

NEOCONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY AND THE USE OF TORTURE IN THE "GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR"

Morally Right, in perfect denial, or in persistent cognitive dissonance?

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May 2007

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1 Introduction

"Success means the ability to predict things that were not objects of an original theory (novel facts), and to unite previously distinct bodies of knowledge" (Wendt, 1999: 65)

The feeling of internal harmony must be close to the wonderful sensation of happiness. Sadly, eloquent narratives of ancient history as well as more mundane observations of the contemporary remind us each day that both states appear constantly equally unattainable to the average person.

As we shall see in the pages that follow, the quest for inner accord is so engraved in the human mind that it appears a necessity on levels beyond the mind of the individual. The purpose of this paper is to examine this phenomenon by its obverse. Specifically I endeavor to find out whether there exists a state of cognitive dissonance – a disturbance in internal harmony – within neoconservatism as regards the ideology's core values and its positions on torture in the context of the current U.S. "global war on terror" (GWOT). If such a state can be recognized then consequently also the magnitude of that dissonance could be studied. However, all of the above requires an understanding of the many dimensions of present-day neoconservatism.

It ought to be obvious that this ambitious task commits us to answer twice to a simple yet well-grounded question "why?" In the first instance, one must be able to answer why the theory of cognitive dissonance is suited for studying an ideology. In the second, one should be able to explain why study neoconservatism in the first place. The answers may not be self-evident to the reader.

But allow me to begin my answer to the first question, that of choosing to use the relatively little-used¹ theory of cognitive dissonance, by taking a small detour. I believe this slight deviation to help to clarify the overall context of this paper. For, as we shall see below, it is an almost uncontested assertion that international law is an essential source of legitimacy in world politics (Cf. Scott and Ambler, 2007: 68). Furthermore,

¹ As regards the study of international relations. Use of the theory has been extensive in social psychology.

according to Scott and Ambler's discussion concerning the "idea of international law", fundamental to this idea has been that international law would be distinguishable and superior to world politics (Scott and Ambler, 2007: 72). In international law, the prohibition of torture is an all but universally accepted norm, yet individuals acting in the name of the United States government have been found guilty of such behavior. Given the rather extensive role in foreign policy advocacy, neoconservatives in general have had relatively little to say about the use of torture, but the attitude tends to be well on the condoning side. Arguments calling for tough measures against "terrorists"² threatening the security of U.S. citizens are certainly understandable³ and neoconservatives can be seen to preserve the rights of the people in the United States and other democracies by their proposed tough measures.

If, however, next to the wish to save innocent lives at any cost, there are competing core values in neoconservatism – say, human rights or the right to mental and physical integrity of all individuals in relation to state actors – the situation changes markedly. And it is here that the theory of cognitive dissonance enters the picture. According to Leon Festinger's enduring theory, a situation in which contradictory behavior and cognition coexist gives rise to a state what he labeled "cognitive dissonance". This is a state where the contradictory relation between two or more cognitive elements (e.g. *knowing* how one behaves, *knowing* something detrimental about that behavior's effects) can be eased by displacing one or the other. To illustrate: a heavy smoker knows that cigarettes are a major factor in many life-threatening diseases such as lung cancer and cardio-vascular diseases. While she continues to smoke, she is in a state of cognitive dissonance. To escape or alleviate this state, she has two major alternatives, namely, to give up smoking (or reduce it, at a minimum), or change her thoughts on the hazards of her habit. The latter alternative finds many ways in the individual's natural pursuit for

² In order to avoid confusion and reduce the risk of misinterpretations the words "terrorist" and "terrorism" will be used in quotation marks throughout this paper due to lack of one, universally accepted use of the term. Walter Laqueur's article *Reflections on Terrorism* (1986) refers to Alex Schmid's book *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide*, in which Schmid claims to have counted over 100 definitions of "terrorism". Emphasizing definitional challenges, Laqueur concludes that "it has been said it resembles pornography, difficult to describe and define, but easy to recognize when one sees it." (Laqueur, 1984: 88-89)

³ Indeed, it is the *duty* of the State to provide safety for its citizens according to international law. This principle is enshrined in the UN charter, article 2, say Evans and Sahnoun (2002) who spell out the most basic duties of states: "sovereignty implies a dual responsibility: externally, to respect the sovereignty of other states, and internally, to respect the dignity and basic rights of all the people within the state." (Evans and Sahnoun, 2002)

the state of consonance. A similar mechanism could be in play regarding a contradictory relation between neoconservatism's core values and its pursued policies. Because the object of this study is an ideology, as opposed to Festinger's original studies on the level of individuals, a discussion on the study of social groups and ideologies is also included in the study below.

What makes the effects of cognitive dissonance especially salient in relation to political life is its tendency to extend to seemingly unconnected areas of decision-making, as Robert Jervis (1976) among others has found. In spite of Jervis's path-breaking work, it appears that there continue to be useful applications to be found in the linkages between social psychology and IR. In a nutshell and in addition to love of academic adventure, this is why the theory of cognitive dissonance has been deemed important enough to be used to study the neoconservative ideology.

As for the second question challenging the wisdom of the decision to study the neoconservative ideology, several justifying reasons can be found. The most cogent reason at this hour in history is the ideology's extensive influence in world politics. I can assert with relative confidence that attempts to fully comprehend the contemporary foreign policy decisions and deliberations of the United States are doomed to fail without an understanding of neoconservatism. The influence of neoconservatism has in the last couple of years been exercised to a large extent through the administration of President George W. Bush and the administration itself has been labeled "neoconservative" countless times. Indeed, many of the foreign policy paths of George W. Bush have been chosen after neoconservative calls to action to the enjoyment and with the enthusiastic approval of neoconservatives. One prominent neoconservative even went as far as to call Bush – admittedly in a half-joking manner – "the Supreme Leader"⁴. Naïveté aside, but statements such as this certainly mirror more approval than rejection of the president. However, all in all, the Bush administration can hardly be labeled a neoconservative one, as a closer study of the term reveals.

⁴ On Fox News Sunday on June 4, 2006, William Kristol said: "*Supreme Leader [Ali] Khomeinei, President Bush's counterpart over in Iran... maybe President Bush should become Supreme Leader Bush, I like that.*"

Finnish discussion concerning neoconservatism has been surprisingly limited and simplified thus far, as some scholars have both noted and shown with own example⁵. Notable exceptions to the rule are James O'Connor's (2006) unpublished Master's thesis⁶ and a forthcoming article⁷ in the Finnish Yearbook of International Law. Internationally, much has been written on neoconservatism⁸ (though this area has been in my view also internationally exceptionally polemic and less than constructive for the most part), U.S. foreign policy, the use of torture, human rights and on cognitive dissonance. Each subject has been covered extensively (with the notable exception of neoconservatism in my opinion) individually and from different angles, but my understanding is that no study has thus far studied all of these together. I therefore feel rather confident that this study will be unique in its composition, for better or for worse. I can only echo Jonathan Monten (2005) when he claims that neoconservatism is frequently studied in a "descriptive, often alarmist, and occasionally conspiratorial" fashion. This appears an inadequacy waiting to be fixed.

Therefore, because neoconservatism is so well-placed yet little understood we will below go through an account of the neoconservative ideology. A necessary intermediate phase of this account is a discussion of the term "ideology". Finding the most fundamental or "core" values of neoconservatism is naturally one of the main objects of this study. Fulfilling the task that I have set for myself requires one further discussion in addition to those mentioned above. That discussion concerns torture, its nature, laws

⁵ See e.g. Markku Ruotsila (2006) in *Politiikka* 48:1, pp. 76-79, or Finnish Institute of Foreign Affairs Senior Researcher Henrikki Heikka's writings. Ruotsila evaluates three novel books on neoconservatism and claims that they, read together especially, bring "new depth and a sense of nuance into the interpretation of neoconservatism, which has - for some time already - followed established, self-contained and banal paths" (my translation from Finnish). It is probable that Ruotsila, who works outside Finland, refers here to a wider international context than just the Finnish one. Heikka makes in at least one article overly direct equations between neoconservatism and President Bush's foreign policy (Cf. *Helsingin Sanomat* June 28, 2005) and in the Finnish foreign policy magazine *Ulkopolitiikka* whirls through some forms of right-wing politics in the US on a highly superficial level ("*Abridged version of US right wing politics*", number 2/2006).

⁶ Titled "*Exceptions, Distinctions and Processes of Identification: The 'Concrete Thought' of Carl Schmitt and US Neoconservatism as Seen through Readings of Kenneth Burke and Jacques Derrida*".

⁷ Titled "*US Neoconservatism and the Rule of Radical Occasionalism - Carl Schmitt's War on Terror?*"

⁸ Michael C. Williams (2005) notes that, unfortunately, "[d]ominated by the triadic division of Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism, IR theory has shown remarkably little willingness to engage with the neoconservative position at the level of its theoretical foundations." Reasons for this, he continues, are easy to understand because of the "need" to address topical issues in U.S. foreign policy rather than focusing on neoconservatism's theoretical foundations. While this justification is understandable - especially in the light in which Williams presents it, namely that neoconservatives themselves "do not generally write for academic journals" - it is very revealing of IR theory's underlying attitudes towards other than canonized approaches. This effect is further amplified by the notion that neoconservatives prefer engaging in day to day politics to theoretical debates.

governing the use of torture and how torture has been used in GWOT. And in order to be able to examine the ideology's positions on torture, one needs also to discuss its relation to the individual. I sincerely hope that my analyses of neoconservatism and ideologies leave the reader better equipped to understand the full dimensions of neoconservatism today.

Some Words on the Object and Context of the Study

This study spans temporally four years limiting itself from September 11, 2001 until the signing of the U.S. Detainee Treatment Act of 2005⁹, on December 30, 2005. The study covers thus in this timeframe the intersection of the "Global War on Terror", the use of torture in this context and the neoconservative ideology. Further studies will undoubtedly undergo additional efforts to expose the effects of later developments, such as the Military Commissions Act which, in direct contradiction to the Detainee Treatment Act, "allows for admission of evidence obtained by coercion, opens the door to presidential authorization of abusive interrogation methods, and expressly immunizes administration officials retroactively against possible legal action based on U.S. laws outlawing torture" (Cooper, 2007).

Following the rhetoric of the Bush administration, members of Al Qaeda and other people the United States has asserted to be after since September 11, 2001, seem to be *hostis humani generis* - enemies of humanity¹⁰. If these people are seen as "evil" and universal enemies, does this mean they are to go without some of the most fundamental rights extended to all others? Some of the most fervent sources of criticism have been human rights organizations who have felt the United States' reactions to the attacks of September 11 and the foregoing attitude to "terrorists" have in effect meant an erosion of an entire system of international human rights and humanitarian law.

I can foresee doubts concerning the inclusion of the legal perspective in this study. This I will understand. As David Beetham (1999) has observed: there has been "an academic division of labour which has assigned the study of democracy to political science, and of human rights to law and jurisprudence: two disciplines which, in the Anglo-Saxon

⁹ Title X of the Department of Defense Authorization bill.

¹⁰ See e.g. Fred Baumann (2004: 69-70): "*at long last, the United States was prepared to defend itself, as well as the world, against an unappeasable, deeply evil enemy*"

world at least, have had very little connection with each other." (Beetham, 1999: 90) However, I might quote University of Southern California Professor Emeritus of International Law and Political Science Carl Christol to back my assertion that it is right to do so: "There is much truth to the observation that issues which at the outset have strong political, and in the present situation, both historical, cultural, and religious facets, end up in a legal context" (Christol, 2004: 28). I agree.

Admittedly, the legal analysis here may be of very little substantive (jurisprudential) significance, but – although it is below but a fraction from my original writing – it is not omitted because of its important connotations for any and all further studies of the subject. Beetham (1999) adds that "[d]emocracy and human rights, we now acknowledge, belong firmly together" and that they would best be studied as an organic unity rather than in some "empirical correlation or a matter of complementarity" (Beetham, 1999: 90).

Claims of criticism toward neoconservatism being only thinly disguised and heavily colored by anti-Semitism are abound.¹¹ These can easily seem peculiar from a Finnish standpoint and generally irrelevant and potentially racist. As a result, this paper will, in effect, disregard all possible religious and racial aspects¹² of representatives of neoconservatism. Criticism may or may not follow. Still, the fervor with which Joshua Muravchik (2004) attacks many of neoconservatism's critics as being anti-Semitic is noteworthy. Out of his thirteen page long article "Myths about Neoconservatism", he spends six pages in their entirety and parts of the remaining seven on discussing (or refuting) Judaism playing a role in neoconservatism. Irwin Stelzer, too, gets involved in this debate. I feel these precious pages could have been filled more analytically, and in a calmer manner.

¹¹ For a discussion on anti-Semitism and criticism toward neoconservatism, see Friedman, 2005.

¹² Indeed, I do not see any. From my perspective, it would seem as absurd to say that neoconservatism is a markedly "Jewish" political outlook as would be to assert that right-wing conservatism is a Christian one. In Irving Kristol's obviously well informed opinion neoconservatives include "a fair proportion of secular intellectuals" (I. Kristol, 2004: 35). Indeed, I want to echo Max Boot's words in asserting that "while many neocons are Jewish, many are not" (Boot, 2004: 47). It goes without saying that same is true *vice versa*.

Briefly on "Success"

My sincere intention is to remain both understandable and academically relevant in the account that follows. The structure of this paper follows from the definition of "success" by Alexander Wendt (1999) in his unforgettable volume *Social Theory of International Politics*, cited above. While the task is very hard, I will try to accomplish it by amalgamating parts of jurisprudence (international law providing for the backdrop for evaluating norms and/or universal ethical questions as well as definitions surrounding torture), psychology (the theory of cognitive dissonance providing the invaluable, though by no means final, indicator for potential discrepancies between neoconservative ideals and practices) and political science defining the overall architecture and design of this humble effort to construct explanation out of the bewildering wealth of information "out there". I undertake this enterprise cognizant of the high risk of remaining sub-academic in all three fields. Furthermore, I will approach the task spelled out by Wendt in reverse order. By uniting previously (more or less) distinct bodies of knowledge, I hope to gain some power to conclude with predictions that were not objects of an original theory before.

What this means in concrete terms is that I will first discuss the theory of cognitive dissonance generally, followed by a discussion on the theory's relation to IR, the study of ideologies and groups, the role of circumstances and, finally, some of typical means of reducing dissonance.

I will then discuss the different dimensions and phases of neoconservatism, making the case, i.a., for neoconservatism as an ideology. I shall also examine the core values of neoconservatism at this stage and some of their implications to the ideology. The role of Leo Strauss is also briefly touched upon.

The definition and nature of torture is discussed in the next chapter. In order to gain an adequate understanding of the implications of the use of torture, I present some typical traits of torture to the reader. These include preconditions to torture, the nearly universal prohibition of torture, the use of torture in GWOT and the relation between the individual and torture.

Finally, the aforementioned elements are brought together for an analysis to find out whether there truly exists a state of cognitive dissonance and what this may entail for neoconservatism. To analyze this, one needs first to establish certain ground rules following from the theory of cognitive dissonance. If a state of dissonance can thus be located among neoconservatives, a further discussion on the magnitude of dissonance and the means to alleviate dissonance becomes possible.

2 The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

Being concerned with series of basic human behavioral patterns, first coined and developed by Leon Festinger at Stanford University in the 1950s, the theory of cognitive dissonance can be used to analyze and explain why certain things are "tolerated" while others are not. Our use of the theory here is based on the notion that the neoconservative ideology's position on torture and the ideology's core values might be incompatible and collide, and thus potentially arouse a state of "cognitive dissonance".

2.1 In Search of Internal Harmony

Cognitive dissonance is appositely described as being "an antecedent condition which leads to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction", dissonance being "the existence of nonfitting relations among conditions" (Festinger, 1957: 3). In other words still: "[t]he basic background of the theory consists of the notion that the human organism tries to establish internal harmony, consistency, or congruity among his opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and values." (Festinger, 1957: 260)

To clarify the concept of cognitive dissonance further, an example: a person who smokes cigarettes is most probably aware of the health risks involved. Should she choose to continue to smoke over kicking the habit, a cognitive dissonance remains. To do what is known to be harmful or in conflict with one's ideals cannot be sustained without a feeling of discomfort that must be, in effect, "explained away". "Science has not proven the adverse effects of smoking beyond reasonable doubt" or "I believe the benefits of smoking in the form of enhanced pleasure, concentration and memory as well as decreased anxiety to outweigh the potential harms" could perhaps be used as ways of reassuring the smoker of the habit's harmless nature, in spite of the wealth of contradicting information.

Cognitive dissonance is not something exceptional, nor is its inception a morally condemnable thing. It is a state in which we spend a large amount of our daily lives: before and after having chosen one detergent over another at the local drug store, before and after having bought a house, let alone before and after deciding to engage in a

romantic relationship. Is/was it worth it? Is/was my behavior consonant with my ideals and ideas of self? The state of cognitive dissonance is indeed inevitable and human, and we all work it off by different means available to us. Most of the time we are successful, and sometimes we are not. What the theory of cognitive dissonance gives us in political science is a tool with which to examine the compatibility or incompatibility of two or more variables in political thinking. Without a doubt, there are many more useful purposes for the theory in addition to this.

2.2 The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance and IR

Robert Jervis has done remarkable and groundbreaking work in the field of International Relations (IR) and psychological factors. Among other theories of (Social) Psychology, cognitive dissonance, too, has caught his attention. In his classic book *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Jervis (1976) devotes a chapter to studying the value and usability of cognitive dissonance in IR. In his analysis, "[t]he central contribution of the theory of cognitive dissonance is the argument that people seek to justify their own behavior". He continues to note that "in constructing defensible postures to support their self-images, people must often rearrange their perceptions, evaluations, and opinions". Importantly, Jervis sees that in order to view their own decisions as having been correct, people may need to increase the value they place on what they have gained by a decision, while simultaneously downplaying the value of the rejected alternative. Even more critically, Jervis asserts that the consequences of dissonance reduction extend to other areas, seemingly apart from the dissonance itself. This is a natural outcome of dissonance reduction shaping attitudes and behavior. (Jervis, 1976: 406)

In spite of Jervis's efforts to promote further use of the theory, applications seem difficult to find in the domain of IR. Recalling that Jervis had noted in the mid Seventies that the theory clearly has explanatory power in relation to "a number of puzzling misperceptions" (Jervis, 1976: 382), this seems somewhat odd, but, nevertheless, still promising concerning its future uses. Indeed, Beasley and Joslyn have found that "dissonance processes may emerge within choice contexts despite (or because of) the presence of strong normative properties" (Beasley and Joslyn, 2001: 538). It is self-evident that most decisions concerning foreign policy, let alone the use of torture and

other issues inherently tied to conceptions of "morality", are inevitably made in the presence of "strong normative properties".

2.3 The Study of Ideologies and Groups

Is the theory of cognitive dissonance, created for the study of the individual and her behavior, not ill-suited for the study of an ideology or network of like-minded individuals, such as the neoconservatives in the United States? My answer is no. Jervis, having studied the use of cognitive dissonance in IR, might agree, although, admittedly, his main interest has tended to rather be individual decision-makers (and their cognition) than collective ideologies. Festinger (1957: 10) himself departed from the assumption that psychologically, opinions, values, beliefs and attitudes are all equal "knowledge" as elements of cognition. And ultimately, what else is an ideology other than opinions, values, beliefs and attitudes? Admittedly, some adjustment and mental strain are needed to avoid pitfalls in moving the object of study from the individual to a more collective level. This does not stop me from making a resolved claim that the theory of cognitive dissonance is not only "not ill-suited", but especially well-suited for the purpose of studying ideologies. Naturally, the object of study will be, in our case, an imagined average neoconservative, representing the ideology at large. This means that there will inevitably be some personal discrepancies between real-life neoconservative attitudes and the ones presented below, especially when attributed to "neoconservatism". I argue that this will be the case with any study of any ideology, however.

Concerning the foregoing categories of cognition on individual and/or group level, a brief reference to Raul Hakli's (2006) interesting article on group beliefs and the distinction between belief and acceptance seems appropriate. Hakli notes that a lengthy discussion on the use and understanding of group belief and knowledge has taken place. Concerning collective intentionality, Hakli says, there have been two types of analyses made. According to one, groups' beliefs, emotions and attitudes are simply metaphorical, a way of relaying the thought that all or most of a group's members feel this or that way. This fundamentally reductionist¹³ view is called the summative view on group beliefs¹⁴. The other view, labeled non-summative, gives in contrast "group beliefs an independent

¹³ "reductionist in the sense that they reduce group beliefs to individual beliefs" (Hakli, 2006: 287)

¹⁴ Or "acceptances" as I will later argue, echoing Hakli (2006).

ontological status" (Hakli, 2006: 276). The non-summative view holds that "belief attributions do not refer to combinations of individual beliefs but rather to something like an agreement of the view of the group". It ought to be clear from what follows that neoconservatives will typically claim the summative view, whereas my own understanding, like that of Hakli's, is that a non-summative view of groups' beliefs is closer to the truth, and therefore better.

Assuming a non-summative view has positive implications for the use of the theory of cognitive dissonance, too. Indeed, if there were no group views as such but only individual attitudes, cognitive dissonance could not feasibly be present at the collective level either. It would also mean that distinctly "neoconservative" ideas and ideals could not be found, only some very vaguely unifying themes or individual agreements possibly crossing many other ideological lines. Hakli asserts that in this "agreement-based sense, it is not a sufficient condition that the group members believe that *p*, and, indeed, it is not even necessary that any of them believe that *p*." What *is* needed is the understanding that all members of the group agree that *they as a group* believe in *p* being correct (Hakli, 2006: 287). Understandably, the case is much clearer if there is a party system, evidence of voting or similar expressions of opinion, and a clear mouthpiece for the movement. With all of these elements either missing or being contestable in neoconservatism, the case is weaker. Nonetheless, I argue that "neoconservatism" is a distinct collection of thoughts, an ideology, which forms its own distinct beliefs and attitudes.

Hakli also raises the question of voluntariness in his article. In making the point for labeling group beliefs group acceptances, Hakli argues that "group beliefs are under voluntary control of the group members, and thus the group itself, with the consequence that group beliefs should be classified as acceptances" (Hakli, 2006: 287-288). I agree fully, on both of Hakli's points: voluntariness and that it is right to call group belief acceptances. To clarify, Hakli lists five ways in which beliefs have been argued to differ from acceptances¹⁵. The first distinction is essential for this point, for it predicates that

¹⁵ It should be noted that Hakli (2006) himself opposes clear-cut divisions between these categories. One of the main arguments in his article is that certain misunderstandings on the definition of acceptance have lead to erroneous argumentation. Having said this, the five differences are as follows: 1) Beliefs are involuntary and acceptances are voluntary; 2) Beliefs aim at truth and acceptances depend on goals; 3) Beliefs are shaped by evidence and acceptances need not be; 4) Beliefs are independent of context and

while beliefs are involuntary, acceptances are voluntary. The theory of cognitive dissonance stipulates specifically that dissonance can only arise where decisions are made voluntarily; otherwise there is no compelling need to justify the action undertaken (Festinger, 1957).

Another important dimension of the theory of cognitive dissonance in relation to neoconservatism is its interest in social groups as both "a major source of cognitive dissonance for the individual and a major vehicle for eliminating and reducing the dissonance which may exist" (Festinger, 1957: 177). The existence of disagreement in a given group increases dissonance without a doubt, as the example given below of Francis Fukuyama's secession from the neoconservative camp will demonstrate. The group's potential to hold on to its conceptions will also be discussed later on.

In spite of Festinger's early remarks on the theory's applicability to groups, the theory of cognitive dissonance has been mainly used on the level of individuals. Its application has thus far remained somewhat limited on other levels, such as groups. This scarcity has been noted, and consequent research has slowly been directed to tackle this particular field (Cf. Matz and Wood, 2005: 22). Our point of departure here diverges somewhat from this line of thinking in that the potential source of dissonance we wish to discern arises from a gap between the ideals of an ideology, a collective entity, and the practiced behavior of the same. Therefore, whereas one can say that the source of this potential dissonance is the group itself, in fact the source is the discrepancy between the ideal and the real, not necessarily the existence of disagreement in groups as with Matz and Wood (2005).

2.4 Circumstances, Resistance to Change and the Extent of Dissonance

What are the circumstances, then, in which people find changing their behavior difficult, asks Festinger (1957: 25) before proceeding to answer this in the following manner: 1) Change may be painful or involve loss (magnitude of resistance to change determined by extent of pain or loss); 2) present behavior may be satisfying (resistance to change being a function of satisfaction obtained from present behavior); and 3) making change

acceptances are context-dependent; 5) Beliefs come in degrees and acceptances are categorical. (From Hakli, 2006: 288).

is believed to be not possible (irreversible action, no knowledge or ability to function in any other way; resistance to change not infinite but persistent). For neoconservatives in their approach to the use of torture, the first two alternatives seem plausible, but not the third, as it is obviously not impossible to reverse an opinion or approach to a given policy.

Jervis notes that pressures that would appear significant in a controlled psychological experiment might in fact seem slight in real life political situations. He explains this by way of competing institutional interests, political incentives, and feelings of duty, all of which obviously abound in political life, and all of which alleviate the pressures. (Jervis, 1976: 386-387) In spite of these weaknesses in the application of the theory in political life Jervis sees it, as was noted above, as potentially quite usable in IR. Jervis also notes that while the basic outlines of the theory "are not startling", some of the theory's implications are contrary to common sense (ibid.) and can thus explicate phenomena more than might otherwise be expected. To Jervis, one of the most exciting implication of the theory is what is called the "psychology of insufficient reward", which appears to persistently run against commonly held beliefs. This implication of the theory stipulates that the bigger the incentive given in exchange for a change in attitude, the *smaller* the change in attitude. Therefore, if, for example, two judges were to be bribed successfully, one with a very modest amount, the other with a significant sum of money, the theory predicates the smaller sum to be the more effective one in effective attitudinal change¹⁶. It may be rare that a judge would comply with an effort to be persuaded for a small monetary reward, but non-material benefits, such as the strengthening of important interpersonal relationships, seem slightly more believable. Jervis further asserts that this effect has been investigated with a wide range of incentives as to be considered real (Jervis, 1976: 399). What this finding gives us, in my view, is one further reason to look into the allegedly approving neoconservative behavior concerning harsh interrogation methods, including the use of torture, which at first glance seems to offer very few incentives to neoconservatives.

¹⁶ The example only being valid if both take the bribe. In his book Jervis refers interested readers to Milton Rosenberg's "Some Limits of Dissonance: Toward a Differentiated View of Counterattitudinal Performance" in Shel A. Feldman, ed., *Cognitive Consistency* (New York: Academic Press, 1966) for a fuller discussion of this phenomenon.

Beasley and Joslyn note that "the magnitude of dissonance increases when people face a choice between two relatively attractive alternatives" (Beasley and Joslyn, 2001: 533). They continue that "dissonance theory quite directly suggests that absolute attractiveness is important in generating dissonance" and that thus, "individuals making a choice between two attractive alternatives [...] will experience dissonance, resulting in a tendency to differentiate [...] attitudes" (ibid.).

Concerning environmental cognitive elements, Festinger finds (1957: 26-27) that the resistance to change socially constructed reality has to do with how difficult it is to find other people to support one's ideas. Another source of resistance which applies to both behavioral and environmental cognitive elements lies in the element's relationship to other cognitive elements. Festinger explains this: "[t]o the extent that the element is consonant with a large number of other elements and to the extent that changing it would replace these consonances with dissonances, the element will be resistant to change". Hence, a change in a socially constructed reality such as the view on a given policy would entail a silent bargaining including other political views, making the analysis challenging but all the more intriguing.

The theory also holds that past decisions may easily be "locked in" so that even otherwise significant amounts of dissonance will not be able to persuade the actor to choose otherwise. In international politics specifically, Cameron G. Thies (2001: 706) explains this as being an outcome of the normally high costs of changing policy in domestic society and the reputational costs of breaking international commitments. For neoconservatives, however, being, collectively speaking at least, outside the U.S. government, the international reputational costs may be of secondary importance and, ironically, sometimes even considered an added value.

2.5 Means of Reducing Dissonance

How far can dissonance go, then? Between any two elements, Festinger finds, the maximum amount of dissonance is "equal to the total resistance to change of the less resistant element" (Festinger, 1957: 28). This is the point after which the less resistant of the elements changes (at the very latest) and thus dissolves the dissonance.

