

Neocons unveiled

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There is much hype and furor over the role and influence of neocons in American decision making process particularly in the field of foreign policy. It is accused that American administration has either become hostage to a particular clique of neocons or it has waxed intrinsically a neocon administration by its general chemistry. According to a veteran American journalist Jim Lobe, "Contrary to appearances, the neoconservatives do not represent a political movement, but a small, exclusive club with incestuous familial and personal connections."

Without going into the genealogy of the neocons, it would be more germane to jot down the history, philosophic foundations (if any) and future ambitions of this clan. Neoconservatives are former liberals, (which explain the "neo" prefix) who advocate an aggressive unilateralist vision of US global supremacy, which includes a close strategic alliance with Israel. Jim Lobe, in his another article of February 2, 2005 "Neocons, More Cannon Fodder, Please" traces the history of the neocons."

Whilst neo-conservatism may owe its neo-Jacobin impulses of "global democratic revolution" to the Trotskyite pedigree of many of its principal ideologues, it owes much of its core political philosophy to Professor Leo Strauss. Strauss moved to America from Germany in 1938 on the suggestion of the Nazi legal theorist Carl Schmitt, taking up residence at the University of Chicago and developing a political philosophy that drew heavily on the writings of Plato, as well as the ideas of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Schmitt.

Strauss believed, like Plato, that the ideal society was one guided by the wise and not by the masses. Whereas Plato had recognized the impracticality of such a solution and instead settled for a rule of law, Strauss believed that the "wise" could indeed rule by implementing a policy of "perpetual deception" where the "populist" masses would

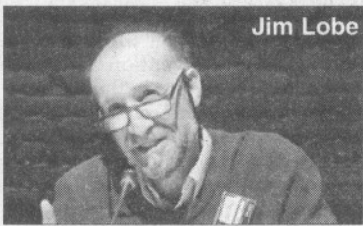
be continually deceived for their own good and to protect the ruling elites from popular reprisals. Although Strauss remained relatively unknown outside academic circles

Book of Revelation set in the context of contemporary global politics: the Rapture has taken place, the Anti-christ has taken control of the UN and created a single global economy, while a small group of American-led believers (obviously neocons) battles the forces of evil in a showdown in Jerusalem. The two narratives – the Neocon's aggressive foreign policy, centered around the Middle East, and the Christian evangelical story of the immanent return of Christ in the Holy Land came out to be weirdly similar and disturbingly parallel. The former openly advocates a "New American Century" and a "benevolent hegemony" of the globe by US power, inaugurated by the invasion of Iraq, while the latter predicts a New Millennium of divine rule ushered in by apocalyptic war, first in Babylon and then in Jerusalem.

The more one begins to examine the Neocon's strategies and the ties between George W. Bush and the Christian Right, the less this link seemed to be either coincidental or unimportant. What I am suggesting here is that there is a subtle but powerful "fit", or what sociologist Max Weber calls an "elective affinity," between the two that has helped them to reinforce one another in very effective ways. The otherwise vacuous figure of George W. Bush represents a crucial link or structural pivot between these two powerful factions, helping to tie them together:

Bush presents the Neocons' radical foreign policy in a guise that is acceptable to his large base of support in the Christian Right, even as he reassures his Christian base that their moral agendas (anti-abortion, anti-gay marriage, faith-based initiatives, etc) will be given powerful political support. In Bush, America as the benevolent hegemon of the Neocons and the American-led "Tribulation Force" of LaHaye's wildly popular novels come together in a disturbing, yet surprisingly successful way has progressively taken

over the United Nations and the world's economic system, unifying all political states ("Global Community"), media ("Global Community Network"), and religions



Jim Lobe

academic circles until recent years, a cult formed around the Professor and today some 60 members of the Bush Administration are identified as Straussians.

Many of the key ideologues of neo-conservatism studied under Strauss are his students. Amongst them was Paul Wolfowitz, the hawkish Deputy Secretary of Defense who studied under Strauss and completed his PhD under Straussian professor, Albert Wohlstetter. Wohlstetter also taught Richard Perle and Ahmad Chalabi (the American bought-and-paid-for Iraqi Quisling).

