

A Neoconservative Theory of International Politics?

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Abstract

Neoconservatism has long had a tenuous relationship with International Relations theory. Despite an abundance of explanatory material and its influence in US foreign policy, few works in IR have attempted to build a *stand-alone* theory out of it. Furthermore, previous work on the topic has resulted in an under-developed and poor understanding of the movement's core ideas. The thesis redefines neoconservatism as a trifecta of i) a set of explanatory ideas on world politics, ii) an approach to foreign policy, and iii) an ideology that stems from the European Enlightenment, all the way to the present day. Using this expanded conceptualization, the thesis builds a theory out of what can *broadly* be considered an ideology. The theory takes the form of an ideal-type construct and emphasizes hegemony in the international system. It offers an explanation for the causes of alliances, as well as regional and systemic conflicts. The theory also adopts a prescriptive function and offers an account of foreign policy analysis. It is highly recommended that the assumptions of the theory that are laid out here be tested in future work.

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Introduction

Neoconservatism has been a fixture of American political discourse for well over 50 years. Often caricatured as an aggressive approach to American foreign policy that lends for untrammelled internationalism and militarism, the ideology, or movement has been met with polarized perspectives in both public and popular media, as well as academia.

In the wave of publicity surrounding the ideology at the height of the Iraq War (2003 – 2011), some work in International Relations attempted to assess where it lay in the context of IR theories. Academic International Relations (IR) prides itself as being a field bespoke to presenting a definitive understanding of global phenomena, and is marked by a wealth of theorizing on this. Theories of international relations aim to provide systemic explanatory and causal accounts for global phenomena and sometimes, and some suggest, solutions for policy makers. But given the three broad schools of IR theorizing, or ‘paradigms’ (Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism), neoconservatism does not fully fit into any of these, as the following pages in the thesis will uncover. The other academic pursuit - formulating a theory out of neoconservatism - remains to be done, despite Michael C. Williams suggesting in 2005 that “...there is a pressing need for IR to treat neoconservatism seriously *as* a theory of international politics” since, as he writes, it does in fact contain some material to so do: “Few political positions today place so great an importance on the influence of ideas as does neoconservatism, and few possess the theoretical depth that its most sophisticated proponents can muster” (2005, p. 324).

The implications of this avoidance in International Relations of neoconservatism as a theory extend well beyond esoteric and abstract academic pursuits. Beyond presenting an array of competing theories, IR at its heart is aimed at understanding the mechanisms and causal forces behind certain forces in international affairs. Implicated in this is an underlying desire to transform international politics for the better. After all, what is the purpose of years of research if not to see it come to fruition in the public or private spheres? Yet, one of the key driving forces for this thesis was the realization that despite decades of development and debate amongst proponents of various theoretical approaches, few of the recognized theories within International Relations have managed to shape US politics as neoconservatism has. Its ideas have influenced the policies of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. Some of Clinton’s foreign policies (in Bosnia) feature hues of an interventionist imperative featured in neoconservatism, and neoconservatives fondly embrace Harry Truman’s creation of the post War order as their own (e.g. Stephens, 2014).

And crucially, despite taking quite the beating since the fallout of the Iraq War, neoconservatives still remain far more represented and vocal in the foreign policy discourse than other IR academics. Additionally, of all the *conservative* movements in the United States, from libertarianism to paleo-conservatism, to more populist strands of thought, neoconservatism is still the most prominent in popular media where several key debates and ideas on foreign policy are presented. For instance, in Daniel Drezner’s 2017 book *The Ideas Industry*, key hitherto living foreign policy intellectuals are listed according to a survey of impact. Where N=22, it is remarkable that there are at least 6 are neoconservatives (Drezner, 2017; pp. 180- 181)¹. While a small number, they represent one of the largest single groups in Drezner’s population. It is worth pointing out too, that only four key international relations theorists (Fareed Zakaria, Joseph Nye, and Stephen Walt, John Mearsheimer) make the list, scoring 3, 5, 14, and 15 respectively, meaning that John Mearsheimer ties in relevance with Bret Stephens and Niall Ferguson who are both considered neoconservatives in this thesis. Furthermore, Fareed Zakaria has arguably risen in importance owing not to his IR theorizing but his presence in popular print and television media (Drezner, 2017; p. 176). This demonstrates that in terms of foreign policy influence and relevance, there is a paucity of real IR theorists, and one of the approaches (neoconservatism) that *is* relevant, is ignored by IR theory.

Table 1 Most Influential Foreign Policy Intellectuals by ideology or theoretical affiliation

Ideology*	n	Names (rank by Drezner [2017])
Neoconservatives**	6	<i>Robert Kagan (4)</i> <i>Charles Krauthammer (6)</i> <i>Richard Haas (11)</i> <i>William Kristol (13)</i> <i>Niall Ferguson (15)</i> <i>Bret Stephens (15)</i>
Liberal Internationalists	3	<i>Samantha Power (14)</i> <i>David Ignatius (8)</i> <i>Jeffrey Goldberg (11)</i>

¹ It should be noted that the ideological affiliation has been added by the author of this thesis

Realists	4	<i>Henry Kissinger (1)</i> <i>Fareed Zakaria (3)</i> <i>Stephen Walt (14)</i> <i>John Mearsheimer (15)</i>
Other: Ex Neocon	1	<i>Francis Fukuyama (9)</i>
Liberal (IR)	1	<i>Joseph Nye (5)</i>
Liberal/ undefined	7	<i>Thomas Friedman (2)</i> <i>Nick Kristof (14)</i> <i>Paul Krugman (12)</i> <i>Zbigniew Brzezinski (14)</i> <i>Walter Russell Mead (7)</i> <i>Robert D. Kaplan (10)</i> <i>David Sanger (15)</i>

(N= 22)

Adapted from Daniel Drezner *The Ideas Industry* (2017). Table 7.1 pp. 180 – 181

**Ideological affiliation* added by the author of this thesis.

** Neoconservatives are taken to be those whose views best align with the neoconservative ideas outlined [later in this thesis], irrespective of whether they identify as such or not.