However, this is not the only way to rid oneself of dissonance. As Ryan K. Beasley and Mark R. Joslyn explain, an “individual may attempt to reduce dissonance by adding consonant cognitions to the troubling inconsistency, decreasing the importance of the elements involved in the dissonant relationship, or simply changing one of the dissonant elements” (Beasley and Joslyn, 2001: 522-523). Festinger explains that decreasing dissonance by means of adding new consonant cognitions is typically achieved by acquiring supporting information and/or avoiding contradicting information and notes that this type of dissonance reduction only works when the contested decision is still relatively new, i.e., in his view less than two years old. In the study Festinger explicitly referred to, the decision concerned newly purchased cars, but this ought not to be of excessive relevance, as the basic mechanism can be trusted to work in the human mind in a dependable way relatively irrespective of the object of the decision. (Festinger, 1957: 50-52). It is also interesting to note that Festinger found out that the older the decision, the more people tended to forget or deny that they ever even seriously considered other alternatives than the one they ultimately went for (Festinger, 1957: 54). This phenomenon is closely related to the "spreading apart" effect, according to which people tend to increasingly perceive the chosen alternative as clearly better than the rejected one(s) once the decision has been made (Thies, 2001: 706; Jervis, 1976: 388).

A note of caution should be added here. The foregoing does not mean that there exists in every case a dissonance or a clear threat of one emerging. In fact, if very little or no dissonance exists, "there should be a relative absence of motivation to seek support or new information at all" (Festinger, 1957: 30). If this is the case, no such selectivity is naturally foreseen either. However, politics and foreign policy being a game of sorts, involving huge amounts of issues of credibility, this will seem an unlikely scenario for foreign policy advocates anywhere. Festinger also raises an important exception, namely that of past experiences guiding present action into more prudent conduct (Festinger, 1957).

Another way of adding new elements would be to "psychologically divorce" oneself from the previous action that caused the current dissonance. To do this would be to admit that if one were to make a given decision all over again, it would be different. This entails no need to actually change one's behavior while simultaneously reducing

dissonance. Of course, in political life such, admissions of one's false judgments can prove fatal, but not always (Cf. Press, 2004). In Festinger's terms, this will create a new state of dissonance whose maximum level would be determined by the resistance to admitting to having been "wrong". (Festinger, 1957: 28-29)

For some reason, admitting to having been wrong is not commonly considered a winning formula for making successful politics. In discussing relations among states, Thies notes that expending resources "increases dissonance and the corresponding pressure to believe that the policy is succeeding" (Thies, 2001: 706), even if evidence would indicate otherwise. Referring to Jervis (1976), he also notes that significant sacrifices that follow from a policy decision (even at the level of declaring war) can paradoxically increase the feeling of having made the right decision by making the effort appear "noble and worthwhile, despite any information to the contrary" (Thies, 2001: 706). Also, "winning" can at such a stage seem both more important and closer than ever, and giving up would, in light of the sacrifices made, seem foolhardy (ibid.). Another aspect of roughly the same phenomenon is raised by Tuomas Forsberg (1996)¹⁷, who points out that if a person is committed to something and believes in this issue with all her heart, she is not likely to alter her beliefs even when faced with cold facts. In fact, in extreme cases, Forsberg explains, the exact opposite is to be expected - for if others could be "converted" to see the issue in similar terms, no dissonance would have to arise (other than that from the cognition of not being entirely truthful, presumably).

It is clear, then, that human behavior is not simply backward-looking, but consists also of evaluating possible outcomes and effects of different available courses of action. Naturally, this is the stage where people tend to, at a minimum, avoid any increase in dissonance. This process is, however, as goal-oriented as any other form of human activity, as Festinger notes: "the seeking of support and the seeking of new information *must* be done in a highly selective manner. A person would initiate discussion with someone he thought would agree with the new cognitive element but would avoid discussion with someone who might agree with the element that he was trying to change. A person would expose himself to sources of information which he expected would add new elements which would increase consonance but would certainly avoid sources which would increase dissonance" (Festinger, 1957: 30, emphasis added). This is

¹⁷ Forsberg (1996: 22, footnote 7) refers to Festinger, Riecken and Schnachter (1956).

central to all political decision-making, including international relations, as the paragraph below will aim to show.

But first, if we find that cognitive dissonance is very common, as it appears to be, why should we care that there exists an occasional state of dissonance among neoconservatives? The answer lies in the fact that the neoconservatives, however far from a "cabal", form an important and influential interest group that will undoubtedly continue to make recommendations concerning policies that future decision makers will sometimes heed. It follows that it would benefit neoconservatives as all other decision and policy makers, if they could keep their minds open when trying to find the most beneficial way of conducting politics and foreign policy. Unfortunately, however, now coming back to Festinger's thoughts on initiating discussions with those who react positively to one's own thoughts and avoiding the company of the critic, in the words of Robert Jervis, "[i]ronically [...], the drive to see one's self as a better, more rational decision-maker will reduce the person's rationality by impairing his ability to utilize information and examine his own values. The person will take positions that, while consistent with his earlier ones, do not take full advantage of the circumstances he is currently facing" (Jervis, 1976: 406). In my view, it is this odd and incongruous effect that makes the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance especially salient to all politics.

To conclude, the rather straightforward theory of cognitive dissonance can be presented in three short bullet points quoting Festinger (1957: 31):

1. There may exist dissonant or "nonfitting" relations among cognitive elements;
2. The existence of dissonance gives rise to pressures to reduce the dissonance and to avoid increases in dissonance;
3. Manifestations of the operation of these pressures include behavior changes, changes of cognition, and circumspect exposure to new information and new opinions.

However simple this three-pronged explanation seems, Festinger hastens to add that although the core of the theory can be easy to understand, it has "rather wide implications and applications to a variety of situations which on the surface look very

different" (Festinger, 1957: 31). I will try to heed these wise words of caution with appropriate care in the sections to follow.

3 The Neoconservative Ideology

"Rarely in American history has such a cohesive and distinctive group managed to exert so decisive an influence on such a crucial issue as the neocons did on Iraq from the collapse of the twin towers through the early stages of the occupation of Baghdad almost two years later" (Marshall, 2003)

Peter Steinfels (1979) wondered in the late 1970s why this group of intellectuals¹⁸ with excellent ties to both industry and labor, the reading (and TV-watching) public, officeholders and the political elite in general, would so easily be dismissed. Unfortunately, this appears to be as easily done in the 21st century as in the 1970s. Despite vast attention to the allegedly neoconservative policies of the United States, the ideology itself and its deeper idiosyncrasies has remained relatively unknown.

Most scholars will agree that neoconservatism¹⁹ as a movement is exceptionally varied and heterogeneous in its composition (Cf. Fukuyama 2006a, 2006b). And, like all complex tangles of political opinions, neoconservatism cannot be properly understood apart from its history, as Peter Steinfels noted of the ideology in the 1970s (Steinfels, 1979: 25). In his article aiming at bridging the gaping distance between IR theory and neoconservatism, Michael Williams, too, notes that understanding the philosophical background of neoconservatism is essential (Williams, 2005).

However varied and heterogeneous, the essentials of traditional neoconservatism can nevertheless be summed up in a relatively concise manner, as former neoconservative Francis Fukuyama shows. He asserts that neoconservatism had "[f]our common principles or threads [which] ran through much of [neoconservative] thought up through the end of the Cold War: a concern with democracy, human rights, and more generally the internal politics of states; a belief that U.S. power can be used for moral purposes; a scepticism about the ability of international law and institutions to solve serious security

¹⁸ Steinfels estimated that roughly a quarter of the scholars on the list of "the 70 most prestigious Contemporary American Intellectuals" in Charles Kadushin's book "The American Intellectual Elite" (1970) could be defined as neoconservative (Steinfels, 1979: 5).

¹⁹ The term "neoconservatism" has been attributed to former leader of the Democratic Socialists Michael Harrington and others on the editorial board of *Dissent*, a leftist magazine. According to Lipset, Harrington denied having come up with the term for a long time, but has since admitted that it was in common usage among the editors of the magazine. Lipset writes the term was originally coined in the mid 1960s. (Cf. Lipset, 1997: 193, also footnote 59 on page 323, and I. Kristol 2005: 8).

problems; and finally, a view that ambitious social engineering often leads to unexpected consequences and often undermines its own ends" (Fukuyama 2006b: 4-5). Neoconservative Kenneth Adelman defines neoconservatism with even fewer words, as regards its foreign policy positions; according to him, neoconservatism is "the idea of a tough foreign policy on behalf of morality, the idea of using our power for moral good in the world" (Adelman in Rose, 2006).

Seymour Martin Lipset suggested that neoconservatism had already in the 1990s ceased to exist as the connotations of the label outgrew its original meaning, that of "strongly anti-communist leftists" (Lipset, 1997: 200). Lipset finds support in the notable neoconservative Norman Podhoretz, who also proclaimed neoconservatism "dead" in 1996 (Stelzer, 2004: 24). Since Podhoretz's manner of interpreting "dead" would mean that virtually all Cold War definitions would have to be thrown into the litter basket, I will dismiss this idea of discarding the term as a whole and insist on neoconservatism being alive and, sometimes quite visibly, kicking. Admitted, neoconservatism has changed its form and to my understanding even been factionalized, but some basic ideas remain "neoconservative" today, as Fukuyama claims above. Lipset and Podhoretz's spreading of premature news of neoconservatism's death can also be understood by way of interpreting what they saw as passing away as a transition to another stage in neoconservatism. My claim is that a change of generation of sorts rather than "death" is what took place when Podhoretz was beginning to mourn. One of Lipset's arguments for the death of neoconservatism is that mostly non-U.S. commentators have carelessly applied the term "neoconservative" to anti-statist traditional conservatives. These pundits have appeared to confuse the prefix *neo* with classical liberal and libertarian thinking and, of course, in light of traditional neoconservative thinking on domestic issues, not much could be further from the truth²⁰. Confusion could be added by the fact that representatives of distinctly anti-statist policy-making such as Margaret Thatcher are included in books such as Irwin Stelzer's *Neoconservatism*²¹, making claims for seemingly "neoconservative" policies.

²⁰ Consider in this light for example the propositions by Irving Kristol to President Reagan concerning federally funded stipends for all those below the poverty line and raising Social Security payments in order to help the financial plight of some of the older people in the U.S. (Cf. Lipset, 1997: 200)

²¹ It ought to be noted, however, that Ms. Thatcher's article *New Threats for Old* appeared in part II of the book, called *Neoconservatives and Foreign Policy with Some Comments by Friendly Dissenters*, thus not implying unreservedly that she be a neoconservative.

Luckily, however, I am not alone but find support for my assertion that neoconservatism is still alive on the "highest level" in the "godfather" of the movement himself, Irving Kristol²². Like Lipset and Podhoretz, he, too, noted around the turn of the millennium that neoconservatism had been absorbed into mainstream conservatism. However, he has since reevaluated this assessment and concluded that neoconservatism may only appear to have disappeared because it tends to "surface only intermittently". This notion of disappearance is wrong, Kristol explains (I. Kristol, 2004: 33). Largely because of the increase of the United States' relative power in the world, and because the 43rd president could unexpectedly relate to the neoconservative ideals, Kristol finds that "neoconservatism began enjoying a second life, at a time when its obituaries were still being published" (I. Kristol, 2004: 37). Again, these "reemergences" are those transitional moments which I claim mark the joints between different "generations" of neoconservatism.

As noted, there are some basics of neoconservatism hardly open to much critical debate. We shall return later to these in our search for neoconservative core values, but let us for the moment turn our attention to a brief history of the ideology, as an insightful reading of Steinfels' and Williams' analyses of neoconservatism obliges us to.

3.1 Evolution of a Political Outlook

Neoconservatism is an older ideology than one might intuitively think: Francis Fukuyama, for example, notes that the "neoconservative legacy [traces] its roots back to the early 1940s" and that it has since "generated a coherent body of ideas that informed a wide range of domestic and foreign policy choices" (Fukuyama 2006b: 4). Irving Kristol reminisces how "[e]ventually, by the 1960s and the early 1970s, something that was to be called 'neoconservatism' came into being as a new category of political identity for persons like myself. I found it a relief to be so designated and to be removed from that narrowing portion of the political spectrum labeled as 'anti-communist liberal'" (I. Kristol, 1995: 485). So with its roots in the 1940s, but in many ways a product of the 1960s, the ideas that neoconservatism represented gained significant momentum in the United States of the 1970s. At the time, this political orientation was considered in part threatening, in part promising (Steinfels, 1979). Neoconservatism again blossomed

²² Kristol remarks himself that he has been frequently referred to as the godfather of neoconservatism, see I. Kristol, 2004: 33.

during the Reagan presidency and resurfaced in the late 1990s, and really made the grade in the aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001, finding heavy resonance in the Oval Office (Cf. Stelzer, 2004).

While neoconservative writer Adam Wolfson doesn't explicitly advocate a division of neoconservatives into distinct generations²³, he does find notable differences between neoconservatives of the past and those that are active today (Wolfson, 2004), as does fellow neoconservative Nathan Glazer (2005). Indeed, Glazer seems highly skeptical of making evolutionary paths from the earliest neoconservatives to the present day advocates of neoconservatism and notes that there "is very little overlap between those who promoted the neoconservatism of the 1970s and those committed to its latter-day manifestation" (Glazer, 2005: 17).

Nevertheless, following Steinfels's assertion that neoconservatism cannot be sufficiently understood without an understanding of the ideology's past, what follows is a short chronological presentation of three neoconservative "generations", stretching from the beginnings of the ideology up until the 21st century. In contrast to Glazer, I believe that there are certain similarities to be found in all three generations of the ideology, thus justifying the label "ideology", however resolutely this label is opposed by most prominent neoconservatives past and present.

3.2 Three Generations of Neoconservatism: Left to Right

The First Generation: From Socialist to Neoconservative (- 1970s)

The first generation of neoconservatives emphasized continuity with traditional liberalism. Indeed, most were former liberals and even socialists by philosophical or political background, Steinfels (1979: 2) notes. In a similar vein, Murray Friedman (2005) notes that neoconservatives began as 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" (Friedman, 2005: 134). Eventually, neoconservatives of this age started to hold in common an until

²³ Max Boot (2004) refers to William Kristol and Robert Kagan as being descendants of the "first generation". His referral is, of course, mainly to family ties as both Kristol and Kagan's fathers Irving and Donald, as well as William's mother Gertrude Himmelfarb, have been notable neoconservatives long before their sons. It is certainly fascinating - but not part of the scope of this study - how strong the bloodline appears in the neoconservative heritage. Gary Dorrien (2004) makes use of distinct generations, similar to those used here, in his book *Imperial Designs*.

then quite odd-seeming mixture of themes from liberal, conservative and socialist traditions. Traditional conservatives saw these newcomers as not much more than "a schism in the left", and didn't consider them "an authentic variety of conservatism" (Friedman, 2005: 134).

The novelty of this controversial mixture of political views is arguably precisely what justified placing the prefix "neo" as well as the label "conservative" on the new ideology's lapel. These intellectuals began to perceive countercultures in the 1950s²⁴, and increasingly so in the 1960s, as utterly illiberal and destructive for liberalism itself, liberalism being in a way self-contradictory, for it provided the liberties needed to destroy the freedom-granting system itself (Steinfels, 1979: 4; see also Friedman, 2005: 100-115). Speaking of "suicide" or "self-destruction" of the West or liberalism has been a neoconservative metaphor of choice ever since (Cf. Kimball, 2006).

Almost all of the prominent neoconservatives of the 1970s were born in or shortly before or after the 1920s. For the bulk of them, the Red Decade of the 1930s embodied a debut in politics, and most became scholars or writers in the Age of Apathy during the 1950s (Steinfels, 1979: 25-26). Things that can hardly be expected to have escaped the notice of and, in turn, greatly influenced these "men [sic] that were changing America's politics"²⁵ include fascism's temporary triumph in the world and the frightening human void of the holocaust. Going into the Cold War, these anti-Stalinist former socialist intellectuals were not going to be duped into positioning themselves anywhere near totalitarianism as they had witnessed the horrors of such regimes relatively closely. In response, their Cold War war effort became efforts in the name of "Cultural Freedom". These hard-line anti-communist efforts were often run and paid for by what Steinfels called sarcastically "the espionage and covert-action arm of a Great Power", the U.S., but this seemingly paradoxical fact appears "to have distressed these intellectuals very little" (Steinfels, 1979: 30-31). Nevertheless, Steinfels attributes the "*mystique* behind all their later *politique*" to these two factors - the rise of totalitarianism and the future of socialism facing this threat (Steinfels, 1979: 26).

²⁴ Lionel Trilling "warned of the rise of an adversary culture, a culture in revolt against the ordinary norms of the society" in the 1950s (Friedman, 2005: 101).

²⁵ Phrase from the title of Peter Steinfels's 1979 book.

Some disagree with Steinfels significantly. Admittedly, the clear and logical text of Steinfels's argumentation can be interpreted in a number of ways. Nathan Glazer asserts that "[w]hen Peter Steinfels wrote in 1978 *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics*, he scarcely said a word about foreign policy". This is not entirely true, as much of Steinfels's narrative was about the primacy of the domestic system predicated over any and all foreign policy considerations. Describing basic neoconservative characteristics Steinfels writes, for example, that a "precarious international order requires a stable, unified society at home; renewed emphasis on the Communist threat and on the Third World's rejection of liberal values is needed to generate the requisite national allegiance and discipline" (Steinfels, 1979: 67). At that time, Glazer claims, however, that neoconservatism was more of a tendency of thought in domestic social policy, while later on, there have been "an increasing number of books on neoconservatives and foreign policy, bearing titles such as *Imperial Dreams [sic]: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana*, and many other such treatments of neoconservatism are no doubt on the way"²⁶ (Glazer, 2005: 17).

Glazer's assertion seems to be somewhat at odds with the unifying issue of anti-Stalinism or anti-communism, which would tend to direct thoughts to a large part outside the United States²⁷, but it seems indeed to a large extent true that, around the time of its consolidating phase in the 1970s, neoconservatism was indeed more interested in domestic issues than foreign policy (Cf. Wolfson, 2004: 216, Friedman, 2005: 120). Glazer appears to view this as a prerequisite for later evolution of the ideology: "[b]ut foreign policy was no part of early neoconservatism: Had it been, there would have been additional bases of division among the early neoconservatives. How the term 'neoconservatism' morphed from a political tendency that dealt almost entirely with domestic social policy to one that deals almost entirely — indeed, entirely — with foreign policy is an interesting question", Glazer concludes (Glazer, 2005: 17).

Initially, almost all neoconservatives were in favor of the welfare planning role of the state and the New Deal. Nevertheless, be it the ambiguous new term, some confusing

²⁶ Glazer refers here most likely to Dorrien's (2004) *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana*.

²⁷ Although it is not to be overlooked that socialism was surprisingly strong in parts of the US at the time, New York being one such place. New York was, incidentally, also the place where the "original" neoconservatives started forming commonly held ideas.

element or the surprising combination of political views, neoconservatives were generally taken to be supporters and advocates of hard-line right-wing domestic and foreign policies. In Lipset's reading of the events at this time, this meant in reality a simultaneous push from and pull toward two opposing sides: that from the old friends on the Left who now rejected them "categorically", and that toward their new appreciative audiences (at least as far as the subjects discussed were connective, as they often were) and new-found friends on the Right. (Lipset, 1997: 193-194)

The spirit of the newly established and catholic movement still politically very transient is well encapsulated in Jeane Kirkpatrick's 1979 article "Why we are not Republicans"²⁸, where she explains that the GOP is mostly an advocate for the well-being of the already well-off white upper and middle classes with no or little regard for the poor and minorities facing obstacles in getting by (Kirkpatrick as referred to in Lipset, 1997: 195).

In hindsight it would therefore seem that it was by no means clear that the neoconservatives would have to drift as far to the political Right as they appear to have started to do in the 1970s. One of their strongest passions, however, got clearly the strongest support there and also, arguably, the least support from the Left. This unifying theme was, naturally, firm and unforgiving anti-communism (Lipset, 1997: 194). By this stage during the 1970s, at the latest, neoconservatives were deeply involved in foreign policy discussions and handing out recommendations concerning the right way to wage the Cold War. And so Albert Wohlstetter, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Democratic senator Henry Martin "Scoop" Jackson aligned themselves against prominent Realists like Henry Kissinger or centrist Republicans and Democrats seeking to use arms control as a strategic means in the Cold War (Fukuyama, 2006b: 34).

A significant turning point in the neoconservatives' moving further to the Right seems to be the failure to capitalize on the success of campaigning for Jimmy Carter's presidency, which yielded no major posts and very few minor ones. The failure to perform after the elections must have been especially bitter in light of a list of sixty names submitted to the president-elect regarding suitable neoconservative candidates for the new

²⁸ Kirkpatrick did become a Republican in 1985, after having served in the administration of former Democrat President Ronald Reagan for some years.

administration's notable jobs (Lipset, 1997: 194). According to Friedman, neoconservatives were, in spite of their disappointment in the Carter administration's policy and composition, willing to aid Carter in the elections which he subsequently lost to Ronald Reagan. A meeting with President Carter in which notable neoconservatives were trying to get a feel of possible pleas for support, however, "did not go well", thus further alienating the neoconservatives from the Democratic Party (Friedman, 2005: 150).

So with roots in socialist thinking and with longstanding Democrat aspirations, yet today closely associated with the Right side of the political spectrum, one might think that the neoconservatives themselves had gradually moved to the political Right. Lipset writes, however, that Dan Himmelfarb contested this idea in the 1980s and claimed that U.S. liberalism had instead moved to the Left while neoconservatives had all the while stayed put. This interpretation seems slightly incredulous and just as one-sided as its obverse, but what matters here is rather that the gap between the Left and the Right seems to have grown in the U.S. and that, all things considered; the neoconservatives today are generally found to lie more to the Right than to the Left. (Lipset, 1997: 196)

Coalition for a Democratic Majority CDM and Committee on the Present Danger

The founding of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority was an attempt to move the Democratic Party more to the political Center and away from the Left (Friedman, 2005: 142). Although it preferred to be called neoliberal, Lipset called the CDM "the one important neoconservative organization during the seventies and early eighties". It dissolved as a result of the 1984 elections (Lipset, 1997: 198)

A closely related organ was the Committee on the Present Danger, designed to spread the neoconservative analysis according to which the Soviet Union had already by then (i.e., 1976) achieved "superiority in arms by concentrating its modest resources there". This threat could be responded to only by means of an ambitious increase in strategic weaponry, with freedom as "the ultimate prize" (Friedman, 2005: 142). Friedman learned ultimately to see CDM and CPD as a "government in waiting", in which neoconservative former liberals found themselves increasingly in the company of more traditional conservatives (Friedman, 2005: 143).

The Second Generation: the Eighties and Mid-Nineties

In addition to any and all disillusionments and disappointments relating to the advancement of many of the neoconservatives' own careers, neoconservatives had grown tired of President Carter's foreign policy, considered at the time "too soft". These to a degree politically homeless neoconservatives were, according to Lipset, consequently personally wooed by presidential candidate Ronald Reagan to support his eventually successful campaign. This time neoconservative efforts yielded concrete dividends in the form of nominations to prominent posts²⁹ and apparent loyalty from the neoconservatives' side to the Reagan style Republicans. (Lipset, 1997) Consequently, neoconservatives could claim "enormous influence" in foreign policy in the Reagan administration (Friedman, 2005: 122).

Echoing neoconservative concerns of the 1960s, around this time (early 1980s) Jeane Kirkpatrick was, among others, concerned that a new kind of politics was increasingly displacing the old way of politics - that of trusting authority, valuing tradition, avoiding open conflicts, and seeking consensus. Indeed, this seems very characteristic of the on occasion nostalgic attitude of the neoconservative politics (Joseph, 1982: 962-963).

In addition to good formal positions in the administration, prominent neoconservatives gained respected positions in the advisory bodies of the Reagan policy-making machinery³⁰. Furthermore, as was noted above, the most obvious unifying terrain from the start between conservatives and neoconservatives was foreign policy. It should thus come as no surprise that these nominations had primarily to do with foreign affairs. (Cf. Lipset, 1997: 195)

Admittedly, then, the Reagan years were a time of considerable influence for neoconservatives (Havers and Wexler, 2001). Neoconservative foreign policy ideals were compressed into "hating détente and arms control as well as despising the 'wimpish' European allies", as was characterized by Thomas Risse (2004). This policy,

²⁹ Jeane Kirkpatrick "was subsequently given the U.N. ambassadorship" and Richard Perle, Carl Gershman, Elliot Abrams and Max Kampelman were appointed to major positions in the State or Defense Departments. (Lipset, 1997:195)

³⁰ Richard Pipes worked for the National Security Council; Norman Podhoretz and Ben Wattenberg functioned as advisors in the international communications apparatus; William Bennett served as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and Secretary of Education and was assisted by Chester Finn and William Kristol; Gertrude Himmelfarb held a presidential appointment on the National Council for the Humanities. (Lipset, 1997:195)

complemented with the notion that arms control "had to be abandoned in favor of an arms race in order to ruin the Soviet economy and, thus, to win the Cold War" (Risse, 2004), was arguably deeply appreciated by the White House and later turned out to be quite emblematic of the Reagan presidency. According to Risse, these somewhat simplified and materialistic explanations of the winning tactics of the Cold War are still rather high on the fondest memories and greatest accomplishments list of the neoconservatives. (Risse, 2004: 226)

In spite of these apparent similarities and close ties with the Reagan administration, neoconservatism remained distinct from the Republican Party's ideology. Furthermore, there were significant breaches in the seemingly smooth relationship as well, as Fukuyama explains: "[a]lthough many [neoconservative] ideas were finally put into practice in the Reagan administration, it remained the case that the foreign policy establishment – the people who ran the bureaucracies at the State Department, the intelligence community, and the Pentagon, as well as the legions of advisers, think tank specialists, and academics – was largely dismissive of [neoconservatives]. Neoconservatives were also used to having the Europeans look down on them as moralistic naïfs, reckless cowboys, or worse. They were used to bucking conventional wisdom and going for solutions [...] that everyone else thought were completely out of the realm of possibility." (Fukuyama, 2006b: 60).

It may well be down to these internal differences of opinion and some major differences in domestic policies with the Republicans that most neoconservatives decided to continue to identify themselves rather as Democrats in spite of the numerous visible positions in the Reagan administration (Lipset, 1997:198).

It was therefore not until the very late 1980s when the Soviet Union began to visibly lose its grip on its satellite socialist countries that the neoconservatives really received any substantial, widespread recognition and a feeling of vindication that came with it. Many neoconservative ideas and suggested policies that Reagan had followed despite intense criticism from leftist and centrist intelligentsia appeared in the aftermath to some extent to have been the right formula for "winning" the Cold War, as opposed to "managing" it, as others would have seen to be fit all along. Fukuyama and numerous others contest the idea of such easy answers, but regardless of what it was that

ultimately "tore that wall down", what remains is that neoconservative ideals received far more kudos than before while neoconservatives could feel their confidence soar (Cf. Fukuyama, 2006b). To many neoconservatives, however, the end of the Cold War came significantly later than it did to the Reagan and first Bush administrations. Most neoconservatives were unforgivingly furious at successive U.S. administrations for allowing Gorbachev to have had any success in his "peace offensive", which was, in their minds, really only aiming at the same form of communist global domination as all other Soviet leaders had, as their understanding of totalitarian rule taught to assume. Therefore, according to Norman Podhoretz, if the U.S. did not seek strategic superiority, "the West would become Finlandized in the name of peace" (Dorrien, 2004: 13).

Others felt at this point that neoconservatism had already long been part and parcel of the Republican Party line. Perhaps in part because of this moment of neoconservative victory, notable tensions were felt within the party. As Havers and Wexler argue: "[b]y the end of the Reagan presidency and well into the Bush presidency, cracks were beginning to appear in the old Republican coalition of libertarians, neoconservatives, and Christian Rightists" (Havers and Wexler, 2001).

Regardless of the neoconservatives' party of choice, Fukuyama saw that lack of uniformity within the neoconservative movement reached significant levels after "the unexpected demise of communism in 1989-91, when unity on foreign policy evaporated and neoconservatives began debating among themselves the nature of American national interests in the post-Cold War world" (Fukuyama, 2006b: 39). A symptom of this debate is that two neoconservative heavyweights of the 1980s, Irving Kristol and Jeane Kirkpatrick, furthered the view that neoconservatism should transform itself to being "nationalistic realists" and pay minimal attention to everything except "America's vital interests" (Dorrien, 2004: 75). Assertions such as these could not have been heard before the end of the Cold War, nor would they be in the years to come.

