

# THE LEGACY OF THE TROTSKYITE RIGHT

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## **The Neoconservative Revolution Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy**

Murray Friedman

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*Reviewed by Stephen J. Sniegoski*

**N**eoconservatives have moved into the limelight with the war on Iraq. As George Packer asserts in *The Assassins' Gate*, "The Iraq War will always be linked with the term 'neoconservative.'"<sup>1</sup> It has been bandied about that neoconservatives were a significant factor in bringing about the war on Iraq. A few commentators have even had the temerity to note the close connection between the neoconservatives and goals of the Israeli right. But it must be added that while the role of Israel has been noted, it has never received much emphasis in the mainstream media. It is not the subject of the evening news or major news programs. As a result, the Israel/neocon connection is perceived only by that small minority of Americans who are highly attentive to the news. Moreover, media references tend to be brief and lacking substantial development. It is only outside of establishment circles on places such as the yet-uncensored Internet that those having little to lose claim that the United States has been making war in the Middle East to advance the interests of Israel. In March 2006, two leading scholars in international relations, John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt, Professor of International Affairs and the academic dean of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, produced their 82-page bombshell paper, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," which included a presentation of the neocons as the driving force for the war on Iraq.

All of this has gone much too far for pro-Zionists and the establishment paladins of political correctness who have pronounced such an idea conspiratorial and the signifying the ultimate hate crime—"anti-Semitism." The stigma of "anti-Semitism" is enough to suppress discussion and scholarship, thus

precluding any genuine freedom of inquiry into any area that might be conceivably branded with this lethal label. To avoid any problem along this line, no American journal dared to publish the Mearsheimer/Walt essay. Rather, the study was picked up only by the *London Review of Books*, which produced an abbreviated version. In the United States it remains only as a "working paper" on a Harvard faculty web site.<sup>2</sup> While the American mainstream media largely ignored this issue, the pro-Zionist smearbund launched a firestorm of invective against the two formerly-esteemed scholars, who are accused of fabricating the whole idea of any pro-Israel lobby influencing American policy because of their alleged anti-Semitic motivation.

Regarding the idea of neoconservatives influencing American policy on the war on Iraq, the mandated Politically Correct line goes something like this: neoconservatives don't exist but are the figment of conspiratorial minds. And if there are a few neocons here and there, they could not possibly be Jewish or oriented to Israel. And most certainly those few neocons, if they do exist, could not possibly be strong enough to influence American foreign policy.

Rather the war, we are told, sprung from the fertile minds of Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and even George W. Bush, as totally impossible as the latter case could be. That somehow the Bush administration plan was exactly like the neocons' (or what people conventionally called neocons) pre-existing war agenda is not gone into. That President Bush admits he doesn't read the newspapers or look at television news, but relies on his intelligent advisors, who were generally neocons, is left unsaid.

Nor does the Official Truth point out that Cheney has been closely tied to influential neocon organizations for years. He was a member of the board of advisors of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), a member of the board of trustees of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), and a founding member of the neoconservative Project for a New American Century (PNAC). It also should be noted that Cheney's wife Lynne Cheney, who had chaired the National Endowment for the Humanities under Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush, was a prestigious member of AEI. It was Cheney who played the major role in bringing the neocons into the Bush II administration and collaborated with them to make the neocon Middle East war agenda actual American policy.

Of course, on the Left we are constantly told that oil was the reason for the war, ignoring the fact that the oil interest never pushed for war and actually sought to end sanctions on both Iraq and Iran. This was exemplified by the fact that the elder George H. W. Bush and his cronies such as former Secretary of State James Baker and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, who had closer ties to the oil industry than anyone in the Bush II administration, were at best cool, or like Scowcroft, publicly opposed the war on Iraq from the outset. The fact of the matter is that the Bush Middle East war agenda was radically different from the traditional American policy in the Middle East,

which had focused on maintaining stability in order to facilitate oil flow, and consequently neocon policy tended to provoke opposition from members of the foreign policy/national security elite.

Countering this smokescreen of neocon denial comes a history of the neoconservative movement by an actual Jewish neocon, or at least a close neocon sympathizer, which confirms most of the neocon influence thesis. In fact, confirmation of neocon influence comes out in author Murray Friedman's very title: *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy*. Friedman points out that there really has been a neoconservative movement that has been strong enough not simply to shape American policy but to revolutionize American conservatism and American politics. Moreover, he happily points out that the group was largely Jewish and reflects Jewish interests. In short, Friedman says about the same thing as the redoubtable Kevin MacDonald, the difference being that Friedman's account is highly laudatory. In his conclusion, Friedman suggests that the motivation of the neoconservatives stems from the beneficent impulse inherent in Judaism: "The idea that Jews have been put on earth to make it a better, perhaps even a holy, place continues to shape their worldview and that of many of their co-religionists."<sup>3</sup>

Friedman was closely tied to the neocons and even more so to the broader community of organized Jewry. Friedman, who died in May 2005 at the age of 79, was a professional historian who served as mid-Atlantic director for the American Jewish Committee. It should be noted that the American Jewish Committee publishes *Commentary* magazine, which under the editorship of Norman Podhoretz was the original flagship of the neoconservative movement. After retiring from the AJC, Friedman served as director of the Myer and Rosaline Feinstein Center for American Jewish History at Temple University since its inception in 1990.

