conservatives but opposed to conventional, mainstream conservatism. For example, the conservative political constituency in US stood for isolationism, nativism, limited government, abolition of welfarism in economy, utmost concern for national interest, non-interference in world affairs etc. They are for greater American involvement in world affairs, for big and powerful governments and reluctant advocates of laissez faire economy. They endorse corporate capitalism yet they are sympathetic to the role of government as provider of Social Security for the elderly and relief for the unemployed[21]

Emphasis on Culture

Another distinguishing difference from other shades of conservatism is the emphasis the neocons put on 'culture'. Classical liberal conservatives would stick to the laissez faire agenda and hope capitalist economy and political freedom would take care of culture and thus they would leave moral issues to the individual as private affairs. But neoconservatives would grieve for the moral decay that conservative capitalism has dragged the American nation towards and would say that this has led the society to anarchy and allowed the left to thrive on such moral anarchy. The neocons ascribe all this to mindless unregulated capitalism that promotes crass materialism and would rather want capitalism to turn "away from the libertine (or libertarian) values of hedonism and irresponsible freedom to the old Protestant values of hard work, sacrifice, and self-denial".[22] The neocons thus seek to diagnose the erosion of traditional culture in the US and strive towards protection and ultimate survival of American culture, which they hold as crucial to American success in the world. It is a grand intellectual effort to overcome the sense of guilt induced by the American defeat in Vietnam and resuscitate and establish American culture as the most advanced and most exemplary of all in the world.

Ideological Ancestry

Leo Strauss

The neocons trace their ideological moorings to Leo Staruss(1899-1973) [23] , a conservative philosopher of German Jewish origin, less known during his academic career as a conservative anti-relativist. As a student of Carl Schmitt, the famous author of *The Concept of the Political* (1932), Strauss and his ideological progeny believe in the use of a 'political enemy'. He would say that the enemy is an essential construct of any political regime and only belief in a mortal enemy can unify the populace and invest the regime with meaning. Schmitt deplored liberalism's attempts to dissolve the idea of the enemy by emphasizing peace over war and in his view, liberalism undermines the very meaning of the 'political'. Famous neocons who have drawn heavily from Straussian perspective include Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Wilmoore Kendall, Walter Berns, Allan Bloom, Harry V. Jaffa, Harvey Mansfield, Jr. and Thomas G. West. Other prominent neoconservative Straussian revolution- aries include Wiliam F. Buckley Jr, editor of National Review, Charles Krauthammer, Midge Decter, William Bennett, Alan

Keyes, George Will, Newt Gingrich and Justice Clarence Thomas. They are all “conservative moralists and revolutionary relativists” as a critic would characterise them.[24]

Albert Wohlsetter

The other strategist influencing the neocons has been Albert Wohlsetter(1914-1997),[25] a mathematical logician by training and one of the early advocates of delicate balance of terror. He joined Rand Corporation in 1951 as a researcher and was a Pentagon consultant. Fond of ‘military chessplaying’ Wohlsetter, never evinced any interest in foreign economic policy. Often contrasted with Henry Kissinger(regarded as a realist dove), Wohlsetter ridiculed the idea of mutually assured destruction and ‘détente, and evolved low cost strategies to counterbalance costly and unsustainable Soviet policy of going in for inter-continental ballistic missiles. Wohlsetter held that US cannot afford to go in for a strategy that aims as reciprocal suicide and should rather work towards creative military strategies like the ‘Strategic Defense Initiative’ or ‘Star Wars’, which sought to target Soviet ICBMs with inexpensive smart bombs, that were chemical and not nuclear. He was considered a major intellectual force behind efforts to avoid the spread of nuclear weapons and the drive to reduce reliance on them by developing non-nuclear systems.