It would therefore seem that even though neoconservatives have since adopted the view that it was indeed their recommendations that were the best formula for countering the perceived Soviet threat, the fall of the Soviet Union was as unexpected to them as to any other group of observers. Consequently, the neoconservative camp was left puzzled and confused, and even the usually provocative and quick Norman Podhoretz was left

explaining that "he no longer knew what to think" (Dorrien, 2004: 14). It ought to be noted, that whatever merit neoconservatives deserve for their policies on the Soviet Union, their estimates of Soviet power until the very end have later proven to be crudely wrong.

During the 1980s, Gary Dorrien writes, "the ideology of American global preeminence originated" and grew stronger during the 1990s (Dorrien, 2004: 1). This ideology then "gained power with the election of George W. Bush, and reshaped American foreign policy after September 11, 2001" (ibid.). And so it can be reported as having happened in hindsight that the confusion after the end of the Cold War lasted several years, and out of it emerged something new, yet distinctly neoconservative in the mid-1990s: a third generation of neoconservatism, which found its true moment after the tragedy of September 11, 2001.

The Third Generation: Late 1990s and on

Perhaps it is that the 1990s were a fitting time for a change in more than one ways. Indeed, a time that would be described as lacking grand strategy, and being marked by drift and indecision, does indeed seem typically perfect for new "big ideas". Add to this a brilliant economic development and the possibilities may have seemed infinite. (Cox, 2004: 29-30) The neoconservatives' impact during this current phase of neoconservatism remained, however, relatively limited through the 1990s. One of the most notable representatives of today's neoconservatives, William Kristol, affirms this and notes that little of his and fellow neoconservative Robert Kagan's work seemed to have much of an impact during the late 1990s (W. Kristol, 2004: 75). September 11, 2001, of course, changed this dramatically and lifted the thus far quite latent writings of this newest generation very much to the fore as there was "a lot more receptivity to the argument that the world was more dangerous than it seemed in the 1990s" (W. Kristol, 2004: 75), something which both Kristol and Kagan had been warning about throughout the 1990s.

Some observers disagree and claim that neoconservatives did in fact have a lot of influence prior to 9/11 and that already Clinton's second term saw some noticeable elements of neoconservative thinking amalgamated in the administration's thinking. This disagreement can probably be explained away in part by the fact that such

observations typically have been limited to domestic policies whereas William Kristol's own conception had to do with foreign policy³¹. Regardless of their (lack of) position in the Clinton administration, some neoconservatives clearly preferred Clinton's fresh idealism in foreign policy after the fusty realism of George H.W. Bush. Joshua Muravchik, for one, remarked that foreign policy stands are the more important determinant of a good president, and that on "what I care about - human rights and promoting democracy, keeping some sense of ideals in our foreign policy - Clinton is more amenable than [George H.W.] Bush" (Dorrien, 2004: 43).

Interestingly, even after the entire administration of George W. Bush has in the media been labeled "neoconservative" or as furthering a "neoconservative" foreign policy agenda so many times, not all political pundits agree that there truly exists a distinctly neoconservative school of thought among the neoconservatives as regards foreign policy: "Neoconservatism never really had a well-explicated theory of foreign policy in the first place", writes Marshall (2003). One particular sentence later in his text, I believe, gives away the reason he might feel that way. He observes that "[a]lthough it is the sworn enemy of realism, neoconservatism has never been and is not now limited to one particular foreign policy school" (Marshall, 2003). Admittedly, this is the genius of the neoconservative approach in many if not all fields of policy as it has never been confined to any one traditional school. Rather it has drawn from a number of sources quite freely, allowing for similar confusion to arise from time to time, and leaving several scholars, journalists and other observers confused as to the true nature of "neoconservatism". Dorrien goes further than most and asserts that even during the relatively quiet 1990s, when other observers had found neoconservatives mainly waging "culture wars", it seemed to Dorrien "that the foreign policy issue was the key to their identity and political future" (Dorrien, 2004: 2)

A certain diversity of views and, perhaps following this, a reluctance to be categorized, is visible in neoconservative party identification as well. As in previous "generations", so, too, among the 21st century neoconservatives there are those who identify themselves more as Democrats than Republicans. Arguably most have moved to the other side of the political fence and now identify themselves more with the goals and

³¹ According to Havers and Wexler in domestic issues, for example, limits of the welfare state were recognized by Clinton's White House "along neoconservative lines" (Havers and Wexler, 2001).

approaches of the GOP (Boot, 2004: 46-47), continuing the now close to traditional seeming slide along the Left-Right railing. For right from the start of neoconservatism, this appears to have been a strengthening trend: to start from the Left (sometimes the far Left in U.S. terms) and to gradually travel to the Right.

Individually, however, a shift in political geography looks unnecessary. "Most younger members of the neoconservative movement", Boot writes, "including some descendants of the first generation, such as William Kristol [...], and Robert Kagan [...] have never gone through a leftist phase, which makes the 'neo' prefix no longer technically accurate". Boot also writes that the term neoconservative has "morphed away from its original definition" (Boot, 2004: 47). Be this as it may - and I am not too keen on tight orthodoxies in any case - there really isn't any other label to attach to these neoconservative thinkers either. Of course, individually one can do what one wishes, as Boot describes Paul Wolfowitz doing by calling himself a "Scoop Jackson Republican", but this idiosyncratic method of definitional choice doesn't seem to carry one very far when more than one person is involved. I would therefore defend the conception that neoconservatism is a distinct "school of thought", even an ideology, as we shall see below. This does not mean that neoconservatism would not have evolved over the years. It has, indeed, changed substantively.

A trait that is prone to give rise to bafflement regarding neoconservatives is arguably their ability to disagree. For example, Stelzer distinguishes at least two distinct schools of foreign policy thought inside the larger neoconservative family. According to him, there are "neocon hawks such as Kristol and Kagan [as contrasted with] neocons such as Krauthammer" (Stelzer, 2004: 15). Where William Kristol favored intervention in Kosovo, Krauthammer opposed it; as W. Kristol and Robert Kagan support an ambitious Middle East reform through democratizing Iraq, James Q. Wilson and other more moderate neoconservatives oppose it. (Stelzer, 2004: 14; see also Boot, 2004: 45)

These divisions, and the actually quite minute breadth between the two types of concurrent neoconservatism, are exemplified by Krauthammer, a "democratic realist"³² who has said: "[w]e will support democracy everywhere, but we will commit blood and treasure only in places where there is a strategic necessity - meaning, places central to

³² In my book, a neoconservative.

the larger war against the existential enemy, the enemy that poses a global mortar threat to freedom... We are friends to all, but we come ashore only where it counts" (quoted in Stelzer, 2004: XV-XVI). W. Kristol and Kagan might agree but tend more often than not to be willing to go much further in their assertions, as compared to Krauthammer.

Kristolian-Kaganite Neoconservatism

The kind of neoconservatism we are primarily concerned with here - one which is seen as stereotypically "hawkish", i.e., hard and unforgiving in foreign policy - might be called the Kristolian-Kaganite version of neoconservatism, after William Kristol and Robert Kagan, labeled "neocon hawks" above. Kristol and Kagan have shared a lot to start with. Among their parents were three notable figures in the neoconservative movement (Irving Kristol and Donald Kagan being the fathers, and Gertrude Himmelfarb being William Kristol's mother). In the 1990s they cofounded *The Weekly Standard* magazine, and together they helped to make sense of the Republican disorientation of the Clinton era, through the battle of ideas. (Dorrien, 2004)

Discussing different types of neoconservatives, Irwin Stelzer, too, places "on the other end the Kristol-Kagan view", according to which "the 'purpose of American foreign policy ought to be clear. When it comes to dealing with tyrannical regimes, especially [ed. note: but not only] those with the power to do us or our allies harm, the United States should seek not coexistence but transformation'" (Stelzer, 2004: XV, "ed. note" by Stelzer, quote in quote from Kagan and Kristol in same volume). What seems to have alienated Francis Fukuyama from his prior base of neoconservatism is the "hijacking" of the term "neoconservative" by the two gentlemen mentioned above. A weary Fukuyama writes that because "the Kristol-Kagan agenda has become so indelibly associated with neoconservatism and was put into practice by the administration of George W. Bush, it is an uphill struggle to try to redefine neoconservative foreign policy after the fact" (Fukuyama, 2006b).

The Kristol-Kagan effort to renew neoconservatism was first laid out (systematically) in a 1996 article in *Foreign Affairs*, where the authors called for a neo-Reaganite agenda for the GOP (Fukuyama, 2006b: 40-41). Where more traditional neoconservatives such as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz long preferred to focus on the moralities of

their society³³, William Kristol and Robert Kagan have tended to make the case for an expressly expansive, interventionist and democracy-promoting set of foreign policy recommendations and demands. This tendency has sometimes been sarcastically called "Wilsonianism on steroids" (Fukuyama, 2006b: 40), Wilsonianism obviously referring to the internationalist ideals of President Woodrow Wilson. Some traits of Wilsonianism that are typically attached to the term were omitted by the neoconservatives, however. These include Wilson's infatuation with multilateral institutions (Dorrien, 2004: 119). Kristol and Kagan write that a world led by the United States is a better, more secure one. It is so primarily because a multipolar world would, in their interpretation, be "far less congenial to democracy and to individual liberties" (Kagan and Kristol, 2000: 24), signifying the salience of democracy and individual liberties as values well worth defending and promoting.

This Kristolian-Kaganite type of neoconservatism is distinct from that of the second generation in many respects. The late Jeane Kirkpatrick, a notable neoconservative of the past, for example, was scolded for claiming that the U.S. need not bear such unusual burdens now as it did in the face of World War II or the Soviet threat during the Cold War. In opposition to Kirkpatrick's assertion, the Kristolian-Kaganite model reply is that such a return to "normalcy" would render not only the U.S. but every other "free nation" vulnerable to new threats and instability. In fact, this is exactly what happened in the run up to World War II, Kristol and Kagan claim. The U.S. is supposed to act as it did during the Cold War even if there were no rival nation in sight that could challenge its power. Indeed, Kristol and Kagan feel it is absolutely erroneous to attach policies of the Cold War to hegemonic rivalry - they were to be implemented in any case for the sake of a stable and the best available international system - one which the U.S. stands for. A premium, or rather a benign side effect, was that it was also the best approach to counter Soviet power. (Kristol and Kagan, 2004: 61-63) Furthermore, whereas the father of William, Irving Kristol, had after the end of the Cold War called for limiting U.S. intervention to a select few "vital interests", W. Kristol and Kagan used a lot of ammunition to call for a much bolder "neo-Reaganite foreign policy of military supremacy and moral confidence" (W. Kristol and Kagan quoted in Dorrien, 2004: 128).

³³ For example, the themes that Podhoretz and Kristol tackle in Mark Gerson's *The Essential Neoconservative Reader* (1996) are quite different from those associated with the core of neoconservatism today. Their writings focus on racial relations, capitalism and the free society, social reform, the welfare state as well as pornography and obscenity.

3.3 Inter Arma Silent Leges?³⁴ Neoconservatives and International Law

Michael Cox characterizes this newest cadre of neoconservatives as being, inter alia, highly skeptical of international institutions. According to Cox (2004), "Reaganite by background, hegemonist by inclination, and keenly aware that there existed a growing gap between US military capabilities and America's ever-expanding global role, the new ideologues on the right were determined to remove all the constraints that they felt had been imposed on the last remaining superpower by the 'international community' in the post-Cold War period" (Cox, 2004: 30). Fukuyama agrees and notes that "[n]eoconservatives share with realists a skepticism about the ability of international law and institutions to solve serious security problems" (Fukuyama, 2006b: 64). More specifically on these newer neoconservatives, Fukuyama writes that Kristol and Kagan have asserted that "getting tyrannical regimes to play by civilized rules through agreements, international law, or norms was ultimately unworkable" (Fukuyama, 2006b: 42). Categorization is never as easy, however. Joshua Muravchik has been noted as being one of the very few neoconservative exceptions to the rule, alongside John Norton Moore and Eugene Rostow. Although it can and probably will adamantly be disputed by many, Dorrien (2004: 119) claims that these individuals are, in fact, committed to international law and believe in it. Again, the variation is far and wide – Charles Krauthammer's attitude towards international law is exemplified by one typical rant of his from the emotional aggressive realism point of view in which he says, according to Dorrien, that "[i]f bin Laden were caught and merely 'brought to justice', as the saying went, his trial would be a media circus presided over by fully wigged Scottish judges at the Hague" (Dorrien, 2004: 103).

According to W. Kristol and Kagan, the solution lies not in international institutions or in international law, but in three other means of projecting U.S. influence: "overwhelming military superiority; a renewed dedication to U.S. alliances; and missile defense as a means of protecting the American homeland from counterattack" (Fukuyama, 2006b: 40).

Ken I. Kersch (2004) presents a good example of neoconservative thinking on international law and how it is thought to erode the U.S. system, even from the inside

³⁴ Meaning roughly, from Latin, "*In the face of arms, the laws fall mute*".

out. In his article, published in 2004 in *The Public Interest*³⁵, he makes the case for extreme caution towards international law. His main concern appears to be that judges become "policy makers who take their cues from international popular or professional opinion". Furthermore, he fears that this could mean that "matters of cultural difference or principled disagreement", such as the death penalty, "would be considered problematic aberrations or disturbances within a rapidly integrating world system" (Kersch, 2004: 7). An even more ridiculous group of people (than social scientists looking to persuade the U.S. to comply with international obligations) are what Kersch calls "millennialists". This is a group with a "project aimed at integrating the laws and public policies of the United States into the emerging [global] moral order", without concern for U.S. interests. To Kersch, the most influential people in this effort to force the U.S. to integrate international law into national law are law professors, however. How legal experts teach advocates of various rights groups, for example, to make use of arguments pertaining to international law doesn't seem to cease to amaze Kersch (2004: 8-13). The results of these developments are to Kersch nothing less than that "the nature and path of American constitutional development will be radically altered" (Kersch, 2004: 16) - probably inestimably for the worse if you ask Kersch, for he is saddened to take cognizance of the situation: "Today, it is the sharp constitutional distinction between a sovereign nation and the rest of the world that is under intellectual assault" (Kersch, 2004: 17).

Here, again, as with other issues, we find a neoconservatism which is varied in its stances. Generally, however, the neoconservative answer to the rhetorical question in Latin presented above is in the negative: no, the laws do not fall mute only in the face of arms, they do so regardless of the presence or absence of arms in our world of anarchy. For in Robert Kagan's view, whereas Europeans live "in a 'post-historical paradise' of international law and cooperation", the United States is content in its unsurpassed role "in the Hobbesian world of history and power, where international rules [are] unreliable and social order [depends on] and [is] shaped by military might" (Kagan in Dorrien, 2004: 164).

³⁵ According to Max Boot "leading neoconservative magazines include *The Weekly Standard*, *The Public Interest* and *Commentary*" (Boot, 2004: 48).

3.4 Situating Neoconservatism, Finding Neoconservative Core Values

"If you ever read a sentence that starts with 'Neocons believe', there is a 99.44 percent chance everything else in that sentence will be untrue"

(Brooks, 2004: 42)

As the words of David Brooks³⁶ ominously call for the close to inevitable failure of this paper's purposes, the words of former neoconservative Francis Fukuyama give some solace in turn. For Fukuyama announces that "[n]eoconservatism is a coherent set of ideas, arguments, and conclusions from experience that should be judged on its own merits" (Fukuyama, 2006b: 13). This ought to make our task of both situating the ideology and pinpointing its core values less than impossible - perhaps even raise the probability of success slightly above the .56 percent in use - but it is interesting to note that neither Fukuyama nor anyone else, to my knowledge, has been able to present a clear, coherent presentation of neoconservative core values, fuller than a list of stereotypical stances. Fukuyama has a decent try in his 2006 book *After the Neocons*, but even this presentation falls short of calm clarity and conciseness - his recent and contentious departure from the neoconservative ranks being undoubtedly a contributing factor to this.

In foreign policy, neoconservatives tend to be linked with a certain amount of trigger happiness. Neoconservatives themselves like to think, however, that they do not rely on power alone in their efforts to spread democracy. Stelzer wraps up the approach as "[m]ore troops, yes; but more seminars as well" (Stelzer, 2004: 11). He claims further that the "neoconservative doctrine is elastic enough to permit the use of both hard and soft power, and to allow distinctions between non-democratic regimes that threaten us, those that support us, and those to which the Western democracies can safely remain indifferent, which pleases both neocons and traditional conservatives" (Stelzer, 2004: XVI).

³⁶ Brooks paraphrases here the famous advertisement slogan of Procter & Gamble's famous Ivory soap, little known in Europe. The industry giant's bar soap was touted by the manufacturer to have been 99.44 percent pure.

Concerning foreign policy, the Peloponnesian War is quoted as being the favorite "neoconservative text" (I. Kristol, 2004: 35-36). More tangibly, Kristol asserts that neoconservative thinking today is colored by the fact that the U.S. is currently unchallenged militarily, and that this fact brings responsibilities, welcome or not. As distinctly neoconservative "attitudes" he lists the following:

1. Patriotism is a natural and healthy sentiment, and should be therefore enhanced by public institutions. The U.S. draws special power from patriotism because of the country's nature as a nation of immigrants.
2. World government is a terrible idea, because it can lead to world tyranny.
3. One of the most important tasks of "statesmen" is to distinguish "friends" from "enemies".
4. For a great power the "national interest" is mainly not a geographical term as might be the case for states of a limited size. Larger nations have more extensive interests, and whereas their identities are ideological, they have ideological interests in addition to material concerns.

To give an example of the fourth, Kristol claims that the "United States will always feel obliged to defend, if possible, a democratic nation under attack from non-democratic forces, external or internal." Therefore, in contrast to stereotypically Realist thinking, no "complicated geopolitical calculations of national interest are needed." (I. Kristol, 2004: 36).

Regarding the aforementioned label "Wilsonianism on Steroids" describing neoconservatism in international politics, Joshua Muravchik considers Wilson's "commitment to multilateral cooperation [...] the 'hollowest' part of his legacy" (in Dorrien, 2004: 119). What nonetheless justified the use of the term was "Wilson's belief in the power of ideas and moral values in international politics" (ibid.). Tellingly, at the turn of the millennium, "[e]ven the realist-leaning neocons had messianic ambitions for the United States, and most neocons were idealists", Gary Dorrien notes. Furthermore, "[d]welling on crisis, and also thriving on it, they had a ready-made worldview when the second President Bush unexpectedly found need of one in the crisis of September 2001" (Dorrien, 2004: 16).

The Project for the New American Century (PNAC)³⁷ is often claimed to be a most influential center of the neoconservative "cabal"³⁸. PNAC was founded by William Kristol in 1997 to promote U.S. leadership in the world and has, indeed, been influential in shaping U.S. foreign policy since its founding. It seems, nonetheless, that the organization - so far with a maximum staff of five³⁹ and operating oftentimes as not much more than "Bill Kristol and a fax machine"⁴⁰ (Fukuyama, 2006c) - and its influence may have been overrated.

More concretely, yet in general terms, Thomas Risse has made an effort to situate neoconservatives in the field of foreign policy. According to him, three competing groups dominate that field in the (George W.) Bush administration. Here, Risse makes the case for two "unilateralist neoconservative" camps, and one camp stemming from George H.W. Bush's administration, with notable conservatives such as George Shultz advising his previous employer's son's administration as to the correct ways of conducting oneself in the world. Fundamentally I agree with the distinction, but beg to differ as regards the labels given to the more or less competing factions. In Risse's view, Vice President Dick Cheney and former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld represent neoconservative thinking. I cannot accept this notion, and doubt that the gentlemen in question themselves would either. Dorrien, too, notes that "[h]awkish unilateralists such as Rumsfeld and Cheney are unipolarists, but not products of the neoconservative movement" (Dorrien, 2004: 6). Interestingly, Risse points out that Cheney and Rumsfeld are, at the same time "aggressive realists" - a term which I feel quite appositely describes their foreign policy views. (Cf. Risse, 2004: 227)

Arguably the most common mistake in placing neoconservatives on a four factor chart is to take them for realists, as Risse in part does. It will be recalled that neoconservatism is, at the same time, considered "the sworn enemy" of Realism, as Marshall (2004) was quoted as asserting above. Figure 1 below aims to show at a glance where neoconservatives are situated in terms four factors when it comes to foreign policy

³⁷ PNAC's website can be found at www.newamericancentury.org

³⁸ Used ironically also in original context (Stelzer, 2004: 5).

³⁹ David Brooks counts five staff members, while Irwin Stelzer comes to only four (Brooks, 2004: 41; Stelzer, 2004: 25).

⁴⁰ From an audio of Fukuyama's interview in London in March, 2006. Fukuyama said "...quite honestly, the Project for the New American Century... people think of this... you know, monstrous conspiracy... it was really just Bill Kristol and a fax machine. And so he'd write these letters and he'd send around these faxes to all of his friends advocating a certain position." (Fukuyama, 2006c)

standpoints: liberalism and realism on the one hand, and unilateral/militant and multilateral/cooperative on the other.

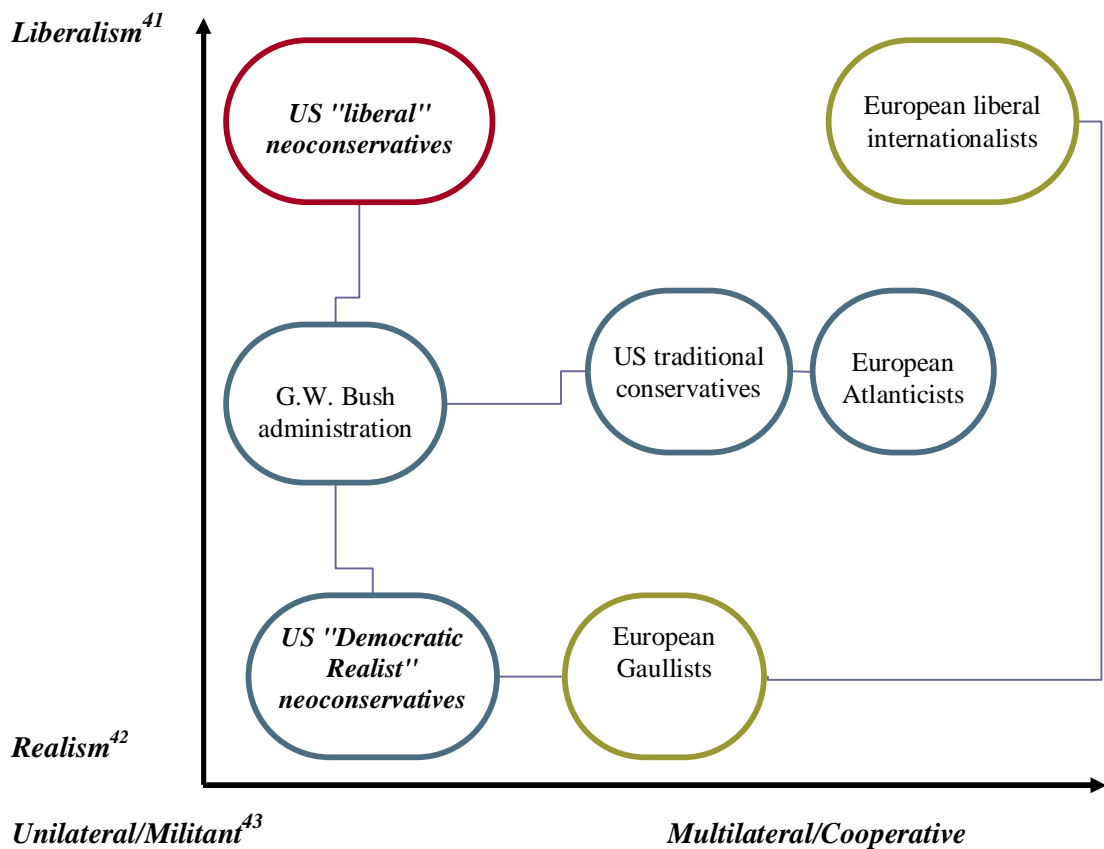


Figure 1: Neoconservatives on a foreign policy coalitions map, a comparison with some U.S. and European coalitions⁴⁴. Chart's contents only very slightly modified after Risse, 2004: 230⁴⁵.

What is important for the purposes of this paper is a twofold question: how and why (to which ends) ought power to be used according to these Kristolian-Kaganite neoconservatives? I believe the answer from a Kristolian-Kaganite view is this: it is in

⁴¹ Liberalist in this context manifesting itself in the will to promote a liberal vision, i.e. enhance the spread of human rights, democracy and market economy (Risse, p. 231)

⁴² "Realist" being one whose foreign policy choices are dominated by so called security interests (Risse, p. 231).

⁴³ Unilateral/militant being the tendency to use force in order to achieve set foreign policy goals, despite possibly lacking support from major allies or approval from the international community; multilateral/cooperative favoring the use and promotion of multilateral institutions.

⁴⁴ The European foreign policy coalitions, as devised by Risse, are included for reference only. See Risse 2004 for his analysis of the impacts of the presented differences for transatlantic relations.

⁴⁵ The main modification being to call Risse's "US 'offensive realist' neoconservatives" "US Democratic Realist Neoconservatives", a term closer to my understanding of the group and adopted from Krauthammer, 2004. Also, a group termed "'anti-Iraq War' coalition" on the original chart was omitted.

the United States' *nature* to do so, and the aim is to "create a benign, peaceful, and democratic world order" by the means presented above as especially characteristic of W. Kristol and Kagan⁴⁶. Furthermore, it is in the country's nature more precisely because "American foreign policy is infused with an unusually high degree of morality" (Kristol and Kagan, as paraphrased in Fukuyama, 2006b: 102). With reference to W. Kristol and Kagan, Dorrien asserts in a somewhat similar tone that "true neoconservatism was about the aggressive promotion of pro-American liberal democracy throughout the world" (Dorrien, 2004: 17).

Williams (2005) writes that neoconservatism tends to stress "political virtue" as a means of meeting the challenge of nihilism. Explicating this further he asserts that "neoconservatism seeks to rescue American culture through a recovery and remobilization of republican virtue" (Williams, 2005: 310). In turn, Campbell (1998) goes through several unifying points of view in explaining that, as seems to be the case for neoconservatives, for classical republicanism "human nature was flawed; faith was fragile; freedom was threatened. Under these conditions, virtue and constant vigilance were essential. But because peace and prosperity brought ease and indulgence, they promised certain decline" (Campbell, 1998: 122). Incidentally, Robert Kagan and William Kristol give a textbook example of these attitudes by demonstrating similar contempt for such, in their view ungroundedly unalarmist and self-congratulatory attitudes prevalent in the U.S. of the 1990s in their volume *Present Dangers* (2000), which provides its readers with a myriad of reasons to be on the alert.

Regarding this antipathy toward nihilism and the efforts to rescue American culture from "counter-culture", the 1960s left an especially deep mark into the memory of the neoconservatives. For them it was a mark of an exceptionally revolting era and it would be folly to say that they would then have been or now be at ease with the current system. Rather, it should be changed in such a manner that the obscenities - including the extreme vice of moral relativism, according to which "anything goes" - of the 1960s could not plausibly return or be perpetuated. In an exemplary clear neoconservative manner, Kimball asserts that *The New Criterion* "has commented often on 'the culture wars', the vast smorgasbord of intellectual, political, and moral havoc bequeathed to us

⁴⁶ These were "overwhelming military superiority; a renewed dedication to U.S. alliances; and missile defense as a means of protecting the American homeland from counterattack" (Fukuyama, 2006b)

by the 1960s" (Kimball, 2006). What I wish to emphasize with this example is the opposition to moral relativism represented by counterculture, a neoconservative core value up until the present day and beyond.

Neoconservative justifications for the war on Iraq also reveal some basic ideological principles. As an example, consider the words of Fred Baumann in the *Public Interest* in 2005: "[t]he case on legal grounds (a raft of unenforced United Nations resolutions), on national security grounds (Saddam Hussein's pursuit of nuclear weapons and his proven use of other weapons of mass destruction), and on moral grounds (his egregious human rights violations), was a strong one" (Baumann, 2004: 72). These three justifying elements appear to come up in the rhetoric of neoconservatives: national security grounds, legal grounds, and moral grounds, whereas it is to be noted that national security is to be interpreted widely, as global interventions where the current global system can be viewed as threatened, and that legal grounds can, to my current understanding of the neoconservative line of thinking, without exception be overridden by moral grounds.