Certainly, expanding beyond strict and artificially imposed labels, it is clear that the majority of thinkers converge around some sort of internationalist role for the US, a view-point that pits neoconservatives further away from IR realists, as well as far left and far right isolationists in the political arena. While liberal internationalists are distinguished from neoconservatives who argue that such intervention should be more sustained and can accrue *strategic* benefits, the fact is their foreign policy goals are closer in nature to neoconservatives than to the realists. There is in other words, a sort of policy convergence on the idea of the US acting as some sort of international management force, be it for humanitarian and hegemonic ends, or just the former. The ratio comes out to being *around* 10:9 for those in support of a more limited scope of US power (liberals and realists combined, excluding thinkers like Walter Russell Mead who are considered *undefined*) to those who support US internationalism. Certainly, adding those former neoconservatives, those

who once held such views but departed due to the Iraq debacle increases the neoconservative side of the ratio. Added to this, the neoconservative influence can be considered even greater when considering persons like Fareed Zakaria once supported the War in Iraq, and was once mentored by Samuel Huntington, who likewise has influenced other neoconservatives.

Yet, a multitude of theories exist in international relations which have hardly come close to the influence of neoconservatism. Only elements of realism have been influential at times, notably during Nixon's and Kissinger's détente (Cooper, 2011). Is it not a massive gap in international relations as a whole – which aims to explain world politics – to not include a theory of neoconservatism? The United States has been a superpower since the end of the Cold War, and so its policies have impacted and continue to impact world politics. A theory which explains – systematically and abstractly so – the preferences and policies of this state can additionally help explain world politics as a whole. The key goal of this thesis thus, is assessing whether it is possible to create a stand-alone theory of neoconservatism, and if so, outlining this theory. As such, the **central research questions** of this thesis are i.) is an international relations theory of neoconservatism possible, or is it easily subsumed into other theoretical approaches and ii.) What would the theory of neoconservatism entail exactly?

Outline of the Thesis

The format of the paper works to answer the two (but related) research questions. The paper opens with a **review** of the work done so far relating neoconservatism to IR theories, and finds that methodologically, some work is limited in its conception of what neoconservatism is (limiting it to the Bush administration), or in who a neoconservative is (focusing on just one or two key thinkers). Additionally, no work in the literature has tried to formulate an extensive stand-alone theory of neoconservatism that is not beholden to the major IR paradigms. The literature review thus helps to contextualize the research questions.

Following this, the **methodological** approaches of the thesis will be outlined, focusing on source selection, source analysis, and definition of neoconservatives. Then the thesis will extensively review **what neoconservatism is** exactly, since the conceptualization in previous work has been limited and/or flawed. This section outlines their views on international perspectives, and suggests that neoconservatism as it exists is a trifecta of explanatory and prescriptive ideas, a loose approach to foreign policy and, an ideology.

This section will then lead into the **intellectual developments** of neoconservatism, with a goal of uncovering which movement has had the most impact on it, and to understand why it emerged: i.e., those differences with its antecedents that were too strong to be shed. This section also traces the modern (20th century) developments of the movement, from Strauss, to Irving Kristol to Bloom.

The next chapter will attempt to – given the redefinition of neoconservatism – **re-assess it with other existing IR theories**. This section i) uses those theories that either have not been assessed with neoconservatism in the literature, or that initially seem highly relevant to neoconservatism. The goal of doing this is twofold. One is to exhaust all other avenues of theoretical subsumability before proceeding to define a theory of neoconservatism. The second is to assess whether or not theoretical subsumption is possible given a different, more expanded understanding of neoconservatism.

This section finds that still, neoconservatism does not fit into any of the theories introduced. The paper then turns its attention to the goal of theory building. But in order to do this, it defines **what a theory is in IR** and how it is **different from ideologies**. With a definition of IR theorizing on hand, the thesis then seeks **to build a theory** of international relations which is both explanatory, prescriptive and, offers a view on foreign policy. The thesis hopes that this can develop a theory which can be refined in future research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Works on the topic of neoconservatism and its relationship to International Relations theory have come to different conclusions as to which theory best describes it. For each of the major paradigms within IR, there are authors who subsume neoconservatism – or at least associate it – with each. Most glaringly is the overall absence of theorizing out of it – i.e. there has been no substantive attempt to create a standalone theory out of it. The following section will delve more into detail on the works that deal with neoconservatism and IR theories, which will then be followed by a discussion of the common threads in the literature, as well as a commentary on the gaps that remain.

Neoconservatism and the Realist schools

Several writers tend to differentiate neoconservatism and the realist paradigm, while at times noting some commonalities. For instance, Williams (2005) denies that neoconservatism is reducible to realism, and acknowledges a tension that exists between the two². However, he does point to some similarities between Hans Morgenthau and the so-called neoconservative godfather, Irving Kristol (*ibid*). Neoconservatives, he writes, are concerned that a liberal society's comforts can lead a culture to lose its foundations of morals, and therefore, there must be a constant struggle to maintain societies' time-tested virtues (Williams, 2005; pp. 312 – 321). Likewise, the fate of such society is also stressed upon in the writings of Hans Morgenthau (Williams, 2005; pp 325). Yet he never goes so far as to associate the two schools as fundamentally the same, since they differ in the preferred response to a degenerate liberal society: neoconservatives stress asserting old values, whereas Morgenthau (examining the aftermath of the collapse of the Weimar Republic) warned of the dangers of such a strong pushback against society (2005; pp. 325 – 327). This is as far as realism goes with neoconservatism for Williams, who then leaves open the option of associating neoconservatism with liberalism - writing that the two are not mutually exclusive - as well as constructivism, owing to both areas' focus on ideas (2005; p. 327). But as the thesis unfolds, it is suggested that this emphasis on the degeneration of a liberal society into hedonism is not a particularly widespread notion in wider neoconservatism. Going back to any links with realism, Williams certainly makes no assumptions that neoconservatism is reducible to this paradigm.