His studies led to the “second-strike” and “Fail-Safe” concepts for deterring nuclear war. These and other methods reduced the probability of accidental war. A severe critic of Arms Limitations agreements with Soviet Union, which, he held, sought to constrain technological creativity of the Americans and maintained an artificial equilibrium with USSR. He argued in favour of graduated deterrence and legitimate use of smart precision guided bombs and even tactical nuclear arms for hitting the enemy tactical bases. What many perhaps rarely know is the fact that Albert Wohlsetter’s strategic Middle East policies in the 1970s lured Soviet Union into the Aghan trap from which it could not recover.[26]

Albert Wohlsetter remained the most influential strategic thinker yet largely unknown to the public. The best tribute paid to him was by the Reagan Administration in 1985: In 1985, President Ronald Reagan awarded Wohlsetter and his wife Roberta, a historian, jointly the Medal Of Freedom, America’s highest civilian honour. The citation said: Albert and Roberta Wohlsetter “marshaled logic, science, and history and enlarged our democracy’s capacity to learn and to act. Through their work, we have seen that mankind’s safety need not rest on threats to the innocent, and that nuclear weapons need not spread inexorably. Their powers of thought and exposition are, in themselves, among the free world’s best defenses.”[27] Wohlsetter worked with both Democrats and Republicans and was more bothered about his own work than commit himself to any political ideology. But in his own inadvertent way, he added a new dimension to the neoconservative philosophy that was slowly emerging throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Many of the influential neocons today like Richard Perle(Wohlsetter’s son-in-law), Paul Wolfowitz (US Undersecretary for Defense) flaunt their contact with Wohlsetter. Perle is the chairman of the Defense Policy Board, a civilian group that advises the Pentagon and like his revered father-in-law Perle is close to the US administration these days and backed the Bush

policy if recent US attack on Iraq and subscribed to the view that US has to behave as the lone Super Power and the policeman of the world. The influence of Wolfowitz of defence policy of US is well known by now. Both Wolfowitz and Perle were direct students of Wohlstetter. Wolfowitz and his good friend William (Bill) Kristol, son of Irving Kristol, were fellow student of Allan Bloom who was a direct student of Leo Strauss, the political philosopher who, as has been mentioned above, provided neocons with a philosophical basis through his conservative writings.

The influence

The influence of Strauss and Wohlstetter on the neocons is enormous. For neocons, the American victory in the cold war, which they would term 'the third world war', as pyrrhic, because the victory dispossessed the Americans of the much-needed enemy[28] at one level and did not ensure the victory of American culture on the other, leaving the field open for Americans to fight among themselves and look inward for an internal enemy they can hardly unite against. The neocons would look for a well-defined external enemy against which they could pit their culture and unify people.

Belief in Vast Superiority of American Culture

Underlining this need is a conviction of the vast superiority of American culture and way of life. The neocons dismiss all suggestion of moral and cultural relativism as absolute nonsense and would rather believe in hierarchies of culture with American culture at the top. Again Straussian in essence, the neocons regard liberalism as the enemy of culture. In view of the emergence of what many called as 'counter-culture' in the 1960s, the godfather of neoconservatism, Irving Kristol, and his close friend and a fellow traveller, Norman Padhoretz, were obsessed with the issue of survival of western culture in the face of liberalism, which values all cultures. They shared this with Strauss who was in fact bothered by the rise of 'universal homogeneous state', which, he says, erodes 'difference' and 'conflict' in favour of a mindless and complacent consumerism; it also eliminates the political need for an enemy for 'nations' and cultures are unimportant from the point of view of consumerist calculation. The neocons borrowing this concern from Strauss are also skeptical of globalization even if they are advocates of big business.

The neocons are overtaken by their self-created hypothesis that the civilization of the West is in decline and it is primarily because it has lost a sense of its unique moral purpose. The West has borrowed an unproductive relativistic ethic from the process of globalization and views progress of humankind as simultaneous development of all cultures and civilizations. This world view tends to take western civilization as no more than one of many civilizations in the march of history. From a Straussian perspective, such a progressivist attitude sounds the death knell of a culture.