Now, if one single thing plagues this arduous journey toward understanding the deeper elements of neoconservatism, it is the constant use of definitions left unexplained. Hence, I have resorted to explaining such instances that are left open to interpretation myself. Here, it is most obviously the concept of morality that cannot go unexplained. "Morality" is given four meanings in the *Dictionary of the English Language*: 1) *The quality of being in accord with standards of right or good conduct*; 2) *A system of ideas of right and wrong conduct: religious morality, Christian morality*; 3) *Virtuous conduct*; and 4) *A rule or lesson in moral conduct* (*American Heritage Dictionary*). The first definition is in my understanding a usable one, and I will consequently understand the word in a manner consistent with this definition. "Being in accord with standards of right or good conduct" would obviously require further speculation on the nature of "right" and "good", let alone the extension "good conduct", but we shall leave that to the Philosophy department. Suffice to say, there is an element of improvement in this definitional step forward.

As one further example of undefined assertions, Jeane Kirkpatrick's (2004) sarcastic effusion *Neoconservatism as a Response to the Counter-culture* on the United States

being the target of the rest of the world's undeserving criticism shows that neoconservatism is sometimes just overly hard to understand. In Kirkpatrick's use, such central concepts as "traditional American attitudes, values and goals" are left unexplained for the reader to figure out. Naturally, thinking of traditional American values, connotations such as the rights of individuals *vis à vis* tyrannical authorities and such spring to mind, but all in all, the article leaves more questions open than it gives answers to, if one is to make sense of neoconservative values based on her article. Is internationalism traditionally "American"? Is freedom of speech a decidedly "American" value? And if so, why should it be a problem that many in the U.S. opposed the Vietnam war - and this obviously was a problem to Kirkpatrick and her peers at the time. And what did Kirkpatrick mean when she wrote that "morality and American power were inextricably linked in the traditional conception" of the United States, and then continued to bemoan the criticism toward the country's foreign policy from outside the U.S. and also from within, in a scolding manner? (Kirkpatrick, 2004: 236-237)

As said, since the so called American values surface in parallel to undefined "morality" over and over again in neoconservative discourse, one needs at this point to direct her attention towards such values a little more profoundly. Furthermore, having argued above that neoconservatism has its roots in anti-communism (and perhaps reversely, then, "pro-Americanism"), the most fundamental neoconservative values can logically be traced back to the Cold War - this incidentally even more so taking into consideration the salience of the demise of the Soviet Union and the eagerness with which neoconservatives take credit for having ended the Cold War. Therefore, in unity with David Campbell's assertions, I claim that past National Security Council strategies outlining broadly the premises of U.S. foreign policy from an identity-based point of view⁴⁷ can disclose highly relevant information on "American" and, by extension, neoconservative values.

One of the most central - and certainly unchallenged in its guiding nature - strategic definitions of policy during the Cold War was the National Security Council document 68 devised in 1950 (NSC-68). NSC-68 outlined the mission of the United States and in so doing, drew from the "fundamental purpose of the United States", which was to

⁴⁷ For a full discussion on identity and foreign policy, see Campbell, 1998.

assure the integrity and vitality of America's free society, founded upon the dignity and worth of the individual (Campbell, 1998: 23). In a later National Security document, NSC 162/2, the genius, strength and promise of America was remarked to be founded upon dignity, equality and freedom of the human being under God (Campbell, 1998: 29). In addition, what any "American values" discussion obviously must boil down to in the context of the United States is the Declaration of Independence and the rights enshrined in this timeless document. As Lipset states, the United States' "basic values are still those set down in the Declaration of Independence" (Lipset, 2003:338). These values include, i.a., that all men are created equal and that they are endowed with "certain unalienable Rights". These may not be the conclusive or definite American values but, again, represent a major improvement as opposed to previous situation of no definition whatsoever.

3.5 Neoconservatism as Ideology

"Ideology is present wherever policy-making is present, and policy-making is the attempt to solve problems - or sidetrack them" (Seliger, 1976: 105)

Seymour Martin Lipset finds that "[n]eoconservative views remain difficult to locate ideologically [...] because the 'ism' was invented in an effort to label a diverse group of opponents. No one created a doctrine and called him-/herself a neoconservative" (Lipset, 1997: 199). While the foregoing is true of the term's birth and initial use, I remain convinced that something along the lines of a neoconservative ideology exists. Mildly supporting this opinion is Peter Steinfels's observation that neoconservatism was before the 1980s already "an outlook that insists on its fidelity to constant principles" (Steinfels, 1979: 25).

Neoconservative efforts to restrict use of the term "ideology" can, especially when judging from a distance, seem somewhat manic and to an extent paranoid. However, this denial can be most congruently found in neoconservative literature, according to which there is "no such thing as a neoconservative movement" (Stelzer, 2004: 4), neoconservatism is "not a 'movement'" (I. Kristol, 2004: 33), it is "not an ideology with party-like planks on every issue of the day" (Wolfson, 2004: 226), and "there is no set

of neoconservative beliefs concerning foreign policy" (I. Kristol, 2004: 35). James Q. Wilson writes that neoconservatism "is neither an ideology nor a movement [...], there has never been an organization to join (or attack)" (Wilson in Gerson, 1996: vii). Stelzer further notes with satisfaction how in one review of his book a Wall Street Journal journalist considered neoconservatism as "not a tightly engineered ideology" (Stelzer, 2004: XII). Would this mean, however, that it is an ideology, though not a very tightly engineered one? I doubt if Stelzer would agree, whereas I agree to the point.

Instead, however, neoconservatives consider it to be a "persuasion" with "a set of attitudes derived from historical experience" and "theses" (I. Kristol, 2004: 33-36), a "distinctive neoconservative sensibility" (Muravchik, 2004: 254), "an intellectual disposition" (Wolfson, 2004: 226), and a "neoconservative tendency", that has no central organization characteristic of a movement⁴⁸. And then, of course, there is the exception to the rule in the usually dependably obstreperous Max Boot, who does use the word "movement" to describe younger neoconservatives (Boot, 2004: 47). Joshua Muravchik makes another deviation from the ideology-rebuttal line in saying that "the prevailing division on Bosnia demonstrated that a distinctive neoconservative sensibility, if not ideology, endured, or perhaps had been reborn, after the end of the Cold War" (Muravchik, 2004: 254). Editor of the late magazine with a clearly neoconservative orientation⁴⁹, the Public Interest, Adam Wolfson also considers neoconservatism to have its "own distinctive qualities, its own style and substance, its own strengths and weaknesses" (Wolfson, 2004: 216). Neoconservative aggressive realist Charles Krauthammer favors the use of the word ideology outright: in popular understanding that the neoconservative attitudes in foreign policy are the only valid ones, he finds evidence of "the maturation of a governing ideology whose time has come" (Krauthammer, 2005: 26). From an outside perspective, things can appear quite ideological, indeed, even in traditional terms, as Zhiyan Cui asserts: "US neoconservatism is [...] forward-looking, even revolutionary!" (Cui, 2004: 246).

There naturally need not be any discrepancy here with the neoconservative assertion that they in fact "disagree vituperatively on just about everything"⁵⁰. Simultaneously,

⁴⁸ Norman Podhoretz in *Commentary*, according to Stelzer (2004: 4)

⁴⁹ But which covered a wide array of issues from a wealth of political angles during its existence.

⁵⁰ Except "on Saddam", according to David Brooks in Stelzer (2004).

there is also somewhat of a contradiction in terms of being something and nothing at the same time, if the generic assertion of non-movement is taken for granted and as a neoconservative "truth". Still, it is only when Stelzer adds that these foregoing "attitudes" do have "definite shape and form in the foreign policy arena", one is tempted to simply give up once and for all and start reciting Shakespeare's tritest instead. For neoconservatism truly appears to both be and not to be, from their own perspective. Nonetheless, "attitudes" derived from a common base of moralities that take definitive form and are used for political ends, are, to me, nothing more and nothing less than manifestations of an actionable ideology.

Stelzer explains that there are at least two reasons for this involuntariness not to be labeled a "movement" (let alone an ideology): first, since those who claim to be in agreement concerning some of the "non-movement's" principles also disagree to a "non-trivial" degree on "important points of policy", there could reasonably be no "movement". Second, many neoconservatives have "spent their lives" lashing out on "movements" such as the peace movement, the communist movement and the environmental movement, which apparently makes all neoconservatives ineligible for movements of any kind (Stelzer, 2004: 4-5). This is ultimately where a collision of opinions occurs between Stelzer's and, for example, Martin Seliger's conception of ideology.

Considering, for example, the heavily and undisputedly neoconservative Project for the New American Century's attempt to influence U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s, "there was a very public effort to persuade the U.S. government to adopt a view of the world that is radically different from that favored by the post-Cold War foreign policy establishment, but which nonetheless had roots in earlier American history" (Stelzer, 2004: 6). Is this not ideological work?

We need to come back to neoconservatism being an ideology but first, what constitutes an ideology? Should the opening words⁵¹ of David McLellan's book *Ideology* (1986) not scare one away from the subject outright, taking a moment to reflect on the meaning and background of the concept of ideology may be in place at this stage. McLellan notes

⁵¹ "Ideology is the most elusive concept in the whole of social science." (McLellan 1986: 1)

that in the hands of such writers as Mao Zedong, "the term 'ideology' took a distinctly pejorative sense associated intellectually with irrationality and politically with the concept of totalitarianism" (McLellan, 1986: 8). Understandably, then, because of all the unintended negative connotations most if not all neoconservatives define neoconservatism as a persuasion and not an ideology. Indeed, and as Steinfels (1979: 39) formulated his point, ideology can be used as or be suspected of being used as "shorthand for Socialism or Marxism", something that the present day neoconservatives would not appreciate.

This is an understandable misunderstanding. It is nevertheless unfortunate, for the term "ideology" was in fact first used in relation to late 18th century liberals in post-revolution France (Lichtheim, 1967: 4-5). And in its original context, the term was conceived of as positive and progressive (McLellan, 1986: 6). Admittedly, the history of a concept's definition may not make for a huge spellbinder, but, interestingly, these liberals ("ideologists" as Lichtheim calls them) were known to hold freedom of thought and expression in high esteem, placed "ideal aims" before "material" interests and would temporarily suffer an enlightened dictatorship that was leading the nation in the correct direction (Lichtheim 1967: 5). Lichtheim regards these political figures as forerunners to positivism, but one can easily see that the aforementioned values could quite straightforwardly be transformed into values which most neoconservatives would find close to their ideals of political aims. The problem with the foregoing assertion is, naturally, that it can also be argued to be accurate as regards most other ideologies, too. (Lichtheim, 1967: 6)

The hesitation to use the word "ideology" can be viewed from a different perspective as well. Daniel Bell, a prominent neoconservative figure from the 1970s on wrote a book titled "The End of Ideology", signifying the displacement of "ideologies" by something better - perhaps a prudent political outlook and elite-driven politics is close to what he had in mind. It might therefore be considered a major step backwards to start naming existing "persuasions" ideologies. Regardless of this rationale, I agree with Steinfels in that these recurring discussions on the ends of ideology⁵² can also be interpreted as being "simply another ideological position", made to appear justified by opposing

⁵² Comparison with Francis Fukuyama's seminal *The End of History and the Last Man* can hardly be avoided here.

"ideologies" (Steinfels, 1979: 32-43). In Bell's and Irving Kristol's view ideologies are to be kept distinct from "preconceptions" and they can be tested by the intensity of belief and resistance to revision. Steinfels rightly notes that while this may sound reasonable, it is not truthfully a distinction but "a muddle" out of which one is supposed to be able to make sense without having even crude definitions of the variables shaping the outcome of such an analysis (Steinfels, 1979: 43)

All in all, there seems to be something in human nature that makes us see faults in others with considerable ease, while failing to see such in oneself. At least so it appears to be with the use of the concept of ideology. As Kenneth R. Hoover (1987) writes: "[m]any people think that other people's beliefs are ideological, as if that were bad, but not their own" (Hoover, 1987: 4). John B. Thompson (1984) would be likely to concur, as he writes that ideology is "the thought of the *other*, the thought of someone other than oneself" (Thompson, 1984: 1).

It would be easy to agree with the neoconservatives' insistence that they do not represent an ideology if they abstained from involvement in the public sphere known generally as "politics". If this were the case, I would be more than willing to call their field "political philosophy"⁵³, but given ample proof of the opposite being the case, I will undergo some intellectual strain to explain why I feel this is not so.

Hoover contends that not all political beliefs are "ideological", however. Generally, he says, ideologies consist "of ideas about how power in society should be organized - ideas that are derived from a view of the problems and possibilities inherent in human nature in its individual and social aspects. All ideologies have some sort of characterization of the human condition⁵⁴ at their core, even if it is the denial that all people share a common human nature" (Hoover, 1987: 4). Hoover continues that to "understand an ideology is to see what the ideas about power involve and to understand how they are related to assumptions about the individual and community life" (Hoover, 1987: 5).

⁵³ Cf. e.g. Seliger, 1976: 115. Seliger asserts that the difference between ideology and political philosophy is that the latter is not directed towards political action directly. Seliger prompts to compare *das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto* to exemplify the difference.

⁵⁴ The American Psychological Association (APA) defines human condition as follows "*the positive and negative aspects of existence as a human being, esp. the inevitable events such as birth, childhood, adolescence, love, sex, reproduction, aging, and death.*"

To fulfill Hoover's requirements for ideology, then, neoconservatism would obviously need to at least attempt to answer questions concerning power, as well as the essential nature of the human condition. These requirements are met, in my opinion. Concerning censorship, as an example, Irving Kristol discloses some thoughts on the neoconservative ideals on the distribution of power and of morality: in his opinion, it is in this instance the "educated classes, upon whose judgment a liberal censorship must rest" (I. Kristol, 2004c: 178). Further, in his article *A Neoconservative Welfare State* Irving Kristol outlines what an acceptable form of welfare state would look like⁵⁵. Here, it is not the costs incurred, but rather the unintended consequences that advise Kristol away from welfare mechanisms. The amount of costs is, in fact, irrelevant and should not receive attention before it is clear what one wants to accomplish (I. Kristol, 2004b). Regarding the human condition, Irving Kristol says, quoting D.H. Lawrence, that pornography is an insult to a vital human relationship, for it treats human beings obscenely, and deprives them of their specifically human dimension (I. Kristol 2004c: 171). He also argues that "[man] has a unique sense of privacy, and a unique capacity for shame when this privacy is violated" (I. Kristol, 2004c: 172), and, in summarizing what neoconservatives think, Karlyn Bowman asserts that "[Irving] Kristol argues that traditional conservatives and neocons (but not libertarians) are equally alarmed by cultural trends in divorce, out-of-wedlock births, crime, drugs, and declining social mores" (Bowman, 2004: 266).

Irving Kristol looks back on the earlier days of neoconservatism and reminisces that "we [at the Public Interest] soon discovered that behind the hard realities of economics and social science were the equally hard realities of morality, family, culture, and religion — the 'habits of the mind' and 'habits of the heart', as Tocqueville said, that determine the quality and character of a people" [...] "this mode of thought took the form of what came to be known as neoconservatism" (I. Kristol, 2005: 9). I argue that these few exemplifications are extremely hard to take as individual observations of the human condition, but rather stand for distinctly neoconservative moral judgments of

⁵⁵ Consistent with the moral principles of "our" civilization; avoidance of unintended outcomes a priority. One such outcome might be that "young girls [who] permit themselves to get pregnant" see welfare as an opportunity to start households of their own - and because living on their own can be viewed as fun and conducive to making them more passive members of society, they should not receive any housing allowance but rather stay with their parents.

"right" and "wrong". And, as Seliger points out, "[a]ll ideologies are [...] neither paradigms of logical argumentation nor entirely illogical structures", and "[h]ence, in so far as politics implies the pursuit of policy [...] there is no politics without ideology" (Seliger, 1976: 99).

Thompson adds that to call a view ideological typically equals to criticizing it, "for 'ideology' is not a neutral term". (Thompson, 1984: 1-2). According to Thompson, the term is used in two different ways: following "a neutral conception of ideology", in which ideology is understood in terms of systems of thought and belief systems, and "a critical conception of ideology" in which ideology is linked fundamentally to sustaining asymmetrical relations of power, to maintaining domination. Thompson, for his part, defends the critical conception of ideology, which is where our ways will part. (Thompson, 1984: 3-4). Also Martin Seliger makes a distinction between two kinds of conceptions of ideology. The first one Seliger calls "the restrictive conception", the other "the inclusive conception", which, as Seliger explains, contains also "those conceptions which stipulate the applicability of the term 'ideology' to all political belief systems" (Seliger, 1976: 14).

A definition of ideology that meets Seliger's (and by extension my own) requirements is the following:

1. Ideology is linked to politics no less than politics is linked to ideology - ideology requires politics "as its mode of implementation while political decisions are always [...] related to moral principles";
2. Ideology cannot be separated from factual knowledge, tolerably rational justifications or moral prescriptions;
3. No theory of ideology can be adequate without taking into account overlapping of ideologies (ideological pluralism);
4. Ideology is *action-oriented thought* and thus its functioning (or perceived ideal functioning) has effects on its own nature. (Seliger, 1976: 15)

As regards Seliger's first requirement, morality, Roger Kimball criticizes in *The New Criterion* how the liberal experiment (especially with its flirtatious relationship to multiculturalism) has as its "chief existential symptom [...] moral paralysis, expressed,

for example, in the inability to discriminate between good and evil" (Kimball, 2006). Irwin Stelzer proudly defends the non-ideology position, by raising a point made by Suzanne Moore which can, actually, be used to counter the argument itself, as it underlines the neoconservative ideology's morality-based outlook: "Neoconservative thought is persuasive precisely because it presents itself not as ideology but as morality - and, moreover, morality charged with optimism" (Suzanne Moore in *New Statesman*, November 1, 2004, quoted in Stelzer, 2004: XVII, footnote 3). Without further explanation or definition, Stelzer himself also talks of the moral dimension of neoconservatism (Stelzer, 2004: 23). Stelzer also claims that the neoconservative road contains several forks, leading in opposite directions and again contends that there is no "neoconservative" path. This contention shows that Seliger's third point concerning inevitable overlapping of ideologies has not been understood. From my perspective, it is no ground for refuting the case for ideology that a given "political outlook" happens to overlap with many ideologies "proper". In fact, just as "overlapping of ideologies is inevitable", so is the only unideological form of politics a completely incoherent one (Seliger, 1976: 102-104). And as for the case of neoconservatism, Fukuyama argues, "the fact that neoconservatism is not monolithic does not imply that it does not rest on a core of coherent ideas" (Fukuyama, 2006b:14). Indeed, it does.

And so, in line with the usage by Martin Seliger and Alvin Gouldner⁵⁶, my intention is to use the word "ideology" in referring to neoconservatism in the fashion of a "neutral" or "inclusive" conception of ideology. For my purposes of clarity over a useful definition, Seliger's persuasive argumentation hits the bull's-eye in stating that "an [...] inclusive [...] conception of ideology [...] is justified in that it can be shown that politics cannot be reduced to argument over technicalities, but either proceed from or develop into argument over priorities, some of which are always a moral texture, that is ideologically determined" (Seliger, 1976: 17).

Seliger offers further clarity by adding three more general criteria for ideologies, all of which I find the neoconservatives to fulfill:

⁵⁶ As referred to in Thompson (1984: 4)

1. Not every belief system can be called ideology. Only those which *directly guide organized social action or analyze it for the sake of guiding it do*;
2. The main concern ought not to lie with isolated ideological statements but with *their being part of a system of beliefs*;
3. The term 'system' may be applied to the loose contexts in which information is placed and provided with meaning.

A belief system exists even if it is not defended in terms of logic by those who live by it. For a belief system's relation to ideology is, according to Seliger, equal to that of religion to theology. To sustain the system itself, theology (ideology) gives explanations to practices that are larger than their immediate significance and purpose (Seliger, 1976: 97). I believe this to be close to the meaning and purpose of neoconservatism today: to preserve ways of functioning politically in order to secure the change[s] needed in the political system.

To highlight the controversiality of the concept of ideology, Seliger takes note of Huntington, who has argued, that "unlike liberalism, democracy, communism and fascism, but like radicalism, the word 'conservatism' does not convey how a society should be organized" (Seliger, 1976: 92). Rather, the core of it would be to defend one or another *political system*. However, Seliger does not feel this to be adequate and reiterates points made by Huntington, such as the fact that each "ideology proper" turns into conservatism once its goals have been sufficiently solidified into a system. Also, an image of the past - in the case of the neoconservatives one easily thinks of the Founding Fathers and their ideals, or Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson (with some exceptions) and Ronald Reagan - can be the object of "conservation" efforts of conservatives - it does not necessarily have to be the reality of today. Seliger concludes his academic dialogue with Huntington by saying: "[s]o, contrary to Huntington's view, conservatism contains an 'ought' demand reflecting an 'ideational' and not merely a 'positional' belief." (Seliger, 1976: 92)

Finally, the point made here is rather that the use of the term "ideology" is not meant in the least in any pejorative sense, but rather a neutral and inclusive one. Whereas I understand the "restrictive" usage of the term where properly explained, I also call for

understanding of my selection of the proper use of the word in the framework of this limited piece of work in the spirit explained above.

I conclude this discussion on neoconservatism being an ideology among others with an example to lead us into the next theme, which is to address links between the ideology and the current Bush administration. Joshua Muravchik explains why neoconservatism was particularly appealing to the Bush administration as it was searching for ideological answers to a crisis: "[n]ot only did the neocons have an analysis of what had gone wrong in American policy, they also stood ready with proposals for what to do now", and, in addition, they "offered a long-term strategy for making the Middle East less of a hotbed of terrorism". What could sound more ideological than having ready made short *and* long term plans for such elementary political controversies? Personally, I cannot think of many such examples.

3.6 *Neoconservatism and the 43rd Presidency*

Many observers have claimed neoconservatism to be an extremely influential interest group or lobby in the current administration, even a dominating one. Let us therefore spend a while drawing a rough picture of the framework in which neoconservatives operate when trying to influence U.S. foreign policy.

Bruce Russett (1990) based his study of the U.S. president's powers in national security policies on a triangular relationship of powers:

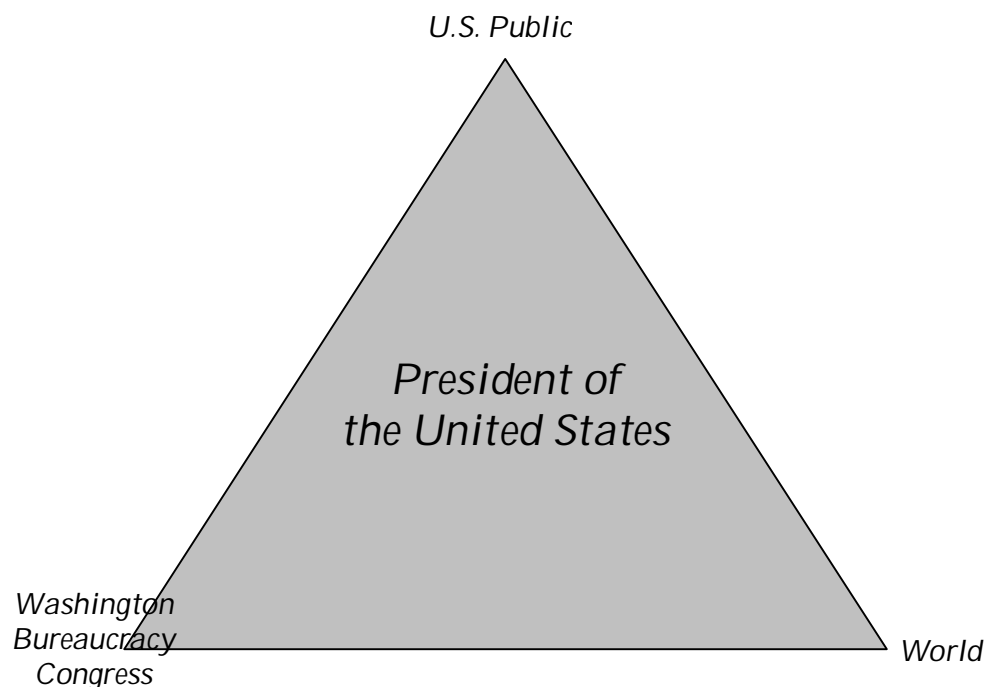


Figure 2: *The triangle of forces within which the United States president operates in foreign policy.*

Figure 2⁵⁷, simplified as it is, serves to show the interconnection between the different actors (or quoting Russett, "forces") which influence U.S. foreign policy. Obviously,

⁵⁷ Figure after Russett, 1990: 8; "Figure 1.1. The triangle of forces within which the United States president operates in foreign policy".

Russett remarks, a country's leadership operates in the world beyond its national borders and tries to effect change in that world (or, perhaps, to resist change and perpetuate the status quo). In turn, it is affected by the outside world and it inevitably encounters external actors - states, international organizations, multinational corporations based abroad, terrorist organizations - which it cannot influence at an acceptable cost, and it is subject to the efforts of those actors to influence its own behavior. (Russett, 1990: 7)

A similar figure could be made to represent the context in which the neoconservatives operate when trying to influence U.S. foreign policy. As Russett says, "Washington is full of people within their own bases of power and with much experience in using their power" (Russett, 1990: 9). Neoconservatives in the 21st century fall into this category with considerable ease. Leaving semantics aside, a taxonomy of three in the current Bush administration appears justified. This will divide the foreign policy "interest groups" mainly influencing U.S. policies in the 21st century into these three groups:

1. Aggressive realists who see the United States' role as world policeman to keep order in a system of anarchy;
2. Moderate, traditional conservatives who feel the U.S. cannot "go it alone" and are rather skeptical of the neoconservatives' imperial ambitions and nation-building implications that these imply;
3. Neoconservatives, who are prepared to use power to promote liberal values and construct a global order of liberal democracies, universal human rights, and capitalism.

These factions compete both inside and outside of the bureaucracy of the Bush administration, as Risse (2004) points out⁵⁸. To illuminate the context of neoconservatives operating mainly outside of the official bureaucracy, figure 3 below is derived from Figure 2 and represents the lower left corner of the first triangle - which we can call the "domestic corner" - in more detail:

⁵⁸ Though he does at one point differentiate between neoconservatives and the traditional conservatives by labelling them "the Pentagon party" and the "State Department party", respectively. This obviously leads one to think in terms of bureaucracy and the administration's inner tiers.