Unlike the usual accounts of the origins of neoconservatism – the movement of liberal and leftist Jews to the right in the late 1960s and early 1970s – Friedman devotes the early part of the book to the theme of a significant Jewish presence in conservatism prior to the neoconservative movement, in contrast to the conventional view that Jews have historically been on the left. "Among the shibboleths to be challenged at the outset," Friedman writes, "is the one holding that liberalism has been bred into the bone of America Jewry....In fact, there has always been a strand of *conservative* Jewish thought that has been little noticed."<sup>4</sup> More than this, Friedman notes the conservatism tendencies inherent to Judaism itself – ethnocentrism, acceptance of private property and wealth, and traditionalism. Friedman even touches on the taboo subject of Jews and Black slavery<sup>5</sup> when he notes that "many Jewish leaders were also conservative on the issue of slavery; relatively few joined the abolitionists, and many, in fact, opposed them."<sup>6</sup>

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the voting patterns of Jews were mixed. While many of the new East European Jewish immigrants were

turning to socialism, the influential German Jewish leadership tended to be conservative and Republican. It was with the coming of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal that the bulk of American Jews would turn into liberal democrats, with some going even farther to the left. In the post-World War II era, Jews would become highly-influential in American culture and these Jewish intellectuals would be characterized by their alienation from American society and from their own Jewish traditions. This contributed to their embrace of political leftism.

The post-World War II era saw American Jews being more politically assertive than heretofore, playing the leading role in working to eliminate racial and ethnic discrimination in the United States. Friedman writes that "Jews and Jewish bodies pioneered much of what would become the civil rights revolution."<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Jews would play the major role in bringing about the removal of Christianity from the public sector.

While Jews were predominantly on the left, Friedman points out that there were a number of Jewish thinkers, the "forgotten Jewish godfathers," who made salient contributions to the budding post-World War II conservative movement, citing such individuals as Leo Strauss, Will Herberg, Murray Ryskind, Ralph de Toledano, Frank Chodorov, Ayn Rand, Murray Rothbard, Milton Friedman, and Frank S. Meyer.

Friedman is undoubtedly correct in describing a substantial Jewish presence in post-World War II conservatism, however, there would not seem to be much relationship between these Jewish conservatives and the neoconservatives, other than that they, like the neocons, were considered to be conservatives. For one thing, the pre-neocon Jewish conservatives were unlike the neocons in that they came to conservatism as individuals not as a distinct group. With a few exceptions, Ayn Rand being a significant one, they would assimilate into an existing form of conservatism or libertarianism, as opposed to crafting something new and distinct. Furthermore, they did not self-consciously promote interests that were identifiably Jewish. (Leo Strauss might be an exception here). It would seem, therefore, that Jews were numerous in the post-World War II conservative movement simply because Jews are numerous in the intellectual class.

Despite pointing out the existence of Jews at the highest levels of the post-World War II conservatism, and the efforts of William F. Buckley and his *National Review* to purge individuals deemed extreme and unsavory from conservatism's ranks, Friedman still presents the conservative movement of the 1950s and 1960s as being tainted with anti-Semitism. Friedman writes that

the conservative political movement remained far outside the mainstream. Such blatantly anti-Semitic figures as Gerald Winrod, Gerald L. K. Smith, and Merwin Hart, as well as Robert Welch, founder of the right-wing extremist John Birch Society, all claimed to be conservatives. They gave the movement a bigoted and reactionary image at a time when memories of Hitler's racism were still fresh.<sup>8</sup>

In making this assessment, Friedman seems to drop his more scholarly analysis of the conservative movement to adopt some of the propagandistic tactics of the prominent 1964 screed against conservatism, *A Danger on the Right*, by Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, prominent executives of the Anti-Defamation League. This portrayal greatly exaggerates the degree of anti-Semitism in the conservative movement in its pre-neocon days. Winrod, Smith, and Hart were fringe figures; Robert Welch and the John Birch Society were not anti-Semitic. The Buckley mainstream intellectual conservatives purged these fringe individuals and others as well who might be too conspiratorialist, segregationist, isolationist, and cultish in order to create a more respectable conservatism. And that "Mr. Conservative" Barry Goldwater, of Jewish background, would not simply be the Republican political standard bearer but the heroic idol of conservatives would seem to belie any significant degree of anti-Semitism.

It could be objectively stated, however, that while the pre-neocon conservative movement was not hostile to Jews, it did not openly promote specifically Jewish interests. For example, the defense of Nationalist Chinese government on Taiwan was a stated conservative goal; the defense of Israel was not. So Friedman's position would seem to be that the Buckley-Goldwater Right was an improvement over what had heretofore existed but that the move to neoconservatism would be an additional step up the evolutionary ladder. "Jewish neocons, in short," Friedman writes, "led the way in smoothing out conservatism's rough edges."<sup>9</sup> In significant part, this evolution involved a move from non-discrimination towards Jews to the positive embrace of Jewish interests.