Globalization and Cultural Decline

Even though the West tends to benefit economically from globalization, neoconservatives are worried about the prospect of the Western culture at the end of the day and apprehend that the

west would lose its identity in the morass of the global village. A derivative of this concern would be a different form of American internationalism to supplement the irreversible process of globalisation— a conscious international activism to promote cultural values that are at the core of American civilization. The neocons would like the values of enlightenment to be spread throughout the world. The Christian right in USA, usually called ‘theo-conservatism’, with its emphasis on moral virtues, also finds the neoconservative stress on culture and morality very assuring and comfortable and they have not hesitated in recent years to align with neoconservatives in a grand alliance to expand the Republican conservative constituency. The core concern with decline of western culture however remains the defining criterion of the movement.

The neoconservatives believe that American capitalism failed to inspire higher cultural vision among Americans. In his book on *Two Cheers for Capitalism*[29] , Kristol said that American capitalism deserved “two (not three) cheers” for providing freedom and wealth for most people. It is undeserving of the third cheer for its lack of moral vision, which alone can combat the nihilistic emptiness of a consumer society. The basic capitalist assumption that self-interest and competition could make people happy and fulfilled was clearly opening the doors for yet another attack by the left, who had lost the battle with capitalism on economics. The symptoms of this moral crisis was visible in high crime rates, illegitimate births, hedonism and promiscuity and rising divorce rates, neocons would say. Neoconservatives warned the GOP that they had to articulate a vision of return to traditional values if they were to stem this crisis. This is where they supported big government in the sense that they held that the state had a moral duty to strive towards raising the ‘character’ of its people.

Even if many would dismiss neocons as remnants of Trotskyites or Jewish socialist liberals, this change in emphasis (on culture) in the agenda of internationalism distinguishes neocons from Trotskyites. It is true that many of its principal advocates are Jews, but they have projected themselves more as Americans first and sympathizers of Israel, if not Zionism, afterwards. Palestinians would call them hypocrites, though.

From Roosevelt’s Children to Reaganite Democrats

The element of socialism did of course play a role in the early days of neoconservatism in the 1960s and even during the 1970s for they were great supporters of New Deal and were addressed as Roosevelt’s children. But progressively, the emphasis has shifted to other areas and many of the neo-conservatives in USA are known for their strident opposition to measures like affirmative action, many (if not all) social security policies. It is interesting that the seeds of neoconservatism were sown in the democratic party and soon it spread to the Republicans when the neocons found after their ideology was properly hatched that they would find in the Republican party a more fertile ground and a more sympathetic ideological matrix to operate in. In fact, neocon policy makers like Perle and Wolfowitz were influenced and patronised by the leading democrat Henry (Scoop) Jackson in the 1960s and 70s. But gradually, the liberalism of the democratic party was suffocating for the neocons and their quest for a conservative political platform ended with their entry into the Republican party, popularly known as the GOP or the grand old party.³⁰

The neoconservative shift from Democratic Party towards Republicanism in the 1980s and especially during the Reagan era brought about many revisions in its political and economic agenda. Even some neocons analysts would argue that Neoconservatism provided “the engine that has galvanized and driven the Republican Party since Ronald Reagan’s presidency”. They would try to substantiate their argument by saying that “Reagan campaigned on, and subsequently accomplished, three important goals that were fully congruent with the Neoconservative movement: a) The dismantling of the Soviet Union, the “Evil Empire”, b) Cutting marginal tax rates, thereby inducing dynamic growth, and, c) Rebuilding the military, which was in dire need of upgradation and modernization”. [31] Bill Bennett, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Larry Kudlow, David Horowitz, Charlton Heston and numerous others switched their loyalty as neocons to the ‘Republican Party and were termed “Reagan Democrats”. Neoconservatives supported Reagan’s deregulation of business in the field of environment, and his administration’s support of big business. Yet the neoconservatives criticized the administration for cutting Social Security, ignoring a key conservative constituency such as the elderly in the process.