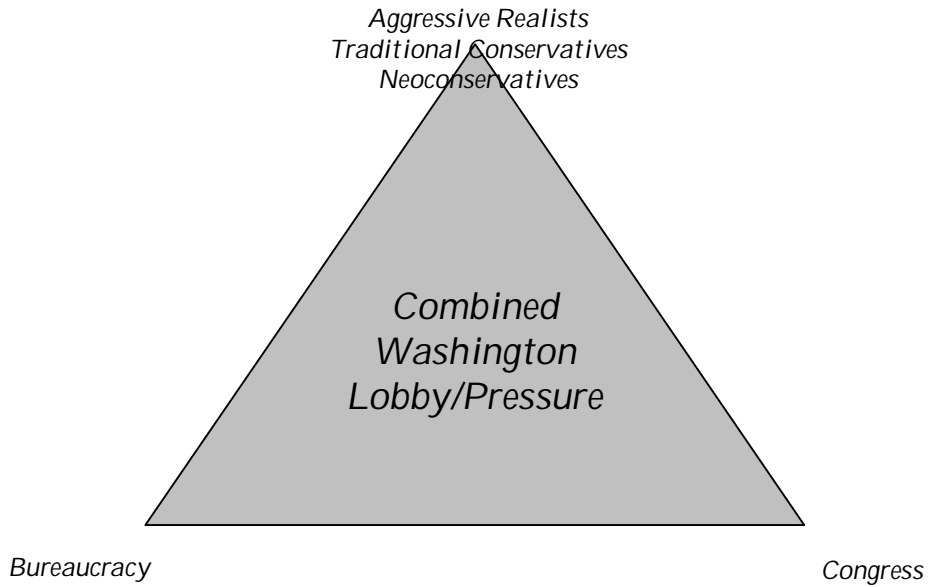


Figure 3: *"The Domestic Corner"; actors involved in Washington lobby.*

To conclude and give a clear understanding of the conceivable context of the neoconservatives, one can merge the two previous figures into one as follows:

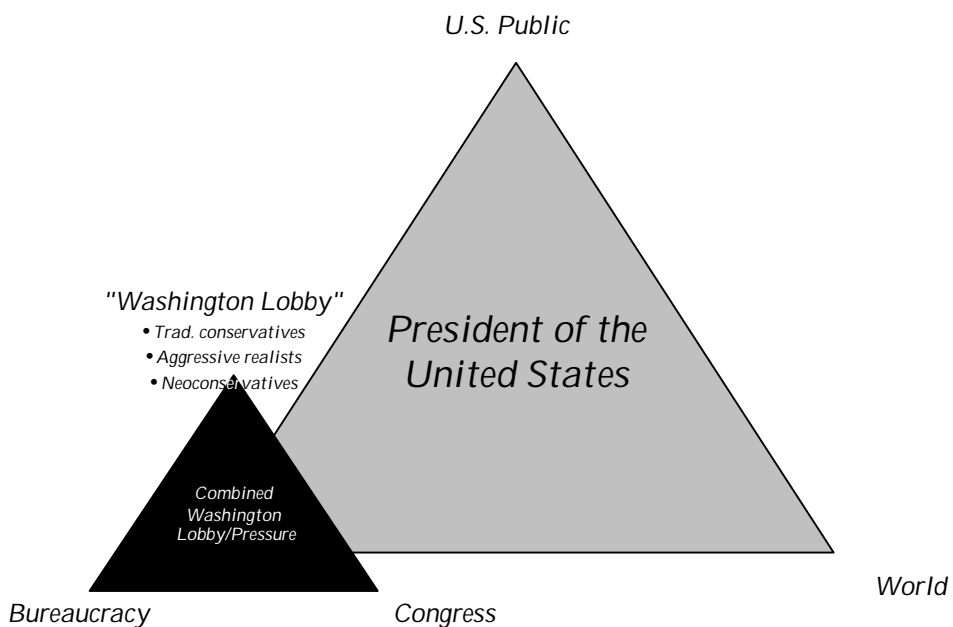


Figure 4: *Russett's triangle of forces in president's foreign policy with the "Domestic Corner"; actors involved in Washington lobby.*

In then moving on to ponder the extent of influence that neoconservatives might have on foreign policy issues in the context presented above, Daalder and Lindsay (2003) pose a blunt question: "George W. Bush presided over a revolution in foreign policy, but was he responsible for it? Commentators across the political spectrum said no. They gave the credit (or blame) to neoconservatives, within the administration, led by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, who they said were determined to use America's great power to transform despotic regimes into liberal democracies. One critic alleged that Bush was 'the callow instrument of neoconservative ideologues'. Another saw a 'neoconservative coup' in Washington and wondered if 'George W fully understands the grand strategy that Wolfowitz and other aides are unfolding.'" (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003: 15). In a similar vein, Daalder and Lindsay quote Senator Joseph Biden as saying that the "[neoconservatives] seem to have captured the heart and mind of the president, and they're controlling the foreign policy agenda" (ibid.).

This is not true on two counts, say Daalder and Lindsay. First, there is a fundamental misunderstanding of the intellectual currents inside the Bush administration and the GOP - neoconservatives are simply more prominent outside the administration. Inside, Dick Cheney and Rumsfeld (who is incidentally now outside the administration, too) are not neoconservatives, and neither is Bush. Rather, all three are traditional hard-line conservatives and assertive nationalists. What these two camps shared, however, was deep skepticism toward traditional Wilsonianism in its commitment to rule of law and international institutions. Both placed faith in power and resolve, not diplomacy or treaties. This understanding allowed for a marriage of convenience in casting the cold-war approach to foreign policy aside. The second and more fundamental mistake has been to grossly underestimate George W. Bush. (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003: 15-16).

Indeed, to many, neoconservatism has passed for almost a synonym for the George W. Bush administration's foreign policy, perhaps downplaying the role of the president. Therefore, a word or two on the alleged linkages may prove useful in this context. Fukuyama emphasizes the need and warns: "the connection [between neoconservatives and the Bush administration] is often overstated and glosses over a much more complex reality" (Fukuyama, 2006b: 4). Max Boot echoes this by saying that "the neocons have no representatives in the administration's top tier" (Boot, 2004: 45), gaining support

from Adam Wolfson who intimates that neoconservative influence can be easily exaggerated and that it often is knowingly so by hostile critics for their own purposes (Wolfson, 2004: 229)

Of course, there are clear links, too. Wolfson is the first to admit this: "Bush's politics and policies, it must be admitted, have, as did Ronald Reagan's, a certain neoconservative resonance", he says (Wolfson, 2004: 225). As a further example, Robert Jervis (2005) lists four elements⁵⁹ of the "Bush doctrine" which, in my judgment, might also serve as valid examples of neoconservative foreign policy points of departure. It therefore appears unwise and futile to try to refute that there is a relationship between neoconservatism and the current Bush administration. However, I will remain loyal to the (neoconservative) notion that the relationship is an indirect one, and that any other competing ideology could have won the attention of the White house after September 11, 2001. In other words, the Bush administration seems neoconservative because it chose to follow the ideology's basic recommendations – not because the administration is inherently neoconservative, or made up solely or even mainly of neoconservative individuals. It is not.

Joshua Micah Marshall (2003) explains that neoconservatives "may be powerful at magazines such as *The Weekly Standard* and think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute, but key movement figures such as Deputy Secretary of Defense⁶⁰ Paul Wolfowitz and Pentagon adviser Richard Perle actually missed out on the top appointments" (Marshall, 2003). According to Boot, the administration of George W. Bush might be most accurately called a "traditional national-interest conservative" one (Boot, 2004: 45), whereas Jervis finds that the administration policy-makers are "Realists in their views about how states influence one another", but "Liberals in their beliefs about the sources of foreign policy" (Jervis, 2005: 577). Boot acknowledges nevertheless that the National Security Strategy issued in September 2002 is a "quintessentially neoconservative document", and, strengthening my foregoing assumption, adds in a complacent manner that neoconservatives have been influential

⁵⁹ 1) a strong belief that foreign policy is to a large extent dictated by domestic regime and that now is the time to "transform international politics"; 2) great threats can only be defeated by new, vigorous policies, i.a. preventive war; 3) willingness to act unilaterally if need be; and 4) peace and stability require the U.S. to "assert its primacy in world politics" (Jervis, 2005: 576).

⁶⁰ Then Deputy Secretary of Defense, now President at World Bank.

not because of their position, wealth or connections, but because of the strength of their arguments (Boot, 2004: 48). The 2002 National Security Strategy formalized what has become to be known as the Bush doctrine in foreign policy. Its main elements are preemptive strike, the promotion of democracy, and military supremacy (Cui, 2004: 241). And as we have seen, these translate very, very close to neoconservative ideals in foreign policy. Zhiyan Cui, too, remarks many fully or partly neoconservative predecessors to these ideals, such as the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance by Paul Wolfowitz, and the 1997 Project for the New American Century mentioned earlier.

In truth, many of the most extreme accusations of neoconservative "conspiratorial" and nefarious influence on U.S. foreign policy are perhaps, as Adam Wolfson claims, less of an analysis of the true sources of Bush's foreign policy thinking than an attempt from political adversaries to discredit both the administration and the neoconservatives (Wolfson, 2004: 227). This seems a plausible explanation, and yet, although correlation does not equal causation, it is also clear that there is a distinctly neoconservative long-term influence involved. One such lineage is easy to establish, as Stelzer eagerly proves: "the views of the U.S. government [...] are a lineal descendant of a 'Defense Planning Guidance' (DPG) prepared in 1992 by Paul Wolfowitz, then Under Secretary of Defense for Policy" (Stelzer, 2004: 16).

Irwin Stelzer adds that the "close similarity between neocon policy proposals and the [George W.] Bush administration's policy on Iraq [...] may explain why many European and other observers consider neocons to be in control of American foreign policy". These observers ignore, however, according to Stelzer, to which extent events rather than ideology dictate policy (Stelzer, 2004: 14). I can agree with the notion of a European fallacy of seeing overwhelming neoconservative power in the administration, but argue that the difference between "events" and "ideology" is rather what Seliger calls operative ideology and fundamental principles, explained below. Norman Podhoretz feels that the "military face of [GWOT] is preemption and the political face is democratization" (Podhoretz in Rago, 2006). Manfred Steger sees the GWOT comprising of "an uneasy marriage" of neoconservatives and neoliberals or globalists who "felt they had little choice but to enter into a shaky ideological compromise with the ascending neoconservative forces" (Steger, 2005: 33). This marriage between

neoliberal economic policy and neoconservative security agenda was to mark the beginning of an "imperial globalism" led by the United States.

While it is absolutely essential to bear in mind Daalder and Lindsay's warnings that the neoconservative movement does not equate one-to-one to the highest ranking Bush administration officials or indeed the administration as a whole, and that the "neoon factor" may be somewhat overstated in current political discourse, it is also noteworthy and inescapable to acknowledge the movement's salient role in the administration's policies, most notably its foreign policy. A colorful way of stating the same is "[t]he neoconservatives have not always written the libretto [in U.S. foreign policy], but the score has in most cases remained in their hands" (Marshall, 2003).

3.7 Neoconservatives and the Individual

At the broad level, neoconservatives "view the idea that individuals have interests (and that they should be allowed to pursue these interests) as an important moral principle, and as a bulwark of individualism, liberty and a market society" (Williams, 2005: 312). However, this is only one half of the neoconservatives' attitudes towards individuals. Because individuals are prone to self-gratification that ultimately leads to life becoming "empty" and "meaningless", some limits on these interests in the name of social order is, in neoconservative understanding, inevitable (Williams, 2005).

The promotion of human rights - either as part of promoting liberal democracy in the world or quite separately - is widely attributed to the neoconservatives (Risse, 2004: 227). Paul Wolfowitz writes that a great accomplishment of the Reagan era was to preserve the State Department's Office of Human Rights. Consequently, in his view, human rights and the promotion of democracy can be seen as emblematic features of Reagan administration foreign policy (Wolfowitz, 2000: 319). These examples signify the great importance the individual and her rights get in neoconservative thinking, in spite of the aforementioned caveat. A further example is the caution with which neoconservatives tend to approach all attempts of social engineering, which they see as extremely prone to failure. This thinking tends to reveal parts of the important position

of the individual *vis à vis* the government, too, favoring the individual's liberties over the government's intentions.

Furthermore, it seems clear that in its efforts to promote democracy, neoconservatism is not just interested in promoting a system of governance, but more broadly the values that liberal democracy entails. We saw above that neoconservatism has its own ideas about the human condition and that it, therefore, has adjusted itself to a more careful standing on many aspects of "liberalism" or "modernity". This has some interesting effects on neoconservative ideas on the individual. As such, these thoughts are dichotomous: in the first place, it is human rights and liberal democracy that neoconservatives want to promote, emphasizing the importance of the rights of the individual *vis à vis* evil tyrants raging in the Hobbesian world. In the second, modernity and liberalism with their overly individualistic "anything goes" mentality is clearly a problem to neoconservatives, who favor respect for traditions and authority over freedom in some instances.

In an attempt to situate himself and thus the correct way of seeing foreign policy between Realism and Liberalism, William Bennett notes that "historical traditions remind us that American foreign policy has always been most successful when interest and principle converge" and continues that to Americans' great fortune, "historically, principle and interest have been virtually indistinguishable on the big issues that the nation has confronted" (Bennett, 2000: 290).

Conceding that he uses oversimplifications, Seymour Martin Lipset lists four variables that the United States emphasizes more than any other modern non-communist industrial nation, namely *achievement, equalitarianism, universalism, and specificity*. According to Lipset, the emphasis on equalitarianism, universalism, and specificity means that expectations concerning fair treatment according to the merits of individual cases or individuals' abilities are justified (Lipset, 2003: 213-214). In turn, Paul Wolfowitz lists four (neoconservative) principles that ought to be apparent in U.S. foreign policy. The first two are relevant in this discussion, as they concern, first, the primacy of democracy and human rights over "efficiency", and, second, strengthening "the international norms in favor of democracy and human rights" to demonstrate

reliance on "a shared moral vision of human life in the twenty-first century", rather than sheer practical necessities (Wolfowitz, 2000: 333).

3.8 Neoconservatives and Torture

Charles Krauthammer vented out his frustrations on the, from his point of view excessive, discussion on the ban of torture in the United States and the world in *The Weekly Standard* (Krauthammer, 2005). In his highly polemic⁶¹ article, Krauthammer describes the "enemy combatants" as being "entitled to no protections whatsoever" (Krauthammer, 2005b). He continues that "people seem to think that the postwar Geneva Conventions were written only to protect detainees", seriously misinterpreting the nature of international law, which would prescribe protections under human rights law in every case, regardless of whether or not humanitarian law steps in. It is unlikely that he would care if anyone dared point out his misgivings, for he goes on: "[b]reaking the laws of war and abusing civilians are what, to understate the matter vastly, terrorists do for a living. They are entitled, therefore, to nothing. Anyone who blows up a car bomb in a market deserves to spend the rest of his life roasting on a spit over an open fire" (ibid.). According to Krauthammer, "we" do not do this, however, because "we" are civilized. A civilized solution, bound by Mr. Krauthammer's understanding of moral duty, is to have an alleged "terrorist", or "miscreant", as he refers to these individuals, "hang by his thumbs" (ibid.). Tellingly of a wider sentiment among the subscribers of the neoconservative magazine, a *Weekly Standard's* reader's response considered Krauthammer's piece "a reasoned and eloquently written argument" (*the Weekly Standard* (2005).

Norman Podhoretz is as straightforward. He sees criticism concerning harsh methods as terribly unjustified and the resulting lack of intelligence the "only reason in my opinion" the United States is having as much trouble in Iraq. "You can only get [good] intelligence by *squeezing* it out of prisoners. That's all there is to it" (Podhoretz in Rago, 2006). Downplaying and redefining torture is also one of Podhoretz's tactics: "The things they're calling 'torture' have never been and have no business being considered

⁶¹ undoubtedly intentionally so

torture." In his opinion, then, the anonymous "they" are in criticizing "trying to make it impossible to fight terrorism". (Podhoretz in Rago, 2006).

Heather McDonald's article in the Weekly Standard also seems characteristic of neoconservative sentiments on the issue of torture. She too appears absolutely convinced that redefining torture is what the U.S. needs at the moment. She also explains that the responsibility for harsh interrogation methods lay elsewhere: "[t]he military began experimenting with such 'stress techniques' only after it became clear that traditional Army methods of questioning lawful prisoners of war, which play on homely emotions such as pride or homesickness, were ineffective in getting war on terror detainees to talk. The stress methods aimed to increase a detainee's sense of uncertainty about the interrogator's limits, and thus to persuade him to cooperate." (MacDonald, 2005)

David Tell, writing for the editors of the Weekly Standard in 2005, comes closest to condemning torture in neoconservative circles as far as I can tell. Tell sees many positive things in the rhetoric of the Republican Senator John McCain against the use of torture and, surprisingly, Tell contemplates the possibility that the administration's position⁶² on the use of torture could be "both politically and morally unsustainable". At this juncture, though, Tell falls back on safely neoconservative jargon and starts wondering "[w]hat makes everybody so sure the situation isn't just a teeny bit more complicated than that?" (Tell, 2005). Raising his eyebrows sky high, he wonders if it could ever have occurred to anyone anywhere what would happen if the rights enshrined in the Constitution and its amendments would be afforded to "terrorists". Insinuating a consequent catastrophe, he speculates with one particular case fresh from his own admiringly vivid imagination: a detainee – "a murderous foreign enemy" – who was denied entrance to the United States in August 2001 would have, if it weren't for his detention, according to Tell, been on one of the planes on September 11, 2001, slitting the throat of a female purser. To Tell, this is apparently more than enough evidence that his rights must not be respected. Tell most probably views himself a "progressive" in this matter, however, as his conclusion is that "a serious, detailed, public debate about how, exactly, a civilized country is really supposed to deal with

⁶² At the time, there was a heated ongoing discussion on McCain's proposal to ban all forms of torture, which the White House threatened to veto.

such men once it's caught them" is needed, as "[w]e haven't figured it out yet, that much is clear" (Tell, 2005).

As was mentioned earlier in this paper, a look into the imaginable rewards of an approving neoconservative attitude concerning harsh interrogation methods, including the use of torture, would be beneficial in light of the "psychology of insufficient reward" phenomenon presented above. The reasons for condoning torture seem scarce to begin with. Alternatively, they seem only justified by layman psychology or common sense generalizations, such as condoning harsh methods, including torture, being simply an extension of "Wilsonianism on Steroids". Further and more careful studies are needed to find the true rewards and punishments in play, but it seems obvious that the need to remain committed to what became known as a neoconservative doctrine, quickly labeled "the Bush doctrine" by many observers, and implemented by the administration, carried the perk of being able to maintain ownership and certain guidance of the doctrine. Departures from the customary policy line could possibly have rendered this ownership less plausible and open to suspicion⁶³.

Interestingly, though, the neoconservative attitude towards torture *can* be as condemning as it can be condoning. Concerning torture in the hands of a "tyrant", it is utterly abhorred, as well as used as a justification to intervene. Most notably, such neoconservative statements abound concerning the discussion prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq⁶⁴.

Astonishingly, amidst all controversy of torture in the hands of U.S. agents, James G. Poulos presents yet another dimension of viewing torture, only this time, it is torture on film. In parallel to Irving Kristol's blanching at the idea of torturing even a willing masochist on stage, Poulos finds that new forms of horror and torture on the silver screen "[invade] the human soul and [allow] evil to triumph over the dignity of the human" (Poulos, 2006). It is, in a word, incredible that the neoconservative narrative on

⁶³ Interestingly, as the Iraq war became less and less popular in the U.S., neoconservatives did start to question the administration's implementation of the ideology's plans. Nothing implies that this could not have happened in the case of torture, but the public has seemed to be, to a large extent, satisfied with the reasoning of the Bush team on this issue.

⁶⁴ Cf. e.g. Kaplan and W. Kristol (2003), Chapter 1, pp. 3-14.

torture can continue in such a dichotomous manner. Yet, this seems exactly what the neoconservative narrative on torture is about.

The foregoing passages on morality, principle and interest that tend to coincide at least in neoconservative *thinking* aim to prove that the neoconservatives claim to be genuinely concerned for human rights inseparable in liberal democracies. Combined with the understanding that torture is all but universally condemned and bindingly prohibited in all cases, I feel it justified to expect statements denouncing the use of torture in all cases arising from the fundamentals of neoconservatism.

3.9 Liberal democracy exigencies, "American values?"

As the neoconservative rhetoric is filled with referrals to "liberal democracy" and its promotion, and as this is undoubtedly one of the ideology's core values, it is necessary to pause a while to reflect on the "exigencies" of liberal democracy: what does it mean to defend and promote such a system of governance? Lauri Karvonen has valuable insights on the matter. In his view, the majority principle does not go very far as far as modern liberal democracy is concerned. Indeed, while rule of the majority is historically the most basic definition of democracy, Karvonen notes that there are "*inalienable rights* that belong to each individual and which are not to be breached or abolished even if such a measure would be the result of a majority decision. An *independent judiciary* is a mechanism through which a democracy monitors itself. These limitations on majority rule encapsulate the essential of the idea of the state governed by law."⁶⁵ (Karvonen, 1997: 22)

In his book *Democracy and Human Rights*, David Beetham distinguishes five indispensable elements of liberalism in democracy, making the case for liberal democracy. I find that one of the five elements is directly related and as such of great importance to this study of what liberal democracy entails for neoconservatism in relation to torture. Namely, Beetham deems an institutional separation of powers

⁶⁵ My translation to English. Karvonen's (1997) original text in Swedish: "*oförytterliga rättigheter* som tillkommer varje individ och som inte får kränkas eller avskaffas även om en sådan åtgärd skulle tillkomma genom ett majoritetsbeslut. Ett *oavhängigt domstolsväsende* är en mekanism varigenom en demokrati övervakar sig själv. Dessa begränsningar av majoritetens makt uppfångar det centrala i *rättsstatsidén*."

between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary elementary for the realization of the "rule of law". Therein lies the question of the guarantee of a fair trial and due process, which I claim all uses of torture undermine (Beetham, 1999: 35). Beetham also makes an insightful observation concerning the liberal in *liberal democracy* and writes: "attempts to abolish these liberal features in the name of a more perfect democracy have only succeeded in undermining the democracy in whose name they were attacked." (Beetham, 1999: 36)

A "torture-friendly" approach to amending the workings of a liberal democracy would probably seek justification in that it is for the collective good - a justification which Beetham also uses as one typical example to "attack" individual rights. Beetham proceeds to say that whatever the good intentions, such projects have on average only "succeeded in cutting the democratic ground from under their feet". The reason for this, according to Beetham, is that democracy is a set of arrangements for securing people's control over the decision-making system, not for securing the right to decide whatever suits them best at a given moment. (Beetham, 1999: 36)

If we are discussing democracies, liberal or not, are they not - and the rights endowed by them - not really designed only to meet the demands and needs of citizens of their sovereign home countries? The most flagrant alleged cases of torture in U.S. hands have been cases where the person allegedly subjected to torture has been a "foreigner" from a U.S. perspective. Does this affect our reasoning and does this leave U.S. democracy intact in spite of alleged torture cases where victims are not U.S. citizens? The answer to both these questions is: not really. The idea of human rights has, as Beetham notes, "from the outset been universalist in aspiration and global in its scope of operation." And again, "as the term 'human' indicates, these are entitlements ascribed to human beings everywhere" (Beetham, 1999: 137). Furthermore, "[h]uman rights [...] take the individual as their point of reference, and seek to guarantee to individuals the minimum necessary conditions for pursuing a distinctively human life" (Beetham, 1999: 90). Therefore the individual and her position are central in discussions of liberal democracy and its promotion.

3.10 The Role of Leo Strauss

The neoconservatives' "trouble with modernity" is often connected with the influence of Leo Strauss⁶⁶, author of 15 books mainly on the giants of political philosophy and their veiled and edifying meanings. Strauss can with confidence be said to have been of greatest interest to neoconservatives, especially representatives of the earlier generations. Boot, for example, notes that some early neoconservatives were influenced by him directly, but that few of today's neoconservatives could be said to (Boot, 2004: 51). William Kristol of the younger neoconservatives can arguably be counted as belonging to the select few, as he was "schooled in Straussian theory", according to Dorrien (2004: 132). The continuing emphasis on Strauss's role can perhaps be attributed to the fact that the defense of values seems to have been especially dear to Strauss (Meier, 2006) – a feature which can be found most agreeable to contemporary neoconservatives, too.

Steven Lenzner and William Kristol give an account of Strauss's work in the Public Interest, and assert thus when closing in for their conclusion of the otherwise seemingly apolitical article: "President Bush's advocacy of 'regime change' [...] is a not altogether unworthy product of Strauss's rehabilitation of the notion of regime" (Lenzner and Kristol, 2003: 38)⁶⁷. Naturally, statements such as this are likely to spur interest in Strauss's role further.

What tends to fascinate many in Strauss's alleged influence in neoconservatism, is also that some of the most undemocratic and elitist traits said to be found in neoconservatism are casually attributed to him. Given that he never really actively spoke for or against real life politics – except along the broad lines of liberal democracy being generally good and fascism and tyranny evil – neoconservatives have had little trouble shooting down such criticism. There are, however, important direct personal linkages between some, admittedly only a handful, neoconservatives and Strauss, as well as some obvious links between Strauss' thoughts on ideal types of governance derived from historic texts and neoconservative ideals. At a very minimum, one can easily assert that such ideals would appear to have had great appeal to neoconservatives. One such thought is that of

⁶⁶ Francis Fukuyama vents out that "[m]ore nonsense has been written about Leo Strauss and the Iraq war" than most other subjects. (Fukuyama, 2006b)

⁶⁷ Could Lenzner and Kristol have resisted the temptation to use some of Strauss's favored exotericism techniques in the texts, if only to make a point? Perhaps this example of "popular and edifying teaching" concerning the current administration would need to be interpreted against other elements of the text, too.

civic virtue, which Strauss saw threatened by liberalism's tendency for immediate "self-interest and libertinism". A better and perhaps nobler way of informed guidance to virtue, rather than merely providing the framework in which to individually "pursue happiness", had in previous times been the goal of public policy. Strauss's skepticism toward tyranny and world government also finds resonance in neoconservative skepticism toward supranational institutions such as the UN (Weinstein, 2004: 210). Neoconservative skepticism toward international law can, by extension, be attributed partly to Strauss, too.

I agree with Williams on the role of Strauss when he writes that "there is little doubt that Strauss's thinking has been influential", but goes on to deny the alleged inordinate weight of Strauss by adding that "too strong an emphasis on the Straussian dimension can lead to a tendency to look for a cabal" (Williams, 2005). Furthermore, without repudiating Strauss's high importance to some notable neoconservatives and relative importance to the movement as a whole, Williams states the obvious in that "the roots of neoconservatism are broader than Straussian philosophy alone" (Williams, 2005: 308-309). And all in all, it is important to bear in mind that Strauss recognized liberal democracy as the only viable and just alternative for the 20th century (Weinstein, 2004: 208; see also Fukuyama, 2006b: 22), and encouraged his students to study and defend the political foundations of the United States (Meier, 2006: xviii).

Indeed, Strauss's alleged influence on current foreign policy appears to be somewhat inflated as more so called Straussians served under president Reagan than do under George W. Bush (Weinstein, 2004: 205). To me, the two most credible influencing elements of Strauss's comprehensive writings would appear to be the notion of politics in service of a greater good, of promoting the best possible way to live and the promotion of virtue (instead of an uncritical settling for the liberal ideal of a framework within which each individual can pursue one's individual happiness, often contradictory to other people's similar desires and unproductive as common, "nobler" goals are regarded); and that "[m]uch of his work can be seen as a response to Nietzsche and Heidegger" (Fukuyama, 2006b: 22), both arguably among the more disliked philosophers among neoconservatives⁶⁸. One can see clear hints of this thinking, and

⁶⁸ According to Fukuyama, because they "had left modernity without a deep philosophical grounding for its own beliefs and institutions", i.e. could be seen as furthering nihilistic views.

undoubtedly of many other "Straussian" ways, too, yet I recognize the possibility of not seeing the links I am suggesting. These links are, I might add, in my opinion of little relevance here.

4 Torture

Just what amounts to torture? Surely one cannot explore the use of and attitude towards something which is not expressly defined and explained, especially in light of the complaint about the neoconservative tendency not to define concepts. Also, the United States' relationship to international law is relevant because the neoconservatives do not operate in a vacuum, but rather in a living and changing realm of U.S. politics, influenced by, i.a., the country's legal commitments.

As will be established below, the absolute prohibition against torture in international and U.S. national law is valid many times over with or without the Geneva Conventions, the application of which have been the object of intense debate during the GWOT. With the help of firm and rather unequivocal definitions of "torture" in international human rights treaties, one would assume it to be easy to interpret these binding regulations and act accordingly. Interestingly, the equation is not as simple in the case of the United States of America in the context of the GWOT. Human rights groups made it a point early on to remind the U.S. of the absolute prohibition against torture in international law.⁶⁹ Arguably, as an intermediate way out of being heavily accused, the rationale of the U.S. has tended to be to redefine the meaning and definition of torture.

This doesn't mean public support for torture, however. Quite the contrary - President Bush has shown contempt for the use of torture on many occasions, such as his annual State of the Union speech. In fact, he has claimed the United States' absolute refrainment from using it on several occasions.⁷⁰ To underline this message and, most probably, to psychologically distance his administration from these apparently barbaric torturers, he said in January 2003: "[t]he dictator who is assembling the world's most dangerous weapons has already used them on whole villages -- leaving thousands of his

⁶⁹ See e.g. Human Rights Watch press release November 11, 2001 "*Torture Not an Option. Human Rights Watch Issues Backgrounder*" at www.hrw.org/press/2001/11/torture1120.htm. Human Rights Watch makes the claim that "[t]he prohibition against torture is absolute and applies even during times of armed conflict or when national security is threatened"

⁷⁰ See e.g. Washington Times 23.6.2004, where President Bush is quoted as saying: "*The values of this country are such that torture is not a part of our soul and our being*", Amnesty International's "*Open letter to President George W. Bush on the question of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment*" (AI Index AMR 51/078/2004) in which President Bush is quoted as having said: "*the United States is committed to the worldwide elimination of torture and we are leading this fight by example*".

own citizens dead, blind, or disfigured. Iraqi refugees tell us how forced confessions are obtained -- by torturing children while their parents are made to watch. International human rights groups have catalogued other methods used in the torture chambers of Iraq: electric shock, burning with hot irons, dripping acid on the skin, mutilation with electric drills, cutting out tongues, and rape. If this is not evil, then evil has no meaning." ⁷¹

Regardless of such lofty rhetoric, there have been numerous and persistent allegations that the U.S. military, too, has used torture in the framework of the GWOT. If one would assume at least some of these allegations to hold up to the truth, there would be an interesting discrepancy to explain away on the U.S. administration's side. As suggested above, one response to this discrepancy between actions and rhetoric has in part been a new definition of the term "torture". Furthermore, practiced U.S. interrogation standards are in a constant flux, it seems. Such high officials as (now former) Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez have authorized techniques that appear to be "impermissible by both military manuals and international law", which can oftentimes be confusing to the military personnel on the field (Human Rights First, 2004: 7).

