

Neo-conservatism

A neoconservative isn't simply an establishment Republican or someone pretending to have conservative values (i.e. RINO)

They have their own hidden history and worldview that few understand

They are neither Christian nor do they represent tradition values

It is relatively easy for a traditional or paleo-conservative to perceive common ground but this is a slippery slope

Death of the Old Right

- Following WWI the “Old Right” contested for control of the Republican Party
 - Opposed the Cold War and the Korean War in particular
 - Sen. Taft lost the Republican primary to Dwight Eisenhower in the 52 election who was backed by eastern corporate interests associated with the Rockefeller’s
 - The outcome was contested and the convention could be seen as having been stolen
 - After coming to office, Eisenhower gradually adopted some of the Old Rights isolationist views.
 - Religiously they were Christian restorationists (Church of Christ), conservative Lutherans (Missouri Synod), Calvinist Presbyterians, Catholic academics and some Jews
 - They were not dispensationalists and were anti-Zionists
- The “New Right” of the 50’s and 60’s strongly supported the Cold War and gradually lost their commitment to free market economics
 - Saw or portrayed themselves as the defenders of Christendom against the communists
 - Attracted a large contingent of generally younger Catholics into the Republican party for the first time (Hannity and O’Reilly represent this heritage)
 - Made up of independent writers associated with the National Review
- The Neo-conservatives built on this anti-Russian position but were distinct in a variety of ways which we will now look at.

Simplified Comparison of Old Right to New Right and Neo-Conservatives

	Domestic Policy	Foreign Policy
Old Right Libertarian Paleo-Conservative	Small Government Decentralized Market Economy Opposes Central Bank	Isolationist Anti-Imperialist Minimize dependence on international trade Minimal Standing Military for defensive purposes Anti-Zionist
New Right Neo-Conservatives	Small Government Less Decentralized Partial Market Economy with active Govt Support of Capital Supports Central Bank	Globalists Aggressive foreign policy Shape world to conform to Anglo-American vision Trade – Finance based Economy Large permanent Standing Military Pro-Zionist

Overview of Neo-Conservatism

- Neo-Conservatism originated as an academic movement amongst anti-Stalinist left wing academics in the late 50's and 60's that gradually took over American conservatism by the 1980's
 - The final conquest happened during the Reagan and Bush administrations and remained unchallenged until the time of Trump apart from Ron Paul
 - Neo-conservatives were highly educated and established institutional academics that had an existing platform, following, and broad personal and media influence
- Many / most of the founders of were secular Jews
 - while some of their most vocal and articulate adversaries were also Jewish like Murray Rothbard and Paul Gottfried
- Neocons were generally “*reformed*” Trotskyites who also incorporated political Zionism
 - Stalin purges weren't acts of random paranoia but specifically targeted the followers of Trotsky
 - The Trotskyites were disproportionately Jewish and often tied to foreign actors, especially England
 - English played prominent roles in both the first and second Russian Revolution as well as the difficult to explain collapse of the White Army
 - Trotsky sought world revolution while Stalin sought only to rule Russia
 - Differentiation between Trotskyites and Stalinists existed in American politics but few understood
 - Displaced Trotskyites found homes in American universities and three letter agencies

Neo-Conservative History

- Leo Strauss, professor of political philosophy at the University of Chicago, is considered the founder of the neo-conservative movement
 - known in conservative academic circles in the later 50's and 60's
 - Secular German – Jewish immigrant
- The original contingent of neo-conservative writers were fairly well known academics and commentators
 - Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Nathan Glazer, Daniel Bell, James Q. Wilson, and Seymour Martin Lipset whose essays appeared regularly in *The Public Interest*
 - neo-conservatives were in no way a grassroots movement and consisted of institutionalized subsidized professors and writers
- Strauss's students went on to make up major portions of the Reagan and Bush administrations
- One of Strauss's students, Harry Jaffa, was a contributor to Strauss's major work, *History of Political Philosophy*
- As a young campaign volunteer Jaffa wrote Goldwater's acceptance speech for the Republican nomination in 64 including the infamous phrase, "*Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice.*"
 - Jaffa didn't align with Goldwater at all making this a difficult relationship to explain
 - This speech and the line in particular ensured the Goldwater had no chance to win
 - Establishment Republicans offered to support for his candidacy

In Their Own Words

- Referring to key neo-conservatives figures as Trotskyites may seem like opinionated name calling but many were fairly open about their philosophical roots and their ultimate loyalties
- In *“The Neo-Conservative Persuasion: Selected Essays 1942-2009”* one of the essays, *“Reflections of a Trotskyist”* Kristol writes openly of his roots in the Trotsky version of communism
- In 2007 in the National Review Online Stephen Schwarz explained, *“To my last breath, I will defend Trotsky who alone and pursued from country to country and finally laid low in his own blood in a hideously hot house in Mexico City, said no to Soviet coddling to Hitlerism, to the Moscow purges, and to the betrayal of the Spanish Republic, and who had the capacity to admit that he had been wrong about the imposition of a single-party state as well as about the fate of the Jewish people. To my last breath, and without apology. Let the neofascists and Stalinists in their second childhood make of it what they will.”*