A fundamental point brought out by Friedman about those who became neoconservatives is that they did not become traditional conservatives. Instead of adopting traditional American conservative positions, they actually altered the content of conservatism to their liking. Neoconservatives, in short, have been anything but the hard right-wingers that their leftist critics sometimes make them out to be. Neoconservatives supported the modern welfare state, in contrast to the traditional conservatives, who emphasized small government, states' rights, and relatively unfettered capitalism. Neoconservatives identified with the liberal policies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and even Lyndon Johnson, the bete noires of traditional conservatives, though rejecting much of the multiculturalism and group entitlements of more recent liberalism. "The neoconservative impulse," Murray Friedman maintains, "was the spontaneous response of a group of liberal intellectuals, mainly Jewish, who sought to shape a perspective of their own while standing apart from more traditional forms of conservatism."<sup>10</sup> They were substantially different from traditional conservatives: "The neocons were direct descendents of the Enlightenment; their ideas included free markets, democracy, individualism, equal rights, and, later, Marxist theories of class struggle and greater government intervention in society."<sup>11</sup>

The term “neoconservative” was coined by socialist Michael Harrington as a derisive term for leftists and liberals who were migrating rightward. Many of the first generation neoconservatives were originally liberal Democrats, or even socialists and Marxists, often Trotskyites. Most originated in New York, and most were Jews. They drifted to the right in the 1960s and 1970s as the Democratic Party moved to the anti-war McGovernite left.<sup>12</sup>

The Jewish nature of the neoconservatives is quite obvious. Those individuals who became neoconservatives were perceptive enough to see that in the 1960s liberals and the left were identifying with issues – group quotas, anti-Americanism, Third World causes – that were apt to be harmful to the collective interest of Jewry.

When they first emerged in the early 1970s, the neoconservatives worked primarily through the Democratic Party – they sought to combat the leftist orientation that had enabled George McGovern to become the Democratic presidential standard bearer in 1972. McGovernites were not simply opposed to American military involvement in Vietnam, they were opposed also to the continuation of the Cold War with its global opposition to Communism and its concomitant huge military spending. The military retrenchment they sought, however, would have had negative repercussions for Israel, dependent as it was on American military assistance, and especially since it was targeted as an ideological enemy by the Communist countries and the world left. “Increasingly,” Friedman maintains, “neocons came to believe that the Jewish state’s ability to survive – indeed, the Jewish community’s will to survive – was dependent on American military strength and its challenge to the Soviet Union, the primary backer of Arab countries in the Middle East.”<sup>13</sup>

Neoconservatism’s first political manifestation was as the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, which was formed in 1972, when most neoconservatives entertained hopes of reclaiming the Democratic Party and American liberalism and still looked upon the Republican Party as an alien entity. Friedman writes that at that time “neocons still associated conservatism with golf, country clubs, the Republican Party, big business – a sort of ‘goyishe’ fraternity – and with the ideological posturing of right-wing fanatics. They viewed traditional conservatives as having little empathy for the underdog and the excluded in society. They thought of themselves as dissenting liberals, ‘children of the depression,’ as Midge Decter declared, who ‘retained a measure of loyalty to the spirit of the New Deal.’”<sup>14</sup>

In the 1970s, the neoconservatives’ political standard bearers were Senators Robert H. “Scoop” Jackson (D-WA.) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.). Neoconservatives basically wanted to return to the anti-Communist Cold War position exemplified by President Harry Truman (1945-1953), which had held sway through the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969). But such an anti-Soviet Communist position had been discredited among mainstream liberal Democrats by the Vietnam imbroglio. While neoconservatives were

opposed to the McGovern liberals in the Democratic Party, whom they viewed as too sympathetic to Communism and radical left causes, they did not identify with the foreign policy of mainstream Republicans. Rather, neoconservatives eschewed Henry Kissinger's accommodationist policy of détente with the Soviet Union, with its emphasis on peace through negotiations, arms control, and trade, which was being pushed by the Nixon and Ford administrations. They viewed the détente policy as defeatist and too callous toward human rights violations in Communist countries.

The neoconservatives remained loyal Democrats in 1976 and looked with hope toward the presidency of Jimmy Carter. But the neoconservatives soon came to realize that Carter did not seem to perceive a dire Soviet expansionist threat. From the neocon viewpoint, the Soviet Union was advancing around the globe while Carter appeared to lack the will to resist.

Moreover, Carter pursued policies that went directly against what the neoconservatives considered to be Jewish interests, especially in his failure to provide sufficient support for Israel. What especially caused neoconservative outrage was the media revelation that UN Ambassador Andrew Young had a secret meeting in New York with the United Nation's Palestinian Liberation Organization observer. Reports surfaced that Israeli intelligence had recorded the diplomats' conversation and leaked it to the American press. Negotiating with the PLO was a violation of American policy. Young was one of the pre-eminent Black leaders in America and Blacks made up a key part of Carter's constituency. Faced with strong Jewish protests, Carter replaced Young at the UN, but his successor, Donald McHenry, supported a Security Council resolution declaring Jerusalem to be occupied territory and charging Israel with extraordinary human rights violations, which led to further Jewish outrage. As a result, Friedman writes, "Carter...was seen by neocons as fundamentally hostile to Israel."<sup>15</sup> By the end of the Carter Administration, the neoconservatives had given up on the Democratic Party and were ready to make a switch in party allegiances.