Another question one would want clear answers to is whether the new flexible and changing definitions of torture offered by the United States in fact change international law. The prohibition of torture is widely considered *jus cogens*⁷² and yet a major actor is allegedly constantly breaking or, at least, seriously bending this legal norm. Scott and Ambler (2007) discuss issues closely related to this challenging question in their article "Does Legality Really Matter?" Discussing the Theory of International Law as Ideology (ILI), they reason that it is possible to uphold the ideology while acting in a manner that would most likely be interpreted as being illegal. This is made possible by justifications based on another party's illegal actions, such as, in our case, acts of "terrorism" (Scott and Ambler, 2007: 73).

The notion of customary international law would obviously require a major part of the world to obey a prohibition for it to be considered valid in the real world. Interestingly

⁷¹ President George W. Bush in his *State of the Union* speech, January 28, 2003. Available online at: www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html

⁷² Peremptory norm of international law.

enough, Pieter H. Kooijmans notes on the question of torture and customary international law, however, that "[f]rom a legal point of view [...] [this wide discrepancy between professed legal and moral conviction and actual practice], is not negated by the widely divergent practice" (Kooijmans, 1995: 14). This is perhaps best enlightened with the fact that, in effect, no democratic government goes as far as to say that torture is inevitable or even needed. Rather, torture allegations are as a rule disputed and sometimes even ridiculed by governments alleged to condone or promote torture⁷³. Kooijmans notes further that states in general do not claim that torture should be used even under states of emergency, which are generally known to be particularly conducive to torture. Instead, "the alleged facts are usually vehemently denied" (Kooijmans, 1995: 15).

The U.S.-based organization American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has received a wealth of information concerning the treatment of detainees by the United States⁷⁴. The ACLU has demanded documents from authorities claiming their right to do so under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act. Without ACLU's and other independent organizations' efforts to gain knowledge of the treatment of detainees at Guantánamo and elsewhere in U.S. custody, available information would be very scarce, indeed.

Mark Danner (2004) illustrates the justification of the extraordinary means in the context of GWOT by referring to (then) president's counsel Alberto Gonzales' definition of fighting "terrorism" as a "new kind of war" (Danner 2004: 75). It is indeed to a large extent that Mr. Gonzales can act to personify the allegedly permitted use of torture within this war. Gonzales' much paraphrased evaluation of the Geneva Conventions and their implementation in GWOT is a prime example: "this new paradigm renders obsolete Geneva's strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners and renders quaint some of its provisions" (ibid.).

⁷³ See e.g. White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan's answer to a question from the media on 25 May, 2005: "Q: *Amnesty International report today, saying the U.S. is a top offender of human rights. Does the White House dispute that assessment?*" Mr McClellan: "I think the allegations are ridiculous and unsupported by the facts. The United States is leading the way when it comes to protecting human rights and promoting human dignity". Transcript available online at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050525-3.html

⁷⁴ All documents obtained by the ACLU can be found at www.aclu.org/torturefoia/

One may wonder just what the logic of unilateral action in a seemingly politically unifying and democratizing world can be. Vice president Cheney offers a peek to one explanation in his saying that eventually "a good part of the world [...] will come around to our way of thinking" (Cheney on NBC, quoted in Marshall, 2003). This concrete example of a widespread argument appears a clear and simple case of a noble end justifying a wide array of means, a pattern critical for accepting torture as a tool for progress in the stated goals of the GWOT.

The U.S. Supreme Court found in the summer of 2004 that the detainees held at Guantánamo Bay are entitled to be heard in a court of law. In response, the administration set up so called Combatant Status Review Tribunals (CSRT) to review detainees' cases. The CSRTs lack "even the most basic due-process protections" (Cooper, 2007), such as the rights to representation, to see, present and contest evidence, and to an impartial decision-maker. In spite of some clear improvements in the form of guiding principles concerning the treatment of detainees, the aforementioned proceedings were in effect consolidated with the adoption of the Detainee Treatment Act in 2005, denying the right to habeas corpus⁷⁵ to the Guantánamo Bay detainees (Cooper, 2007).

Summa summarum, in the words of Christol, "[i]t has become necessary to determine if international law, with its historic content dealing with the laws or customs of war, and international agreements to which the United States is a party, have application to those charged with acts of terrorism" (Christol, 2004: 25).

⁷⁵ In other words the right to have the legality of one's detention reviewed by an independent court of law.

4.1 Preconditions to Torture

In a chillingly laconic listing, Ronald D. Crelinsten and Alex P. Schmid give the usual preconditions to torture in two categories, a set of social conditions and a set of legal conditions (Crelinsten & Schmid, 1995). Alarming, these conditions are fulfilled to the point in the most common torture allegations against the U.S. military:

Social conditions:

- a national emergency or other perceived threat to security⁷⁶
- the need to process large numbers of suspects⁷⁷
- the dehumanization of an outgroup (national, religious or ethnic)⁷⁸
- a high level of authorization to violate normal moral principles⁷⁹
- the presence of a "sacred mission" which justifies anything⁸⁰

Legal Conditions:

- a long period of incommunicado detention, particularly without access to a lawyer⁸¹
- the inability to identify interrogators⁸²

⁷⁶ See e.g. the Declaration of National Emergency by Reason Of Certain Terrorist Attacks by President Bush on September 14, 2001: "A national emergency exists by reason of the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center, New York, New York, and the Pentagon, and the continuing and immediate threat of further attacks on the United States" and "NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America [...], hereby declare that the national emergency has existed since September 11, 2001". Available online at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010914-4.html

⁷⁷ See e.g. Amnesty International (2005b) report "*Guantánamo and beyond: The continuing pursuit of unchecked executive power*" which claims the US holds 70,000 prisoners in the name of the "Global War on Terrorism".

⁷⁸ See e.g. President Bush's quotes in "*Remarks by the President to the Travel Pool*". Bush is quoted as saying: "*Remember, these are -- the ones in Guantanamo Bay are killers. They don't share the same values we share.*" A White House Press Release; Office of the Press Secretary of the White House, March 20, 2002. Available online at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020320-17.html

⁷⁹ President Bush Discusses War on Terror at Naval Academy Commencement in Annapolis, Maryland on May 27, 2005. President Bush said: "*These enemies will not be stopped by negotiations, or concessions, or appeals to reason*", available online at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050527.html

⁸⁰ E.g. on September 16, 2001, president Bush said at a press conference: "*This is a new kind of -- a new kind of evil. And we understand. [...] This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while*". Available online at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html

⁸¹ See e.g. Amnesty International (2005) report "*Guantánamo and Beyond*", page 5: "*Hundreds remain in US custody in Afghanistan, with some in Bagram air base having been detained without trial and virtually incommunicado for more than a year*" or page 27: "*After all, in the southeast corner of Cuba, the US government continues to operate a military detention camp in which detainees have been kept virtually incommunicado without charge or judicial review for more than three years*".

- trials under military law or similar procedure⁸³
- the absence of independent checks on the detainees' medical condition⁸⁴
- rules of evidence which do not automatically rule out confessions obtained under torture⁸⁵

According to Crelinsten and Schmid, these are the traditional preconditions to torture. A closer study immediately reveals that most if not all of these preconditions are fulfilled in the reported and alleged torture cases the United States has had to face in the course of its "Global War on Terrorism".

4.2 Prohibition of Torture

International Law

It can be taken as a given fact that states accept the fact that something called "international law" truly exists and that this law regulates the actions by and sanctions to state actors. In other words, "there is no modern-day example of a state claiming that it is not bound by general rules of international law" (Dixon, 1990: 4). Further, it is just as clear that torture is a nearly universally condemned act. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in Article 5 that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment"⁸⁶. Technically not a binding treaty, the declaration is certainly respected⁸⁷ (Ding, 1998) and can be seen as part of international customary law.

⁸² See e.g. the International Herald Tribune February (2005a) article *Outsourcing Torture*: "Terrorism suspects have often been abducted by masked American agents" or NY Times (2005) that describes in article *In U.S. Report, Brutal Details of 2 Afghan Inmates' Deaths* how US military personnel had covered their name tags at Bagram Air Base.

⁸³ See e.g. "Remarks by the President to the Travel Pool", A White House Press Release; Office of the Press Secretary of the White House, March 20, 2002. President Bush said: "we'll be using the [military] tribunals if in the course of bringing somebody to justice it may jeopardize or compromise the national security interests". Available online at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020320-17.html.

⁸⁴ See e.g. Amnesty International (2005a) report *US detentions in Afghanistan: an aide-mémoire for continued action*. Neither of the two men deceased in US custody at Bagram Air Base in December 2002 had been seen by the ICRC. Most detainees at Guantánamo Bay are being monitored by the ICRC, but not immediately after their arrival when "the risk of torture or ill-treatment is at its peak" (page 2).

⁸⁵ Cf. Amnesty International (2005) report *Guantánamo and Beyond*, page 2: "The [Combatant Status Review Tribunals], meanwhile, can draw on evidence extracted under torture or other ill-treatment in making its determinations".

⁸⁶ G.A. Res. 217 (A) (III), UN Doc A/810 at 71 (1948)

⁸⁷ James Ding writes that "[t]he Declaration was passed and proclaimed as a resolution by the United Nations. It was not an international treaty, and strictly speaking, it was not legally binding. However,

Furthermore, Martin Dixon (1990) asserts that international law exists and prevails, though "*just as there will be murder and theft in national law*", there will be occasional breaches of international law (Dixon, 1990: 4). It would seem, however, that the actions undertaken by the United States to override essential elements of international law today are somewhat more systematic and rejecting in their nature than what Dixon referred to in 1990.

A binding treaty, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966 put into practice the spirit of many of the rights already embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Amnesty International, 2002: 12). Concerning torture, Article 7 of the Covenant states that "[n]o one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". Furthermore, as Pieter H. Kooijmans notes, Article 10 of the Covenant, which provides that "all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person", is highly relevant (Kooijmans, 1995: 16). Kooijmans adds that violations of Article 10 are almost without exception the first step toward violations of Article 7". Conversely, "compliance with Article 10 [...] is the best preventive measure against the violation of Article 7" (ibid.). The United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed its opposition to torture in 1975 when it passed the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Amnesty International, 2002: 12).

Of all international treaties and declarations, it is quite naturally the United Nations (1984) Convention against Torture (CAT)⁸⁸ that remains the most quoted and universally most ratified international treaty condemning torture; as of June 8, 2005, the Treaty had 139 state parties⁸⁹. The treaty prohibits the use of torture in all cases, without exception and defines torture in Article I as follows:

because of its worldwide recognition under the domestic law of many countries and by other international human rights instruments, arguably, it formed part of the customary international law. Moreover, as it was passed unanimously, (with only 8 abstentions) it could also be treated as an authoritative interpretation of the human rights provision in the United Nations Charter".

⁸⁸ Available online at www.un.org/documents/ga/res/39/a39r046.htm

⁸⁹ Source: www.ohchr.org/english/countries/ratification/9.htm

"the term 'torture' means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions." (United Nations, 1984)

Although marked by clear misreading of international law, the Bush administration's interpretation that the Geneva Conventions do not apply in the context of the GWOT cannot be totally ignored as it has caused a significant amount of confusion. Furthermore, it appears elementary in the creation of an atmosphere around the question of torture. The New York Times, for instance, reported that "with President Bush's final determination in February 2002 that the [Geneva] Conventions did not apply to the conflict with Al Qaeda and that Taliban fighters would not be accorded the rights of prisoners of war, the interrogators believed they 'could deviate slightly from the rules'" (New York Times, 2005). As a result, misinterpretations on a massive scale have come up: according to one sergeant of the U.S. military, "there was [sic] the Geneva Conventions for enemy prisoners of war, but nothing for terrorists" (ibid.). Of course, it ought to be clear that whenever international humanitarian law is not applicable, international human rights law is. Similar confusion is found in a letter from Captain Ian Fishback of the U.S. military to U.S. Senator John McCain. The letter was published in The Washington Post in 2005 and managed to stir a discussion on the rules of the ongoing "war". In his letter Fishback, who had by that time served in both Afghanistan and Iraq, pleaded for more clarity on the issue of treatment of detainees, as he had for 17 months tried to determine the standards for himself to no avail. "Instead of resolving my concerns", Fishback wrote, "the approach for clarification process leaves me deeply troubled. Despite my efforts, I have been unable to get clear, consistent answers from my leadership about what constitutes lawful and humane treatment of detainees. I am certain that this confusion contributed to a wide range of abuses" (Fishback, 2005).

Further adding to this type of insecurity were sentiments indicating that "the detainees [...] were to be considered terrorists until proved otherwise" (the New York Times, 2005). Again, the Geneva Conventions aside, article 2 of the Convention against Torture underlines the total prohibition of torture in saying that there can never be any "exceptional circumstances whatsoever" to justify torture. The article explicitly reads further that orders from superiors cannot be used to justify acts of torture. Again, the Convention against Torture applies in all cases and the absolute prohibition of torture is overwhelmingly considered *jus cogens*, a peremptory norm of international law that cannot be violated legally.

Prohibition of Torture in U.S. law

Prior to the "Global War on Terrorism", U.S. military doctrine acknowledged four categories of detainees: 1) Enemy Prisoner of War; 2) Retained Personnel; 3) Civilian Internee; and 4) Other Detainee. Today, these categories are complemented by many categories that make it more likely and easier to deviate from previously established military rules and international law, such as the Geneva Conventions. These new categories include such labels as "Enemy Combatant", "Under-privileged Enemy Combatant", "Security Internee", "Criminal Detainee", "Military Intelligence Hold", "Person under U.S. Forces Control" and "Low Level Enemy Combatant" (Human Rights First, 2004: 7).

The Fifth, eighth and fourteenth amendments to the U.S. Constitution are relevant legal texts as regards the treatment of detainees in U.S. custody: the fifth amendment guarantees due process (although the amendment notes exceptions for times of war), the eighth prohibits cruel and unusual punishment, and the fourteenth again guarantees due process and also equal protection of the laws to citizens and, importantly, any person within the jurisdiction of the U.S. An act of torture is defined in U.S. law (18 U.S.C. §2340) as an "act committed by a person acting under the color of law specifically intended to inflict severe pain or suffering [...] upon another person within his custody or physical control"⁹⁰ (Danner, 2004: 108). It has been noted further that it is also a "criminal offense for any person outside the United States [to] commit [...] or attempt [...] to commit torture" under 18 U.S.C. §2340A (Danner, 2004: 108, from a reproduction of a letter from the U.S. Department of Justice to the White House).

⁹⁰ Text available online at: http://straylight.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode18/uscode18_00002340-0000.html

Although not a piece of legislation, the U.S. Department of the Army's Field Manual 34-52 is probably the most profound an average member of the military gets in legal readings concerning the treatment of prisoners and detainees. The manual makes it clear that, relating to intelligence interrogation, all forms of torture or inhumane and degrading treatment are strictly prohibited, including such methods as "use of force", "threats", "insults" and "exposure to unpleasant [...] treatment" (American Journal of International Law, 2004: 592).

Of the Nature of Torture

If the above definition is the most useful and widespread and widely accepted *legal* definition of torture, one could use as a definition of the *nature* of torture one used by Kooijmans: First of all, "torture is the absolute negation of [human] dignity". Second, it is "intended to destroy and wipe out the victim's personality" and third, it is "the violation *par excellence* of the physical and mental integrity - in their indissoluble interdependence - of the individual human being" (Kooijmans, 1995: 15). In a similar vein, Bruce Ackerman considers the "torture memos" of the U.S. Justice Department, "prepared in secret to provide confidential guidance to the security apparatus", to be "a recipe for legalistic inhumanity". For Ackerman, the "extremely permissive" interpretation of legally acceptable methods of interrogation - considered by the same administration "'torture' when undertaken by Saddam Hussein" - was not the key issue. For him, it was rather that the memoranda "assured members of the security services that they could violate these permissive definitions and escape criminal prosecution as torturers". (Ackerman, 2006: 110).

Another aspect of the nature of torture is that it is often considered a *crime of obedience*. If torture takes place in violation of clear orders and regulations, it is considered an ordinary crime. However, the essential character of torture is, as Herbert C. Kelman notes, that it is a crime of obedience: "a crime that takes place, not in opposition to the authorities, but under explicit instructions from the authorities to engage in acts of torture, or in an environment in which such acts are implicitly sponsored, expected, or at least tolerated by the authorities" (Kelman, 1995: 21). Even if the guilty party acted on her own initiative, it is still very much possible that the torture crime committed would be a crime of obedience if the atmosphere, so to speak, has been conducive for this to

happen. In other words, so long as the perpetrators can prove to have had good reasons to have believed their actions to be tolerated, it makes for a crime of obedience in Kelman's eyes. Naturally, in most cases, proof of such tolerance is very hard to present.

4.3 Use of Torture in GWOT

Torture in the context of the U.S. Global War on Terror has become a hot and widely debated issue both nationally in the USA, as well as internationally. Nationally, this debate has produced clashes between the dominant political parties, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. In addition, it has produced notable clashes inside these major parties as well. John McCain of the Republican Party has become somewhat of an exceptional icon against the use of torture within the party, whereas ex-Democrat Joe Lieberman was scolded for being too like-minded with the more, in this sense, proactive Republicans. Criticism has also been directed to the current administration from outside the party-political framework, namely several U.S. NGOs as well as academic figures. Internationally, criticism toward the United States has been harsh if not effective. Vocal critics have included the European Union and several of its member states, the Council of Europe, some UN member organizations as well as large international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Human Rights First.

As regards the United States' international legal obligations pertaining to the Convention against Torture, its oversight body, the Committee against Torture, last reviewed the United States in 2006. Criticism from the committee was harsh, too. The committee found, i.a., that "despite the occurrence of cases of extraterritorial torture of detainees, no prosecutions [had] been initiated under the extraterritorial criminal torture statute". The report further reminds the U.S. that the Convention applies to all areas under the de facto effective control of the U.S. and expresses its concern over a myriad of torture related matters, including but not limited to "the involvement of the [United States] in enforced disappearances", the fact that in 2002 the United States authorized the use of "certain interrogation techniques that have resulted in the death of some detainees during interrogation". The Committee further finds that "'confusing interrogation rules' and techniques defined in vague and general terms, such as 'stress

positions', have led to serious abuses of detainees", and finds concern in "allegations of impunity", and has learned through "reliable reports of acts of torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment". (Committee against Torture, 2006)

Torture cases have come most clearly and explicitly to daylight in the incomprehensible pictures of Abu Ghraib. It is perhaps wise to remind oneself at this stage that the U.S. administration has never claimed that the Geneva Conventions do not apply to prisoners of war in the War in Iraq. Obvious questions, therefore, include one in particular: what is going on in places where prisoners are not extended the rights that Abu Ghraib prisoners were meant to enjoy?

Treatment of Guantánamo Bay prisoners

"By December, 2002, approximately 600 prisoners from 43 countries had been transported for safekeeping to the U.S. Naval Base in Cuba. They were captured in Afghanistan. They have been labeled 'detainees' in order to avoid their claim that they are prisoners of war under the Third Geneva Convention. Underlying this form of detention is the opportunity to carry on intensive interrogation in order to obtain information concerning the location of terrorists and their plans." (Christol, 2004: 56)

A common trait of reports on the prisoners in Guantánamo Bay is that access to the detained people is strictly controlled. This is to be expected, of course, to some extent with individuals alleged to be dangerous "terrorists". The obvious result, however, as Jane Meyer wrote for the *New Yorker* after her visit to the detention center, is that "only one side of the story was available: that of the U.S. military" (Davidson, 2005). On the other hand, Meyer, who visited the naval base in 2005, was surprised at how much the Department of Defense let her see, producing an odd mixture of feelings of being in the know and not knowing at all what was going on at Guantánamo. For example, Meyer got a chance to follow an Administrative Review Board hearing where detainees are allowed to challenge the grounds for their detention, or "their status as a danger to the U.S.", as Meyer put it. In this hearing, Meyer observed what she called a "complete breakdown of communication and understanding between the U.S. officials and the detainee, and also the utter lack of due process. It looked like a court hearing, but there were no lawyers." To aid him, the detainee had a military representative. As in all cases the review board refused to share any evidence it had with the detainee - a procedure

which is, in Mayer's words, "radically out of synch with U.S. standards of justice" (Davidson, 2005). These are, as is recalled from the previous chapter, perfect examples of legal preconditions to torture (a long period of incommunicado detention, particularly without access to a lawyer; trials under military law or similar procedure). Kooijmans's notion above on how compliance with Article 10 of the ICCPR, treating detained people with humanity and "respect for the inherent dignity of the human person" relates to violations of Article 7, are brought to mind here as well.

Furthermore, parts of the non-treating medical personnel at Guantánamo are reported as having assisted in interrogations, thus violating the apparent consensus that medical personnel clearly ought to distance themselves from all coercive or abusive, let alone torturous treatment of the detainees. Among the violations this procedure entails are the World Medical Association's 1975 protocol⁹¹ and "pretty much every other national and international standard", according to Mayer (Davidson, 2005). Here, it may be healthy to remember that Crelinsten and Schmid's legal conditions for torture, as they were presented above, included "the absence of independent checks on the detainees' medical condition", a rule which would appear to be compromised by these U.S. proceedings. Physicians for Human Rights has, indeed, recommended interviews with health personnel at U.S. prisons and detention facilities to assess physicians' role in interrogations (Human Rights First, 2004: 12). This, along with allegations of the misuse of the role of medical personnel has raised concern that physicians might be involved in planning or implementing interrogation methods that amount to torture or abuse. Not everyone loses sleep over this, as Heather MacDonald demonstrates in the neoconservative magazine the Weekly Standard. She notes that "[i]f military doctors have monitored and possibly helped craft lawful interrogation plans, they are committing no war crimes but are serving their country with honor" (MacDonald, 2005).

The Bush administration apparently chose Guantánamo Bay as the location for most of the detainees captured in Afghanistan and other countries during the months following the attacks of September 11, 2001, because it could function as a place where no law - or rather only the rules of the administration - would apply. In other words, the "jailers'

⁹¹ Mayer refers here probably to the WMA Declaration of Helsinki (1964), concerning Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects. The declaration has been amended five times since 1964, including in 1975.

edicts would prevail in place of civil law" (International Herald Tribune, 2005b). Cooper concurs and says Guantánamo Bay was "explicitly chosen from the start as a way of evading legal controls" (Cooper, 2007).

By fall 2004, eight cases of detainee abuse by U.S. forces had been officially verified by U.S. military investigations (Human Rights First, 2004: 1, 2). All in all, at Guantánamo Bay, as well as in U.S. prisons and detention facilities in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world, the military has concluded that at least five deaths in custody have been the result of torture or abuse. More than 30 detainees have died in U.S. custody, although U.S. officials have claimed most of these deaths have been the result of natural causes or enemy attacks (Human Rights First, 2004: 2).

The ACLU received Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) files concerning the treatment of detainees that have revealed some extreme behavior on the part of the U.S. military personnel⁹². Generally, examples of the treatment range from the detainees not knowing where or how their families are, to flushing the Koran down the toilet, to guards "dancing around" while detainees are praying, to being beaten by U.S. military forces, to calling detainees "son of a bitch" and "bastard", and finally, to guards jumping on the back of a detainee and hitting, kicking and spitting on detainees (FBI Memos, Agency Stamp 3836-3838).

More specifically, the FBI records show, one detainee is alleged to have been "tortured for two (2) days [...] not afforded treatment for his wound [and] taken to another house where he was again tortured and repeatedly ordered to admit he was Al' Queda [sic] and had met USAMA BIN LADEN. [The detainee] [...] admitted he was Al Queda [sic] and had met UBL and then his wound was treated" (FBI Memo, Agency Stamp 3894-3895). Another FBI file shows that a Guantánamo Bay detainee "claimed that when he was first captured, he was tortured by those asking him questions. He had to stand up for five days straight and answer questions. He was also forced to strip naked and stand in front of a female interrogator" (FBI Memos, Agency Stamp 3979-3981).

⁹² Available online at www.aclu.org/torturefoia/released/052505/

In a nutshell, and to put it in the plainest of words, the treatment of prisoners at Guantánamo has been, according to the ICRC among others, "tantamount to torture" (Davidson, 2005).

Treatment of prisoners/detainees at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan

Nearly 2000 pages long, a classified file prepared by the U.S. Army's criminal investigation and obtained by The New York Times, reveals among other things that military personnel at Bagram were "young, poorly trained" and "guilty of 'repeated incidents of abuse'" (New York Times, 2005). The newspaper also reports the deaths of two detainees, one of whom was considered by most interrogators to be "an innocent man who simply drove his taxi past the American base at the wrong time" (ibid.).

U.S. officials have long maintained that cases of ill-treatment and abuse that have surfaced are isolated cases that do not represent the treatment of detainees at large. Interestingly, The New York Times reports of a series of abuses at Bagram that has led nowhere in terms of a systematic crackdown on detainee ill-treatment or abuse. Rather, it suggests that "harsh treatment by some interrogators was routine and that guards could strike shackled detainees with virtual impunity". Furthermore, the newspaper reports, "[s]enior officers frequently toured the detention center, and several of them acknowledged seeing prisoners chained up for punishment or to deprive them of sleep". The two deaths in custody reported by The New York Times and acknowledged by U.S. officials occurred in December 2002. As of May 2005, no one had been convicted in either case and only seven soldiers have been charged with offenses linked to detainee abuse (New York Times, 2005). Indeed, it took nearly two years for the military to press individual charges against suspects in the two homicides at Bagram Air Base (Human Rights First, 2004: 5-6), which can seem somewhat emblematic of the confusion and lack of will to combat abuse in the military.

The Army Inspector General has estimated in his report that "up to 80% of those held for security or intelligence reasons were potentially eligible for release upon proper review of their cases" (Human Rights First, 2004: 8). The report further notes that detainees were being held from three to fifteen times longer than military doctrine permits (ibid.). The FBI files obtained by the ACLU show that detainees have indeed been severely mistreated and subjected to abuse and torture. Individual cases highlight

this in a plain manner: "[a]fter being moved to an unknown facility in Bagram, [the detainee's] head was placed against the cement floor and his head was kicked. As a result of other beatings in Bagram, [the detainee] received a broken shoulder (FBI Memos, Agency Stamp 3882-3883).

"Extraordinary Rendition"

"When an al Qaeda training manual fell into U.S. hands a few years ago, it warned of countries, besides Israel and Jordan, where interrogators were the most brutal: Egypt, Syria and Saudia [sic] Arabia. The manual listed burning, dog attacks and electrical prods." (Haddock, 2001)

The use of "extraordinary rendition", a pseudo-legal term coined by the U.S. administration, is closely related to the question concerning the use of torture in GWOT. It has been called a "way in which the administration has circumvented accountability for torture [...], that is, allowing the CIA secretly to grab suspected foreign terrorists and deport them to countries known for use of torture" (Cooper, 2007). A much used descriptive statement of a U.S. official involved in "rendition" procedures is "We don't kick the...out of them. We send them to other countries so they can kick the...out of them"⁹³. These "other countries" include the countries listed in the al Qaeda training manual, thus intimating a knowing tactic of sending suspects to countries where the prohibition of torture is not respected, what the suspects would fear, and where, consequently, they would suffer the most.

4.4 Torture and the Individual

Ultimately, torture is always about the individual. It is about the individual who is tortured for information that is considered essential, punishment for alleged actions, or, in some cases, punishment for existence, if the individual is dehumanized and demonized as member of an out-group heavily enough. Abu Ghraib also seems to suggest that some sort of recreational humiliation of human beings amounting to torture is possible. What international law aims to do, by way of prohibiting the torture of individuals, is provide a system where all people can uphold their inherent dignity as human beings, no matter what their crime.

⁹³ Quote from a Washington Post article by Dana Priest and Barton Gellman, as cited in Cooper, 2007: 66.