Stephen Hurst (2005) on the other hand makes a more direct association with realism, focusing on the shared ideas of power seeking states in an anarchic system, with states as the main actor, economic issues being secondary, and the constancy of threats (p. 78). Going more into detail, Jonathan D. Caverley (2010) argues that neoconservatism's tenets and influences are in fact strong enough to render it a theory in international relations (p. 594) but still tries to reduce it to some variant of realism. He writes that neoconservatism and realism share all the starting points, of anarchy, state-centrism, uncertainty, and the differentiation between stronger and weaker states (p. 598-599). Specifically, he suggests that neoclassical realism is remarkably similar to neoconservatism, in that both emphasize a focus on foreign policy, ideational as well as material

² “While neoconservatism is often characterized as a form of realism, many of its most revealing features lie in its contrast to Realism. Nowhere is this more clearly expressed than in the understanding of the concept of the national interest underpinning the ‘neoReaganite’ foreign policy and ‘national greatness conservatism’....” (Williams, 2005; p. 309).

forces, and concepts of identity and ideology, and, they share a structural view of world politics with the addition of emphasis placed on foreign policy, the latter which distinguishes neoclassical realism from others in realism (Caverley, 2010; pp. 608- 609). However, Caverley stops short at integrating neo-conservatism fully into the realist school by stating that its policy outcomes can be contrary to what realists prefer (2010; p. 611). Neoconservatism, he writes, “can take a realist starting point, and justify foreign policy that profoundly differs from the realist tradition” (Caverley, 2010; p. 611). Further, he completely rejects any association between Wilsonian liberalism and neoconservatism (2010; pp. 599- 602).

A major shortcoming of his take is that while he rightfully agrees that the ideology cannot be reduced to the Bush era’s policies, he mentions preventative war as major tenet of neoconservatism, (2010; p. 608) but, does so without detailing other forms of non-military policies that neoconservatives espouse from time to time. Further, while he does state that neoconservatism is a form of *neoclassical realism*, he mentions the *policy outcomes* “differ from the realist tradition” (2010, p. 611). This is problematic, as, neoconservatism is roughly equal parts explanatory, as well as normative. To describe one element (explanatory) as neoclassically realist, whereas the other is different, demonstrates that neoconservatism in its entirety cannot be considered neoclassically realist.

Overall, among those academics who posit some similarities between realism and the perspective in question, there is a general trepidation to *fully* subsume neoconservatism into any realist theory, as well as a general disagreement on *which* realism best describes the topic at hand.

Neoconservatism and IR Liberal theories:

In a subsequent paper, Williams, along with Brian C. Schmidt (2008) outlined the differences between realists and neoconservatives, in accounting for the neoconservatives’ triumph over the realists leading to the Iraq war (p. 192). They cite tensions between the neoconservative preference for unipolarity and the structural (or defensive, neo-realist) realist view that this is unstable, as well as neoconservative pre-emption vs deterrence (as favoured by defensive realists) (2008; pp. pp. 205 – 206; 208-209). Realists, they write, also see *nationalism* as far more potent than democratization, and this explains their grim outlook for the efficacy (or lack thereof) of

democratization projects (p. 204)³. Interestingly, keeping within the liberal/realist ontology, they state, without going into detail, that neoconservatism is a liberal theory of international relations and “...Bush and the neoconservatives wholeheartedly embrace the liberal premise that democracies have distinct foreign policies and exercise peaceful restraint with other democracies” (pp. 202- 203).⁴ This indicates an exercise of the democratic peace theory, to which Schmidt and Williams allude, adopting Mearsheimer’s idea that Bush’s neoconservatism, far from being a variant of realism, is “Wilsonian liberalism with teeth” (Schmidt and Williams, 2008; p. 199; Mearsheimer, 2005, p. 1)⁵.

Further, neoconservatives argue that the domestic and the international spheres should not be separated like what the realists espouse, but rather, should be blended since the national interest involves the restoration of virtue to ensure a stronger domestic and foreign policy (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, p. 214). To this, they write that:

“...while neo-conservatism definitely draws upon these themes of liberal exceptionalism and universalism, it combines them with an important second element: a deeper sense of foreboding – a constant fear that America’s liberal political order is at risk of destruction not only through the actions of foreign enemies or idealistic overextension, but through internal political decline” (Schmidt and Williams, 2008; p. 214)

Therefore, for Schmidt and Williams, neoconservatism under President George W. Bush had liberal underpinnings, where liberalism is deeply imbued in the neocon’s sense of mission – the preservation of the liberal order domestically and internationally.

However, Lowbeer Lewis (2009) is the most willing to make direct links with liberalism (p.73; 81). Neoconservatism, he writes, is underpinned by beliefs in benevolent hegemony, moral foreign policy, regime type or “state identity”, and a great faith in the efficacy of the military

³ On the other hand, James W. Caesar in Kagan and Kristol’s *Present Dangers* suggests that neoconservatives express profound support in the idea of nationalism and the state as the focal point of politics (2000, p. 35).

⁴ Pitting neoconservatism against realism at a very foundational level, Schmidt and Williams write “To the extent that neoconservatism embraces a liberal theory of international relations, it is not surprising that many realists view the Bush doctrine as a recipe for disaster” (2008; p. 202)

⁵ Mearsheimer, “Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War” (2005; p.1) “Neo-conservative theory – the Bush doctrine – is essentially Wilsonianism with teeth. The theory has an idealist strand and a power strand: Wilsonianism provides the idealism, an emphasis on military power provides the teeth.”

(Lowbeer-Lewis, 2009; p. 75). He is direct in disassociating realism from neoconservatism, with key differences of bandwagoning (pp. 75-76), morality in foreign affairs (p. 76), separation of domestic and international spheres, (ibid), and disagreements on democracy promotion (2009, p 77). His conclusion is that because of the forceful nature of promoting liberal values, neoconservatism can be characterized by what he terms “muscular liberalism” (p. 81) and points to several liberal thinkers who rallied behind the Iraq War of 2003 (ibid), whereas realists staged an opposing campaign to the war (pp. 79 – 80). However, his paper details more those differences between neocons and the realists, and does not delve as deeply into the affinity with liberalism.