The political transformation of those who became neocons was embodied by Norman Podhoretz and *Commentary* magazine, which he edited for 35 years until his retirement in 1995. Funded by the American Jewish Committee, *Commentary's* purpose was to view politics and culture through a Jewish perspective. Podhoretz transformed the magazine into a neoconservative publication, offering writing space to many who would be leading figures in the movement. Ironically, when Podhoretz first became editor, he allied himself with New Left radicals, who vociferously opposed the war in Vietnam. Friedman writes that under Podhoretz's editorship, "*Commentary* became perhaps the first magazine of any significance to pay serious attention to radical ideology." However, Podhoretz started his move rightward by 1967, and by 1970 "his conversion to neoconservatism was complete."<sup>16</sup>

Friedman points out that Podhoretz, like most who gravitated to neoconservatism, did not dwell on Jewish interests and the fate of Israel until the latter half of the 1960s and the 1970s, when his "sense of his own Jewishness intensified."<sup>17</sup> Friedman writes that "A central element in Podhoretz's evolving views, which would soon become his and many of the neocons' governing principle was the question, 'Is It Good for the Jews,' the title of a February 1972 *Commentary* piece."<sup>18</sup> Exemplifying this greater focus on Jewish interests, Friedman observes, "*Commentary* articles now came to emphasize threats to Jews and the safety and security of the Jewish state. By the 1980s, nearly half of Podhoretz's writings on international affairs centered on Israel and these dangers."<sup>19</sup>

After their disillusionment with Jimmy Carter, the neocons came to the conclusion that success could not be achieved in the Democratic Party and they gravitated to the Republicans. There they found kindred spirits among that party's staunchly anti-Communist conservative wing, which was also disenchanted with the détente policy of the Nixon and Ford administrations. It was only among the right-wing Republicans where there still remained firm support for the idea that Soviet Communism was an evil, relentless ideological enemy – an attitude that the conventional wisdom of the times looked upon as outdated and gauche.

Welcomed in as valuable intellectual allies by the conservative Republicans, the neoconservatives had made their momentous shift just as the most successful right-wing Republican of the modern era, Ronald Reagan, won the presidential election of 1980. "Reagan's triumph in the election," Friedman writes, "provided the neocons with their version of John F. Kennedy's Camelot. *Commentary* became the White House's favorite political journal, and some sixty members of the CPD were recruited to work for the new president."<sup>20</sup>

Despite being newcomers to the conservative camp, neoconservatives were able to find places in the Reagan administration in national security and foreign policy areas, although at less than Cabinet-level status. A fundamental reason for their success, which Friedman fails to bring out, was that the neoconservatives possessed establishment credentials and respectability. The fact that they had recently espoused liberal positions bolstered their credibility in the establishment circles. They could not be easily ignored or ridiculed, as could many marginalized traditional conservatives. Reagan political strategists believed that neocons could serve as effective public exponents of administration policy.<sup>21</sup>

The neocons did play a significant role in the success of Reagan's policies. Friedman writes: "The neocons," Friedman opines, "reinforced Reagan's hard-line beliefs on international communism and provided much of the administration's ideological energy, giving the Reagan revolution 'its final sophistication.'"<sup>22</sup>

Significant neoconservatives in the Reagan administration included Richard Perle, assistant secretary of defense for international security policy; Paul Wolfowitz, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs and later ambassador to Indonesia; Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state for human rights and later as assistant secretary of state for hemispheric affairs, where he played a central role in aiding the Contras in the Iran-Contra affair, for which he was indicted; Jeane Kirkpatrick, ambassador to the United Nations; Kenneth Adelman, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency; Richard Pipes, member of the National Security Council on Soviet and East European affairs; and Max Kampelman, ambassador and head of the United States delegation to the negotiations with the Soviet Union on nuclear and space arms.

In the Reagan administration, the neoconservatives allied with the militant right-wing anti-Communists and combated Republican establishment elements in order to fashion a hard-line anti-Soviet foreign policy. Neoconservatives were in the forefront of pressing for Reagan's military build-up and de-emphasizing arms control agreements, which had been a foreign policy centerpiece of previous administrations, both Republican and Democrat.<sup>23</sup>

Friedman portrays the neocons as being the primary force in Reagan's foreign policy. For example, he writes that "Although Reagan had laid the foundation of the 'Reagan Doctrine' in his Westminster speech in London on Jun 8, 1982 (the phrase was the brainchild of Charles Krauthammer, another of the emerging neocons), the actual substance did not appear...until a year later in NSD DD-75, the document largely developed by Richard Pipes."<sup>24</sup> Of all the neocons shaping the Reagan foreign policy, Friedman sees Richard Perle to be the most influential. "In the shaping of the policies of the Reagan administration, such figures as Kirkpatrick, Rostow, Podhoretz, Pipes, and Perle played a critical role," Friedman writes. "By the latter part of the 1980s, the very force of Perle's ideas, and the fierce energy he exerted in advancing them, made him perhaps the central figure here, save Reagan himself."<sup>25</sup>

