

**Ernst Fraenkel Vorträge**  
zur amerikanischen  
Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft und Geschichte

Herausgegeben von Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich

**1**

Seymour Martin Lipset  
**Neoconservatism: Myth and Reality**

Peter Steinfels  
**The Short Happy Life of  
Neoconservatism**

John F. Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien  
der Freien Universität Berlin

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## Vorwort des Herausgebers

Diese neue Schriftenreihe des John F. Kennedy-Instituts der Freien Universität Berlin soll dazu beitragen, die Ergebnisse der Ernst Fraenkel Vorträge zur amerikanischen Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft und Geschichte über den Tag hinaus festzuhalten und einem breiten Interessentenkreis auch außerhalb von Berlin zugänglich zu machen. Die Vortragsreihe ist dem Deutsch-Amerikaner und weltweit bekannten Politik- und Amerikawissenschaftler Ernst Fraenkel gewidmet, der von 1951 bis 1967 an der Freien Universität Berlin lehrte und dessen Initiative 1963 zur Gründung des John F. Kennedy-Instituts für Nordamerikastudien führte. Wie Ernst Fraenkel selbst, so sollen auch diese Vorträge renommierter amerikanischer Wissenschaftler und Kenner der jeweiligen Themenbereiche zum wissenschaftlichen Brückenschlag über den Atlantik hinweg beitragen und Anregungen für die Forschung am Kennedy-Institut sowie an anderen europäischen Amerikainstituten vermitteln.

Dieses Heft enthält die beiden Vorträge zum Rahmenthema "Neokonservatismus". Am 24. Juni 1987 hielt Seymour Martin Lipset (Stanford University) den ersten Ernst Fraenkel Vortrag. Ihm folgte am 10. Februar 1988 Peter Steinfels (New York Times), der schon 1979 mit dem Buch **THE NEOCONSERVATIVES: THE MEN WHO ARE CHANGING AMERICA'S POLITICS**, der ersten großen Studie dieses Phänomens, hervorgetreten war.

Die Vorträge wurden aus Mitteln finanziert, die die Fritz Thyssen Stiftung auf Antrag von Frau Professor Helga Haftendorn (Institut für Internationale Politik und Regionalstudien der FU Berlin) und mir (John F. Kennedy-Institut) zur Verfügung stellte. Der Stiftung gilt dafür ein besonderer Dank.

Berlin, im Juni 1988

Carl-Ludwig Holtfreich

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## Neoconservatism: Myth and Reality

### Seymour Martin Lipset

I feel very fortunate to be back here lecturing at the Free University where I led a seminar in 1953 and, as a result, had the experience of being downtown on the 17th of June and seeing a real revolution. But that is another subject.

I am particularly pleased to inaugurate the Ernst Fraenkel lecture series. Ernst Fraenkel, as you know, was a distinguished man, a great teacher and scholar, who also played an important role in politics. It is particularly noteworthy at this time, when South Korea appears on the verge of restoring democracy, that one of the things Ernst Fraenkel did before he returned to Berlin was write the Korean constitution.

What most comes to mind about Ernst Fraenkel, however, is that he was a passionate man who could not repress himself. He would get so wrapped up in an argument that he would start to yell. I can still recall his sitting across from me in my apartment in Zehlendorf and shouting in a voice which could be heard blocks away.

He is remembered for many intellectual accomplishments, but I cite him most frequently for laying down a very important dictum for scholars in the social sciences. He said that institutions always vary across national lines, that parties sind nicht Parteien and trade unions sind nicht Gewerkschaften. That is, it is impossible to translate institutional terms without knowing the different cultures behind the languages. Social and cultural analysis requires knowing at least two countries well, one's own and another, although the more the better. And, as you will see, a large part of what I have to say is that Konservatismus ist nicht conservatism.

### Introduction

The neoconservative trend in American politics should be termed a "tendency" rather than a "movement." It was never a cohesive set of beliefs, and has now almost disappeared from the political spectrum. The term itself is misunderstood abroad as well as in the United States. Much of the writing on the subject treats it as a variant of right-wing American conservatism, Friedmanite and Reaganite in its ideological orientation. In fact, the concept of neoconservatism arose out of quarrels within the American socialist movement, and the term was first applied as a way of discrediting political bona fides, much as social fascism was formulated by the Communists in the late twenties and early thirties to denigrate the Social Democrats. To understand neo-conservatism, it is necessary to examine the political failure of American socialism and the resultant sharp sectarian conflicts that emerged within the American left.

### Ideological Tendencies

Before tackling the subject itself, I think it important, particularly for a foreign audience, to give some background about ideological terms and tendencies in America. The words "conservative" and "liberal" mean something quite different in the United States than they do in Europe or, it should be noted, Canada as well. Many political writers such as H.G. Wells, Louis Hartz, George Grant, and Max Balogh have emphasized that there are no conservatives in America, that its citizens are all liberals. In The Future in America, published in 1906, in which Wells discussed the weakness of labor/socialist parties in the United States, he also noted that the country also lacked a conservative party of the kind present in Europe and Britain. He contended that the orientations of the two major American political parties, the Democrats and Republicans, corresponded to those of the left and right wings of the British Liberal Party. Wells asserted a thesis which was to be elaborated in 1955 by Louis Hartz in The Liberal Tradition in America, that the American political ethos is classically liberal in the 18th and 19th century sense of the term. Liberalism in its original meaning involves an anti-statist philosophy, opposition to mercantilism and the alliance of throne and altar, support for economic and political freedoms, laissez-faire and civil liberties, as well as egalitarianism in Tocquevillian terms, e.g., equality of opportunity and respect, regardless of status or income differences. Liberalism was the ideology of the American Revolution and remains the source of contemporary political values of the American right and left. Conservatism in the European and Canadian sense originated out of a defense of the alliance of monarchy and the church, religion and aristocracy. Tories have stood for a strong state, an established church, mercantilism, communitarianism, and noblesse oblige, i.e., the values of a hierarchical manorial society.

The American Revolution gave rise to an ideology which is anti-statist, anti-monarchical, anti-church establishment, pro meritocratic competition, and ultimately populist. Basically the American Creed has been suspicious of the state. The Founding Fathers first established a government which did not even have an executive, under the Articles of Confederation. It did not work. By 1789, they had accepted the need for an executive, but to control it set up an elaborate system of checks and balances deliberately intended to make domination by the central government difficult. The Bill of Rights was designed to inhibit state power. As Friedrich Engels pointed out, the pervasiveness of liberalism in America also may be linked to the fact that the United States is the purest example of a bourgeois state, formed in a society that lacks feudal or mercantilist origins. Bourgeois institutions and values occur in their most pristine form in America because it is the most important industrially developed country which is not post-feudal. What Americans seek to conserve is an anti-statist and equalitarian set of beliefs, an approach to

politics that in Europe is called "liberal." Hence, as has been suggested, Americans continue to support diverse forms of nineteenth century liberalism, not socialism or conservatism.

These American values have particularly affected the American left and labor movements. Not only has the United States lacked a socialist party of any significance, but membership in trade unions is smaller proportionately there than anywhere else in the industrialized world, only 15 percent of the non-agricultural employed labor force as of 1987. Even more significant is the continued opposition of American labor organizations to socialism, and the strong strain of anti-statism within them. The largest and most important trade union center, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was syndicalist from its formation in 1886 to its merger with the smaller Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1955. The strongest radical or leftist trade union movement in American history, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), was anarcho-syndicalist.

Though much American labor history written by both Europeans and Americans describes the AFL as conservative compared to unions abroad, they are incorrect. Samuel Gompers, President of the AFL for most of its first four decades, was not a conservative. He argued that what the state can give, the state can take away. Workers should not depend on the state. They should rely only on themselves. Gompers believed that state owned industry would be a much tougher opponent for the union movement than private employers, since companies are weaker than the state. Workers, therefore are better off under capitalism than under public ownership. Unions can protect them more readily under the former.

The AFL was much more militant than European labor movements before and after World War I. Such behavior corresponds to the strong emphasis on competitiveness or winning in other areas of American life. Federation affiliates struck more readily, using more aggressive tactics than did European unions. Both the AFL and the IWW were more prone to use violence against strike breakers and to damage employer property. Prior to the Great Depression, therefore, American labor was militant and syndicalist. During the early thirties, American unions initiated the tactic of factory sit-ins during strikes, one which subsequently spread to France.

The syndicalist and anarcho-syndicalist background of the American labor movement helps to explain the strong anti-Communist and anti-Soviet stance taken by the bulk of the unions since World War II and their alliance with intellectual supporters of a hard-line American foreign policy. This behavior has puzzled foreign observers, including Soviet ones, but it is entirely explicable given the historic distrust of the state which trade unionists have shared with other Americans.

In Britain and Germany, conservatives led by Disraeli and Bismarck inaugurated the welfare state. Rural and aristocratic Tories disliked capitalists as selfish materialists. They believed in the hierarchical values of the manor, in the responsibility of elites to protect those beneath them. They found offensive the values of capitalism, which assumed workers should be discharged without notice when they were no longer needed or no longer useful because of illness, age, or the state of the economy. Marx' Das Kapital and Engels' Condition of the Working Class in England both described in detail the oppression of workers under British capitalism, the most advanced economy of their day. These books are replete with quotations from official reports of the maltreatment of factory workers. Who wrote those descriptions? Tories, conservatives, who believed in the values of aristocracy, monarchy, communitarianism, noblesse oblige. They were as outraged as the Marxists by the way in which workers were treated, since they believed that employers should protect their employees.