One the other end of the spectrum, some academics have gone to great pains to disassociate liberalism from neoconservatism. Michael Crosston, in his critique of the democratization project, describes it as “uber realist in how it envisions America’s liberal authority within the global system but then proposes to achieve such power through the willful acquiescence of all other states” (2009; p. 305). He also states that, contrary to Lowbeer Lewis (2009), it must not be characterized as a muscular version of the democratic peace theory (p. 322).

The most ardent voice on this however is Jean-François Drolet (2010) who has written of neoconservatism as inherently illiberal. Similar to other writers on the topic, he writes of their differences with realism, that they consider the apparent realist amoral foreign policy as ultimately meaningless (p. 95) and suggests, like Williams (2005), that they fear the decay of the liberal society, but, he adds further that they *need* an existential enemy to give the state a purpose to maintain its values (2010; p. 109-110)⁶. But he is particularly insistent that neoconservatism is fundamentally illiberal, writing “...these Wilsonian tropes are misleading. For they suggest that neoconservatism resorts to realist means to pursue liberal ends and deepen the normative fabric of the global liberal order. This is simply not the case. Neoconservatives are conservatives ‘all the way down’” (Drolet, 2010; p. 91). For instance, the very idea of democratization is illiberal since it is designed for hegemonic and not altruistic purposes, and, their version of democracy itself is limited, with restrictions on popular input (Drolet, 2010; pp. 98-100).⁷ Additionally, so as not to

⁶ “The upshot of this atavistic conception of ethical freedom is that it requires an enemy foil to bring itself into relief. This is why after the end of the Cold War neoconservatives were not so comfortable with the world they believe to have ‘won’ for themselves...and it is of course, on the basis of this same atavistic ethos of struggle that neoconservatives have greeted the events of 9/11 with such opportunistic fervor” (Drolet, 2010, p. 110).

⁷ To make this point, Drolet mentions Kristol saying, “I don’t think that neoconservatives at that time [prior to the mid -1980’s] were particularly strong supporters of democracy” (Cited in J. Mann, The Rise of the

allow the liberal state to fall into hedonism, Drolet writes there must always be a threat to their way of life, thereby ensuring the society's constant upkeep of their values (2010 p. 109 – 110). This in turn creates a collective obligation to the state by the individual and eliminates critical thinking, which Drolet argues is contradictory to the individualist underpinnings of the Enlightenment (2010; p. 111). Even further he notes – making a spurious connection – that several fascist intellectuals similarly also warned of the degradation of society (Drolet, 2010; p. 112). One such example is Leo Strauss's mentor, Martin Heidegger, who initially embraced fascism as a means to salvage society from its downward hedonistic path (Lilla, 2016; p. 43 – 46; 50). But just because Strauss was influenced by Heidegger does not necessarily mean that neoconservatism is of a fascist persuasion to which Drolet alludes.

*

Neoconservatism and Constructivism

Danny Cooper (2011) stresses the importance of ideas to neoconservatives, and brings up some similarities with constructivism, but writes that neoconservatives tend not to be interested in IR theory and inter-paradigmatic debates, preferring instead to influence policy (pp. 43 - 44). Conversely, Aaron Rapport (2008) in an extensive undertaking, finds neoconservatism to be an explanatory and predictive critical theory (p. 289). Commonalities with Alexander Wendt are similar views on human nature (p. 267) and cultures of anarchy accounting for alliance formation (p. 281). Rapport argues that neoconservatism has a profound focus on ideas, and consequentially, their power to shape the malleable human (2008; pp 262 – 267). Departing somewhat from some democratic peace theorists, the neoconservative logic behind democratization, according to Rapport - who integrates a more constructivist analysis - stresses that the regime type has fundamental bearings on the behavior and attitude of citizens (Rapport, 2008; p. 269 – 270) in terms of the sheer transformative influence of ideas on the preferences of individuals. The most important tenet of neoconservatism however, is that political ideologies will find conflict with each other, and the distribution of differing ideologies will determine conflicts (Rapport, 2008; p. 275). Neoconservatism's focus on ideational conflicts and preponderance thus sets it apart from the material realists, which accounts for why they (neoconservatives) have emphasized the threats

Vulcans (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 130) and correctly notes that neoconservatives did support right wing authoritarian rulers. (2010, p. 97).

from both the gargantuan USSR *and* scattered radical Islamist groups (Rapport, pp. 276 – 277; 279). He does note that differences exist between constructivism and neoconservatism on the topic of international institutions (which he erroneously suggests the neoconservatives do not emphasize), as well as the necessity of hegemony, which is absent in constructivism (pp. 290-291).

However, a major problem with this paper is that while the perspective does take into account ideas to a great extent, Rapport ultimately ignores that neoconservatives do also emphasize material power, and as Chapter 2 will demonstrate, neoconservatism does emphasize the role of international organizations.

Using this ontology Andrew Flibbert (2006) traced why the Bush administration decided upon the war in Iraq. The preponderance of ideas (over material or individualistic pursuits of the administration) are described as the leading, or unifying factor that explains why the war was chosen (Flibbert, 2006, p. 313). Regarding individual pursuits, such as Bush's apparent obsession with completing what his father started, or Dick Cheney's and Karl Rove's wish to crush Iraq as a challenger to US interests in the region, none of these separately account for the war, unless one takes into consideration the power of ideas (Flibbert, 2006; pp. 318- 324). The discourse was imbued with the framing of purpose, problem, solution, and means (Flibbert, 2006; p. 328, 331 – 345). For the purpose, neoconservatives saw America needing to be a benevolent hegemon, which "...was the underlying social purpose of US power for the Bush administration" (Flibbert, 2006; p. 331).

With regards to the framing of the problem before the war, neoconservatives demonstrated their "Manichean Primordialism" with little nuance between good and bad actors (2006, p. 336 - 341). Solution entailed regime change of the Hussein run Iraq (Flibbert, 2006; pp. 341 – 343), and finally, the means to achieve this was the use of the military, which for neoconservatives is a highly important tool of foreign policy (Flibbert, 2006; pp. 343 – 344).

One problem with Andrew Flibbert's piece on why the US went to Iraq, is that there is little mention of the foreign policy apparatus of the United States which acted as the vessel for such ideas to actually be operationalized, and of course, its extensive focus on the Bush administration may not be generalizable to wider neoconservative ideology.