In contrast to the longstanding American defensive Cold War strategy of containing Soviet communism, the neoconservatives pushed for destabilizing the Soviet empire and its allies. They did not invent this strategic doctrine which originated with such seminal conservative thinkers as James Burnham and Robert Strausz-Hupe. The goal behind this offensive strategy was to actually bring about the defeat of the Soviet Union, instead of just achieving stalemate, which would be the best that could be obtained by defensive containment. But while not the originators of an offensive Cold War strategy, the neocons were the first to successfully promote its implementation.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, Friedman devotes much more space to American activities in Central America to remove the pro-Soviet Sandinista regime in Nicaragua than to their successful effort to provide effective military aid to militant

Islamic Afghan “freedom fighters” in their resistance struggle against the Soviet occupation. The latter event better represents Reagan’s offensively-oriented Cold War strategy and played more of a role in sapping actual Soviet power, which led to its defeat in the Cold War. Friedman does trumpet the idea that the Reagan administration policies brought about victory in the Cold War. Perhaps, this absence of much of a discussion on Afghanistan stems from the fact that the neoconservatives now portray these very same militant Muslims as a deadly threat to America and the world.

In discussing the neoconservative orientation of the Reagan administration, Friedman goes so far as to describe Reagan as a “genuine neocon” and he points out his similarity to the neocons. “For most of his life he had been a liberal Democrat,” Friedman maintains. “He joined the Republican Party only in 1962.”<sup>27</sup> These similarities, however, are largely superficial and actually disingenuous. The anti-Communist Reagan actually came to support Richard Nixon over Democrat Helen Gahagen Douglas for U.S. Senator in 1950. In 1952 and 1956, he campaigned as a Democrat for Eisenhower. In 1960, he campaigned as a Democrat for Nixon. From 1954 until 1962, Reagan worked for General Electric, hosting the company’s weekly television series and delivering corporate speeches extolling the free-enterprise system. Reagan, in short, had been a conservative, free-market, anti-communist, and only nominally a Democrat, for over 10 years before officially switching parties in 1962. Reagan’s switch was only in terms of party identification, not in terms of beliefs. This is hardly similar to the liberal or leftist background of the neocons. When Reagan formally joined the Republican Party he championed Goldwater at a time when the neocons were solidly in the Lyndon B. Johnson camp. And despite his positive views of Jews and Israel, there is no evidence that Jewish issues played any significant role in Reagan’s political thinking. To summarize, Reagan was anything but a “genuine neocon.”

Since neoconservatism was quite different for traditional conservatism, their movement into the conservative camp was not without difficulty. And Friedman discusses the opposition from traditional conservatives, who became known as the paleoconservatives, to what Friedman describes as the “neocon attempt to take over the entire conservative movement.”<sup>28</sup> A significant “source of friction between the two groups was their differing views on Israel. Many on the right believed that the backing the neocons gave to Israel reflected a fanciful, democratic globalism rather than genuine concern for American interests.”<sup>29</sup>

While Friedman’s major point is that that neocons changed conservatism, he also claims that neocons moved rightward in the process. “Over time, neocons and more traditional conservatives, if not the paleos later represented most prominently by Pat Buchanan...moved closer together. Neocons picked up a number of traditionalist themes. [Midge] Decter frequently criticized the feminist and gay movements.”<sup>30</sup> It would seem here that Friedman is simply

wrong about any significant political change in the neocons. There is no evidence that the neocons or pre-1970s liberals ever promoted homosexuality or feminism in its recent form. In short, this evidence provides nothing to show that they adopted right-wing views but simply that that neocons remained true to their origins in resisting the counter-culture. There were conservative elements in neoconservatism from the outset, else there would be no reason to depict them as conservative at all.

Friedman portrays the change in conservatism wrought by the neocons in a very positive light. "The neoconservative intellectuals," Friedman writes, "completed the modernization that William F. Buckley had begun when he created *National Review* in 1955. They not only enlarged its vision but helped make it acceptable to larger numbers of Americans. In doing so, they provided many of the ideas and arguments that allowed it to compete with and triumph over the prevailing interpretations of the previous half-century."<sup>31</sup>

As alluded to earlier in this review, Friedman identifies the impact of neoconservatism very much like Kevin MacDonald, though from a completely different perspective. MacDonald writes that the "intellectual and cumulative effect of neoconservatism and its current hegemony over the conservative political movement in the United States (achieved partly by its large influence on the media and among foundations) has been to shift the conservative movement toward the center and, in effect, to define the limits of conservative legitimacy. Clearly, these limits of conservative legitimacy are defined by whether they conflict with specifically Jewish group interests in a minimally restrictive immigration policy, support for Israel, global democracy, opposition to quotas and affirmative action, and so on." Significantly, MacDonald holds that "The ethnic agenda of neoconservatism can also be seen in their promotion of the idea that the United States should pursue a highly interventionist foreign policy aimed at global democracy and the interests of Israel rather than aimed at the specific national interests of the United States."<sup>32</sup>

One can only conceive of conservatism as successful, as Friedman does, if the meaning of conservatism is radically changed. The past 30 years have seen the acceptance of de-facto discriminatory group quotas; runaway illegal immigration which is transforming the cultural, lingual, and racial basis of the United States; multiculturalism as opposed to Western culture; homosexuality to the point of homosexual "marriage;" feminism to the point of a major birth dearth; unnecessary global war; accelerating government deficits; diminished civil liberties; a vast expansion of the power of the federal government. Much of this would be seen as progress from the liberal perspective but is an absolute nightmare from the perspective of traditional pre-neocon conservatism of 1970.