1990s and the Neocons

During the tenure of George Bush Sr., the neocons were also actively influencing the Bush agenda and were great supporters of the Gulf War. However, with the fall of Soviet Union in the early 1990s the American foreign policy looked decentred and people like Kristol were worried about America losing its major inspiration for intervening in world affairs. The end of cold war thus wrenched the Americans out of their cold war inertia and unable to resituate themselves properly in the emerging terrain of international affairs, the domestic political arena saw the emergence of culture wars, divisive politics, a strange shade of isolationism championed by Pat Buchanan seeking to combine paleo-conservatism with Christian moralism, which only limited Republican electoral prospects. [32]

Bush Sr. perhaps did not know how to combine different shades of conservatism and lost the elections even if he won critical acclaim at home for his Gulf War. The early nineties also saw serious economic depression, which had its impact on electoral choice also. The Democrats won and started borrowing few elements of neoconservatism like limiting welfarism, rolling back social policies, supporting big governments and emphasising on economic progress. They also gained from sidetracking moral issues, which the Republicans fought on to their electoral disadvantage. The divisive influence of Christian moralist policies indeed hampered the presidential prospect of the Republicans in 1996 despite their spectacular performance in 1994 congressional elections. Newt Gingrich’s conservative agenda spelt out in his ‘Contract with America’ in 1994, with its emphasis on withdrawing monies for public education, ending welfare for immigrants, and eroding the separation of church and state etc. alienated many Republican sympathisers and eroded the Republican constituency resulting in Clinton’s second win in spite of the scandals against him.

The thin margin (almost a chance win) of Republican victory in the Presidential elections in 2000 suggested that neocons had a long way to go. It is important to remember here that after the poor showing by Bush in the Presidential elections, many American analysts had almost sounded

the death knell of neoconservatism and forecast their absorption into the paleo-conservative fold. However, much more than the victory of George Bush Jr. the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre has now provided the neocons with yet another opportunity to execute their agenda. And the American interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq indicates that the neocon ideology might be having a field day now. And the neocon agenda is very much contained within the Middle East Policy Initiative seeking to promote democratic values in Middle East after the victory in the Iraq war.

The conservatives like Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft and James Baker III would denounce the idea of bringing democracy to the Middle East as a mad, hubristic dream likely to backfire with tragic consequences. However, true to the neocon emphasis on promotion of American values in the world, the Bush administration, seeks to promote liberal democratic values, for the simple reason that liberal democracies rarely fight one another, sponsor terrorism, or use weapons of mass destruction. If Americans do not want another 9/11, they argue, they need to liberalise the Middle East— a difficult undertaking but worth taking. And like the American experiment in Germany, Japan and Italy, if this requires occupying Iraq for an extended period, they would not mind it. The most prominent champions of this neocon agenda inside the administration are Vice President Dick Cheney and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. Many neoconservatives have sought to disguise this strategy, for better appeal, under a term “hard Wilsonianism”, which advocates Wilson’s championing of American ideals but reject his reliance on international organizations and treaties to accomplish these objectives. Like Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, “hard Wilsonians” want to use American might to promote American ideals”. [33]

The Neocon dent into Bush Administration

The neocons are fairly represented in the Bush administration. In a recent address to the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), supposed to be the den of neo-conservatism, Bush expressed his obligations to the institute and said that he had the privilege of having almost 20 experts from the institute assisting his administration in various capacities. AEI is known for its neoconservative agenda and has supported research on various issues from a neocons perspective. The way Bush wanted to persuade people at AEI suggests that Bush is as much in need of the neocons as they are in need of Bush to push their agenda. It is like a symbiotic relationship being worked out between the administration and a particular brand of conservative philosophy. Many prying reports in US media suggests that the Bush administration is seeking deliberately to promote institutions devoted to promotion and popularization of the neoconservative political philosophy since the 1960s.

AEI is not alone in enjoying the patronage of the administration. There are other organizations like Hoover Institution, Heritage Foundation, Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, the Cato Institute and Citizens for a Sound Economy, the Hudson Institute, the Hoover Institution, the National Bureau of Economic Research, the Manhattan Institute and the Ethics and Public Policy Center. These organizations churn out intellectual capital to nourish the conservative movement and are mostly associated with the Republican Party.