Neoconservatism as Discourse

Some work has been done as well on the construction of the neoconservative arguments. Ty Solomon (2013) writes of neoconservatism as a discourse (p. 102). While he is focused on understanding how neoconservatism rebounded in the 1990's from near obscurity to full policy relevance (and to this he credits Kagan and Kristol's reframing of the threat to the newly unipolar world system [pp.113-116]), it is interesting to examine Solomon's ontology for neoconservatism. With the focus as a discourse, there is immense importance placed on the power of the very ideas that constitute neoconservatism, as well as the importance it places on ideas in the world (Solomon, 2013, (p. 101, 107 – 117). However, he is reluctant to fold it within a post-positivist theory of international relations, instead utilizing psychoanalytic theory to examine its affective appeals (pp. 103 – 107; 118). But while an interesting inquiry linking psychology to political science, this does not capture all of neoconservatism, excluding its wealth of explanatory 'tenets' and its wide ranging foreign policy recommendations.

Similarly, Chengxin Pan and Oliver Turner (2016) define neoconservatism as a discourse, and emphasize the ideas that constitute it. A distinguishing feature of neoconservatism, they write, is its interplay of both power and virtue as key concepts (2016, pp. 11- 13). Like Solomon (2013), they suggest that because it is a discourse, it has been successfully received, i.e. its popularity and resonance is due to its simplicity, or "common-sense" (pp. 8 -10). Further, they are also reluctant to define it as a theory in international relations (Pan and Turner, 2016; p. 9). Even though they do share an ontology with the post positivist school – or more specifically, constructivism - in understanding that ideas are the foundation of neoconservatism, they ultimately reject the idea of placing neoconservatism in theoretical terms. (Pan and Turner, 2016; p. 9). But again, this hardly captures the totality of neoconservatism, as a body of ideas attempting to both dually explain *and* ameliorate world affairs.

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The above survey of literature indicates an absence of consensus on where neoconservatism lies with relation to international relations theory. Writers focus on particular elements of the field to draw their conclusion. The discourse camp looks at how arguments are framed, and examine the constituting ideas of neoconservative narratives (Solomon, 2013; Pan and Turner, 2016). The constructivist group looks at how neoconservatism believes in the

transformative nature of ideas (eg regime type on people's behavior), and, concludes that it was the compelling or persuasive ideas that can account for neoconservative's success in impacting foreign policy.

An interesting interplay is exemplified by Caverley (2010) and Rapport (2008). Both suggest that neoconservatives are guided by ideas, but come to different conclusions. For Rapport the ideational focus is strong enough to subsume it under a constructivist ontology, but for Caverley (2010), notions of ideas complement explanations of foreign policy, and therefore render it a neoclassical realist theory. This case of similar tenets but differing conclusions can also be seen with Lowbeer- Lewis (2009) and Drolet (2010), who emphasize democratization, but the former suggests this means they are highly liberal whereas the latter suggests this points to deep illiberalism.

Therefore, the literature on neoconservatism with regards to IR theory points to a lack of cohesion and agreement, where a body of work with similar source material features different findings.

Tellingly, where theories are crafted out of neoconservatism, such as Caverley's (2010) and Rapport's (2008) work, there is still a tendency to reduce them to a particular theory in IR, be it neoclassical realism in Caverley's case or constructivism in Rapport's. Additionally, there is no consensus on which parts of neoconservatism should be considered with regard to IR theory. Some look at it from an *explanatory* angle (Rapport, 2008; Lowbeer-Lewis, 2009), while others focus on its *prescriptive* aspects (Drolet, 2010; Williams, 2005), and some look at a combination of both (Flibbert, 2006). This means that there is little focus on what kind of theory Neoconservatism actually is – is it an explanatory critical theory as Rapport (2008) suggests, or is it a deeply normative one as alluded to by Williams (2005)?

Omissions and Gaps

From this survey, one can find gaps in the literature. Much of the work on neoconservatism with regards to IR theory centers around the **Bush doctrine** and its tenets, - and with this, only the militaristic dimension of it - without recognizing that the Bush era's policies were a part of, but not the whole, of neoconservative thought. Further, there is a failure to understand that certain aspects of the 43rd president were unique to his presidency, and not necessarily applicable to wider neoconservatism. Consider Norman Podhoretz's (1982, 1983) writings on Vietnam, where he

expressed that it was morally reprehensible to let the South Vietnamese fall into the hands of the North (p. 172). There is no mention of actively democratizing Vietnam, rather, a more pragmatic embrace of an authoritarian regime - South Vietnam (1982, 1983; p. 205). To his credit, Drolet does mention that before the 1990's, neoconservatives did not adopt the democratization stance, one of the few writers to express nuance on this and take into account the evolution towards this idea (2010, p. 97).

Hence, it is flawed thinking to associate the Bush doctrine wholly with neoconservatism. Some neoconservatives (although perhaps to 'save face' in response to the massive blowback against the war) have distanced themselves from the Bush administration. Max Boot for instance suggested that while closely linked to the neoconservatives, George W. Bush and his inner circle were hardly neoconservative, describing them as "...traditional national- interest conservatives who...decried the Clinton administration for its focus on nation-building and human rights." (Boot, 2004, p. 45). In other words, neoconservatives tended to believe the Bush administration's policies were not as morally aligned as they would have preferred, and most damningly, accused the administration of failing to accept the full neoconservative policy package, (for instance, higher troop deployment), which they believed would have avoided the Iraq debacle: "[Neoconservatism] has probably been weakened by the Bush administration's poor performance in implementing what could be characterized as its recommended foreign policy" (Kristol, 2004, p. 76).

Additionally, the academic work on neoconservatism overwhelmingly places emphasis on combining domestic writings and those of the international front. Neoconservatives, they argue, believe that a **healthy and virtuous domestic polity** can lead to an effective international policy, and so, neoconservatives supposedly combine the domestic and international ideas into their foreign policies (Williams, 2005; p. 309; 321).^{8 9} But, in conceiving of the **domestic front as analytically one and the same as the international**, both are diminished. As a consequence, much of the work on neoconservatism fails to cover their perspectives on alliance formation, preference shaping, the stability of unipolarity and so forth. It is important to note that some

⁸ "...Kristol exemplifies a powerful intellectual and rhetorical strategy that continues to find expression in neoconservative positions on both domestic and foreign policy and that, in particular, comprises a powerful synthesis of the domestic and international realms that not only explains neoconservatism's distinctive approach to foreign policy but also helps to account for its rise to prominence and effectiveness in American political debate." (Williams, 2005; p.309).