James Burnham's *Suicide of the West*, published in 1964, became a classic among movement conservatives by defining liberalism as the "ideology of Western suicide." Burnham boiled the issue facing America and the West

down to basics. As Burnham put it starkly, "The primary issue before Western civilization today, and before its member nations, is survival." And he saw the demise of Western civilization in the near future. Liberalism, Burnham held, was the mind-set that reconciled Western peoples to the death of their culture and civilization.

Patrick Buchanan provided an updated expression of the Burnhamite position in *The Death of the West*, published in 2001. While Burnham was a mainstream National Review conservative, the expression of comparable view by Buchanan put him outside the pale of today's conservative movement. As Friedman writes, "Buchanan, [is] a throwback to an old-style, anti-Semitic, and extreme form of conservatism." However, after Buchanan's unsuccessful bid to gain the 1992 Republican nomination, Friedman maintains, "he has virtually disappeared from American political life." Friedman writes that Buchanan's "1992 campaign may well have been the 'last hurrah' of the old right."<sup>33</sup>

Now, let's make an objective, analytic judgment here. Buchanan has been one of the only major recent figures on the right to point out that Western civilization is dying. The problems are far more serious than they were in 1964 when Burnham wrote *Suicide of the West*. In 1964, the concern for Western survival was considered appropriate for mainstream conservatives to contemplate. At the current time, it is taboo to claim that the West should be defended. And only someone outside of the conservative mainstream would dare broach the topic.

Does this mean that neoconservatism, like liberalism, seeks, consciously or unconsciously, the destruction of the West? This is not the case. Neocons, who express themselves on this matter, are troubled by recent social and cultural developments. However, the energy they devote to defending the West comes in a poor second to their emphasis on Israel and specifically Jewish interests. To pursue these primary interests they have found it necessary to accommodate what seem to be the dominate forces of today. Thus there has been a steady movement of neoconservatism leftward in order to remain viable in a society that has moved ever leftward. However, in adjusting themselves to this trend leftward, the neocons have been able to successfully push their war agenda to advance Israel in the Middle East, even though neocon policy in the Middle East would seem to diametrically conflict with the fundamental anti-Western views of liberalism. As a result, we have the aberration of the United States government projecting its power abroad and (purportedly) pushing Western values – in short, engaging in what appears to the world as American imperialism – while simultaneously allowing Western civilization to crumble at home.

While the survival of traditional American government and society is more imperiled than ever, it is obviously true that the neoconservative movement has flourished and is more influential than ever. "The most enduring legacy of neoconservatism," Friedman writes, "has been the creation of a new generation

of highly influential younger conservative Jewish intellectuals, social activists, and allies." When the movement began in the early 1970s, "the movement consisted of perhaps two dozen individuals. Their numbers today have increased to hundreds of individuals threaded throughout the news media, think tanks, political life, government, and the universities....Their influence has been felt everywhere."<sup>34</sup> A conclusion to be derived here is that if neoconservatism could, as Friedman maintains, influence the foreign policy of the Reagan administration, its capability to influence the Bush II administration's policy was much greater. The effort to cavalierly dismiss the possibility of the neocons playing a major role in bringing about the war on Iraq just does not jibe with Friedman's overall depiction of advancing neoconservative power and influence.

And while Western civilization in America is unraveling, Friedman points out that the younger neocons are even more committed to their Jewish heritage than the original generation, as made evident in their turn to the Jewish religion. "The older generation's interest in religion," Friedman writes, "tended to be more instrumental; that is, it had not been a deeply personal experience.... Strengthening Judaism, especially among the young, would counter the effects of assimilation and provide support for the embattled state of Israel."<sup>35</sup> Friedman continues that "By contrast, a number of the younger generation neocons are — or have become — traditional or even orthodox Jews."<sup>36</sup>

The irony of the Friedman book is that it deals very sparingly with the war on Iraq and the Bush administration Middle East war agenda that is now targeting Iran. Obviously, this is the crucial issue confronting Americans today. But Friedman does hold that neocons were influential here, writing that the "neoconservatives would have enormous impact in the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush." After referring to the influence of the earlier generation of neocons, Friedman observes that "the next generation of neocons — Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Kristol's son, William (through his own magazine, *The Weekly Standard*) — helped to persuade President Bush to pursue the war on terrorism by invading March in 2003."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Friedman seems to grant that the war on Iraq has been the neocons' major endeavor. "In the final analysis," Friedman writes near the end of the book, "the legacy of neoconservatives will rest on the results of the Iraq war and its aftermath."<sup>38</sup>