Various writers dealing with the issue of why no socialism in the United States, such as H.G. Wells, Louis Hartz, and Gad Horowitz, have argued that strong socialist movements are to be found in countries with a strong state tradition, that Socialism is the other side of Toryism. Harold Macmillan once defined Toryism as paternalistic socialism. The last speech that he made in the House of Lords, at the age of 90, was a bitter attack on Margaret Thatcher for mistreating coal miners during their prolonged strike in 1984. He said these are our people, these are loyal Englishmen who provided coal when we needed it during the war. As a classic Tory, he found her politics immoral. Macmillan's values are the essence of Toryism. Margaret Thatcher is a bourgeois liberal. She is a Reaganite, a Friedmanite. She is not a conservative in the European sense.

Like Macmillan, George Grant, Canada's leading conservative philosopher and theologian, strongly opposes bourgeois liberalism, which he identifies with the United States. He emphasizes the link between socialism and British-Canadian type conservatism. Both seek to use "public power to achieve national purpose." He believes Canadian culture is preferable to American because it contains strong Tory and socialist strands. Another Canadian scholar, Gad Horowitz, who is a socialist, has also pointed to the "common orientation towards the collectivity" of the two tendencies. He notes that "socialism has more in common with Toryism than liberalism, for liberalism is possessive individualism, while socialism and toryism are variants of collectivism."

Socialism has not appealed to Americans because it proposes to enlarge the power of the state. In Europe socialism could have a mass following since statism is rooted in national traditions. Where statism is legitimate, the egalitarian tendencies are also statist, i.e. socialist. But in America, given the suspicion of the state, the left



has been anti-statist. The most recent large scale effort to build radicalism in America, the New Left of the 1960s, was much closer to anarchism than to socialism in its ideology and organizational practices. The European revolutionary figure who appealed most to the American New Left was Rosa Luxemburg and she, of course, is an anti-statist figure. Although a Marxist, she viewed state and party power as dangerous.

The American emphasis on opposition to the state was modified drastically following the onslaught of the Great Depression in the 1930s. Richard Hofstadter noted that the Depression introduced "a social democratic tinge" into American politics and American trade unionism. The New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt fostered a welfare-planning-regulatory state, although he rejected proposals to nationalize industry and was explicitly anti-socialist, as was John L. Lewis, the founding leader of the CIO, who supported the Republicans in the twenties and forties. But classically liberal laissez faire individualistic doctrines remained strong on the right, among the Republicans and conservatives, and were gradually reestablished within the dominant American beliefs during the long post-war prosperity. Examples of the revival of these values are the six Republican victories out of the nine presidential elections since 1952 and the sharp decline in trade union membership, from one-third of the employed labor force in the mid-fifties to less than one-sixth in the mid-eighties.

### The Politics of Intellectuals

The relationship of this discussion of American values and political ideology to the topic, neoconservatism, rests in the fact that the tendency arose among intellectuals, the only stratum in American society in which leftist doctrines have made headway. American intellectuals (those involved in creative activities), as well as major sections of the intelligentsia (those who use intellectual products), have been alienated from the mainstream of bourgeois society, and some turned to socialist ideas as an alternative. In his book, Anti-intellectualism in the United States, Richard Hofstadter reported that, as of its publication in 1964, intellectuals in the United States had been on the left for at least the last three quarters of a century. Many in the smaller group of non-left intellectuals, such as Henry Adams, William James, and T.S. Eliot, were also alienated from American business and materialistic values. As Lionel Trilling has emphasized, these alienated intellectuals fostered an "adversary culture" antagonistic to capitalism. They have been progressives, liberals, socialists, and "greens." One of the constant patterns in American political life from the late 19th century on, the anti-materialistic conservation movement, has always drawn on the intelligentsia for support.

The Great Depression pressed many American intellectuals to the far left. In 1932, 400 writers, artists and academics, many of whom were very distinguished, issued a public statement endorsing Foster and Ford, the candidates for President and Vice President of the Communist Party. Post-war quantitative studies of the politics of academics have found that professors, particularly those in the social sciences and the humanities, have been much more disposed to support socialist or other leftist candidates than any other segment of the society for which opinion data exist. Faculty have disproportionately supported left-wing third parties. This does not mean that the majority have been radicals, but that the level of such commitments among them has been far higher than among the public at large. Only two percent of the general population voted for a left third party in 1948, but 15 percent of the social science professoriate did so. And more important than the opinions or vote of the stratum is the fact that the more successful, the more distinguished, the more creative they are, the more likely intellectuals are to be on the left. Friedrich Hayek attested to this phenomenon when reporting on his impressions of American university life in 1949, and these are supported by much subsequent survey data. Academics at the major universities, e.g., Harvard, Berkeley, Chicago, Yale, Stanford, are much more disposed to hold liberal-left views than at less prestigious schools. Those deeply involved in research and publication are more likely to be radical than those who primarily spend their time teaching. Recent studies of journalists find the same pattern; reporters working for major networks or newspapers are considerably to the left of the profession generally.

Thus it should be recognized that the free market-oriented United States has had important left wing tendencies within the intellectual community. However, given the persistent weakness of socialist and communist parties in America, these alienated intellectuals have operated in a political vacuum. Some have been members of the small radical parties, most have not. Hence, unlike the situation in Europe, there have been few pragmatic Realpolitik constraints on the ideological purity of the left intellectuals in America. In much of Europe, left intellectuals who wanted Praxis, who sought a meaningful relation between ideology and politics, could at different times in history support the socialists or Communists. Such a situation has never held true in the United States. America has had leftist intellectuals in abundance, but no mass party, no ideological pragmatism, no contact by radicals with policy relevant politics.

### Conflicts Within the Left

Relative to the size of the organized left in America, ideologically purist tendencies have been stronger in this country than elsewhere in the democratic world. Prior to 1945, Trotskyism was more influential in the United States than in

Europe. Partisan Review, for many years the major literary magazine, was edited by people loosely sympathetic to Trotskyism. A significant number of intellectuals were Trotskyist fellow travelers during the early thirties. They took ultra left positions developed in the conflicts among the intelligentsia about Marxism, socialism, the nature of the Soviet Union, the Spanish Civil War, and the like. Trotskyism appealed as a revolutionary ideology not corrupted by power or the need to compromise with electoral realities which undercut the social democratic appeal. Besides the Trotskyists, who declined numerically with the outbreak of World War II, there was a vigorous independent left which thought of itself as revolutionary. The American Socialist Party, led by Norman Thomas, stood considerably to the left of the European affiliates of the Second International during the 1930s and 1940s. Anti-Stalinism, a sophisticated radical opposition to the Communist International, was a major point of view among American intellectuals. Although the Communist Party was the strongest force among leftists in membership terms and general political influence during the New Deal period, it had less appeal to many intellectuals than the Trotskyists and revolutionary socialists, in part because of the Communist Popular Front policy of supporting Roosevelt and the Democrats.

The 1930s witnessed incredibly bitter fights between the Communist and the non-Communist American lefts about the character of the Soviet Union. Stalinism was seen by the anti-Communist radicals not only as oppressive in the USSR, but as having betrayed the cause of revolutionary socialism around the world. As Gillian Peele notes in Revival and Reaction (1984), "the primary divisions in American intellectual life in the 1930s were within the far left", and resulted in "a heritage of ideas and an awareness of disputes within the communist movement which was unusual among scholars and rare among practicing politicians." A generation of radicals was weaned on the interpretation that the Communists were responsible for the rise of Hitler, that they had cooperated with the Nazis in strikes in 1931 and 1932, and had undermined the Social Democratic government in Prussia. Before the Nazis came to power, Communists denounced the socialists as social fascists, i.e., objective allies of fascism. The non-Communist left believed that the Stalinists had undermined the anti-fascist struggle during the Spanish Civil War, that they had been more concerned with destroying the anti-Stalinist left than with defeating Franco. Ultimately there was the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939 which made World War II possible. In 1940, Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, visited Berlin and said that fascism was a matter of taste. Until the Soviet Union itself was invaded, Communists sought to work with the German conquerors in occupied Europe. The French Communist party, for example, applied for permission to publish L'Humanite in Paris in 1940. In 1941, after the Soviet entry into the war, the American Communists openly supported the Roosevelt administration's indictment of the leaders of the

Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party under the Smith Act, a law enacted as an anti-Communist measure.

The revulsion to Stalinism among the American anti-communist left affected reactions to McCarthyism in the early 1950s. While no one who could be considered "left" openly supported Senator Joseph McCarthy, some anti-Stalinist radicals were soft on his platform. While they agreed that his methods were bad, and disapproved of his tactics, at least he was fighting the Communists. The Communists themselves played into the hands of McCarthy and his allies by rarely defending their free speech rights under the Constitution to agitate or organize as Communists. When attacked by government or Congressional investigators, they would insist they were liberals, that the investigations were designed to intimidate the progressive movement. Although the Socialists and the IWW, when arrested during World War I, had defended their civil rights as radicals, and the Trotskyists did the same in 1941, Communists never stood up to McCarthy or other investigators to proclaim their right to be revolutionaries. Hence, the issue was whether X actually was a Communist, not whether he had a right to be one. Under such conditions, some anti-Stalinist leftists found it difficult to speak up for people whom they regarded as committed Stalinists.

The anti-Stalinist left intellectuals on the whole continued to identify themselves as socialists or liberals during the post-war period. The cold war of the late forties and early fifties was led in the free world by liberals and leftists, e.g., Harry Truman, Clement Atlee, Ernie Bevan, Kurt Schumacher, Guy Mollet, and Haakon Lie. When Henry Wallace left Truman's cabinet and joined with the Communists to set up a new left dovish third party, the Progressives, in 1948, few liberals or trade union leaders followed.