⁹ "Attitudes towards the national interest are thus as much a concern of domestic political virtue as a dimension of foreign policy. Indeed the two are seen as inseparable" (Williams, 2005; p. 321).

international elements do enter the home-front, and the domestic can impact the international (such as public opinion being a key driver on foreign policy: Vietnam and Iraq for instance), but, these are areas of blending that have not been addressed in the literature, which instead, focuses on the idea of virtue in a populace.

As a result, what is glaringly missing from the literature is an analysis of neoconservative writings and views on the **global financial architecture**, and the US's place in it. Much of the neoconservative viewpoints of the international political economy tend to contradict what the above writers have written of neoconservatism, that they reject multilateralism and international organizations (eg., Hurst, 2005; p. 79). The neoconservative position on global capitalism demonstrates another side of the equation of what they believe to be tools of US hegemony. Where for instance Cooper (2011) writes that global stability is underpinned by the US's military might (p. 13), this ignores other parts of the post-World War II world order that are characterized by the Bretton Woods system. If hegemony is as important to the neoconservatives as academics write, then there should be some mention of their perspectives on a hegemon, which, for them, is not *just* preponderant, but, following Keohane's (1984) work, is one that creates an order, and facilitates cooperation for some time.

Additionally, the literature lacks any mention of **strategic and moral imperatives for alliance formation**. Some, like Rapport (2008) do state that neoconservatives favour forming allies out of ideological affinity (such as NATO), but, he does not acknowledge the strategic logic behind such behaviours. This omission of alliances in the literature is due to some academics' acceptance that hegemony involves unilateral behavior. But as Brooks and Wolforth (2016) point out, a preponderant state like the US does not preclude the presence of allies, but in fact alliances partially enhance its security position through assurances, leverage and cooperation (pp. 92-93).

Finally, and most crucially, the literature lacks **any proper construction of a theory** of neoconservatism. Caverley (2010) comes close, by constructing it as a neo classical realist theory, with a focus on regime type, but, as mentioned in the prior pages, his work suffers from an unwitting adherence to the Bush doctrine. Rapport (2008) likewise constructs a detailed type of critical theory out of neoconservatism, but fails to capture their perspectives on material power, and, it ignores the normative side of neoconservatism. Additionally, both theories are ultimately reducible to pre-existing theories in IR.

The problems with neoconservatism's literature hence can be traced to the failure to properly define the ideology, by failing to note any changes across time, generalizing the Bush doctrine and the Iraq War to wider neoconservatism, and focusing very heavily on its militaristic aspects. After outlining the methods used in the thesis, the subsequent chapter thus seeks to lay out a more holistic understanding of neoconservatism.

Methodology of the thesis

Source Selection: Defining Neoconservatives and Neoconservatism

The source selection of this thesis was careful not to focus on just one writer. While this would have yielded immense understanding of a particularly influential author in neoconservatism, this would diminish the findings' generalizability to the wider ideology. The thesis instead tried to sample different and diverse thinkers, with the only key criteria being that they were to write about *American* power. Different writers, and those at different times were selected to give a wider understanding of the perspective. The goal of this was to see what commonalities existed amongst them to determine which are those core beliefs and those which are just particular to one or two writers. The sources for the thesis thus tried to be a **representative sample** of neoconservatism, by selecting key texts from different time periods and from different times, as well as some less cited texts by key thinkers as well.

To select the relevant and important sources, this required the primary definition of **the neoconservative writer**. Unlike some of the work surveyed above which at times, like Rapport's work, tended to focus on the George W. Bush, and Caverley's who mentioned preventative war as a major tenet of neoconservatism (Caverley, 2010; p. 608), the thesis considers that neoconservatism goes far beyond this particular time period. While some figures associated with the Bush II administration cannot be avoided in any analysis of neoconservatism, this thesis has made an almost concerted effort to extend far beyond this, by widely expanding the sources from before the Bush administration and writers who had little actual influence inside the administration.

The term – neoconservative- was created disparagingly by socialist Michael Harrington, but has since been embraced to a limited extent, with exceptions (Goldberg, 2003). Even in a modern context, the term sometimes comes with broad negative connotations. **Self-identification** is thus a poor tool to define a neoconservative writer, since there are many who have rejected the

label but whose ideas do fall into the ideology. As the pages below unfold, one may find some names and works referenced not normally associated with the ideology. Further, while affiliation with typical neoconservative publications was a useful starting point, it was not the definitive means by which to select writers.

Instead, the main tool to identify a person as a *neoconservative* is a strong and hitherto persistent viewpoint on the need for the US to maintain some sort of active/interventionist standing in the world for hegemonic purposes. It is thus a high degree of **favourability of active US hegemony**. This is a particularly relevant idea for this thesis which deals with the *international* dimension of neoconservatism. The reason for this broad idea is that many other groups in US policy making circles tend not to be vocally supportive of this. Take for instance Nuno P. Monteiro's taxonomy in his *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (2014), a noteworthy book which lays out a theory of unipolarity, which is of course bespoke to the 21st century. Mainstream policy makers, he writes, intend to preserve the global status quo of US commitments overseas, and suggests that neoconservatives are differentiated from this group by espousing a more *aggressive* approach to US foreign policy (2014; pp. 10 - 12)¹⁰. Monteiro's is a fine starting point, which distinguishes between those who favour hegemony (but take a more passive view towards its maintenance), and those who are in favour a much more *active* approach to it. For instance, the notable Kristol and Kagan 1996 piece, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy" makes the case for active US involvement in world politics lest the US's ostensibly hard-won victory in the Cold War is laid to waste. As opposed to simply curtailing its international commitments and enjoying the unipolar decade, Kristol and Kagan suggest that unipolarity must be *actively* maintained. Latent power therefore, and connotations of the sleeping-giant of the hegemon do not fit into the neoconservative worldview. But adherence to active hegemony is hardly explicated in these precise terms since hegemony may have attached to it negative connotations. For Irving Kristol (1976, republished in 2011), active hegemony entails the maintenance of US values worldwide (p. 150). For Stephens