Despite the sketchiness of his presentation of the American war on Iraq, Friedman, in bringing out the neoconservatives' influence and identity with Israel, does provide a picture of the neoconservatives that meshes with the idea that they served as the driving force for the war in Iraq. And Friedman backs up what he says with extensive evidence drawn in large part from the neocons own words. What is especially notable about Friedman's account is that he is a Jewish scholar who is sympathetic to the neoconservatives, and actually could be called a neocon himself. His praise of the neocons even applies to the war

on Iraq. "What was new and bold about the Bush doctrine and the neocon advisors who pressed it forward was that it recognized that this country was already at war—a new kind of war that we had never experienced before," Friedman writes. "The underlying premise of that war, which the debate over weapons of mass destruction tended to obfuscate, was that we had set out to change the basic dynamic in the Middle East, which was responsible for most of the terrorism we were facing. The decision to launch a preemptive strike, although it offended some of our putative allies, resulted in a humanely and successfully fought war."<sup>39</sup>

While it was true that the neocons have openly sought a larger Middle East war to bring about the regime change throughout the region, which they call World War IV, they sold the war to the American people as predicated on Saddam's alleged lethal WMD threat. Such a threat was especially pushed by bogus intelligence from Douglas Feith's Office of Special Plans, which relied heavily on Israeli intelligence and Ahmed Chalabi's Iraq National Congress.

It must be acknowledged, however, that while Friedman makes mention of the neoconservative push for the war on Iraq and their overall Middle East war agenda, he does not discuss the neocons' intimate relationship with Israel and how their Middle East agenda paralleled that of the Likudnik Right, which is the key to understanding neoconservative policy. In fact, much of the neocon approach to the Middle East can be seen to have originated in Likudnik thinking, which was oriented to weakening Israel's enemies in order to improve Israeli external security and, in the process, to cut off support for Israel's internal enemy, the Palestinians. An important article in that genre was Oded Yinon's "A Strategy for Israel in the 1980s," which appeared in the World Zionist Organization's periodical *Kivunim* (Directions) in February 1982. Yinon called for Israel to bring about the dissolution of regional Arab states and their fragmentation into a mosaic of ethnic and sectarian groupings that could in no way confront Israeli power.

Leading neocons—Richard Perle, David Wurmser, Douglas Feith—were so enamored with this approach that they proposed a comparable plan entitled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm" to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in 1996. The plan called for Israel to use military means to reconfigure the entire Middle East for the benefit of its security; the first step would be the elimination of Saddam Hussein.

It also needs to be mentioned that the Israeli government worked in tandem with the neocons in supporting both the war on Iraq and later militant policies toward Iran and Syria.

While ignoring the intimate connection of Israel to the war on Iraq, Friedman goes on to delineate the achievements of the war: the removal of Saddam and his henchman and "free elections." Moreover, he claims that the war has had

positive “wider effects” such as Libya’s Muammar al-Qaddafi agreeing to give up WMD and allow for inspections.<sup>40</sup>

Friedman describes Bush’s re-election victory in November 2004 as being a veritable referendum on the war. “The major issue of the campaign was the war on terrorism,” Friedman maintains, “and it appeared to resonate with the voters.” To Friedman, the electorate’s ratification of the Bush’s foreign policy appeared “congruent with the central premise of this book that we are presently living in any age of conservatism, it further acknowledges the role of the neocons in shaping the strategies and ideas of our times.”<sup>41</sup>

Given the usual outcry by pro-Zionist elements regarding any hint of pro-Israel influence on American foreign policy, it is highly noteworthy that this book has been reviewed in Jewish or establishment circles without any scathing condemnation of Friedman’s thesis. For example, in a review in the Jewish newspaper *Forward*, Gal Beckerman writes that “it is a fact that as a political philosophy, neoconservatism was born among the children of Jewish immigrants and is now largely the intellectual domain of those immigrants’ grandchildren.” In fact, Beckerman maintains that “If there is an intellectual movement in America to whose invention Jews can lay sole claim, neoconservatism is it.”<sup>42</sup>

The reaction to Friedman’s work reflects an odd phenomenon in which it is totally taboo for a gentile to discuss anything suggesting Jewish power if the implication is the least bit negative; but if the subject is placed in a favorable light, and a Jewish individual is the author, all manner of power can be attributed to Jews. A work that perhaps ranks highest in this genre is Yuri Slezkine’s much-acclaimed *The Jewish Century* in which the Russian Jewish author attributes the most powerful and influential intellectual and political movements of the last century, including the rise and fall of Soviet Communism, to Jewish influence.<sup>43</sup> Note that Slezkine’s depiction of the extent of Jewish power is a couple of orders of magnitude beyond merely observing that neocons were the driving force for the American war policy in the Middle East.

But America’s Orwellian society is predicated on iron-clad “double-think” so that respectable gentiles would not dare to cite such scholarly Jewish works, no matter how much acclaim they have received, for what might be labeled “anti-Semitic” purposes any more than they would actually examine the evidence on any taboo subject. So while Friedman’s *The Neoconservative Revolution* lays out the essence of neoconservative power and influence, one should not expect this information to penetrate respectable circles when discussing the cause of America’s war on Iraq and overall Middle East policy. In those rarified forums where official truth is dispensed to the great American masses, establishment-sanctioned talking heads and other esteemed members of the punditocracy will continue to prattle knowingly about the existence on

the web of loony Jewish conspiracy theories involving an imaginary group called the neoconservatives.

