

and a civilization. From the U.S. to West Berlin, the West was imperiled by Soviet and Chinese Communism; in the Middle East, Israel was imperiled by the Arab states and by Soviet designs on the region.

By the 1980s, neoconservatives had changed; they were no longer based in New York and no longer concerned about "making it," to borrow the title of Norman Podhoretz's 1967 autobiography. They had reoriented themselves toward Washington, the proper seat of American politics. Despite the prominent Jewish figures who would emerge in the movement's second generation — William Kristol, David Brooks, and Paul Wolfowitz the Jewish element would diminish over time. Catholic neoconservatives like John Neuhaus and George Weigel were not less neoconservative than their Jewish counterparts, and Jewish neoconservatives like David Brooks were "Jewish" primarily by way of their attachment to the intellectual legacy of the movement. Someone like Dick Cheney, with his ties to a

central neoconservative institution like the American Enterprise Institute, could draw upon the movement's ideas, without it mattering that he is not Jewish.

With the Iraq War of 2003, neoconservatism ceased to be a descriptive term, becoming instead a word with international resonance and a great, sometimes dangerous, imprecision of usage. The neoconservatives could be seen as a shadowy presence in the White House, and neoconservatism could be a code word for Jews in government, pulling the levers of power and secretly serving Israel by urging President Bush to attack Iraq. Though the importance of non-Jews like Dick Cheney in arguing for war should prevent any easy linkage of Jews, neoconservatism, and the Iraq War, the power of conspiratorial thinking is very strong. This makes it all the more important to clarify the true relationship between Jews and neoconservatism, which lies in the complicated and vanishing milieu of the New York intellectuals.

## Israel and the Iraq War

Allan Arkush

Yountless magazine articles and books pub-Ulished during the past few years have documented the long campaign on the part of a largely Jewish group of neoconservative intellectuals and political figures to get the U.S. to complete the job it left unfinished in 1991 and topple Saddam Hussein and his regime. The authors of no small number of these works have contended that these people were activated mainly by a concern for the security of Israel. None of the neoconservatives, for their part, deny that Israel's safety is of great importance to them. But did it override everything else in their eyes? Did their preoccupations with Israel cloud their analyses of American foreign policy? Did they drag the U.S. into a war that was designed to serve another nation's interests more than those of their own country?

Writing in *Commentary* in September 2003, neoconservative Joshua Muravchik responded to such questions with some questions of his own. Richard Perle, Elliott Abrams, and Paul Wolfowitz, he noted, "as well as the rest of the neocon circle, are and were hardliners toward the USSR, China, Nicaragua, and North Korea. Is it any wonder that they held a similar position toward Saddam Hussein's Iraq? If Israel

did not exist, would any one of them have favored giving Hans Blix's team still more time, or leaving the whole matter in the hands of the UN? Are we to believe that the decades-long neoconservative campaign against Communism and anti-Americanism was a fantastically farsighted Rube Goldberg machine programmed to produce some benefit for Israel somewhere down the line?"

Although Muravchik somewhat oversimplified matters, he made a valid point. Even more than their predecessors, today's Jewish neoconservatives share a perspective that extends far beyond the need to protect Israel, which is by no means the centerpiece of their thinking. This emerges quite clearly from all of their post-Cold War programmatic writings on foreign policy, which have been focused mainly on outlining the multifarious ways in which the U.S ought to dominate world affairs benevolently during what one of them, Charles Krauthammer, memorably characterized as a "unipolar moment."

Conspiracy-mongers have no difficulty in dismissing such writings as mere instruments for the perpetration of a nefarious Zionist plot. Other observers may conclude that where there are so many accusations of the

Allan Arkush is a professor of Judaic studies at Binghamton University.

April 2008 Nisan 5768 To subscribe: 877-568-SHMA www.shma.com use of smoke there must be at least some fire, regardless of what the neoconservatives say in their own defense. Perhaps their concern for Israel's security predisposed them, wittingly or unwittingly, to favor a more activist stance in American foreign policy than they might otherwise support.

An awareness of the vicissitudes of modern Jewish history has, to some extent, reinforced the Jewish neoconservatives' sense of the presence of evil in this world, and the need for what they see as the forces of good, led by America, to combat it. But this does not imply that they pushed for the invasion of Iraq in order to protect the Jewish state. Indeed, whatever their fiercest enemies may say, the neoconservatives' best informed critics make no such charges. Francis Fukuyama, for example, in 1998, was a cosigner, along with Paul Wolfowitz, William Kristol, Richard Perle, and other neoconservatives of a letter to President Clinton urging him to remove Saddam Hussein from power. On September 20, 2001, he cosigned a similar letter to President Bush. After the war, however, he broke with the neoconservatives and criticized them extensively, focusing on what he perceived to be their overambitious goals and unwise strategies. And yet, Fukuyama never accused any of his former allies of misplaced loyalty (though he wrote an article in which he charged Charles Krauthammer, in particular, with letting his views on how Israelis should handle the Palestinians color his views on how the U.S should deal with the Arabs more broadly).

Those who are not persuaded by what the neoconservatives themselves say or by what Fukuyama fails to say will no doubt continue to believe that Wolfowitz et al, whether they know it or not, were pursuing a more Zionist agenda than they ever let on. I myself do not think that such notions are defensible, but I do not expect that they will go away. Indeed, strongly pro-Israel American Jews in high places who advocate or help to institute policies that are promoted, in part, as beneficial to Israel will always be exposed to such suspicions, especially when the policies for which they are responsible are unpopular or unsuccessful — or both.



Diana Furchtgott-Roth

The neoconservative view of domestic pollacksquare icy can best be summed up by Nobel prize-winning economist Milton Friedman, at the conclusion of his book, Capitalism and Freedom. Talking about "the internal threat coming from men of good intentions and good will who wish to reform us," he writes: "Impatient with the slowness of persuasion and example to achieve the great social changes they envision, they are anxious to use the power of the state to achieve their ends and confident of their own ability to do so. Yet if they gained the power, they would fail to achieve their immediate aims and, in addition, would produce a collective state from which they would recoil in horror and of which they would be among the first victims."

The roles of the individual versus the state can be seen in many areas of domestic policy, such as taxes, healthcare, education, and transportation. Neoconservatives put forward solutions that tax Americans less and give them more choice in their purchase of services, whereas others suggest higher taxes and a larger role for the government.

This battle is being played out now in the

presidential campaign. Republicans, as exemplified not only by their presumptive candidate, Arizona Senator John McCain, are putting forward a portfolio of individual solutions designed to increase individual choice and reduce the reach of government. Democrats, as exemplified by the platforms of New York Senator Hillary Clinton and Illinois Senator Barack Obama, who, as of this writing, are essentially tied, are proposing more government funding and control.

In tax policy, Democrats want to let President Bush's tax rates for top earners and small businesses expire in 2010, raising taxes from 35 percent to 40 percent. Tax breaks for business investment would also be reduced. With these funds, they would spend more on a whole range of domestic programs. In contrast, Republicans propose to not only make President Bush's tax rates permanent, but also lower the rates further, both for individuals and businesses.

The Democrats' approach to services is to spend more money to cover specific programs for more people. Take education, where the price tags of Hillary Clinton's new programs Diana Furchtgott-Roth, former chief economist of the U.S. Department of Labor, is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and director of Hudson's Center for Employment Policy.

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