The reasons for the growth of anti-Stalinism in the immediate post-war period were rooted in events; the takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948, the overtly anti-Semitic trials subsequently held in that country, Stalin's increasing reliance on anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, the end of any pretense of democratic rights and the suppression of the Socialists in eastern Europe, the Blockade of Berlin, and the Korean War. The non-Communist intellectuals, both left and right, united for a brief period in the International Congress for Cultural Freedom, an organization set up to oppose Communist influence in the intellectual world. At the most important meeting of the Congress in Milan in 1955 many important leaders from both the democratic left and right were present, united in their agreement that Communist totalitarianism should be opposed.

This unity dissolved in the 1960s with the Vietnam War and the subsequent rise of a radical student-based anti-war movement which rejected the moralistic anti-Communism of the anti-Stalinist left. These developments led to a sharp split within the liberal and social democratic communities. In the United States, the leading New

Left group, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) emerged out of the student section of the League for Industrial Democracy (SLID). The parent organization was founded in 1905 to organize intellectuals and professionals in support for trade unions and social democratic principles generally. In the mid-sixties, as the youth affiliate turned further to the left, and showed a willingness to collaborate with any group that opposed the Vietnam War, including the Communists, the older socialists in the LID, led by Michael Harrington, sought to discipline their youth, telling them to stay away from the Communists. The student segment rejected this advice, which they viewed as Red-baiting. They broke with the SLID and, as the SDS, went on its own. They adopted a strong anti-anti-Communist stance.

The division was not limited to the student or youth movements. A growing conflict developed within the adult left, particularly between the New Left and the old Trotskyist and social democratic segments. The bitter anti-Communism of the old left continued to be the main passion of many involved in the latter two. Max Schactman, who founded a dissident revolutionary movement which broke with the official Trotskyists in 1940 over their support of the Soviet attack on Finland, opposed World War II as an imperialist war but in the mid-sixties endorsed the American involvement in Vietnam. At the outset of American intervention, the majority of the American non-Communist left supported an American role in Vietnam viewed as support of resistance to an effort by part of the Communist world to take over a non-Communist country. South Vietnam had a labor movement with close ties to the AFL-CIO. As the war continued, however, leftists who did not oppose it found themselves isolated within the left and liberal communities, which became increasingly involved in the anti-war movement. As the protest took on the character of a mass movement led by radicals, those who wanted to continue leftist or socialist activities were faced with a choice; oppose the war or be perceived by the new growing generation of young radicals as reactionaries. The Socialist party, which included the dissident Trotskyists, split. Its left was to become known as the Democratic Socialists. Its right formed an organization called Social Democrats USA, which supported the Vietnam war. The left opposed it, though they rejected the pro Hanoi-Viet Cong stance of many of the New Left radicals involved in the anti-war movement and the confrontational tactics frequently aimed at universities.

These struggles within the non-Communist left were paralleled in the conflicts within the Democratic party and the liberal community. The New Deal groupings, which had been more or less united behind the strong anti-Communist foreign policies of Harry Truman and John Kennedy, also began to divide. The New Politics wing, identified with Senators Eugene McCarthy, George McGovern and Robert Kennedy, opposed the war and favored efforts to negotiate with the Soviets on arms control and other matters. Conversely, a number of old line New Dealers, including

Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey and Henry Jackson, together with the major leaders of the AFL-CIO, remained strong in their opposition to the Communists and continued to support the war in Vietnam.

The left and liberal worlds were now sharply split. A number of prominent intellectuals, with roots in the anti-Stalinist left, were dismayed by the rise of the increasingly influential New Left and New Politics tendencies which they perceived as soft on Communism. They were especially critical of the student movement and identified many of the new single issue movements that had developed in the sixties as somehow linked together in undermining resistance to Communism. These reactions gradually led them to concentrate on fighting the anti-anti-Communist left. They continued, however, to favor welfare state policies and support for trade unions. Viewing democracy as an end in itself and strongly attached to the values of scholarship, they argued that the confrontationist attacks by the New Left and the anti-war movement on the universities and on the democratic political system were not only unwarranted, but played into the hands of anti-democratic extremists, both of the left and the right. Hence they were regarded as renegades by the New Left and found a greater emotional kinship with anti-Communist conservatives and Republicans than with their erstwhile political colleagues, whom they considered too dovish in their foreign policy views.

### The Emergence of Neoconservatism

The hard line anti-Stalinists were, however, still perceived as within the liberal or left communities until Michael Harrington, the leader of the Democratic Socialists, coined the term neoconservatism. He formulated it in order to discredit the right wing social democrats. They, he said, are neoconservatives, people who are objectively conservative and allied to, if not a part of, the conservative movement. What Harrington was endeavoring to do was to tell the left of center world, particularly the militant New Left students who regarded left social democrats like himself and Irving Howe as non-radicals, that there was a difference between them and right-wing social democrats.

The subsequent development and seemingly increased influence of the neoconservative "movement" are a good example of the consequences of a phenomenon sociologists describe as "labeling." Labels determine reactions to those labeled, whether they are described as psychotic, communist, or conservative. In the case of the neoconservatives, the label led many of their former friends and allies, for whom "conservative" is an invidious term, to reject them. Conversely, the label led many traditional rightists, Republicans, and business people, long unhappy about their limited support among intellectuals, to welcome as new allies this group of prominent writers and academics who, they were told, had come over to their side.

The term quickly took hold and became part of American political discourse. Many in United States and elsewhere assumed that neoconservatives were hard line right wingers on domestic as well as foreign issues, whereas in fact, almost all of them remained supportive of welfare planning state and New Deal policies. They were identified with the Hubert Humphrey, Henry Jackson, Pat Moynihan Democrats; the George Meany, Lane Kirkland trade unionists; and the Social Democrats USA led by Sidney Hook and Bayard Rustin. But this background was forgotten or ignored as the old line conservative intellectuals, Republican politicians, and many in the business community, reacted positively to being told that a group of prominent, disproportionately Jewish, intellectuals, who had once been on the left, were now conservatives.

Neoconservatives thus found themselves rejected by their old friends and hailed by their opponents. The latter's welcome frequently included appreciative audiences, particularly when the neoconservatives dealt with issues upon which they and the conservatives agreed, such as foreign policy and opposition to affirmative action quotas. Neoconservatives were invited to write for conservative magazines, speak to their meetings, and work for their think-tanks. Since the neoconservatives' strongest passions were reserved for their opposition to the Soviets and Communists and they were concerned that most American liberals had become appeasers, they welcomed an alliance with hardline foreign policy conservatives. But their political leaders remained Humphrey, Jackson, and Moynihan. The latter two were to become the co-chairs of the one neoconservative organization, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM), founded in 1973 to rally Democrats in opposition to the New Politics liberals.

The Republicans tried hard to win over the neoconservatives. Richard Nixon appointed Moynihan as his domestic policy advisor in 1969, and subsequently made him his Ambassador to India and the United Nations. He tried to recruit Henry Jackson to serve as Secretary of Defense. In 1972, the Republicans pressed the neoconservative intellectuals to endorse Nixon against the Democratic Presidential nominee, George McGovern, who as an ardent foreign policy dove was anathema to them. Few, except for Irving Kristol, did so. The majority sat out the election, although, Daniel Bell and Nathan Glazer, successively co-editors with Kristol of The Public Interest, publicly endorsed McGovern. The Social Democrats USA and the AFL-CIO under George Meany abstained.

In 1976, most of the neoconservatives backed Henry Jackson for the Democratic nomination for President, but the previously unknown Jimmy Carter won. Carter, who had supported Jackson against McGovern four years earlier, turned out to be a big disappointment to the anti-Communist left. His appointments to positions below Cabinet level were largely to people identified with George McGovern's views on

foreign policy and Ralph Nader's on domestic issues. CDM, which had backed Carter for the nomination after Jackson withdrew, submitted a list of 60 names to Carter as possible appointments. Only one, Peter Rosenblatt, received a position (as Special Representative to Micronesia). Among those on the list who were not appointed were Jeane Kirkpatrick, Richard Perle, Max Kampelman, and Nathan Glazer.

The Republicans tried to capitalize on the frustrations of the neoconservatives with the Carter administration. Bill Brock, the Chair of the Republican National Committee, invited neoconservative intellectuals to lunch on a one-to-one basis, but had little success in recruiting them. At his invitation, Jeane Kirkpatrick wrote an article in 1979 for Common Sense, a Republican magazine, explaining "Why We are Not Republicans." She said the problem rested in the fact that the Republican party is a WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) vehicle, and the people connected with it are corporate board, country club types who are anti-welfare and have no concern for the poor and blacks.

By 1980, many of the neoconservatives had become deeply antagonistic to Jimmy Carter, whom they saw as too soft in foreign policy terms. They were personally wooed by Ronald Reagan. He had invited Jeane Kirkpatrick (who together with her husband, Evron, had been close to Humphrey) and others among them to be on his campaign team. A number of neoconservatives, Richard Perle (a major Jackson aide), Kirkpatrick, Carl Gershman (a leader of Social Democrats USA), Elliot Abrams (a son-in-law of Norman Podhoretz, editor of Commentary), and Max Kampelman (formerly Humphrey's chief of staff), were appointed to major positions in the State or Defense Departments. Richard Pipes (a Jackson advisor) worked for the National Security Council. Others such as Podhoretz and Ben Wattenberg (previously a Johnson aide) received advisory posts in the administration's international communications apparatus. Michael Novak became Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Commission. William Bennett has served consecutively as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and Secretary of Education, in which department he has been assisted by Chester Finn and William Kristol. Gertrude Himmelfarb holds a presidential appointment on the Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities. A 1987 article in The New Republic has described these developments as a Trotskyist takeover of the Reagan administration.