Through various periodicals, journals and e-magazines the people associated with this movement— William Kristol, Robert Kagan, Lawrence Kaplan, Francis Fukuyama. Irving Kristol, Mark Gerson, Norman Padhoretz, Victor Davis Hanson etc.— have succeeded in endearing their agenda to the ordinary American through forceful prose (for they combine ‘moderation with boldness’ as some would say) and after 9/11 they have exploited the sense of insecurity and urgency in average American very effectively. Some of the important publications are *Commentary*, *Reason*, *The National Interest*, *American Spectator*, *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, *Public Interest*, and *The New Criterion*.

In a recent article in *New York Post*(April 18, 2003), John Padhoretz, son of the famous neocon, Norman Padhoretz, handled the allegation by many that neocons had unleashed a vast conspiracy to control US foreign policy and proclaimed satirically: “Yes, we neoconservatives have succeeded in brainwashing the leaders of the United States and Britain, using nefarious mind-controlling techniques. Those techniques include: Writing articles, circulating letters, giving speeches and appearing on television.”

However, it is perhaps unfair to say that the neoconservatives have seized the Bush Administration and sought to project it as the ruling ideology in recent years. In fact, as the above discussion suggests they have sought to influence the policies of every administration since Nixon. They have succeeded in different ways. In fact, the paleo-conservatives are getting sucked into the neoconservative circus, hiding their pet isolationist, nativist and protectionist agenda. The American success in Iraq thus may have many fathers among the conservative fold.

It is interesting to find nonetheless that the neoconservatives in US are countered more by the so-called paleo-conservatives than others. Conservatives like Pat Buchanan would say that neoconservatives (especially the Jewish ones) are just a bunch of “ex-liberals, socialists, and Trotskyists who signed on in the name of anti-Communism and now control our foundations and set the limits of permissible dissent. They are like the fleas who conclude that they are steering the dog, their relationship to the (conservative) movement has always been parasitical.” But Buchanan knows very well that neocons have all but hijacked the conservative agenda. And ‘History’ is perhaps on their side. Who knows?

The Future

Most interestingly, the neoconservatives in America have already found echoes in Europe across the Atlantic. The recent paper, “The post modern state and the new world order”, by Robert Cooper, foreign policy advisor to British Prime Minister Tony Blair, tends to borrow many elements of American neoconservatism. His arguments in favour of a new cooperative, voluntary, moral and defensive imperialism and says that “just like in the old empire, Western countries would have to deal with ‘old-fashioned, pre-modern states outside the postmodern continent of Europe with the rougher methods of an earlier era— force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the nineteenth century.” The emphasis on cultural superiority of western culture, however, may provoke similar mindsets in different contexts of power play in the non-western world and give rise to a spurious ethno-centrism that could threaten the state system and give rise to chronic instabilities which may,

through the feed-back loop add to issues of international insecurity. The influence of neoconservatism on international political matrix may thus be much more disturbing than imagined so far.[34]

The American neo-modern urge to impose its values on the world and exercise its power pre-emptively in defence of such values has sought unabashedly and unapologetically to legitimize a dangerous strain of ethno-centrism, which directly contends with a parallel wave of multiculturalism that was sweeping the world regarded as 'post-modern' by many critics.[35] Thus these two separate and exclusive world views will be at play in the world today and perhaps, as in all ages in history, it will depend on the powerful— or the American 'will to power', in the present context— to determine which of these prevails as the ruling ideology. Will the powerful win the game?