Torture is also always about the other individual or individuals, those who commit the acts of torture. As Cooper has noted, torture has also been condemned "for its dehumanizing effect *on the torturer* and for its degrading impact on society" (Cooper, 2007, emphasis added). Furthermore, how their legal responsibilities lie in relation to the institutions they represent is not an easy matter.

Torture that takes place outside the framework of the rule of law, but with the knowledge of the governing elite, appears similar to "legal" torture⁹⁴. This is a critical observation as it is crucial in finding out or judging who the responsibility lies with. There are strong suggestions that the political elite in the Bush administration - including the neoconservatives "on the fringes" of the administration - have been in the know about a number of cases in the hands of United States of America military forces in its "Global War on Terror" context. Cooper explains that, to say the least, "interrogators were under heavy pressure from Washington to collect intelligence", and with referral to seven different sources, convincingly claims that this has been "extensively documented" (Cooper, 2007).

If remarkable amounts of information leading to corroborating such hints are not followed, this, in my opinion further suggests a severe case of scotoma⁹⁵, not a dearth of available information, and it is indeed not believable that the silence on neoconservatives' part could be attributed to not knowing. I will argue that in parallel and similar to executions, torture is the ultimate denial of the individual's rights. This interpretation that puts torture and capital punishment in an analogous relationship finds corroboration also elsewhere (see e.g. Steinfels, 1979).

In conclusion on the subject of torture, I give the reader two different examples of being wary of torture for practical reasons: in the first instance, according to Mayer, the FBI (which has had years and years of experience of needing to extract critical information from suspects, Mayer notes), "has found that non-coercive interrogation methods yield more reliable results". In a similar vein, the Supreme Court of Israel prohibited the use

⁹⁴ I argue that international law permits no form of "legal" torture whatsoever.

⁹⁵ or *blind spots*

of torture, "after finding that it resulted in too many false confessions and too much moral baggage" (Davidson, 2005).

5 Cognitive Dissonance in Neoconservative Positions on Torture in GWOT

Coming now back jointly to the issues dealt with separately above, our next attempt is to set in motion an analysis where the object is the neoconservative ideology and its positions on torture, and the tool used for this purpose the theory of cognitive dissonance. Our first task is to consider some further elements and applications of the theory as regards this analysis.

5.1 *Difficulty in Decision Making and the Attractiveness of Competing Alternatives*

Festinger makes use of one classification of a study⁹⁶ that categorizes choices in decision-making into three types: 1) *Preference*: decisions characterized by a clear preference for one alternative over the other; 2) *Conflict*: decisions characterized by considerable difficulty because of near equal attractiveness of choices; and 3) *Indifference*: decisions characterized by lack of clear preference, one way or the other. (Festinger, 1957: 73-74). In light of what has been noted above, it should be clear that neoconservative choices toward the use of torture fall into the second category: on the one hand, neoconservatives tend to take "intelligence extraction" and similar justifications for the use of torture very seriously and some openly favor it. On the other hand, the very neoconservative rhetoric that celebrates liberal democracy and moral use of U.S. power, let alone the oft-heard aim of promotion of human rights in the world, give a certain impression in quite another direction, leaving a student of neoconservatism with little more than a conclusion that each is an attractive alternative. According to Festinger, the study shows how very difficult, sometimes indeed impossible, it is to reverse a decision in this choice category labeled "Conflict" once it has been made. Indeed, Festinger expected and the study confirmed a decision in this category to arouse "considerable dissonance", and, consequently, pressures following the decision to alleviate this state by increasing the attractiveness of the chosen

⁹⁶ See Martin, A.H. (1922): *An experimental study of the factors and types of voluntary choice*; in Archives of Psychology, No 51.

alternative, decreasing the attractiveness of the unchosen one, or both. Remarkably, the post-decision dissonance reduction efforts lead to the alternatives ultimately becoming "more different than during the decision", Festinger notes. (Festinger, 1957: 77) Therefore we should not expect sudden reversals in neoconservative attitudes toward the use of torture. Neither should it be surprising to be able to argue with some ease for a difficult decision concerning the use of torture in the "GWOT" on the neoconservatives' side based on the most basic neoconservative premises. However, manifestations of these differences would be expected to disappear or cool off after "a decision"⁹⁷ has been made.

Of course, one source of dissonance may be interaction with others, as Festinger also notes (Festinger, 1957: 133). In this respect, even this paper might be able to - in a critical but not entirely dismissive neoconservative reading - produce dissonance among neoconservatives by e.g. pointing to contradictions and, at times, appearing to disagree with some neoconservative premises. The same mechanisms to reduce dissonance that have been presented above would, of course, be in play. In addition, Festinger would expect a blend of some of the following responses to this hypothetical new dissonant information: "attempts to escape or avoid further exposure, erroneous interpretation or perception of the material, or any other technique or maneuver which will help to abolish the newly introduced dissonance and to prevent the further introduction of dissonance." In a similar vein, Festinger quotes studies in which subjects prefer to not have to defend themselves or admit error and thus rather not face implications of ideas opposed to theirs. (Festinger: 134-135) In other words still, "[w]hen dissonance exists, persons will be able to evade the impact of dissonance-increasing information, even when forcibly exposed to it, by various means such as misperception, denying its validity, and the like."⁹⁸ (Festinger, 1957: 176)

⁹⁷ The word "decision" here is in quotation marks because it is not easily imaginable that one could discern a moment where a neoconservative consensus had been reached and consequently a "decision" been made. Judging from neoconservative discussion - and to a certain extent lack of it - such an understanding appears to exist, however, regardless of lack of a specific point in time where it has been reached.

⁹⁸ I recognize the danger of being perceived as unfair in first writing that one's own writing can induce dissonance, and then, with referral to an external authority, claiming that counterattacks will be a natural response, hinting that such responses might not contain any justified criticism. This is not my intention.

5.2 *Dissonance related to disagreement in groups*

As discussed rather extensively above, a typical neoconservative is likely to claim that neoconservatism is such a loose network of people connected in such a loose manner that it is not prudent to say there is in fact much of a movement. There are no headquarters, no party, and no system for bringing about such a thing as the "official line" of the neoconservatives. What is more, neoconservatives are likely to consider themselves very tolerant towards differing ideas within the "movement". In addition to our discussion on neoconservatism being an ideology above, consider the effects of Francis Fukuyama's book *"After the Neocons"* (2006b), which was sure to make him a *persona non grata* among former fellows. In this work he presents his readers page after page of good reasons to abandon and replace the broken ideology. Naturally enough, Fukuyama was ostracized from the in-group far away to the other side of the outskirts of politically acceptable persons (see e.g. Fukuyama, 2006b). Had there not been any "right" and "neoconservative" ways of seeing the non-movement, Fukuyama might logically have been cordially welcomed to debate the different aspects of policy-making he so poignantly criticizes in his book within an intellectually attuned circle of peers.

To illustrate the two-way character of cognitive dissonance in groups, let us therefore consider the case of Francis Fukuyama for a while. Fukuyama's tale - having been an important part of the neoconservative movement until noticing how great the discrepancies between his personal views and those of other neoconservatives on evaluating "success" in Iraq, and consequently publicly taking distance from the ideology - is an edifying one in many ways, but in this context none is as enlightening as showing the effect of cognitive dissonance in action. For example, Matz and Wood (2005) see "good theoretical reason to believe that dissonance arises from interpersonal inconsistencies in judgments". Indeed, in their study Matz and Wood found that "being grouped with others who hold opinions opposed to one's own induces feelings of dissonance discomfort" which was further increased if interaction with these others was foreseeable (Matz and Wood, 2005: 27).

Furthermore, Jervis makes a point concerning the amount of negative consequences of a decision and voluntariness. According to him, the theory of cognitive dissonance foretells that a person who voluntarily steps down from office (or in the case of

Fukuyama leaves the ranks of an ideology) will feel more derogation towards his or her previous positions than one who leaves involuntarily, whatever these reasons might be. This has implications to how reliable information from Fukuyama on neoconservatism after the fact ought to be perceived. Jervis explains this by noting that the political implications of voluntariness are clear: "if a decision-maker feels he had no choice but to make a given decision, he will be less prone to avoid or distort information than he would if he had acted freely" (Jervis, 1976: 400). This is not to claim that Francis Fukuyama, whom I respect a great deal, is a pathological (or any other type of) liar. It is simply to be expected that he be overly critical and avoid favorable information on neoconservatism after making his decision to deem the ideology unworthy of his continued support.

Incidentally, for Fukuyama, the straw that broke the camel's back was Charles Krauthammer's speech at the American Enterprise Institute, at what most likely was a very social setting for like-minded pundits (See Fukuyama, 2006b). Matz and Wood find further that "bolstering self-worth reduces the dissonance that is generated when people's actions threaten their personal integrity". Others, those who might have disagreed as Fukuyama did but "stayed the course" and did not publicly change their cognitions, may have taken advantage of "the emotional benefit consensus" by changing their own thoughts to fit the overall agreement within the group, were there such a need. Others in disagreement still may have followed a third potential way to rid oneself of dissonance, namely that of joining another, more attitudinally congenial group (Matz and Wood, 2005:27-35). Coming back to Fukuyama and his reaction, though; what more could a highly esteemed scholar such as he do to bolster his self-worth than to write a book (or two) denouncing the neoconservative ideology and asserting analyses which were more "right", and to travel around the world promoting this message? I think not much more, and this in itself makes his case a particularly intriguing one from the point of view of cognitive dissonance.

5.3 Determining the Conditions for an Analysis and Specifying the Cognitive Elements

Festinger reminds us that determining whether or not dissonance exists should start with specifying the cognitive elements which are under consideration and then examining

whether, considering either one alone, the obverse of the other follows. If a dissonant relation is thus found, one should specify further what would reduce the magnitude of the dissonance (Festinger, 1957: 279). This is specifically the task which we intend to undertake under the current heading.

Furthermore, it ought to be clear from the theory's principal statement above - two elements will be dissonant if the obverse of the other follows from the first - that, reversely, two elements will be in consonant relation if, "considering these two alone, one element follows from the other" (Festinger, 1957: 261). In the case of neoconservatism and its attitude towards torture in the GWOT, we thus have two major and mutually exclusive options:

1. A *dissonant relation* between condoning the use of torture and neoconservatism's core values; where neoconservatism's core values dictate that the use of torture is wrong, or;
2. A *consonant relation* between condoning the use of torture and neoconservatism's core values; where acceptance of the use of torture can be logically inferred from neoconservatism's core values.

Furthermore, as was noted above, neoconservative resistance to change could be explained by either of two things: because change would be painful or involve loss (magnitude of resistance to change determined by extent of pain or loss); or because present behavior is satisfying (resistance to change being a function of satisfaction obtained from present behavior).

As also stated above, however, our main object of interest lies in finding potential cognitive dissonance in the neoconservative ideology as regards two things: core values in the ideology on the one hand, and, on the other, torture as an accepted if not preferred means of tackling "terrorism" in the context of the GWOT. How is one going to know if there is such a dissonance and, further, if there exists such a dissonance, how is one to find out about its severity? In reading one's Festinger, the answer is rather simple and straightforward: "*If two elements are dissonant with one another, the magnitude of the dissonance will be a function of the importance of the elements*" (Festinger, 1957: 16). In our current case, this would translate into turning to the salience of personal freedom

and liberties in the neoconservative ideology and proving or discarding my previously stated point that torture is the ultimate denial of personal liberties. To reiterate, the cognitive elements are thus found to be:

- A. Neoconservative core values discussed above and;
- B. Use of torture in GWOT or, rather, neoconservative positions on the use of torture in the context of the GWOT.

5.4 Examining whether the Obverse of the Other Follows Considering it Alone

To see whether or not a state of cognitive dissonance ought to occur, we will now move on to study neoconservatism's core values more closely in relation to torture: can it be said logically that condoning, even promoting the use of torture is the obverse of these values? If answered in the affirmative, a state of dissonance can indeed be expected to take place. Following Festinger's advice, we will then endeavor to find what would reduce the magnitude of such dissonance, other than an obvious change of heart, which would naturally dissolve all dissonance as one of the two dissonant cognitions would cease to exist, and if the new, substituting cognition followed from the core values and produced a new, consonant relation.

As we have seen, at the heart of the neoconservative ideology are the creation of an international moral order, as well as spreading American political and economic principles (Kristol and Kagan, 2004: 62). In order to avoid excessive repetition and to condense our foregoing discussion into a few simple words, the neoconservative core values at play here can be said to be "morality", human rights, democracy, and so called American values. In order to be able to make a case for a state of cognitive dissonance to arise, therefore, the obverse of these values ought to emerge in neoconservative thinking. Let us briefly discuss the nature of each and look for "an obverse" version these values.

The obverse of morality is as easy and challenging as its point of departure: the antonym for morality must logically be immorality, yet it remains just as ill-defined as "morality" in the hands of neoconservatives, as we noted before. We have above

committed ourselves to using the word morality in the following fashion, to denote *the quality of being in accord with standards of right or good conduct*. The obverse being, quite naturally, the *quality of being in violation of standards of right or good conduct*. Having above also noted that the prohibition of torture is absolute and undisputed in the world, as well as that the United States is bound by international and national law to not torture, it seems fair to say that the use of torture is in fact in grave violation of standards of right or good conduct and, thus, "immoral".

The same applies, quite obviously, for human rights, a second neoconservative core value. For it is indeed not fathomable that violations of a clear, universal and absolute prohibition in international human rights law would not constitute the obverse of such a prohibition and, consequently, a human right so protected.

Finding the obverse of democracy is not as easy - intuitively it would be tyranny, oligarchy, or some other decidedly undemocratic form - but instead, we look back at the foregoing discussion and recognize the value of the words of Lauri Karvonen and David Beetham, cited above on liberal democracy exigencies. As we recall, these included human rights - "entitlements ascribed to human beings everywhere" (Beetham, 1999: 137) - "which take the individual as their point of reference, and seek to guarantee to individuals the minimum necessary conditions for pursuing a distinctively human life" (Beetham, 1999: 90). The absolute reversal of democracy may indeed be tyranny, but the obverse of a *liberal* democracy is arguably and reasonably also an *illiberal* form of democracy. Thus, if neoconservatives call for torture (or do not oppose it), it should logically breach the inherent exigencies of another of their core values, liberal democracy.

So-called American values tend to reflect the inherent dignity of the individual human being. We have found on earlier pages of this study that American values have separately been claimed to be founded on the dignity and worth of the individual, and that the genius, strength and promise of America is founded upon dignity, equality and freedom of the human being. As it also transpires from our foregoing discussion, the use of torture is inextricably linked to three things: 1) the absolute negation of human dignity; 2) the intention to destroy the victim's personality; and 3) the violation *par excellence* of the physical and mental integrity of the individual human being

(Kooijmans, 1995). It is an understatement, perhaps, to simply laconically note that these characteristics are the obverse of what is understood by the mentioned "American values".

5.5 Evaluating the Magnitude of Dissonance

According to Festinger, the magnitude of dissonance is a direct function of the importance of the elements in a dissonant relation (Festinger, 1957: 262). However, this is not all there is to the extent of dissonance, for in addition to the importance of the elements, the relative attractiveness of unchosen alternatives increases the dissonance further. Therefore, if one had to choose between living or dying, it would be easy for most to choose the former and not regret their decision. Also, the magnitude of the dissonance introduced by the expression of disagreement by others is a factor, although this decreases as the number of consonant cognitive elements⁹⁹ increases. This means, in turn, that the state of dissonance can be alleviated by seeking out and adding consonant cognitions, the obverse of which is to block out dissonant information, used as a means to decrease dissonance. (Festinger, 1957)

In this case specifically the total magnitude of dissonance between our two clusters of cognitive elements is a function of the weighted proportion of all relevant relations between the two dissonant clusters, discussed above, each dissonant relation weighted according to the importance of the decision and relative attractiveness of unchosen alternatives (Cf. Festinger, 1957: 262). It will be further recalled that the theory of cognitive dissonance states that "the more cognitive elements there are corresponding to desirable features of the rejected alternative, the greater would be the dissonance following the decision and, hence, the greater the pressure to reduce dissonance" (Festinger, 1957: 66).

If one were to take the issue of torture as a question of morality - as we indeed are obliged to do by way of having been guided by the neoconservative core value of "morality", and "moral use of power", "use of power for moral good", etc. - it would be tempting to contrast the amount of space granted in, say, *The Weekly Standard*, to

⁹⁹ These elements can either be objective facts or knowledge that other people hold same opinion

discussions on the *morality* in the use of torture in the GWOT with the - in the view of most leading neoconservatives much reviled and abhorred immorality of president Clinton's Lewinsky scandal. Contrasting such extremes would in fact not be very difficult as the former has hardly been discussed at all, and virtually any number of the Weekly Standard in 1998 was filled with libel, quip, serious analysis concerning the morality and honesty of Clinton, accompanied with calls for his impeachment by William Kristol and his colleagues. William Kristol's own writings on the theme of torture and/or harsh interrogation methods have been markedly few, but on the condoning side (Cf. e.g. W. Kristol, 2006).

As was explained above, the resistance to change socially constructed reality is related to how difficult it is to find other people to agree with the changed attitudes. We also saw above that a change in views on a given policy entails a "silent bargaining" including other political views, making change less likely. As we have not seen fundamentally diverging neoconservative views on the question of torture, we must assume that the resistance to change is enhanced by a socially constructed agreement within the ideology on the issue. But, as the ongoing debate on who qualifies as a neoconservative and who doesn't (Cf. e.g. Fukuyama, 2006a) shows, there is a continuing uncertainty and perhaps will to identify with the "ideology". This could be a sign of cognitive dissonance among the ideology's past supporters and taking distance to it surely could be a sign of a way out of this unpleasant feeling. These speculations notwithstanding, one would have to be sure that the unpleasantness really boils down to the GWOT and the use of torture in that context, which is an assumption we cannot truthfully make.

In addition, a central point in pinpointing potential cognitive dissonance within the neoconservative ideology is to gauge the salience of the critique's source to neoconservatives. This can play a major part in shaping the different ways critique will be accepted or declined. As Festinger (1957) argues in his introductory notes already, under circumstances in which a person judges the source of critique negatively or positively, "there is a marked tendency to change either the evaluation of the opinion involved or the evaluation of the source in a direction which would reduce the dissonance" (Festinger, 1957). In other words, critique towards one's own ideology tends to be judged by who is giving it, and if the source is defined in less than flattering

terms, chances are the source will lose much of its remaining credibility rather than its critique being heard. Indeed, neoconservatives label "the continued hand-wringing" of the neoconservatives' critics - notably the left-wing press in Britain and liberal¹⁰⁰ press in the U.S. as "inappropriate" (Stelzer, 2004: XIV), making critique from these sources most probably useless as regards absorption of new information.

Unfortunately, however, we can only speculate on the importance and priority orders of given issues to neoconservatism. But given the fact that the elements in play have been identified as being the neoconservative ideology's core values, one would have to assume that the importance of these elements is high, if not critical, to the supporters of the ideology. It is, for example, not imaginable that these core values would be traded for other substitutive values. Considering on the other hand the other side of the dissonant relation, the condoning position on the use of torture in the GWOT, we can clearly see that a trade-off is easily imagined. Logically, nothing stands in the way of neoconservatives taking a stand against the use of torture: indeed, their core values appear to even call for such action. Therefore, the attitudinal alternative seems to be, at least theoretically, extremely attractive to the neoconservative ideology. Of course, some factors in neoconservative policies intimate otherwise. Such examples include the traditional distrust in international law and institutions. So, again, whereas it is impossible to measure the magnitude of dissonance that the incongruence between core values and the position on torture arouses, we can safely assume it to be substantial in light of the foregoing.

5.6 Means of Diminishing Cognitive Dissonance: Diffusion or Denial of Responsibility

Matz and Wood (2005) take notice of earlier research on cognitive dissonance and find that "the diffusion of responsibility for a dissonance-producing act to others in a group and the misattribution of dissonance arousal to dislike for an out-group" are group-level practicable means of diminishing dissonance in groups. This can be a further reason why the neoconservatives do not appear to agonize over the potentially high levels of cognitive dissonance we have observed. In a similar vein, Gosling et al. also reason that

¹⁰⁰ In the political sense of the word as understood in the U.S.

if "the feeling of responsibility affects the level of dissonance arousal", as it undoubtedly does, then "denial of responsibility should reduce it" (Gosling et al., 2006: 723). Wicklund and Brehm have also concluded in discussing the role of responsibility that "[i]f a person feels no psychological connection between himself and the consequence, dissonance will not be aroused [sic]" (Wicklund and Brehm, 1976: 66).

Gosling et al. also point to the fact that denial of inconsistency and denial of responsibility are separate phenomena. In the case of this paper, the difference ought to be clear: it is indeed not the same thing to claim that neoconservatives deny the obverse relation between condoning torture and their ideology's core values emphasizing liberal democracy and human rights, as to claim that neoconservatives refute *responsibility* for acts of torture. True, both alternatives imply denial, but, as Gosling et al. put it: "they differ in which object is denied" (Gosling et al., 2006: 723).

Intriguingly, Jervis has found that specifically in foreign policy decisions the higher the price of a given policy, the greater the belief that the achieved end result was "worthy of their sacrifice" (Jervis, 1976: 394). Naturally, this is logically not so. To claim that there is a natural correlation between the extent of sacrifice and amount of excellence in a decision would be absolutely ludicrous. But it is understandable from a dissonance reduction point of view, nevertheless. Admittedly, there is no neoconservative sacrifice immediately attached to the use of torture, but some sacrifice has arguably been made in the form of deteriorated relations with former and contemporary allies, one could claim. One could also claim that it is unimportant to focus on past discrepancies in neoconservative positions and their relation to the ideology's fundamental values. However, the study of past, present and future neoconservative behavior is important work because, as Jervis explains, "the person tries to maintain consistency between his past and future behavior. If in justifying what he has done, the person alters his values or beliefs, later decisions will follow the new path." (Jervis, 1976: 406)

It is also fathomable that through group membership of sorts, by subscribing to a broadly defined ideology, neoconservatives could reduce their sensations of dissonance by diffusing responsibility for negative acts to the group as a whole (Gosling et al., 2006: 723).

Revisiting Seliger, it is possible to distinguish between two modes of "ideology in action". The first one, which Seliger has labeled that of "fundamental principles", is close to the grand ideas of the ideology. These typically color fanciful pictures of the end state of when the ideology has proven successful. In the case of Marxists, this would probably be the state of world communism having grown out of the capitalist and the socialist phases, whereas for neoconservatism, this end state would plausibly liken a state of world democracy, where the United States stands tallest as the vanguard of liberty of other democratic capitalistic states. The other side of ideology concerns justifications of real life policies. These are set under the "grand illusions" of the fundamental principles and labeled "operative ideology".

In both of these dimensions, all six interacting components of Seliger's ideological thought - description, analysis, moral description, technical description, implementation and, finally, rejection (Seliger, 1976: 109) - and their criteria are activated, but with different emphases.

D = description; A = analysis; Pm = moral prescriptions; Pt = technical prescriptions; I = implements, i.e. the ways and means of implementation; R = rejections

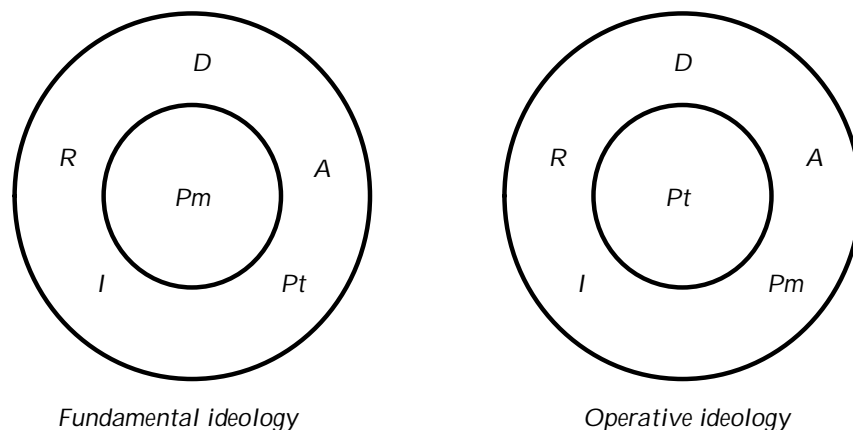


Figure 5 after Figure 2 in Seliger, 1976: 110

In the case of apparent cognitive dissonance on the ideological level for the neoconservatives as regards torture, it is to be noted that the two-dimensional argumentation and its inherent deviation from fundamental principles can, in the words of Martin Seliger, be "sincerely believed to be temporary" (Seliger, 1976: 110). As an example of existing bifurcations of ideological thinking in neoconservatism, Fukuyama

explains concerning the war on Iraq that "the abstract ideas were interpreted in certain characteristic ways that might better be described as mindsets or worldviews rather than principled positions. The prudential choices that flowed from these mindsets were biased in certain consistent directions that made them, when they proved to be wrong, something more than individual errors of judgment" (Fukuyama 2006b: 5). On the other hand, neoconservatives have repeatedly defended themselves from criticism concerning the GWOT by pointing to the poor implementation of their ideas by the George W. Bush administration (see e.g. W. Kristol, 2004: 76), thereby saving the fundamental side of ideology in tact, and shifting the responsibility for failure onto the operative ideology of the Bush administration.

Coming back to the specific issue of the use of torture, it is of course not very strange that torture is seen as categorically unacceptable and subject to censorship even if volunteers could be found or if the setting were entirely fictional (Cf. I. Kristol, 2004c; Poulos, 2006), but it seems odd that torture as a tool for interrogation is accepted without noteworthy objections. It is apparently the use of torture as a tool for achieving larger aims that renders it tolerable. The results of this appear to be two-fold: first, inferring from the "American values" discussion, neoconservatives would logically need to be wary of condoning torture, if nothing more. In cases of condoning torture, there ought to be clear signs of cognitive dissonance among neoconservatives. Second, neoconservatives, nearly all but especially so those which I have here labeled Kristolian-Kaganites, tend to at times see promotion of liberal democracy as a means to maintain the current hegemonic position of the United States, not to promote human freedom as such. In this light it is not particularly surprising to find that there is no cognitive dissonance apparent, as what really matters is the United States of America and its military-political interests in relation to other nations, not individual laments outside its borders. This dual thinking is reflected in Wolfowitz's writing, too. He asserts that while U.S. foreign policy reflects U.S. core principles, it is not "a Kantian notion in which ultimately only the purity of one's intentions counts. Rather, policies must be effective in the world", he concludes. This is baffling as we have concluded above that certain limitations follow from being a liberal democracy, that neoconservatism claims to base its morality to a large extent on the promotion of (liberal) democracy and human rights; and that these appear to be contradictory in relation to the above stated neoconservative objective of being effective. In fact, that is

what Wolfowitz states himself just two short pages prior to writing the exact opposite. (See Wolfowitz, 2000: 333 and 335, respectively).¹⁰¹

Beasley and Joslyn (2001) point to yet another way of dissonance which involves a reaction to an outcome (Outcome-Based Dissonance). Their study had to do with electoral behavior and, thus, the context was quite different from ours. For while in elections, "the outcome [...] offers a clear reality constraint in that it is difficult to deny who won" (Beasley and Joslyn, 2001: 524), the question of attitude towards the use of torture is a more intricate one. It is, of course, still imaginable that a prevailing notion of a "right" and a "wrong" way to fight the "War on Terror" would influence the neoconservatives. If, for instance, indisputable evidence of a catastrophe claiming the lives of a significant number of civilians caused by acting on a wrongful testimony given in response to interrogation methods amounting to torture were presented, a similar kind of dissonance, based on the outcome of using torture, would be possible.

In spite of many and wide differences between the context of democratic elections and neoconservative judgments of the use of torture, there are certain similarities as well. Consider, for example, how Beasley and Joslyn explain the difference between electoral choice and choices more traditional in the study of cognitive dissonance: "an electoral choice does not necessarily lead to an outcome. Although irrevocable, electoral commitment does not necessarily wed the individual to the outcome in the same fashion as, say, choosing a toaster and then living with that choice"¹⁰² (Beasley and Joslyn, 2001: 537). Therefore, Beasley and Joslyn suggest, the implications of electoral commitment might not be as great as for other actions. Nevertheless, they conclude that their "results indicate that the characteristics of the act of voting are sufficient to arouse dissonance that leads to greater attitude differentiation in post-election comparative candidate evaluations among voters" (Beasley and Joslyn, 2001: 533). If this is the case

¹⁰¹ In the name of fairness, it should be added that Wolfowitz (2000) was contradictory inasmuch as "efficiency" and "being effective in the world" can be understood as roughly the same. It goes without saying that they are not exactly the same. Uses of the words are reproduced here, so the reader can see for herself whether or not she thinks my judgment fair. Wolfowitz scolded the "*pre-1980s 'formula' for progress*" which centered on "*a willingness to sacrifice democracy and human rights on the altar of 'efficiency'*" on page 333. Two pages later, on page 335, he ridiculed the Kantian notion of having "*only the purity of one's intentions count*" while, in his own mind, "*policies must be effective in the world*".