As should be evident from this list of Reagan appointees, their positions are almost entirely in the foreign, defense, or education and intellectual policy realms. No neoconservative has been assigned to a post affecting economic or welfare policy, i.e., the Treasury, Commerce, Agriculture, Labor, or Health and Human Services Departments. The reason is fairly clear: questions of affirmative action and meritocracy apart, almost all the neoconservatives remained liberals and Democrats



on most domestic policy issues, at least as of the beginning of the Reagan presidency in 1981. Even Irving Kristol, who supported Nixon in 1972 and became a Republican soon after, has insisted that he continues to favor a variety of welfare programs and that he disagrees with Friedman, Hayek and Reagan on these issues. As he put it in an article seeking to define "What is a Neo-Conservative?" (Newsweek, January 19, 1976), "Neo-conservatism is not at all hostile to the idea of the welfare state, but it is critical of the Great Society version of this welfare state. In general, it approves of those social reforms that, while providing needed security and comfort to the individual in our dynamic, urbanized society, do so with a minimum of bureaucratic intrusion in the individual's affairs.... In short, while being for the welfare state, it is opposed to the paternalistic state." The reforms he approves of "would include, of course, social security, unemployment insurance, some form of national health insurance, some kind of family assistance plan, etc."

Writing in 1976, Kristol notes that while he is willing to accept identification as a neoconservative, "some of my friends who have been identified as fellow neo-conservatives are less complaisant about this business. Daniel Partick Moynihan, for instance, suggests that he is a modern version of a Wilsonian progressive. Prof. Daniel Bell of Harvard asserts that he is, as he always had been, a right-wing social democrat."

The wooing of neo-conservatives by Reagan and Brock, and, more fundamentally, changes in the larger political scene, have led a number of neo-conservatives to become Republicans. This group includes Evron and Jeane Kirkpatrick, Elliott Abrams, Peter Berger, William Bennett, Midge Dechter, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Norman Podhoretz and Aaron Wildavsky. While they have been well received by the Republican Party leadership, traditional American conservative intellectuals, adherents to classic laissez-faire doctrines, have increasingly begun to criticize neoconservatives as a foreign body within their ranks, corrupting their basic values. In an article in The New Republic (August 11 and 18, 1986), John Judis summarizes the criticisms that have appeared in various conservative journals: "The traditionalists accused ... the neoconservatives of being welfare-state liberals and cultural modernists who had appropriated the term and spoils of conservatism for purely opportunistic ends." Writing of conflicting conservative tendencies in The New York Times of October 13, 1987, E.J. Dionne, the paper's national political correspondent, notes the critique by "old-time conservatives" of "neoconservatives, such as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz..., who are mainly former Democrats,... for importing liberal ideas within the conservative movement and seeking to transform conservatism into something quite different: a kind of 1940's anti-Communist liberalism more suitable to Harry S. Truman than to Robert Taft or Barry M. Goldwater."

Judis' and Dionne's conclusions refer to a series of articles published in traditional conservative magazines in 1986 and 1987 (The Intercollegiate Review, Spring 1986; The National Review, June 20, 1986; and The American Spectator, October 1987), which argue that "welfare-state Democrats...have taken over once conservative publications and institutions" (Paul Gottfried): that "neoconservatives continue to speak from the Left. They embrace most of the New Deal, Fair Deal and Great Society...." Their views are "essentially statist ... and coercively egalitarian...." (M.E. Bradford); that ex Democrats like "Irving Kristol seem to want to reconstitute the Democratic party of the 1950s and early 1960s (the party of big government and anti-Communism - Senator Henry Jackson's dream)" (Tom Bethell). Earlier, George Gilder criticized the neoconservatives in The National Review (March 5, 1982) for their refusal to support the conservatives on the social issues, the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion, sex education, pornography, school prayer and gay liberation.

Although Jeane Kirkpatrick joined the G.O.P. in 1985, she has remained on the liberal side on many domestic issues. The National Review explained her rejection of a presidential bid in November 1987 on the grounds that she recognized that "questions about her views on economic and social issues would have inevitably arisen." As "a portent of the battle to come," an aide to conservative candidate Jack Kemp sent a letter to the Manchester Union Leader listing her positions on various matters.

The bulk of the neoconservatives have remained Democrats. Writing in the twentieth anniversary issue of The Public Interest in Fall 1985, the conservative sociologist Robert Nisbet noted that "only a small fraction of those who had been most prominent in The Public Interest and in Commentary voted for Reagan." The one important neoconservative organization is still the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, although it would prefer to be known as neoliberal. The group includes not only intellectuals, but various Democratic Party leaders such as James Wright, the Speaker of the House of Representatives; Congressman Tom Foley, the House Majority Leader; Senators Sam Nunn, the Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Daniel Inouye, the Head of the Senate Intelligence Committee; Dante Fascell, Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Les Aspin, who presides over the House Armed Services Committee; and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the party's leading spokesperson on welfare policy. Their ranks also contain four past Presidents of the American Political Science Association, Samuel Huntington, Lucien Pye, Austin Ranney, and myself; and many other prominent scholars, such as Nathan Glazer, Michael Novak, John P. Roche, Adam Ulam, Leon Wieseltier, Raymond Wolfinger, and Martin Peretz, who is both a member of the Harvard faculty and publisher of The New Republic. The organization is supported by a number of AFL-CIO leaders, including its President, Lane Kirkland, as well as

by Social Democrats USA. The CDM intellectuals and the labor movement have had a mutual admiration society and have cooperated strongly. In the late seventies, the Committee for Labor Law Reform, set up on behalf of the AFL-CIO, was chaired by two prominent neoconservative political scientists and drew largely on the CDM for membership.

Although they have separated politically, Democratic and Republican neoconservatives are able to work together. From its inception in 1965 to 1972, The Public Interest was co-edited by Irving Kristol, who supported Nixon in 1972 and Reagan in 1984, and, Daniel Bell, who endorsed McGovern in 1972 and Mondale in 1984. In 1973, Nathan Glazer, who also backed McGovern and Mondale, took over Bell's position as co-editor. Its Publications Committee has included old line Republicans like Robert Nisbet and a key Democratic leader, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who is very liberal on domestic issues.

Who are the neoconservatives? Much of the discussion about them emphasizes that many are New York Jewish intellectuals. But Jewish intellectuals are to be found in all groups, particularly among liberals and in the past among Communists, Socialists, and Trotskyists. The common link in the sources of neoconservatism is past involvement against Communism as anti-Stalinists, in the radical movement, or as liberal opponents of Communist dominated factions in sections of the Democratic Party where the Communists were once strong, e.g., Minnesota, New York, and the state of Washington.

While I have stressed the continuing commitment to New Deal objectives of most neoconservatives, they have, like most liberals and socialists, become more conservative in their general approach to the polity. Their experiences with the confrontationist tactics of the New Left, with the attacks on the universities in the sixties and early seventies, led them and others to place a greater emphasis on public order and the need for respect for authority. The failure of socialism abroad and the counter productive results of many welfare policies led to a concern for what Robert K. Merton has called "the unanticipated consequences of purposeful social action." As I noted in the late seventies, "many of the social changes of the past few decades which were designed to extend equality and to upgrade the bottom ... have brought with them unanticipated destructive consequences for the individuals who were supposed to be helped." Hence, it is necessary for government to act with "humility, caution and recognition of complexity." A myriad of articles in The Public Interest have provided documentation for this line of argument.

Neoconservative views remain difficult to locate ideologically precisely because the "ism" was invented in an effort to label a diverse group of political opponents. No one created a doctrine and called himself a neoconservative. Daniel Bell once summed up the political views of people like himself by saying that "I am a socialist

in economics, a liberal in politics, and a conservative in culture." That is, he believes in the welfare state, in meritocracy and individualism, and in employing "the principle of authority" and tradition in evaluating cultural developments (see the chapter on Bell in Peter Steinfels, The Neoconservatives, 1979). Not surprisingly, Irving Kristol has referred to Bell as "the theoretician for what may be called our 'social democratic' wing." (Reflections of a Neoconservative, 1983). Yet Kristol himself, the "Godfather" of Republican neoconservatism, strongly attacked Ronald Reagan's domestic policies early in 1987 as miserly, as typical of "Republican administrations which are forever denying themselves any interesting initiatives in social policy, because such initiatives always cost some money." And he urged that Reagan support a variety of welfare policies even though "they would cost money" and increase the budget deficit. Most specifically, he argued for measures to aid the elderly, such as withdrawing the restrictions on incomes earned by those who receive Social Security and, more radically, for raising stipends for those existing below the poverty line. "Why not raise Social Security payments so that the Reagan administration can proclaim proudly that it has abolished poverty for our older citizens." ("The Missing Social Agenda," The Wall Street Journal, January 26, 1987).

The neoconservative impulse, priority on resisting Communist expansion by liberals and social democrats, though weaker than in the past, continues to surface among veterans of the political wars of the 1960s. An article in the radical magazine, Mother Jones, (October 1987) describes the foreign policy accomplishments of a young Democratic "Gang of Four," three, Bruce Cameron, Robert Leikin and Bernard Aronson, active in the anti-Vietnam and other liberal and radical movements, and one Social Democratic leader, Penn Kemble. They are credited with playing a major role in the Washington debates over Nicaragua and helping win over crucial Democratic congressional votes for aid to the contras.