Neo-Conservative Institutions

- Strauss had both students and followers with the followers breaking down into two schools, east and west coast
- The east coast Straussians were more philosophical and less political with Joseph Cropsey of Chicago and Harvey Mansfield of Harvard being two leading figures
- The west coast Straussians, whose prominent adherents include Jaffa, Larry Arnn (Hillsdale), Thomas G West, Peter Schramm (Ashland), and Charles Kesleer (also of Claremont) are highly political
 - Thomas G West described his belief system as being *“combative as hell .. They not only dislike liberals, leftist, Democrats, they have fights to pick with the followers of other conservative figures: Fredrick Hayek, Ayn Rand, and Wilmore Kendall”*
- To the Straussian the memory of the old anti-imperialist Right represented by Taft and Bickle, modern libertarians, and, when politically expedient, the South are as much of an enemy as neo-Marxists on the left
 - Steven Smith of Yale described the ideology of the west coast Straussians as follows: *“The West Coasters have created a synthesis of Strauss’s defense of the classical doctrine of natural right — the view that there is a single immutable standard of justice — with the wisdom of the American founding fathers, supplemented by Lincoln and Churchill (recently names like Calvin Coolidge and Clarence Thomas have been added to the list). Contra Strauss [emphasis added], the West Coasters have developed their own theory of American exceptionalism, arguing that the framers uniquely combined features of classical prudence with biblical morality”*

What Neo-Conservatives did to History

- Neocon worldview has been culturally ingrained as defining conservatism and has been accepted and propagated by establishment and New Right Republicans
- This required a fundamentally new understanding of history and nationalism
 - traditional conservative view of history is that it is comprised of collective memories that retain old virtues and honor heritage with loyalties growing from experience
 - History as an objective study including economics, technology, culture, religion, geography, etc..
- Neo-Conservative history is the story of political philosophy
 - Based on American Exceptionalism and Puritan vision of the “City on a Hill”
 - Central concept is the “*Proposition Nation*” where the American colonists were drawn together by the idea that “*All men are created equal*”
 - Ultimate vision is globalist resulting in one word hegemony
- This was most prominently shown in their near cult-like admiration for President Lincoln and his willingness to readily act outside of the constitution.
 - The failed war of Southern Independence along with all the subsequent American conquests would be recast as crusades to spread democracy and “*freedom*” based on the proposition that “*all men are created equal*”
 - Even more extreme than the recreation of Lincoln, the progressive social activists of the 19th and early 20th century, who grew out of the progressive northern evangelical churches, would be redefined in a sort of conservative context advancing the “*proposition nation*”
 - This version of history would require the vilification of not only the South but anyone holding an anti-federalist position and the elevation of Yankee puritan ethno-religious culture that produced Progressivism (neo-liberalism) as the true American cultural heritage

Bradford vs. Jaffa

- The debate between conservative Southern historian M.E. Bradford and Harry Jaffa dramatically contrasted these two incompatible perspectives as summarized by Thomas Woods as follows:
 - *“Bradford argued that Lincolnian rhetoric, particularly the Great Emancipator’s teleological language (e.g, his description of the United States as a nation “dedicated to a proposition”) was a recipe for ongoing revolution that a genuine conservative could not embrace. The idea of the federal government as an engine of equality enforcement rather than as the modest, purely nomocratic agent of a confederation of sovereign states, endowed with strictly limited powers, amounted to Bradford’s judgment to a revolutionary overthrow of the original constitutional order”*
- The Straussian historical interpretation was easy for the New Right cold warriors to adopt because it aligned well with their core positions and also became a dominant position in public schools before being largely displaced by critical theory interdisciplinary materialism
 - *The neoconservatives are not really conservatives at all. They are impostors and opportunists. They were Leftists in the 1930s, New Deal and Great Society Democrats through the 1960s, and slid to the right and the Republicans after Nixon and Reagan began rolling up forty-nine state landslides. They defected from liberalism only when they saw conservatism in the ascendancy, and they rode the Reagan revolution into power. Their heroes—Wilson, FDR, Dr. King—are men of the Left. Their tracts denouncing rivals and critics as traitors, fascists, and anti-Semites come straight out of the hard Left. Their agenda—endless struggle and waris neo-Jacobin, out of the French, not the American Revolution – Pat Buchanan*

Neo-Conservatism and Christianity

- While Neo-conservatism is now deeply tied to common perceptions of both patriotism and Christianity it is an entirely secular philosophy
- The following quote from professor and commentator James Kurth in “Western Traditions: Our Traditions” sums the real relationship between neo-conservatism and Christianity
 - *From their origins (be it as followers of Leon Trotsky or Leo Strauss), neoconservatives have seen the Christian tradition as an alien, even a threatening one.... The only Western tradition the neoconservatives actually want to defend is the Enlightenment.... [T]hey have wanted to advance it in the rest of the world with the establishment of a kind of American empire.... [This] is not a conservative project but a radical and revolutionary one. For the most part, it might be said that, with friends like the neoconservatives, Western civilization does not need enemies... [neoconservatives] may think that they will create a global and universal civilization, abroad and at home, but the evidence is accumulating that they instead opened the doors to the barbarians both without (e.g., Islamic terrorists) and within (pagan disregard for the dignity of human life)."*
- He went on to conclude that: “the best defense against barbarians at home and abroad isn’t empire but defense of the Christian traditions that built Western Civilization”

The Neo-Conservative Today (in the Age of Trump)

- Neocons still dominate the Republican Party
 - Democrats have a mix of neocon and neo-liberalism (wokism)
- There are a number of Neo-Conservative commentators and outlets with large followings that are “proud neo-conservatives”
 - Fox News, Shawn Hannity, Mark Levin
 - Recognizing political reality they tend to emphasize paleoconservative positions
- Many, probably most, prominent conservative commentators take paleoconservative positions on modern political topics but hold to neo-conservative views on history
 - Deviating from this historical interpretation is seen as being unpatriotic
- Still false beliefs about the past always lead to false views of the present and a misdirected vision of the future