¹⁰² Living with the choice of having picked this or that toaster may seem somewhat undramatic in the present context. What Beasley and Joslyn had in mind was most likely a classic study of cognitive dissonance referred to in Festinger (1957), where participants could, in fact, choose, among other options, a toaster.

with electoral choice, having cast a ballot among thousands - indeed in Beasley and Joslyn's case (presidential elections in the U.S.) tens of millions - of other people, I dare suspect that a choice to support the use of harsh interrogation methods can, too.

"[D]enial of responsibility is a defensive reaction following an action that one does not want to be accountable for, whereas looking for other responsible agents is a more complex and elaborate cognitive operation, which individuals may engage in later in order to justify the denial of responsibility" (Gosling et al., 2006: 723). In this light, the Kristol-Kaganite approach to torture, mainly silence, and no discernible coherent attitudes, would appear to fit the first part of this definition. By not saying much at all, they would in effect evade the otherwise impending state of dissonance. Krauthammer, Podhoretz et al., on the other hand, by advocating a hard-line pro-torture policy, would appear to have to travel through the first stage and arrive at the second. At first glance, this may seem a little at odds with their rhetoric, after all, they do not seem to be seeking denial of responsibility in any way, but are seemingly content with their assertions. I argue, however, that it is in placing the responsibility on the alleged "terrorists" that the justification of denial of responsibility makes itself visible. Clearly, neither Krauthammer nor Podhoretz would want to torture any civilized person, or any person for that matter, if it weren't for the necessities of World War IV (Podhoretz's term, see Rago, 2006), and the imminent threat of the end of the world as we know it. Therefore, responsibility lies with the enemy as, in the words of Krauthammer, "This time the enemy knows no reason." (Krauthammer, 2004: 19)

In addition to this quite obvious "blame game", the aforementioned fact that neoconservatives remain separate from the George W. Bush administration, creates further space for denial of responsibility. Neoconservatives have also repeatedly - while simultaneously giving credit for acting out on the right causes - scolded the Bush administration for wrong ways of implementing their grand ideas. This clearly distances the architects of the strategy from the working men and women who are in the process of building it. David Rose's article *Neo Culpa* for Vanity Fair magazine gives an abundant number of examples of this denial of responsibility as regards the war in Iraq gone awry. Many central neoconservative policymakers and otherwise adamant pundits demonstrate denials that are, frankly, quite acrobatic in nature. Kenneth Adelman, for example, according to Rose "a lifelong neocon activist", had turned from the Adelman

claiming that "liberating Iraq would be a cakewalk" to blaming the administration (which he too was part of until 2005) as flagrantly incompetent and thus guilty of all mistakes made. Adelman continues that while the "policy can be absolutely right, and noble, beneficial, [...] if you can't execute it, it's useless". (Rose, 2006) David Frum, who has been very closely associated with the White House, is quoted as saying that the situation "must ultimately be blamed on 'failure at the center' - starting with President Bush." To Frum, Bush's not absorbing the ideas in spite of "saying the words" is the root of "everything" (ibid.). Richard Perle goes perhaps furthest of all, though. He claims that neoconservatives had "almost no voice in what happened" in Iraq, and notes that he is getting very tired of being described as an architect of war. Perle concludes with words that are especially suitable for our analysis. Regarding plans for overthrowing Saddam Hussein he contests: "I had no responsibility for that" (ibid.).

This is in line with the findings of Gosling et al. (2006), according to which "individuals tend to deny responsibility for their act as a means to reduce cognitive dissonance", when given the chance to do so. The study indicated further that the effects of denial of responsibility were even greater than expected in light of other previously established modes of dissonance reduction. Interestingly, denial of responsibility also functions as a means to diminish dissonance after another "tool" has been taken advantage of ("trivialization"¹⁰³), in contrast to many other means which only work when used as a first way of dealing with dissonance.

What is more, in the study conducted by Gosling et al., the findings built on previous research arguing that "when individuals become involved in the defense of principles or values independently of any personal or financial interest, they feel positive emotions called 'deontic', linked to satisfaction of a moral requirement". Admittedly there are personal and financial perks involved in neoconservatives' involvement in public affairs, but I argue that it is just as certain that they are genuinely interested in making the world a better place, thus eligible for this "deontic bonus" or added incentive. Reversely, if the actions transgress *internalized moral values*, a feeling of guilt or related "moral emotions", ought to surface. Gosling et al. found that denial of responsibility was an excellent way of reducing cognitive dissonance related to shame and guilt in a free-

¹⁰³ Confirmed by Gosling et al (2006) to be an entirely separate form of reduction.

choice condition through a mechanism of disengagement from one's own behavior. Magnificently, this disengagement has such powers that, according to Gosling et al., "individuals are no longer conscious of the inconsistency between their attitude and their behavior" and "the self [is] protected, and individuals do not feel any negative affect." (Gosling et al., 2006: 729-730)

The foregoing becomes understandable when Irving Kristol condemns the use of torture as part of an art performance, even if the victim was willing to subject him- or herself to the treatment. Speaking for an abstract "we", Irving Kristol declares that we would not allow someone willing to commit suicide do so on stage as part of a play "any more than we would permit scenes of real physical torture on stage, *even if the victim were a willing masochist*" (I. Kristol, 2004c: 170, emphasis added). I do not believe that either Krauthammer, Podhoretz or any other neoconservative person objected to this assertion if and when they read it in its original context, and most likely did not reflect on other, more obvious contexts of torture, where victims have been alleged "terrorists", many of whom may have been wholly third party individuals and thus innocent.

There is some reason to believe that neoconservatism might also suffer from what is known as the *overconfidence effect*¹⁰⁴. In short, this effect entails "feeling confident in the accuracy of one's beliefs and judgments" bringing about "a sense of security in the face of both mundane and important decisions", regardless of the fact that this confidence is often most unwarranted when evaluated against cold facts. According to Blanton et al. this overconfidence can result from a desire to see oneself as a competent or accurate perceiver, a wish most if not all political figures and movements are bound to have. In parallel to the findings of the theory of cognitive dissonance, which Blanton et al. use in their study of overconfidence, feelings of confidence can occur when people give greater weight to supporting evidence for own beliefs and opposing evidence for alternatives. (Blanton et al., 2001: 373-374)

Blanton et al. discovered in their study what they called "an important connection between cognitive dissonance and overconfidence", and noted that where "cognitive dissonance associated with feeling uncertain increased, confidence increased in a way

¹⁰⁴ See Blanton et al. (2001)

that was not warranted by increases in accuracy" (Blanton et al. 2001:382). We must therefore leave open the possibility that overconfidence and keeping faithful to the approach taken before can, to an extent, alleviate cognitive dissonance even if assertions conflict. Blanton et al. also suggest that overconfidence may be more prevalent than elsewhere where there are strong social grounds for presenting oneself in good light, i.e. as knowledgeable, and where attention is "focused on the self". (Blanton et al. 2001: 382) Expressions of political opinions, in my view, are very powerful in both instances and it would be no wonder if this were one element in dissonance reduction for neoconservatives.

Openness of decision making and deliberations have also been found to be a factor in harder commitment to decisions, as Jervis (1976: 401) has pointed out. Neoconservatives, for their part, have repeatedly refuted claims of their ranks being a "cabal" by the fact that their communications are as open as is possible. Jervis notes that such circumstances help to make decision makers especially resistant to new information. New information can obviously be acceptable even from such sources that would otherwise be deemed unreliable if the information provided is consonant with previous cognitions. Concerning the blatant atrocities of Saddam Hussein, for example, such sources as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the UN Human Rights Commission are apparently deemed reliable by most neoconservatives¹⁰⁵. Should criticism stemming from the same not induce cognitive dissonance when such criticism is clearly directed towards policies advocated by the neoconservatives?

Scott and Ambler (2007) consider a similar question from an ILI¹⁰⁶ perspective, as regards the wanting legality and legitimacy of the U.S. attack on Saddam Hussein's Iraq and find that evidence suggests that "international law rhetoric [...] served as a vehicle for achieving a particular foreign policy objective", rather than "having constructed the driving force behind U.S. policy" (Scott and Ambler, 2007: 79). Generic analogies between the invasion of Iraq and the use of torture remain handicapped on many levels, but are, at least in this case, useful in highlighting the "backwards" role of international law in U.S. foreign policy reasoning.

¹⁰⁵ See e.g. Kaplan and W. Kristol, 2003. The volume's notes include numerous references to the mentioned organizations.

¹⁰⁶ Theory of International Law as Ideology

Moreover, Scott and Ambler find that U.S. military personnel have been responsible for interrogation methods amounting to torture, that even the U.S. military's own investigations found that U.S. soldiers had committed "egregious acts and grave breaches of international law", that the Convention against Torture had been violated, and that the ICRC confirmed allegations of serious prisoner abuse in Iraq. The reactions to this are, according to the theory of ILI, best understood principally as revealing a breach against the "image not only of the US but of international law as compulsory and politically neutral in the sense of treating all states equally." Importantly, it "also underlined the falseness of any image of international law as dictating US policy." (Scott and Ambler, 2007: 80).

However, Gawronski and Strack (2004) declare that "a dissonance producing inconsistency between two propositions" - in our case condoning the use of torture and the core values of neoconservatism - "is defined only by an assignment of truth values." This means that in order for dissonance to emerge, both propositions will have to be regarded as true. As we saw before, Festinger held that ideology is equal to "knowledge", and logically, what one regards as knowledge, one holds as true. Therefore, given that neoconservative core values have been accurately explained, and given that torture by U.S. forces in the context of the GWOT has taken place, both propositions will pass for truths¹⁰⁷.

In line with Festinger's original theory, Gawronski and Strack argue that the consequent dissonance is resolved "either by explicitly rejecting one proposition as being false or by finding an additional proposition that resolves the inconsistency", in other words by disclaiming the former truth value of either, or deliberately attributing further justifying values to the behavior (Gawronski and Strack, 2004: 536). Again, it cannot be credibly said that either one of the propositions would be false - changing the core values incrementally may be natural and happen through similar mechanisms, but, following neoconservative rhetoric, this remains an unlikely explanation; disputing cases of torture is unconvincing in light of the foregoing quotations by neoconservatives - and

¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately this assertion, too, needs to be taken with a spoonful of salt as neoconservatives might theoretically claim not to believe that torture has in fact taken place. On the other hand, existing neoconservative commentaries regarding the favorable aspects of torture suggest that there might not be such objections.

thus, it would appear palpable that the way in which the state of dissonance has been alleviated has been to add justifying values to the behavior.

This finds support in both the statements favoring the use of harsh interrogation methods, which without exception emphasize the moral grounds for such behavior: it is only used for saving the lives of the many innocent in contrast to abusing the rights of "just one" or "few".

Another question looking to be answered is this: do neoconservatives feel responsible for torture in GWOT? Judging from their political proclamations, a layman's analysis might well be that they should. However, as Gosling et al. show in their article (2006), "[i]f the individual does not feel responsible for the counterattitudinal behavior, even if this behavior is inconsistent with the initial attitude and if both elements are important, the individual will not feel discomfort and therefore will not be motivated to reduce dissonance".

Of course, neoconservatives will have had and continue to have an infinite number of possible positions on the use of torture in GWOT. This is by no means a problem in the theory of cognitive dissonance. Certainly, as Festinger (1957: 36) also notes, it "makes the analysis of the decision process difficult, but, happily, adds very little complexity to the analysis of the dissonances which exist after the decision is made". In other words, all elements *not present* in the newly made decision, be it to support the use torture in GWOT, like support for the absolute prohibition of torture, are now dissonant with the cognitive elements corresponding to the action taken. The extent of this dissonance is dependent on several factors. These include the importance of the decision (proximity to core values); the relative attractiveness of the unchosen alternative(s) (this attractiveness can of course easily move into either direction in light of sudden changes in the political atmosphere) and the degree of cognitive overlap (loosely "similarity") between two elements or choices of the alternatives involved in the decision.

As regards political opinions within groups of likes such as the neoconservatives, "dissonance can be resolved through group-level mechanisms, including the diffusion of responsibility for a dissonance-producing act to others in a group and the misattribution of dissonance arousal to dislike for an out-group" (Matz & Wood, 2005).

In politics, it should be noted, counterattitudinal behavior arouses feelings of dissonance only in cases where politicians etc. feel that this behavior has influenced others (Jervis, 1976: 404). In the present case, it should be clear that the neoconservatives understand and accept their role in influencing the president and his administration. Oftentimes they are the first to claim ownership of or show support for new policies. Furthermore, one would find insurmountable obstacles in attempting to try to in advance draw lines between such neoconservative policy recommendations that will be taken seriously in the White House and those that will not. Therefore, all indications of recommendations, not to mention demands, from the neoconservative side, should be taken as potentially seriously affecting the official policy - even more so in light of the highly successful track record of the movement during the last couple of years. This is not to say that dissonance could not be reduced by way of denying one's responsibility. Of course it could, and it can.

Although we at this point can only conclude that neoconservative core values do indeed clash with contemporary neoconservative action and rhetoric on torture, thus giving rise to a state of cognitive dissonance, our further steps remain severely limited. It is indeed inevitable that our analysis leaves us with very little except some speculations as to what the neoconservatives themselves have done and will do regarding this cognitive dissonance. We need not speculate if there are measures taken to alleviate this discomfort. Logically, there must be, for the state of cognitive dissonance is not a tolerable one. Francis Fukuyama's case shows one extreme way of dissolving such incongruence, but unfortunately that tale tells us nothing of the use of torture, although it, too, may have played a part.

I argue that a point made by Jervis, mentioned earlier in this paper, seems at this stage the most plausible outcome, although probably not the only one. According to Jervis "people must often rearrange their perceptions, evaluations, and opinions" in order to construct one or more "defensible postures" supporting their self-image (Jervis, 1976: 406). Logically, this rearranging of "perceptions, evaluations, and opinions" will affect every other attitude of a given ideology, thus attributing to a spillover effect of sorts. To predict how exactly attitudes and even central values such as the promotion of human rights are now arrayed inside of neoconservative ideology must be the object of quite

another, separate study. What we can say at this point already, however, is that the principles of liberal democracy, "American values", human rights, and "morality" are experiencing a steep downward trend in U.S. neoconservatism at the moment.

It seems fitting to remind the reader at this late stage of the United States' third president Thomas Jefferson's idealism by quoting him: "*A society that will trade a little liberty for a little order will deserve neither and will lose both*"¹⁰⁸. The concepts of freedom, democracy and the rule of law will remain the cornerstones of the United States' history. Whether they will be central in the image of the nation's future will depend on its commitments to its own ideals, the implementation of which will be for the nation itself to decide.

5.7 Concluding Discussion

Having declared that a state of cognitive dissonance occurs logically between neoconservative core values and condoning the use of torture, we ought to pause a while before rushing to obligatory complacent concluding remarks instructing the reader to appreciate the insights of the writer. The premise of this paper was always to explore the explicit core values of the neoconservative ideology in relation to the allegedly condoning attitude towards the use of torture in the GWOT. So far so good. We have established that the explicit core values of neoconservatism are not unfamiliar with the promotion of liberal democracy and human rights, that torture has taken place in GWOT, that neoconservatives appear to condone it; and that there is an irreconcilable conflict between these. We have also speculated with the idea of neoconservatism adding an "extra" element of justification, saving the lives of huge amounts of innocents by breaching the rights of one or few, to appease this conflict. The trouble with the foregoing is that it rests to a large extent to the *explicit* core values of neoconservatism. It would be folly and naïve to claim that these values are the only true values.

A similar dichotomy is presented by Gawronski and Strack who found corroboration for the assumption that cognitive dissonance can be potent in changing explicit attitudes but that implicit attitudes are far more resistant to change. (Cf. Gawronski and Strack, 2004).

¹⁰⁸ As quoted in Baker and Stack, Jr., 2006: 230

Is it possible that the implicit attitudes of neoconservatives would remain unchanged in the face of overwhelming evidence, boosted by the *overconfidence effect*? The answer is most likely yes.

In fact, one need only trawl through some neoconservative writings to find indications of the opposite. Wolfson, for example, avows that the promotion of democracy is not so much for the sake of democracy and human rights themselves but rather for upkeeping the United States' dominant position in the world. According to him, only a principled foreign policy can keep up the U.S. public's interest for foreign affairs in the long haul (Wolfson, 2004: 227). Naturally, this changes the above analysis. As was stressed before, the results remain irrespective of the truth values: the results indicate whether or not cognitive dissonance *ought to* arise between the sketched variants of the two conflicting propositions. I have argued this to be the case.

Lawrence Kaplan and William Kristol declare that "American principles" are universal and that "[e]xporting democracy *does* further America's vital interests" (Kaplan and W. Kristol, 2003: 104). According to them, speaking in terms of democratic rather than American aims helps relay a favorable image of U.S. efforts. Mixing these assertions with the "theory" of democratic peace, the writers conclude that the "ethics and institutions of democracy encourage compromise", thus benefiting all people and peoples in the world. Yet, in the end, the bottom line remains unchanged: "The more democratic the world becomes, the more likely it is to be congenial to America". (Kaplan and W. Kristol, 2003: 105).

The results of this paper must therefore unfortunately remain inconclusive. What we have established is a clear conflict between the explicit core values and condoning the use of torture. In addition, however, we have cast doubts on the explicit core values being more or less tools, rather than inflexible and guiding moral principles. This finding leads to intriguing and novel questions that, one hopes, future studies of the subject will aim to answer, for example: what implications does the alleged demotion of liberal democracy and human rights to "tools" of maintenance of the existing world order have?

In any case, neoconservatism ought to remain relevant as an object of study. Having been buried in the past as irrelevant, William Kristol could recently express this candidly by saying that "Neoconservatism is today stronger than ever" (W. Kristol, 2004: 76)

Regardless of the relative strength or weakness of the neoconservative ideology, one thing seems certain: their grip on formerly held beliefs is not going to get any weaker in the foreseeable future. According to Jervis (1976: 404), where dissonance is held and both the individual and the dissonant information (or sources of such information) she is facing are resistant to change, few other choices remain but to add new consonant elements to one's own set of beliefs. This effect is called "the Boomerang effect" because of the return to and reaffirming of existing attitudes, but it is also, and perhaps even more accurately, known as "anti-learning" (Jervis, 1976: 405).

My feeling is Bennett might have phrased his thought better than he intended in his discussion concerning morality and U.S. foreign policy. He noted, in a somewhat circular argument, that analogous to individuals, moral action by states must be constituted by more than mere *expressions* of morality, it must entail moral actions and judgments, measurable by a moral standard. Bennett claims however that for states, unlike for individuals, there is no universally accepted or enforced law (Bennett, 2000: 294). I argue that the prohibition of the use of torture is close enough, although hardly strictly enforced. In concert with Bennet, Joshua Muravchik notes that "political acts are subject to measurement against moral standards, and that the virtues of kindness compassion, generosity, honor, and reason should guide public life as well as private" (Muravchik quoted in Dorrien, 2004: 117). Ironically, in criticizing U.S. liberals whose "social justice" ideals he scorns, Irving Kristol (1995: 257) raises the question of liberty being the penultimate value in society, but has, to my knowledge been still as a mouse regarding the deprivation of fundamental freedoms of those alleged "terrorists" who may turn out to be innocent.

So what do we know that we didn't know before understanding the logic of dissonance presented above? For one, we now understand that neoconservatism has changed, and that this change has been caused by dissonance between the ideology's core values and the actual positions assumed by its supporters. We also realize that, while avoiding

being overly fatalistic, this change to an extent predetermines what neoconservatism can be in the future. For it is similarly understood that in "reducing dissonance [...] people alter their beliefs and evaluations, thereby changing the premises of later deliberations" (Jervis, 1976:387).

But here, once again, right before the close, a word of caution is in place. This paper has aimed not so much at getting to ground truth about the philosophical underpinnings and foundations of neoconservative political thinking as finding out how it manifests itself in "real life". I have attempted to do so by way of introducing myself to as much academic and non-academic literature and other material on the subject as has been reasonably available. This literature consists of neoconservative and pro-neoconservative as well as critical literature, and I have attempted to form a fair and balanced view of "what the neoconservatives are all about". To this end, I do not feel that a deeper analysis of, for example, the works of Leo Strauss would necessarily have brought about too many advantages. The history and premises of neoconservative political thinking are, however, the obvious point of destination if later reading of this work proves many of my assertions concerning the ideology false.

Regarding the ideological background and neoconservatism, Strauss in particular, it is to be noted that certain uncomfortable questions rise here before the end for some implicitly or explicitly "Straussian" neoconservatives. Namely, their relationship to Strauss's idea that "modernity was about the denial of truth, including moral truth, which led to the worship of power/intolerance" (Dorrien, 2004: 132) can cause discomfort, for using torture as a means of extracting alleged truths ought logically to qualify as worship of power/intolerance, in most people's view at least. And, as has been explored above, torture is not acceptable according to U.S. or international law, ultimately reflecting U.S. and other democracies' deeply embedded values.

I wish to acknowledge another fresh view concerning the study of neoconservatism. An article by James O'Connor (forthcoming) has caught my interest recently. O'Connor's article views neoconservatism as "the most militant variety of US exceptionalist self-perception" (O'Connor, forthcoming). O'Connor's cynical analysis of the "radical occasionalism" of neoconservatism that renders neoconservatism a movement willing to use most any rhetorical means to accomplish unrelated things it set out to do in the first

place: "sovereignty, freedom, democracy, the collective will or essential character of the nation, and suchlike - are perceived purely as instruments for self-empowerment" (O'Connor, forthcoming). Commentaries of neoconservatism along these lines can make analyses such as mine seem starry-eyed rather than fair and balanced. Indeed, one need to pause to think what the true value of "democracy" or human rights is if they are demoted to tools of hegemony preservation, promotion and extension as neoconservatism tends to view them, at least partially. In my opinion such usage of those concepts tells a short but revealing story of the hegemon itself and little more. Is it truly believable that people will acquiesce on a large scale with a notion of reducing morality, perhaps even love, to maintenance of order? And what will be left if this is truly the case? In any case all such efforts seem so very futile to me and, more alarmingly, counterfinal, as my current understanding of the human condition is that the resulting "order" for the sake of order - not for human development, mutual understanding, some form of "happiness" or some such "higher reason" - will remain empty, hollow, transparent and conducive to dissatisfaction, leading to disorder once more. Naturally, any and all vocal defendants of the neoconservative ideology will add that this is the absolute negation of what their ideology is all about, and then it will be actions over words to turn the minds of disillusioned critics of the ideology.

Countering human rights NGOs' criticisms of the U.S. treatment of GWOT detainees, Kenneth Anderson (2005) declares in *The Weekly Standard* things that seem highly ironic in the light neoconservatism has presented itself above, e.g. heavily contradicting one's values. Anderson says: "[t]here is something morally perverse about [different human rights organizations' criticisms of the United States]. Can you really hold these positions simultaneously and still count yourself a human rights organization acting solely on principle? Unlikely. What it means in the real world, of course, is that these human rights organizations, whether Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, simply indulge themselves in rhetorical overkill. They do not mean what they say" (Anderson, 2005). The same applies too often to neoconservatism.

6 Conclusions

Our study has given support for the notion that neoconservatism is a movement with distinct characteristics, political goals and shared values. It is therefore defensible to call it an "ideology" in a positive sense. Neoconservatism has proven to be extremely varied in its manifestations, yet the belief that U.S. power can be used for "moral purposes" and that liberal democracy and human rights ought to be promoted seems relatively uncontested, unifying all of neoconservatism. Francis Fukuyama's dissociating himself from the ideology based on too wide a discrepancy between personal views and those of the ideology, although possibly entirely unconnected to the issue of torture, serves as a valid example of cognitive dissonance taking place in groups and within ideologies.

Our discussion on the different aspects of torture - in international and national law, as well as the "essence" of torture - has convinced us of the central role that the individual and her dignity inherently play. Furthermore, we have discussed the use of torture as it has taken place in U.S. custody in the context of GWOT, and how the neoconservative ideology feels about the issue.

In this study, we have identified two cognitive elements potentially in a dissonant relation within neoconservatism. These elements are: neoconservative core values on the one hand, and neoconservative positions on the use of torture in the context of the GWOT on the other. In order to analyze the potential arousal of cognitive dissonance we have studied neoconservatism and found its core values to be, roughly the following: "morality", human rights, democracy, and so called American values. We have attributed content to each of these concepts and tried to locate the obverse of each to find whether or not Festinger's condition for cognitive dissonance could be fulfilled: that the obverse of the other follows from this. We concluded this thin analysis to indicate that a state of cognitive dissonance ought indeed to arise.

We have shown that typically post-decision dissonance reduction efforts lead to the alternatives becoming "more different than during the decision" (called also the "spreading apart" of alternatives). A prerequisite of this phenomenon is that

neoconservatives avoid conflicting information or dismiss it out of hand as irrelevant. Therefore we should not expect sudden reversals in neoconservative attitudes toward the use of torture, however much in conflict in the ideology's core values they appear to be in light of what has been noted above.

Regarding the magnitude of the resulting dissonance, we can only conclude that because it is a function of the importance of the elements and because the elements in play here present themselves as important if not critical, we could consequently expect a decent amount of dissonance. The mechanisms of dissonance reduction are varied and effective, however, leaving us with just hints of how neoconservatism has taken on the challenge of cognitive dissonance. The fact that we are dealing with a social group makes attitude change despite dissonance difficult. Furthermore, the neoconservative attitude may have been securely "locked in" by now, making it thus resistant to change. Moreover, if neoconservatives and neoconservatism deeply believe in their attitude being justified - as they appear to do with all their heart - persuasive efforts may be in vain as Forsberg noted above. Criticism towards neoconservatism has been harsh and voiced, quite naturally, mainly by political opposition. This has made neoconservative attitude change even less likely, as changes in the evaluation of the sources of dissonant information (likeability, reliability etc.) is easily done, as Festinger has shown.

Perhaps most importantly, however, dissonance may have been reduced by means of denial of responsibility, an excellent means of reducing dissonance caused by transgressions of internalized moral values, as we have noted with a reading of Gosling et al. Neoconservatives have demonstrated great willingness and ability to blame the Bush administration for failure in the war on Iraq; it could do so also as regards the use of torture. Furthermore the real responsibility has been found to be with the victims of torture, or "terrorists", if with anyone. So far, an extensive denial of responsibility has not been necessary, as neoconservatives have not been accused of advocating torture to any real extent. It might prove yet to be a way out of dissonance.

Jervis's related notions on foreign policy "sacrifices" having a distinct role in assuring the decision maker of the decision's noble nature may play a role, too. Instead of admitting to having violated their own and more general moral principles, it seems more

plausible that neoconservatives experience that there was never a choice and that one must stay the course.

The fundamental side of ideology (as opposed to operative ideology) must be most important to any ideology, for it defines the grand strategies of the movement. It seems further that neoconservatism as a fundamental ideology would not condone the use of torture in any case, but does so currently on the operative level. We have noted Martin Seliger's explanation that such discrepancies can be "sincerely believed to be temporary", yet recall Jervis's pointing out that recent decisions tend to direct following ones. Therefore the fundamental side of ideology is not, truthfully, the only source of guiding information for an ideology.

What we are ultimately left with here is the presumption that while neoconservatism's core values as such may not have changed, an internal rearranging of sorts has, which has further manifested itself on the operative level. Although we cannot know this, Jervis's observation that people must often rearrange their perceptions, evaluations, and opinions in order to construct one or more "defensible postures" supporting their self-image seems at this stage the most plausible and sustainable rationalization for neoconservative dissonance reduction.

To conclude, it is fascinating to think for a moment what a neoconservative critique of this paper might look like. One of the first thoughts that comes to mind is that criticism might be directed at this paper being overly moralistic, petty, and perhaps idealistic in its finding opposition to the use of torture. The author of this paper does not believe in value-free writing, academic or not, but rather believes that science ought to be normatively based. And so such criticism may be in place and justified from certain points of view. Should such criticism originate in neoconservative cadres, the author would anxiously await the next opportunity to point at several sources of *cognitive dissonance* arising from such critique: after all, it is hard-boiled idealism and *moral* uses of power that the ideology advocates.

7 Literature

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