1. Collin Powell's address to The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC on September 26, 2002, available on <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2002/13757.htm>
2. Robert Kagan and William Kristol characterise Clinton's foreign policy like this in their article 'A Distinctly American Internationalism', in *Weekly Standard*, November 29, 1999.
3. G. John Ikenberry, "America's Imperial Ambition", *Foreign Affairs*, September, October, 2002.
4. Ikenberry in his paper in *Foreign Affairs* quoted above would argue that the coalition partners hardly have any other option than to follow the American vision and goes on to write: "It is a vision in which sovereignty becomes more absolute for America even as it becomes more conditional for countries that challenge Washington's standards of internal and external behavior".
5. On November 19, 1999, Bush, as a Republican Presidential candidate said this in his address at the Regan Library. It is quoted by Robert Kagan and William Kristol in their article 'A Distinctly American Internationalism', op.cit.
6. Robert Kagan is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He is also an Alexander Hamilton fellow in American diplomatic history at American University and a contributing editor at the conservative *Weekly Standard*. From 1985-1988, Kagan was deputy for policy in the bureau of Inter-American Affairs. From 1984 to 1985, he was a member of the State Department's Policy Planning staff and principal speechwriter to Secretary of State George P. Shultz.
7. Robert Kagan, "The Benevolent Empire", *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1998. Available on <http://www.ceip.org/people/kagbenev.htm>
8. William Kristol is editor of *The Weekly Standard*. Before starting *The Weekly Standard* in 1995, Mr. Kristol led the *Project for the Republican Future*, where he helped shape the strategy that produced the 1994 Republican Congressional victory. Prior to that, Mr. Kristol

served as chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle during the Bush Sr. administration and to Secretary of Education William Bennett under President Reagan. Before coming to Washington in 1985, Mr. Kristol taught politics at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard's Kennedy School of government.

9. The hold of the Kristols on the neoconservative movement has been so great that critics often call Washington D.C. as 'Kristol city'. See Shadia Dury cited in Ken Masugi, "A Leo Strauss Conspiracy," *The Washington Times*, February 4, 1998. Available on <http://www.ashbrook.org/publicat/oped/masugi/98/strauss.html>
10. William Kristol and Lawrence F. Kaplan, argue this out in "*The War over Iraq; Saddam's Tyranny and America's Mission*", Encounter Books, 2003
11. As Robert Kagan and William Kristol would say the stand taken by Bush on CTBT, on the policy of unthreatening China but not leaving it unchecked, his view that American principles have to be guarded even at the cost of American national interests, his strategy of evolving a NATO style alliance in South East Asia etc. appealed to many conservative supporters who were otherwise known as 'neoconservatives' in America in common parlance.
12. Seymour Martin Lipset, (1996) *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co, p.200
13. John Lewis Gladdis, an American scholar wrote in this vein. He said that the terrorists involved in the twin tower crash had offered the U.S with "yet another chance to lead the world into a new era, together with the opportunity to do it, this time more seriously", in his article "And Now This: Lessons from the Old Era for the New One", in *The Age of Terror: America and the World after September 11*, edited by Strobe Talbott and Nayan Chanda, Basic Books, Yale Centre for the study of Globalisation, New York, 2001, p.21
14. Robert O. Keohane would call this new form of terror as 'globalized informal violence' in his article "The Globalization of Informal Violence, Theories of World Politics and 'The Liberalism of Fear' " in *Social Science Research Council : September 11 Essays*, Fall, 2001 quoted by Murat Karagoz, "September 11: A New Type of Terrorism", *Perceptions*, September –November 2002, p.143.
15. Lawrence Freedman, "The Third World War?", *Survival*, Vol 43, No 4, Winter, 2001. pp 61-68.
16. Steve Perry, a critic of the neocon agenda says about the Iraq war that "it is not about weapons of mass destruction, or terrorism, or Saddam, or UN resolutions. This war, should it come, is intended to mark the official emergence of the United States as a full-fledged global empire, seizing sole responsibility and authority as planetary policeman. It would be the culmination of a plan 10 years or more in the making, carried out by those who believe the United States must seize the opportunity for global domination, even if it means becoming the 'American imperialists' that our enemies always claimed we were." June 10, 2003.