Neoconservatism, however, basically has ceased to exist. The term lost its meaning as commentators applied it, beyond its original application to strongly anti-Communist leftists, to a wide range of traditional conservatives in the U.S. and abroad who are classically liberal anti-statists on domestic issues, and hard-liners on foreign policy. This use of the label, as I have noted, is wrong since almost all of the original neoconservatives have been supporters of the welfare state and continue to criticize Friedmanite free market economics. If they were in Britain, most would be members or supporters of the Social Democrats, the right-wing split from the Labour Party, which probably comes closer to the positions of the American neoconservatives on most issues (except trade unionism) than any other party in the world. The British Social Democrats are clearly no longer socialists; they resemble American New Dealers who are also strongly anti-Communist.

### The Future

The immediate future of the American neoconservatives is linked to developments in major party politics. Those who have become Republicans will remain there. They can not return to the Democrats. Some, like Norman Podhoretz and Midge Dechter, have become rigid conservatives on most issues, including the social ones of women's and gay rights. Others, like Jeane Kirkpatrick, are still relatively liberal on various domestic issues.

The prospects for the Democratic neoconservatives are more difficult to anticipate. Like the magazine with which they most identify, The New Republic, they are consistent only in their approach to foreign policy. They vary on domestic social and economic issues, though they are more conservative than liberal Democrats on some domestic matters, such as affirmative action quotas for minorities and women. Like most Democrats, including the more liberal ones, they have become less enamoured with economic interventionist policies, e.g., regulation and protectionism and spending more on welfare. The crucial area, however, remains foreign and defense policy. The Democratic neoconservatives have been strongly suspicious of, and opposed to, the more extreme doves seeking the 1988 Presidential nomination, such as Gary Hart, Jesse Jackson, Governor Michael Dukakis, or Senator Paul Simon. They would have preferred to rally behind more defense oriented Democrats, such as Senators Sam Nunn or Bill Bradley, who voted for military aid to the Nicaraguan contras in 1986. But these men have refused to run, leaving Senator Albert Gore, Jr. of Tennessee as the candidate closest to their position. He, however, is unlikely to get the nomination. Should the Democrats nominate an ardent dove, while the Republican standard bearer is someone more moderate in his ideological image than Ronald Reagan, like Vice President George Bush or Senator Robert Dole, there may be further defections to the Republican ranks.

The larger American political situation may change, however, should the new Reagan-Gorbachev detente relationship prove stable, and glasnost policies continue to unfold. The Soviet leader has acknowledged, indeed emphasized, the dire plight of the economy in his country. He has proposed drastic changes in economic policies, changes which he refers to as constituting a "revolution without guns." He faces serious opposition within the Soviet elite and is, therefore, under pressure to produce quickly. This can only be done by increasing trade with the West and reducing military expenditures, both of which require better East-West relations. Whether these changes can be accomplished is uncertain, but there is a realistic possibility that some will occur, as the signing of the missile reduction treaty indicates. If they do, they will relieve the ideological conflicts linked to foreign and defense policy within the United States, and thus reduce tensions within the Democratic party. But

this is speculation. In any case, the concept of neoconservatism is irrelevant to further developments within American politics.

## The Short Happy Life of Neoconservatism

Peter Steinfels

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to participate in this series of lectures. Professor Holtfrerich was kind enough to send me the first lecture given last summer by Prof. Seymour Martin Lipset. I will return the favor by trying, whenever possible, to relate my own observations to those of Prof. Lipset, so that we can continue some kind of a conversation.

I realize, of course, that not everyone here heard Prof. Lipset's lecture last summer. And there may even be some of you who did hear it but do not remember it word for word. So I will try to summarize those parts of his presentation that are most pertinent to my own.

First, Prof. Lipset points out that the term neoconservative has been "misunderstood abroad as well as in the United States"; it has been treated "as a variant of right-wing American conservatism" of the sort associated with the ideological commitment to free-market policies defended by Milton Friedman or the popular anti-statism and optimistic nationalism so effectively articulated by Ronald Reagan. Instead, Prof. Lipset points out, neoconservatism has very different ideological sources on the American left and cannot be understood apart from them.

In all this, Prof. Lipset is undeniably right. I must add, in all modesty, that the misunderstandings he mentions would be less widespread if more people had bought my book--and if it had been translated into languages like French and German, whose readers actually might have had some practical interest in the subject. Instead, for no reason I can understand, it was translated into Italian and Korean--in which political settings it has no relevance at all.

After providing a very helpful and extended description of the special forms that conservatism and liberalism--and socialism, too--have taken in the United States, Prof. Lipset placed neoconservatism in the context of ideological conflicts among a rather small group of American intellectuals. These struggles centered on questions of Stalinism and Communism on the American left from the 1930s to the 1960s. Prof. Lipset minimizes the differences between neoconservatives and welfare-state/New-Deal liberals except on questions of foreign policy, and he finds the common link uniting neoconservatives almost solely in their "past involvement against Communism as anti-Stalinists." Prof. Lipset does not deny that neoconservatives became more conservative on a whole range of issues, but he treats this as a largely incidental development. It reflects, in his opinion, a growing

conservatism that touched all parts of the political spectrum--or it was an outgrowth of the new working alliances that neoconservatives formed because of their strong anti-Communist and anti-Soviet foreign policy views.

On this point our analyses of neoconservatism diverge. What he says about the quarrels among politically active left-wing American intellectuals is true. And what he says about the anti-Stalinist heritage of the neoconservatives is also true. But his emphasis leaves out of the story much that I consider essential.

About a dozen years ago, when I began writing a magazine article that grew so long it turned into my book (The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics, New York: Simon and Schuster 1979), there were three basic objections to taking up the topic of neoconservatism at all.

The first was that there was no such thing as neoconservatism because the people and positions being so labeled did not really fit into any coherent unity.

The second was that there was no such thing as neoconservatism because the people and positions so labeled were not really distinct from the existing liberalism.

The third was that there was no such thing as neoconservatism because, although the people and positions may have had some unity, they were not really distinct from the existing conservatism.

The first of these objections, I would take it, questioned the "ism" in neoconservatism. The second questioned the "conservative." The third questioned the "neo."

Prof. Lipset's analysis contains a blend of the first two objections, so let me start where we agree--in replying to the third.

Prof. Lipset stressed the left-wing background that divided neoconservatives from the various American conservatisms: doctrinaire anti-statists, small-town boosters, hardline anti-Communists, or corporate managers. Prof. Lipset also stressed that unlike these anciens conservatisms, the neoconservatives did not reject the welfare state.

Let me expand upon that. Although the older conservatisms could be intellectually and culturally sophisticated, for the most part they were consciously pre-modernist in their outlook, if not even consciously pre-modern. They rejected the continental Enlightenment and the popular movements, democratic and socialist, of the nineteenth century. They ignored or had only a critical stance toward most of the modern masters of political and social thought: Marx, Weber, Freud. They often rooted themselves in religious faith. They were suspicious of efforts to extend both formal civil liberties and welfare entitlements. And they had a large popular component of anti-urban, anti-European, anti-cosmopolitan, anti-intellectual, and fundamentalist sentiment.



The neoconservatives, on the other hand, were decidedly post-modernist. Their views arose from an inside familiarity with the reformist and revolutionary movements that followed in the wake of the French Revolution, with the modern canon of social thought and imaginative literature. Despite their twinges of religious nostalgia, the neoconservatives were essentially secular in spirit. They were urban and cosmopolitan in their mentality.

And unlike the older conservatives in the U.S., the neoconservatives did not reject the welfare state. Roosevelt's New Deal was not for them, as it was for the ideologists writing in the conservative National Review, the symbol of some great fall from grace in American history. Most conservatives seem to find that history took "a wrong turn" at some point; but several centuries seemed to separate the old and the neos in this regard. The old conservatives were apt to see the "wrong turn" in the French Revolution or the Enlightenment, or earlier with Descartes, or Luther, or even William of Ockham. The neoconservatives tended to place the "wrong turn" in considerably more recent days, say 1962 with the Port Huron Statement, the original manifesto of the American New Left, or in the mid-sixties with the riots at the University of California at Berkeley, or with the emergence of the counter-culture, or the anti-Vietnam war movement.

But what of the other two objections to the distinct reality of neoconservatism, both of which are echoed by Prof. Lipset-- that, apart perhaps from a more uncompromising anti-Soviet stance in foreign policy, it was not really distinct from the liberalism that preceded it and that it was not a coherent movement but at most a tendency if not simply a grabbag of positions and personalities gathered under a pejorative label?

There is, of course, some truth to these objections. It is true that neoconservatism had a continuity with the strong conservative cast which already marked the American liberalism of the 1950s. It is also true that the label neoconservative grouped individuals who were not always in agreement. There was, for example, a major divergence between literary-philosophical intellectuals and more technocratic policy scientists. The former wanted to challenge what they saw as the erroneous moral premises of current liberalism, while the latter simply wanted to clear away what they considered to be liberal moral pretensions so that they could get on with their professional advising of government. But of course I had never maintained that neoconservatism was an "ism" in the rigorous doctrinal sense of Marxism or even monetarism. It was a broad outlook, a current of opinion, a common approach to political questions.

In truth, it was never difficult to construct a list of political and cultural positions that neoconservatives commonly took--and that put them at odds with the liberal sympathies of the late sixties and seventies. They rejected virtually all

recent proposals for redistribution of wealth and income. They opposed: affirmative action and busing to counter inbuilt patterns of racial inequality, strict environmental protection, no-growth, low-growth, or any sort of "green" economics, prisoners' rights, women's liberation, gay liberation, the counter-culture in all its forms. They favored: maintenance of a meritocracy, the free market, traditional family values, the work ethic, and middle-class virtues generally. They have been militantly anti-Communist, anti-Soviet, and supportive of a strong military and a national readiness to use it. They have little patience for Third-World grievances against the West, for the United Nations, and for popular movements in favor of disarmament.