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### ENDNOTES

1. George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), p. 15.
2. Faculty Research Working Papers Series, John F. Kennedy School of Government (see website address below). The web page states: "We are pleased to provide an electronic database to disseminate works-in-progress reflecting the broad range of research activities of Kennedy School faculty members. You may search the database, view abstracts of papers, and download the full text of papers in Adobe Acrobat PDF format." It is to be noted that the papers submitted are formatted in different ways, which implies minimal editing. It would seem that a faculty member could have displayed anything that he or she desired.  
[www.ksg.harvard.edu/research/working\\_papers/index.htm](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/research/working_papers/index.htm)
3. Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 242.
4. Friedman, p. 3.
5. This subject was gone over in detail in the much-condemned work (banned in Canada and not sold in mainstream bookstores) *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, (Chicago: The Nation of Islam Historical Research Department, 1991). Written from a passionate, Black militant perspective, the tabooed work brings out considerable evidence, relying heavily on Jewish sources, showing Jewish involvement in the slave trade, support for slavery, and overall hostility to the Black race as inferior.
6. Friedman, p. 5.
7. Friedman, p. 22.
8. Friedman, p. 53.
9. Friedman, p. 53.
10. Friedman, p. 128; Murray Friedman writes sympathetically that "The most fundamental ingredient marking neoconservatism has been its realistic and pragmatic approach to problems. The neocons found themselves at odds with that form of conservative libertarianism that seeks individual freedom, unrestrained by government. While increasingly doubtful of governmental solutions to problems, neocons were not hostile to government itself, particularly programs like Social Security. They saw no road to serfdom, as Hayek predicted, in the welfare state that they themselves had played no small role in creating." Friedman, p. 121.
11. Friedman, p. 134.
12. Friedman, pp. 127-31.

13. Friedman, p. 148.
14. Friedman, p. 127.
15. Friedman, p. 149-50.
16. Friedman, p. 122.
17. Friedman, p. 148.
18. Friedman, p. 147.
19. Friedman, p. 148.
20. Friedman, p. 152.
21. Regarding their value to the Right, Samuel Francis, a conservative critic of the neoconservatives, writes, "For the right, the main service neoconservatives performed was to lend it a certain respectability that the right generally lacked – not only through academic and literary credentials but in the general tone they adopted, a tone that contributes to William Pfaff's sad delusion that the neoconservatives 'are the first seriously intelligent movement of the American right since the 19th century.' Of course, it never dawned on the conservatives who welcomed them as allies, and soon as leaders, that the 'respectability' the neocons brought them was one defined and conferred by the dominant left and therefore made it impossible for the right to challenge the left at all." Samuel Francis, "The Real Cabal," *Chronicles*, September 2003.  
<http://www.chroniclesmagazine.org/Chronicles/September2003/0903Francis.html>
22. Friedman, p. 154.
23. Reaganite Paul Craig Roberts (Under-Secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration), who became a staunch conservative critic of the neocons, writes: "In Reagan's time we did not recognize that neoconservatives had a Jacobin frame of mind. Perhaps we were not paying close enough attention. We saw neoconservatives as former left-wingers who had realized that the Soviet Union might be a threat after all. We regarded them as allies against Henry Kissinger's inclination to reach an unfavorable accommodation with the Soviet Union." Paul Craig Roberts, "My Epiphany," *CounterPunch*, February 6, 2006, [www.counterpunch.com/roberts02062006.html](http://www.counterpunch.com/roberts02062006.html)
24. Friedman, p. 167.
25. Friedman, p. 160.
26. Emphasis on the war-winning strategy is provided by Jay Winik, *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind The-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era & the Men & Women Who Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). When this view had been expressed earlier by James Burnham on the pages of the conservative *National Review*, it was simply ignored by the establishment. When the war-winning theme was enunciated by the conservative 1964 Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater in his book *Why Not Victory?: A Fresh Look At American Foreign Policy* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), Goldwater and his conservative backers were presented by the establishment as near-insane advocates of global nuclear destruction. When neocons adopted this very same foreign policy strategy, however, it took on the air of near-respectability. In short, neocons did not invent the positions they advocated; by and large, they were not creative thinkers. Rather, because of their backgrounds in the liberal establishment, they gave an air of intellectual and political respectability to positions on the Right that previously had been outside the bounds of discussion.

27. Friedman, p. 151.
28. Friedman, p. 135.
29. Friedman, p. 135.
30. Friedman, p. 135.
31. Friedman, pp. 224-225.
32. Kevin MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), pp. 312-313.
33. Friedman, p. 225.
34. Friedman, pp. 226-27.
35. Friedman, pp. 230-31.
36. Friedman, p. 231.
37. Friedman, p. 121.
38. Friedman, p. 240.
39. Friedman, p. 241.
40. Friedman, p. 241.
41. Friedman, p. 241.
42. Gal Beckerman, "The Neoconservative Persuasion," *Forward*, January 6, 2006. <http://www.forward.com/main/printer-friendly.php?id=7102>
43. Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).