¹⁰ While he does call them "Primacists" in this conception, the previous page in his book saw him outline neoconservatives as "arguing for a more active US role, reshaping the world with its power, if necessary by military means" (p. 10). But in describing primacists, he more or less describes the neoconservative establishment, who "...despite having lost political ground in the aftermath of costly interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, argue for a more proactive U.S. role in foreign affairs, taking out threats preventively and reshaping important regions of the world...in ways that further U.S. interests" (p. 11)

(2014), it comes in the form of in fact, being the “world policeman”, in the sense that its purpose is to enforce global norms (p. vx; pp. 218-219).

Because the thesis identifies neoconservatism based on a particular idea – active US hegemony – some people on the left, or the democratic party, or who otherwise would not identify as neoconservatives – like ‘liberal hawks’, may very well be subsumed into this approach. This of course however is an implication of the broadening of the definition of the term, which means that neoconservatism in reality is i. misunderstood and ii. much more widely held than has been previously thought, possibly transcending partisan loyalties. The definition also helps to distinguish neoconservatism from other right-wing ideologies that also espouse a positive conception of American power, but offer different means to preserving this.

For this reason, in addition to those typical neoconservative figures like William and Irving Kristol, Robert Kagan, and Charles Krauthammer, persons such as Niall Ferguson, Dick Cheney are folded into this category. The latter two may be particularly surprising but have been chosen in the thesis since the former has consistently elucidated points that resemble the neoconservative corpus, and the latter has assisted in operationalizing some neoconservative ideas into policy. In fact, while Muravchick has rejected people like John Bolton and Dick Cheney as neoconservatives (2010; p. 11), the fact is, analyzing their writings in a discursive manner produces considerable overlap with traditional neoconservatives, enough so to fold them into this label. Additionally, one cannot reasonably consider Paul Wolfowitz (the author of the 1992 leaked Defense Planning Guidance 1994 -1999) a neoconservative, and *not* Dick Cheney, who was tasked with ‘damage control’ and the reformulating of Wolfowitz’s ideas into the more supposedly palatable Regional Defense Strategy paper of 1993 (Cooper, 2011).

The fundamental point is that the main method of this paper is a highly **discursive or discourse-analytical** one. Even if a neoconservative may suggest that person X is not a neoconservative, and person X may insist they are not a neoconservative, if their writings are similar to those normally considered neoconservatives, then they too are folded into this group. Additionally, this method means that neoconservatism will be defined, discussed and analyzed based on what the writings demonstrate, and not what commentators commonly label as neoconservatism. A neoconservative tenet will likely be drawn from a concept that is written in **high frequency** as well as **emphatically** (in a positive way) in the corpus. This would explain for instance, why the issue of pre-emption, while still a logical part of neoconservative thought, is

given less attention in this paper than the issue of hegemony and alliances. In short, the frequency and depth of consideration given to particular issues by neoconservatives in their writing-is what determines key concepts of neoconservatism in this paper.

But in conjunction with this, the historical, contemporary and intellectual networks surrounding traditional neoconservatives will be used to add some context and additional meaning to the use of some thinkers. Utilized are groups such as the now defunct Project for the New American Century (PNAC), as well as the Wall Street Journal Editorial Board, Commentary Magazine, the Weekly Standard. From these writers, references of other writers are also used to identify others who may have published the viewpoints expressed in the above paragraph, but may not necessarily have held membership in any of these organizations or publications. Further, advisors and appointees of the Reagan and Bush II administrations were also considered as neoconservatives, as well as, where possible, writers pre-1960's identified as having earlier impacts on the field, such as Seymour Martin Lipset¹¹, Albert Wohlsseter¹², Friedrich Hayek, Samuel Huntington, and Leo Strauss.

Source Analysis

The means to analyze the sources were **qualitative** and **discursive** in nature. The thesis examined sources based on the frequency of and qualitative emphasis on certain concepts. This method was chosen since it allowed for the most accurate means of demonstrating neoconservatism – in essence, it allows for the neoconservative work to speak for itself. The particular means of assessing the sources depended on the tasks at hand in the thesis, and followed a step by step process in the goal of culminating in the building of a theory. The thesis needed to primarily understand what neoconservatism was, and then assess it with other IR theories. These two tasks followed an intra textual and inter textual approach to the sources, respectively. These are elaborated upon further below.

¹¹ Wohlsseter and Lipset are listed as forebears to the neoconservative movement by Goldberg (2003). Goldberg, Jonah "The Neoconservative Invention" National Review, 20th May, 2003. Web. accessed. 22.10.16

¹² Ibid.

Tenet extraction within neoconservatism – intra-textuality

Since the above literature review demonstrated that some previous work has been insufficient in presenting neoconservatism in a holistic manner, it was necessary to go back to the drawing board and develop an understanding of neoconservatism that was relevant to international relations. This meant that some initial tenets had to be drawn from the approach. This would serve as a working (expanded) definition which would be used to compare and contrast neoconservatism with other IR theories.

To do this, neoconservative writers were assessed qualitatively with a focus on broad commonalities as well as the emphasis placed on certain concepts as well as the frequency with which they are mentioned. The overall focus was examining the work *within* the confines of the neoconservative canon. The end goal was to extract some working tenets of neoconservatism – which forms the bulk of Chapter 2. It is worth noting that these tenets are not *the* tenets of a neoconservative theory, but rather a clearer guideline with which to work on the path of eliminating the possibility of its subsumability into other theories.