But any such shopping list does not go far to convey the basic premises that gave neoconservatism an inner coherence and energy. As I described the neoconservatives' basic tenets in my book, I began with their perception of a world in crisis. Like all conservatives they viewed such a crisis as a threat, not an opportunity. They viewed the crisis as essentially internal to American society and they viewed it as essentially cultural and moral in character. The legitimacy of the society's governing institutions was being challenged not because of material failures, failures of the political institutions, or failures of leadership (obviously, this analysis minimized the specifics of the racial conflicts or the war in Vietnam), but because of something on the cultural level.

The analysis that became standard in neoconservative essays can be most easily stated in terms of four concepts:

The first of these was the "adversary culture," a concept developed by the distinguished literary scholar, Lionel Trilling. In his view, modern literature since Romanticism had expressed a certain subversive spirit, an oppositional mentality that set the individual self in its search for autonomy and experience against all social restraints, against convention, and against the "ordinary" in life--family, neighborhood, routine job. For a long time this outlook had been nourished in artistic and literary Bohemia. With the coming of mass university education, what may have been appropriate for a few adventurous souls became a standard doctrine inculcated in great numbers of the middle class.

In fact, the expansion of higher education was part and parcel of the creation of a New Class, a stratum of well-educated or perhaps half-educated people required by the technological society and employed in the processing of symbols or "knowledge." It was precisely this New Class that was, first, infected by the adversary culture, to which it had been exposed in its education, and, without always being conscious of it, was engaged in a struggle for power with the older business class.

At the same time, government (and, later in the neoconservative analysis, other social institutions) was suffering from "overload," a straining of capacity due to an excess of expectations and demands. The result was inevitable failure on the part of

these institutions and a consequent loss of their social legitimacy. The demands arose, first, from a simple hubris on the part of policy makers, who promised far more than they could deliver, and, second, from the nearly intractable problems of the "underclass," a vaguely defined group of the American poor and racial minorities. Though the problems of the underclass were real, they admitted of no easy solutions; unfortunately, the New Class was given to using these problems as well as egalitarianism generally in its efforts to delegitimize morally the status quo and the business class.

All this led to a new assignment for intellectuals--a cultural sentry duty. Instead of experimentation and criticism, the intellectuals' task was to dampen with skepticism any outbursts of enthusiasm or moral fervor that might threaten a fragile social structure. What was wanted was a conservative clerisy rather than a dissenting intelligentsia.

Not only has neoconservatism developed these themes with a surprising consistency and even repetitiousness, it showed other differences from American liberalism. It is true that liberalism, indeed from its origins, has had a strong defensive, conservative aspect. One need only look at James Madison. It is also true that post-war American liberalism, in particular, had a conservative cast. But when, in the 1960s, fifties liberals became seventies neoconservatives, two basic changes took place in their attitudes.

One was a significant shift in the balance of pessimism and optimism about the special American potential for creative political action. The second was a shift in attitude toward modernization. In the 1950s, many of the later neoconservatives had engaged in extensive analyses of McCarthyism. At that time they characterized the social groups which gave rise to McCarthyism as those who had somehow been displaced in the process of modernization. This analysis was questionable empirically, but the important point is that its view of modernization was essentially benign. Disruption came from the marginalized and vestigial forces, those left behind; social health could be anticipated once the transition had been completed. By the late sixties, however, the same group of thinkers became convinced that conflict was lodged in the very heart of modernity. It was significant that the role of the Evil Witch in the neoconservative drama was given the name New Class.

A year and a half after my book had been published, this species of objection to the entire topic disappeared. This was one of the minor side effects of the election of Ronald Reagan to the American presidency. People began to congratulate me on having written a prophetic book. This was, to be sure, very pleasant. Unfortunately--and I did not always point this out at the time--it was not true.

It was quite true that a number of neoconservatives were given quite visible roles in the Reagan government, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Elliot Abrams, and William Bennett

being among the more visible examples. An even greater number served in part-time positions or had advisory roles. Prof. Lipset has listed these people and positions in detail. Moreover the Reagan election victory owed much to lessons that neoconservatives had been preaching for almost a decade.

First, the Reagan campaign avoided even the cloaked appeals to racism that had marred much recent conservatism and had marked it, at least as far as the respectable vehicles of public opinion were concerned, as outside the mainstream of politics as defined since the civil-rights victories of the 1960s.

Second, the Reagan campaign avoided direct attacks on the New Deal itself, suggesting that the "Big Government" it opposed was only the overgrowth of the last decade and a half. Reagan linked himself sympathetically with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and, to a lesser extent, with John F. Kennedy. Although he preached smaller government, he concentrated on traditional Democratic goals—employment and a growing economy. The stereotypical Republican and Democratic attitudes toward the economy appeared to be reversed. President Carter conveyed the impression that the nation's economic difficulties could only be minimally affected by presidential policy, and that for the most part they had to work themselves out within their natural limits. Reagan, on the contrary, appeared buoyant and aggressive, full of assurance that an economic solution was at hand if only the politicians would dare to seize it. The solution was too good to be true, and George Bush, then speaking for traditional Republican fiscal conservatives, had called it "voodoo economics." But supply-side economics had actually been nurtured to national prominence by the leading neoconservative intellectual Irving Kristol, who had offered the pages—and the prestige—of The Public Interest, a journal known for hard-headed analysis, to the supply-side exponents.

Of course the Reagan campaign could have picked up these themes without benefit of active neoconservative support. That was not the case. There is no doubt that more members of the neoconservative Committee for a Democratic Majority were actively identified with the Reagan cause than with Carter's, an ironic fate for the stalwarts of an organization ostensibly founded to return the Democratic Party to its own true bearings.

Fortunately for my reputation as the author of a prophetic book, no one had asked me in the summer of 1979 whether I thought that a year later many, perhaps most, of the leading neoconservatives would be found in the camp of Ronald Reagan. I would certainly have replied, "Not likely." I would have given an explanation very much along the lines of Prof. Lipset's. I would have said that the conservatism of Ronald Reagan and the conservatism of the neoconservatives had quite distinct roots and many seemingly incompatible characteristics. Ronald Reagan was the ideological offspring of the "New Radical Right" of the 1950s, which the later

neoconservatives had once analyzed scornfully as a form of political atavism. Although Reagan himself had been a Democratic supporter of Roosevelt, the brand of conservatism he now traveled with had never accepted the welfare state--as revealed by one of his earlier suggestions that Social Security for the elderly should be repealed.

Likewise Reagan's kind of anti-Communism appeared moralistic and nationalistic and undiscriminating. The neoconservatives had always prided themselves on an anti-Communism which was not only militant but, they believed, realistic and flexible. For Reagan, it was sufficiently damning to point out that Soviet Communism was atheistic. Neoconservatives, many of whom were probably atheists themselves, preferred to describe the Communist danger in more directly political and military terms. And so on. Was there, for instance, a single neoconservative who shared the concern and indignation that, in the middle 1970s, Ronald Reagan had displayed over the revision of U.S. control over the Panama Canal?

Nonetheless I was wrong. The neoconservatives moved to the right faster and further than I would ever have predicted.

But it turned out that I was wrong about something even more fundamental. In my book, I noted the complaints that the United States, a society lacking the soil of a feudal past, had never produced a substantial intellectual conservatism. The result, Lionel Trilling wrote in a memorable phrase, was not that there were no conservative impulses but that they did not "express themselves in ideas but only action or in irritable mental gestures that seek to resemble ideas." "It is just when a movement despairs of having ideas," he added, "that it turns to force."

Was neoconservatism the serious and intelligent conservatism America had lacked and whose absence American liberals were always lamenting, more than a bit condescendingly to whatever conservatism was around?

The question had been raised by others. I risked a definite answer: "Let me not hedge my bet," I wrote. Neoconservatism was indeed the long-awaited serious and intelligent form of American conservatism.

I was aware of the scornful objections such a claim provoked, particularly on the American Left. Perhaps the shrewdest objection came from those who noted my sharp criticism of many aspects of neoconservatism and concluded that I only want to build the movement up so that I could have more fun in trying to knock it down. Other objections, I thought, erected a standard of consistency and profundity for a serious conservatism that was simply impossibly high for any broad, popular current of thought ever to meet.

Neoconservatism, although I might consider its vision cramped and less than America was capable of, nonetheless paid serious attention to questions of cultural and moral foundations that liberalism has ignored. It produced rigorous criticism of

many government initiatives. It did all this without the cultural baggage that had previously kept conservatism from relevance in the United States. It accepted the welfare state just as it accepted the "functional rationality" of the corporate capitalist economy--and it tried to limit both with its skepticism, its gradualism, and its concern for other, intermediate institutions. It displayed no nostalgia for a pre-industrial, rural, or small-town past. It did not reject the New Deal or the international role of the U.S. It offered a form of stoicism or a secular Protestant Ethic in which Max Weber's "disenchantment" of the world would be experienced as tragedy and transformed into a source of authority and discipline.

I wrote that I did not hedge my bet, but of course in some ways I did. Even from a critic's standpoint, it was easy to see certain steps that neoconservatism needed to take to make a lasting mark on American political thought and life.

But hedged or not, I lost my bet. Within a few years neoconservatism was effectively liquidated as a distinct political outlook. Its special strengths had been dissipated, its weaknesses exaggerated, and its particular identity lost in the pool of already existing conservatisms.

In many ways, the story is the familiar one of too much success too soon. Neoconservatism thrived on its enemies but was done in by its friends. As early as 1970 and 1971 the conservative journal National Review had begun making welcoming noises in the direction of the neoconservatives. The National Review had always operated as an ideological umbrella trying to shelter a number of disparate and quarreling forms of conservatism. Neoconservatism could resist this hospitality for only so long. Eventually its writers found themselves appearing side by side with spokespersons for the jumble of laissez-faire and traditionalist conservatisms whom they had previously avoided if not scorned.