17. For elucidation and discussion here I have drawn upon the article by Robert Lowry Clinton, "Neocons vs. Theocons Again", *First Things*, October 1998, pp.18-19.
18. The term was coined by the American socialist Michael Harrington in the 1970s. Cited in Grant Havers and Mark Wexler, "Is U.S. Neoconservatism Dead?", available on <http://www.lsus.edu/la/journals/ideology/contents/neoconservatism.htm>.
19. For better view on neoconservatism see Irving Kristol's book, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea*, Elephant Paperbacks, Chicago, 1995.
20. Mark Gerson's view. Available on <http://wso.williams.edu/orgs/freepress/gerson2.html>. Mark Gerson is the author of *The Neoconservative Vision: From the Cold War to the Culture Wars*, Madison Books, London, 1996.
21. In a 1993 article appearing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Kristol expressed his enthusiasm for Social Security, Medicare, food stamps, Medicaid, even cash allowances for unwed mothers.
22. Cited in Grant Havers and Mark Wexler, op.cit.
23. Leo Strauss was born in Kirchhain, in Hesse, in 1899, and left Germany on the eve of Hitler's accession to power. After brief stays in Paris and in England, he arrived in New York, where he taught at the New School of Social Research before founding the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, which would become the crucible where "Straussians" were formed. This introduction has been taken from "The Strategist And The Philosopher" by Alain Frachon et Daniel Vernet in *Le Monde*, Translated by Mark K. Jensen April 15, 2003. This article caught the attention of scholars all over the world and inspired my paper. The original french version of the paper is available on: <http://www.lemonde.fr/article/0,5987,3230—316921-,00.html> and the translated version on <http://162.42.211.226/article2978.htm>
24. Shadia Dury cited in Ken Masugi, "A Leo Straussian Conspiracy", *The Washington Times*, February 4, 1998. Available on <http://www.ashbrook.org/publicat/oped/masugi/98/strauss.html>
25. Albert Wohlstetter studied mathematics at city college of New York and Columbia University and after his master's degree from Columbia University in mathematical logic in the year 1938, he worked in the 1940s with the war production board and in the aviation industry. In 1951, he joined the California-based Rand Corporation and worked as a senior policy analyst for about a dozen years, followed by several decades as a Rand consultant. In the early 1960s, he taught at the university of California and from 1964 to 1980, at the University of Chicago. Wohlstetter was affiliated with institutions such as the European-American Institute, the Hoover Institution, and PAN Heuristics Services.
26. For much of the discussion on Wohlstetter in this paragraph, the author refers to Jude Waniski's obituary in *Polyconomics* on 16 January 1997. Available on <http://www/polyconomics.com> in its search page.

27. Voice of America, 21 January 1997, available on <http://www.fas.org/news/usa/1997/01/msg00025f.htm>
28. Norman Padhoretz would describe it as “loss of a defining foreign demon” and saw in 1991 Gulf War an opportunity for America to “remoralize” itself.
29. Irving Kristol, *Two Cheers For Capitalism*, Basic Books, New York, 1978..
30. Although younger to the democratic party (by 22 years), and established in 1856, it has been known as grand old party in popular parlance. Originally G.O.P, as it came to be known as since 1875, stood for the gallant old party. But this popular expansion of the acronymic GOP came later and caught on.
31. Carol Devine-Molin, “The Smearing Of Neoconservatives”, *GOP News*, March 25, 2002, available on http://www.gopusa.com/caroldevinemolin/2002/cdm_0325p.shtml
32. Buchanan targetted the gays, minorities and other “enemies” of America at the Republican convention in 1992
33. Max Boot, “What the heck is a neocon?”, in *Wall Street Journal*, December 30, 2002, available on <http://www.benadorassociates.com/article/180>
34. Ikenberry writing in *Foreign Affairs* quoted above (en. 3) says: “America’s nascent neoimperial grand strategy threatens to rend the fabric of the international community and political partnerships precisely at a time when that community and those partnerships are urgently needed. It is an approach fraught with peril and likely to fail. It is not only politically unsustainable but diplomatically harmful. And if history is a guide, it will trigger antagonism and resistance that will leave America in a more hostile and divided world.”
35. Postmodernity tends to blunt the edge of ethnocentrism and holds that there are no universal truths but merely ‘competing narratives’. It was a reaction to the modernist project that universal values can be achieved and hence worth striving for. Thus it was “a move away from common universal values to individualized cultures/beliefs (either personal or common to small cultural groupings), each with no more value than the other”. (*International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 2002 Cited in a presentation by Monte Sahlin, Youth Ministries Convention, Atlanta, February 2002.