Strauss' acolyte Allan Bloom, author of *Closing of the American Mind*, taught Francis Fukuyama. William, Irving Kristol, and Gary Schmitt, the director of the *Project for the New American Century* (PNAC) have all admitted to being heavily influenced by Straussians thinking. Perhaps, the most interesting study of neo-conservatism phenomenon is *"America Alone: The Neoconservatives and the Global Order"* by Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke. The two go back to the origin of the neoconservative movement or persuasion in the 1960s, when various often left-leaning intellectuals – Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Daniel Bell, Daniel Moynihan, Midge Decter, Michael Novak, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Peter Berger and others – struggled to come to terms with

and religions ("Enigma Babylon One World Faith") under a Nicolae-appointed supreme pontiff".

In another very interesting study of neocon philosophy, if at all it qualifies to achieve the status of a philosophy, Hugh Urban of Ohio State University has dilated upon it comparing it with other famous political philosophies and their political ideals. In doing so, he has made a psychoanalysis of apparently simple but congenitally complex personality of George W. Bush along with some ascendant cultural factors, which ultimately became the basic building blocks of the psychic make-up of Bush. The effort has been quintessentially made with a view to having an in-depth insight into the detailed landscape of the mindset of that specific ruling coterie who could make or mar the destiny of the whole planet having repercussions even for generations to come. In his highly vivacious article, "Religion and Secrecy in the Bush Administration", with subtitle "The Gentleman, The Prince, and the Simulacrum". Declaring Bush as the prodigal son, he takes a start with a quotation from the speeches of Bush. "I know we're all sinners, but I've accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior". George W. Bush, when asked what argument he would give to gain entry to heaven.

the cultural revolution of the 1960s twinned with a willingness to apologize for communism verging sometimes on knee-jerk anti-Americanism that characterized many sectors of American intellectual life.

Many of these writers did important work in a variety of fields, from criticizing the shortcomings of the welfare state to trying to define the role of religion in an essentially secular society that continued to value religious freedom. Over time, perhaps driven by a conviction that protection of the state of Israel is a preeminent concern, Neoconservatives narrowed their range of interests, coming to focus on foreign policy. However, "Even on foreign policy, modern neo-conservatism focuses more narrowly. "It pays scant attention to the world beyond select areas of the world where its ideology is applicable." In present times, now, the locus of their attention is Middle East. However, notwithstanding the fact that they are now the sole superpower of the world, their brokerage for peace in settling Palestinian issue could not materialize, having less impact on the strategic imperatives of this longstanding issue than even Oslo peace process had.

After invading Iraq and regime change, now, strategic spotlight of neocons is upon Iran. Syria is also under duress. Why the region of Middle East has assumed so much importance in neocons agenda? To delve on this question, the analogy which professor Hugh Urban has drawn would be interesting to quote here entailed in his article "Bush, the neocons and Evangelical Christian Fiction". He goes on to say, "One of the most striking such intersections occurred to me this summer as I sat down to read the twelfth and last volume of the wildly popular *Left Behind* series by evangelical preacher Tim LaHaye and novelist Jerry Jenkins.

For those who haven't yet had a chance to read any of LaHaye and Jenkin's series, the story is basically an evangelical interpretation of the

The centrality of religious faith in the life and politics of George W. Bush is surely no secret. The narrative that he and his biographers tell of his life is clearly modeled on that of the prodigal son — the young man who fritters his early life away on alcohol and sin, only to find God and returns to his rightful place in his father's former occupation. As he recounts his own redemption-narrative, Bush had become mired in the world of business and the overuse of alcohol, and so turned in his darker hours to the study of scripture. The beginning of this conversion occurred during a summer weekend in 1985, when evangelist Billy Graham visited George and Laura at their summer house in Kennebunkport, Maine. The Reverend, with his magnetic presence and warmth, planted a "seed of salvation" in his soul that soon blossomed into a new birth:

In the course of his recommitment to Jesus, Bush began a regular study of scripture using Don Evans' "one year" Bible; he gave up drinking; and he also began working more closely with various members of the Religious Right. According to Doug Wead, an Assemblies of God evangelist and author of the Bush campaign publication, *Man of Integrity*, the Bush family had close relationships not just with Graham but also with several other religious leaders, including "dear friend," Jerry Falwell. The younger Bush would soon put these connections with the Christian Right to good use during his father's campaign, winning the trust of the evangelical audience the senior Bush had failed to reach: Bush had become so attuned to all the nuances of the evangelical subcultures that virtually no one questioned the sincerity of his acceptance of Christ. Bush had replaced his father's visionless pragmatism with the Manichaeian certitudes of Good and Evil. Dubya's bond with the Christian right was a crucial part of what distinguished him from his father.

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