Two other developments, both insufficiently foreseen in my 1979 book, cemented this relationship.

The first was the shift of neoconservative attention from domestic to international affairs. In my view, neoconservatism was originally a response to what was perceived as a crisis within Western nations, not a threat from without. And the crisis, as I noted, was essentially cultural. When neoconservatives turned to international politics, it was the Third World that first preoccupied, at least partly because the claims of the Third World, unlike those, it seemed, of the Soviet Union, had a real force in the left-of-center, educated American milieu that neoconservatives were simultaneously criticizing and trying to influence. It is worth recalling that in the article which reportedly earned Daniel Moynihan his selection as UN ambassador, Moynihan downplayed conflict with the Soviet Union. The real problem, he argued, was to devise a satisfactory ideological and diplomatic response to what he termed the "British Revolution," that is, to a Fabian-inspired, anti-capitalist, and anti-

American outlook that was a common denominator of the claims made by the Third World against the West. However fanciful it might be, Moynihan's analysis showed the distance separating the neoconservatives in the mid-seventies from the simple anti-Soviet and military-minded position of Republican conservatives like Reagan. Moynihan went to the UN as an appointee of Henry Kissinger, who was then the bete noire of the Republican hardliners.

There was tension between Moynihan and Kissinger from the start, however. Neoconservatives distrusted Kissinger's commitment to the security of Israel. Indeed, the neoconservative shift to international issues can probably be traced back to the 1973 Middle East war. Having witnessed the crushing of left-of-center Democrats in the McGovern campaign, the neoconservatives paused momentarily in their critique of the Left. But the Middle East war and the withdrawal of the U.S. from Vietnam made them (and eventually Kissinger, too) focus attention and energy on the global reach of the Soviets as the main, if not the only, world danger. The gap would be closing between them and the Reaganites. Nothing has been heard of the "British Revolution" in years.

On one level, this new danger was eminently material rather than cultural. It involved geopolitics, supplies of oil, new weapons in Europe, sea lanes, and relative levels of military power. At the same time, there was some continuity in the neoconservative concern. Ultimately, they concluded, the international conflict was also cultural. The central problem, they argued, was American flabbiness of will, a flabbiness resulting from a post-Vietnam mood of unrestrained self-denigration and from a naivete about America's Communist adversaries in the world. Just as an educated, or half-educated "New Class" had been responsible for the domestic cultural turmoil of the sixties and early seventies, the foreign-policy crisis was the responsibility of similar people, belated critics of the war in Vietnam who had found high places in the Carter administration after 1976. Events in Nicaragua, Iran, and Afghanistan confirmed the neoconservative fears: Carter and his associates had to go. It is significant that most of the posts in the Reagan administration given to neoconservatives have been in the foreign-policy area.

The second development requires more explanation. Despite the intensity of political conflict in the U.S. during the 1960s and early 1970s, little of it directly implicated capitalism. The first major issue of the sixties, for example, was civil rights for black Americans: how to remove the vast inequities that resulted from a racism which had predated capitalism and, indeed, was institutionally entrenched in precisely that part of the nation which was least and latest affected by capitalist industrialization. The second great issue was the war in Vietnam, an overseas folly far more explicable by ideological blindness or bureaucratic momentum than by economic interests. Various explanations of the war as a capitalist venture were

offered, and, to be sure, at some point everything done by a capitalist society can be said to be due to capitalism. But the efforts to show that capitalism was the crucial factor in the war's pursuit were always strained and further embarrassed by the fact that major segments of corporate leadership outspokenly opposed the American policy.

Only as the decade wore on did both rhetoric and social analysis grow more global. Capitalism began to suffer from the same loss of credibility as did the government itself. Between the mid-sixties and the mid-seventies, the proportion of the public expressing confidence and trust in big business dropped from over 55 percent to well below 20 percent. The counter-culture, with its drugs, hand crafts, and communes, flamboyantly rejected the bourgeois ethic, although it was itself largely a product of affluence and often seemed to represent a new frontier in consumerism. American executives began to worry about the defection of their sons and daughters--and sometimes even of their middle managers.

Worse yet, the expectations elicited among an overwhelmingly Republican business elite by the election of a Republican president in 1968 went unfulfilled. Inflation metamorphosed into stagflation; OPEC subjected the nation to price shocks; Watergate subjected the nation, and the business community as well, to a moral shock. Not only that, but two new developments on the part of the welfare state--a new degree of environmental regulation and programs of "affirmative action" to insure the hiring of racial minorities--threatened to insert government directly into the prerogatives of management. The upper class's share of national income had not changed noticeably, taxation of corporations had actually declined, and the rate of investment had risen slightly--but for all of that, things seemed out of control.

Corporations had never hesitated to lobby for favorable government treatment. And indirectly the needs and desires of those with economic power had always weighed heavily in the shaping of public opinion and the setting of a public agenda. But what was now added was the conviction that business had to proceed much more consciously and systematically to create and maintain a cultural climate favorable to business interests. Business needed a solid emplacement of its viewpoint in the culture-bearing institutions: in the media, the law and the professions, in the universities and lower education, in the churches, even (so declared Milton Friedman) in the poetry and the popular music.

There was no master plan for this cultural offensive. There were, in good free market fashion, entrepreneurs and imitators, innovators and followers. Mobil Oil was one innovator, conducting a sophisticated ideological and public-relations campaign through brightly argued and shrewdly placed advertising, and through a well-financed courtship of television stations. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) was another innovator. This Washington think tank increased its budget and



its staff tenfold in the course of the seventies. The idea caught on. Family foundations like the Scaife Family Trusts and the Smith Richardson Foundation began to supply hundreds of millions of dollars not only to the AEI but to establish an impressive network of conservative research organizations, legal firms, university "chairs of free enterprise," television programs, educational seminars for federal judges and religious leaders, political and literary journals, student newspapers, and conferences for journalists.

What did all this have to do with neoconservatism? Neoconservatism was not the creation of business interests. It had emerged in its own right several years before the corporate ideological efforts I have described. The neoconservative criticism of the New Left, the counter-culture, and sixties liberalism did not arise primarily from any defense of capitalism. Neoconservatism did believe that economic growth was essential for political tranquility, but its concern for the bourgeois ethic had less to do with economic growth than an interest in the character type which would feature the discipline it assumed necessary to make liberal political institutions work. Neoconservatism had wanted to protect government from "overload," but government was not the "enemy."

Yet neoconservatives were not absent from the capitalist mobilization. Irving Kristol had long complained that liberal intellectuals were attracted to social and economic reform because they were struggling to replace businessmen as the dominant political elite. At first this theory had been addressed to the liberal intellectual audience itself as a way of chiding it to self-criticism. In the mid-seventies, Kristol began expounding his theory in the *Wall Street Journal* where it fell upon eager ears. Soon he was directly advising business leaders on how they could enlist the talents of neoconservatives in the defense of capitalism. Other neoconservatives joined in, and their agenda changed accordingly. Now they attacked government regulation of business, wrote about the perverse "anti-capitalist mentality" of academic humanists, proclaimed the need for a "theology of the corporation" in religious circles, and published books celebrating the "spirit of democratic capitalism."

Other neoconservatives remained more restrained, but much quieter. Almost all have taken advantage of the hospitable environments and available funds that business has provided--often legitimating the business efforts in the process. Some neoconservatives continue to publish empirical studies that poke holes in some of the business arguments, but these positions get none of the wide attention enjoyed by neoconservative themes (such as its criticism of the New Class) that support the business argument. Back in 1973, perhaps secure in the fact that George McGovern and the left-wing Democrats had been roundly defeated, the neoconservatives momentarily appeared to wonder whether the abandonment of liberal programs was

not going too far. By 1981, however, they raised quite a few cheers and barely a whisper of protest as Ronald Reagan renounced those programs and attempted to dismantle them.

Professor Seymour Martin Lipset ended his paper last summer with the declaration that "the concept of neoconservatism is irrelevant to further developments within American politics."

Once again we agree, but I think for different reasons. Prof. Lipset's conclusion is based, first, on his belief that by now neoconservatism is simply too muddled as a concept to retain any meaning, and, second, because neoconservatives, whether they have become Republicans or have remained, as I rather doubt, mostly Democrats, simply can find no comfortable home in the major political parties.

Although his description of the political plight of neoconservatives may be accurate, it ignores the deeper problem--that neoconservatism has abandoned its unique traits and liquidated itself as a distinctive movement. He insists, for example, on the neoconservative commitment to the welfare state but most of the expressions of that commitment date from well before the the Reagan administration--and he gives little attention to the real shift in neoconservative concern for defending the capitalist system against enemies seen on every side rather than maintaining any effective defense at all of the welfare state.

The problem goes beyond the two specific areas of foreign policy and economic institutions. It also has to do with the tone and style of neoconservatism.

First, neoconservatism has remained essentially negative. The systematic critique it felt obliged to launch on all forms or offshoots of sixties radicalism was to be preliminary to a positive assault on society's problems. Somehow the critique prolongs itself, and the positive phase never arrives. "In the longer run," Irving Kristol once wrote, ". . . American conservatism will have . . . to propose an ideal of moral and spiritual excellence." One begins to suspect that what he was talking about is John Maynard Keynes's longer run in which we are all dead.

There is a second aspect to this negativity. Despite their praise of civility, neoconservative commentators regularly seem to write not to rebut but to destroy. There is also a wearying joylessness in much neoconservative argument. Oh, there can be some pleasure at the expense of opponents, seeing them punched around, reminiscent of the pleasure children derive from seeing cartoon characters bashed into strange shapes. But it is interesting that a magazine like the New Yorker is full of cartoons essentially teasing the social milieus and cultural presumptions of the people who read it. The conservative journal, the National Review, and the liberal New Republic, though neither is easy on its enemies, do contain at least some humor at their own expense. This is never the case with a neoconservative journal like Commentary.

At its best, neoconservatism insisted on the ambiguity and complexity of all political solutions. It decried the vulgarization and even brutalization of ideas that had occurred as avant-garde political and cultural criticism was taken up by a younger, popular audience and reduced to New Left slogans, counter-culture posturing, or rock-music lyrics. At its best, neoconservatism was a revolt of the critical intelligence against the short-circuiting of thought by crude labeling of adversaries, sheer repetition of shibboleths, and appeals to sentiment.

Of course, no current of political thought will always be at its best. Nonetheless, it seems to me that neoconservatism has long since fallen drastically from its earlier virtues. In shifting its attention to foreign policy, neoconservatism abandoned almost all sense of ambiguity and complexity. There is but one serious international problem, and those who see things differently are suffering from ideological soft-headedness, anti-Americanism, or, as Mr. Norman Podhoretz once seriously maintained, homosexuality. Jeane Kirkpatrick set the tone for neoconservative debate on foreign policy when she labeled critics of the Reagan administration "blame America firsters." The neoconservative belief on foreign policy has indeed become that it is precisely a great simplification that is needed for a successful concentration of energy and will. This is a time, they say, for making "stark choices."

Criticisms like this were made in what I consider to have been a kind of death knell for neoconservatism. In the 1984 50th anniversary issue of the Partisan Review, the ur-journal of New York intellectuals, Daniel Bell addresses what in effect are some of his better friends with some very revealing remarks.

The appearance of the neoconservatives, he says, once promised "a genuine set of intellectual debates on the crucial issues of political philosophy." "Unfortunately," he continues, "those intellectual debates of the 1970s have shrivelled in the 1980s. And one also sees, in odd instances, the rapprochement of neoconservatives with the New Right . . . on questions such as supply-side economics, or a hard line on foreign policy."

Several things disturb Daniel Bell, particularly about "the tone and temper" of this political discourse.

First, "although now growing in influence, the neoconservatives sound and talk often like a hunted band of men and women huddled together against the 'cultural hegemony' of the liberals and the Left," a reflex which Bell calls "a parochialism which has stopped time and is skewed by partisan politics."

Second is "the dyspeptic unwillingness of some conservatives to make relevant distinctions between social democracy and communism." "One senses," Bell adds, "that this is not a debate but a desire to discredit."

Third is the fondness for ideological reification. "One reads increasingly . . . of The Media, The Liberals, The Universities, and then such assertions as 'The Media

are favorable to the Soviet Union' or 'The Liberals are unpatriotic.' . . . Not only is it a debasement of language, but it is the formulation of issues in combat terms. At the extreme, this leads to the reduction of beliefs to motives, and the denial of legitimacy to one's opponents."

Fourth is "an attitude of self-righteousness and rectitude" which does not hesitate to mix normal political criticism with labeling of individuals as enemies of freedom.

Bell recalls that when he founded the quarterly The Public Interest with Irving Kristol in 1965, they wanted to reduce what they thought were undue ideological precommitments in public debate. Today, says Bell, Irving Kristol believes "all politics is ideological" and neoconservatism ought to imitate, in this regard, the militance of the left. Bell finds here a whiff of the old Leninism. Bell does not want to apply these criticisms without differentiation to all neoconservatives, but it is clear his concern runs deep for violations of what he calls, in Sidney Hook's phrase, "the ethics of controversy." "In a fragile society," he concludes, these matters "are central to the nature of political discourse."

Neoconservatism has had to face a problem that the sixties posed for the Left: the routinization of iconoclasm, the vulgarization of hard-won ideas into clichés.

One can trace this problem in the response of another generation to neoconservatism. By and large, that response has been limited and distorting. If there is a journal that young conservative writers and activists identify with as their own, it is the American Spectator. The American Spectator is a monthly rooted not in neoconservatism but in the ancient conservatism of William F. Buckley, Jr.'s National Review. It began as a conservative college paper, a pioneer among such publications that are now being well funded by conservative and neoconservative foundations in order to counter what they consider undue liberal influence on the university campuses. Its editor, R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., now a successful newspaper columnist, developed a baroque, sneering prose style that mixed Mr. Buckley's with H.L. Mencken. Eventually the American Spectator, too, prospered from the influx of conservative money. The Scaife Foundation gave it, I believe, about \$ 1.5 million over five years, a period which appeared to coincide with the magazine's transformation from a rather amateurish, derivative, and parochial journal to one that was professional and published established neoconservative thinkers along with bright young talents.

The strategic location of the American Spectator for young conservative writers is important when you consider the description one of them gave me: "That's where you write when you want to be rude." In fact, Mr. Tyrrell, following Mencken, has raised exaggeration and caricature into a matter of principle. His magazine features a style that runs smoothly from charming brashness to a calculated brutality of thought and

expression. The former can be a relief from, say, the programmatic sobriety of Commentary, but the latter is a deadly brew.

Here, for example, is the typical style of one Tom Bethell, a widely published young conservative who, at least at times, has been presented as a neoconservative. Bethell has it in for those "who aspire to the impudent, demoralizing ideal of equality," for example. "Anyone who embraces equality as an ideal is in danger of serving a self-imposed lifetime sentence of resentment and jealousy." At least behind that bit of bravado is a pedigreed, though somewhat musty, political idea. What can be said, however, of his characterization of the Maryknoll nuns working with third-world poor, some of whom were murdered at about the time this appeared? These "radical nuns," he writes, are "one of the horrors of our time. They have stopped believing in God and in an afterlife. In the process they have transformed themselves into bulldike socialists who spend the rest of their lives attempting to destroy in others the loyalties and beliefs that they destroyed in themselves."

Of course, Mr. Bethell knows nothing of these nuns in reality, nor does he really care. He is pronouncing a greater truth, he believes, than any that should be limited by factual investigation and modification. The purposeful hyperbole and ridicule in this and even in passages less vitriolic carry other messages by implication. One is a refusal of any close accountability for what one writes. The other is a sense of contempt for the objects of one's attack, as though their insignificance did not even merit any attempt to be precise.

This kind of conservative denunciation harkens back to Maurras and the verbal barrages of Action Francais. To my knowledge there has been no protest, no resistance, to the coarsening of their own thought on the part of the older, established generation of neoconservatives.

There was a moral seriousness among the neoconservatives rooted in the fact that the effort to understand and oppose the emergence of totalitarianism on both right and left was the central issue of their political lives. In this respect, Orwell is a legitimate antecedent. But substitute Mencken for Orwell and what have you? Someone whose central political issue was the struggle against Prohibition.

The truth is that there was a kind of conversion experience among the older neoconservatives--a recognition of the potential for terror lurking in utopianism. This experience cannot be replicated for the next generation. Neoconservatives in their forties--a great proportion of whom appear to be the offspring or children in law of the older generation--can at least look back at the New Left or the counter-culture or the movement against the war in Vietnam as mini-Gods that failed. But their younger colleagues cannot even share in this miniature conversion. Having been virtually born conservatives, they cannot be born again.

As Prof. Lipset noted, there is no natural presidential candidate for the neoconservatives to support in either party. For a while, it looked as though Congressman Jack Kemp might play this role, but Mr. Kemp's performance to date has been disappointing. But it is not only neoconservative thinkers who lack a sympathetic candidate, it is conservative thinkers of all kinds.

To a young self-consciously conservative writer with whom I discussed this situation, the absence of an ideologically satisfactory conservative presidential candidate implied that for the time being many conservative thinkers would abandon political activity for ideological debate. Ideologists with time on their hands, he said, start fighting with one another, and already, he believed, the sniping had begun.

One example of this internecine quarreling was the series of attacks made by conservatives of the older variety on neoconservatives for being supporters of the welfare state and secret sympathizers with modernity. Prof. Lipset referred to some of these attacks.

But my young conservative interlocutor, although he admired the neoconservatives, did not think neoconservatism would be relevant to what he saw as the coming debates among conservatives. The new dividing line, in his view, was between traditionalists who, like Edmund Burke, treasured the restraints that preserved society as an organic whole, and libertarians, who accepted the conservative defense of the market economy but rejected conservative insistence on social restraints and obligations. The latter he referred to as "cocaine conservatives." Neoconservatism, although it shared a number of premises with traditionalists, was nevertheless so focused on fighting battles with the left that it had no role to play in this debate.

In effectively criticizing liberal programs and in breaking the domination of liberalism among American intellectuals, neoconservatism has had an important impact on American political life and thought. Neoconservatism helped create the climate that led to the Reagan presidency.

But short-run influence was bought at the price of long-run achievement. Neoconservatism once seemed to be developing a vision of American political existence that was sober, cautious, "disenchanted," but not without a residual generosity, tough-minded excellence, and civic spirit. The victories it has won, however, have not been on behalf of that vision. Neoconservatism relaxed the tension that made it special--its commitment to the welfare state, for example, combined with its fear of overloading government and undermining authority--or its two-edged view of capitalism. Instead, it put its considerable intellectual and polemical skills at the service of simpler, sanguine faiths which assure all good things through the progress of the market economy and American power. In the post-Reagan era, neoconservatism is unlikely to play a crucial role on either the left or

the right. Certainly, as a potentially distinct, modern, and intellectually serious form of American conservatism, it has been a disappointment.