Comparative approach

This then introduces the second task in the thesis, which was to compare neoconservatism with other IR theories (Chapter 3, Part I). The selection of IR theories was made owing to what was not considered in the literature (like an in-depth look at the democratic peace theory, or theories of hegemonic stability), or those theories which *could* yield a different finding once a broader and more holistic understanding of neoconservatism was used. For this second task, neoconservatism with its working tenets was assessed comparatively with the tenets of the selected theories (being Classical Realism, Structural Realism, Post Classical Realism, Neo-Liberalism, the Democratic Peace Theory, Classical Liberalism, Wendt's Constructivism, and theories of Hegemonic Stability).

Theory building.

The thesis works under the assumption that should none of the theories above be found to capture neoconservatism properly, then this would mean that in fact, neoconservatism can possibly be made to be a theory. A description of the theory building will be expanded upon in the third chapter right before the presentation of the neoconservative theory, so that the reader will be

acutely aware of the processes and tools used in producing the theory. The following lays out briefly the concepts of relevance and processes involved in the theory building of neoconservatism.

Ideologies vs Theories

Chapter 2 will explain that despite various protests from neoconservatives, their ideas do conform to some definition of ideology. This will present a unique task in chapter 3 when the issue of theory building is introduced. How does one convert an ideology into a theory? This will entail the careful and precise definition of IR theories, as well as outlining those differences between theories and ideologies. The key concepts used in the thesis to differentiate between theories and ideologies are “ideal types” borrowed from Max Weber, and “statelessness” to draw neoconservatism away from its attachment to the US in particular into a more abstracted and generalizable entity not bound to any particular state or people.

Ideal types:

The thesis follows the assumption that IR theories broadly follow Max Weber’s description of Ideal Types. Ideal types are constructs designed to efficiently explain multiple or complex phenomena in one framework (Weber, 1994; p. 263). To explain something by converting it into an ideal type essentially involves the researcher’s manipulation of certain concepts. Weber writes, “Substantively, this construct in itself is like a utopia which has been arrived at by the analytical accentuation of certain elements of reality”. Weber thus continues that “The construction of abstract ideal-types recommends itself not as an end but as a means.” (p. 265). Nuances and exceptions of something are often not included in these constructs, which aim to be a broad, parsimonious and thus a generalizable framework. IR theories often fit this description of ideal types. For instance, academic IR makes reference to “the state” and certain postulated needs and actions of this state. Where Weber made reference to the “city-economy” as an ideal-type construct, so too does the unspecified “state” in IR come across as an ideal-type, rather than a real observation of a real and specified state (Weber, 1994, p. 263).¹³ IR theories use ideal types to

¹³ In full, and to clarify, Weber writes, “When we do this, we construct the concept “city-economy” not as an average of the economic structures actually existing in all the cities observed, but as an ideal-type” (ibid). Similarly, key concepts in IR theorizing are not attained through empirical observations, but rather through such artificial constructs. Further, IR is peppered with terms that point to its theories being ideal-types. “Hundreds of words in the historian’s vocabulary are ambiguous constructs created to meet the

present **theories of specific phenomena or answers to specific questions** not to be theories of everything. It is logical thus, that neoconservatism can be created into a theory, by rearranging certain assertions and reformulating them more abstractly so that they fit the criteria of international relations as ideal type constructs.

Stateless theories

Given that the thesis will eventually use an ideal type construction to build the theory, it will be necessary to strip it from all ties to particular time and space. Theories of international relations, in hoping to be applicable explanations to almost any state, at almost any time, tend not to be bespoke to a particular time or place. Neoconservatism on the other hand is an approach tailored to, and uniquely applicable to the United States. The task of theory construction would entail drawing neoconservatism out of those “loyalties” and ties to the United States, while still retaining those key ideas that make it neoconservatism. This is one key area which marks the departure from ideology into theory, which will be detailed further in Chapter 3.

Selecting which type of theory to use: Purpose and Function of IR theories

Despite a wealth of theorizing in academic IR, there remains a considerable lack of a definitive account of theory building and what exactly constitutes a theory. The thesis assumes that in addition to the above ideal type constructs and disembodiment from time and place (which are especially important for converting an ideology into a theory), international relations theories can be defined and built based on the purpose the researcher wishes to fulfill. John Mearsheimer’s offensive realism theory for instance, as he writes, is predictive (2001, 2014; pp. 7 – 8), as well as descriptive and prescriptive (2001, 2014; p. 11). On the other hand, neoconservatism may be best suited to an explanatory and normative theory, eliminating predictive functions.

The theory will be built following key “why” questions, “how” questions, and theorizing on foreign policy, borrowing from Monteiro, 2014’s similar practice of using key questions to

unconsciously felt need for adequate expression; the meaning of which is only concretely felt but not clearly thought out,” wrote Weber (p. 266). IR publications typically abound with such terms like “anarchy” “state” “polarity” or “interdependence”, which, while often being a better defined and conceptualized than Weber’s quoted description, still demonstrate that heuristic and particular wording typical in ideal types.

build a theory¹⁴. These in turn are underpinned by the levels of analysis, i.e., their explanations will take place in at least one level of analysis. On foreign policy theories, some academics seem to draw a dichotomy between theories of foreign policy and theories of international politics (eg. Zakaria 1999; p. 14). This paper considers the two hardly mutually exclusive since foreign policy is a main driver of international affairs between and amongst states.

Chapter 2: What is neoconservatism?

By its adherents, and thus many scholars who work on the subject, neoconservatism is taken to be a broad collection of ideas. Irwin Stelzer has suggested that, rather than being considered as a singular or central entity, it should be classed, following from Kristol's and Podhoretz's loose definitions, as a broader 'persuasion' "tendency" or "sensibility" (2004; p. 4). Irving Kristol of course, is famous for defining neoconservatism uniquely, not as a theory or ideology, but as a loose collection of principled ideas on the welfare state, economy and the free market, Western civilization, equality over egalitarianism and an opposition to American isolationism (Kristol, 1976). Shying away from terms like ideology or 'movement', Kristol described the neoconservative *persuasion*: "It is hopeful, not lugubrious; forward thinking, not nostalgic and its general tone is cheerful, not grim or dyspeptic" (Kristol, 2003; p. 191).

Kristol's own definition of the nature of neoconservatism is loose and meandering. For the purposes of studying the topic in an academic framework, this 'persuasion' is broken down to be an **ideology**, an **approach to foreign policy**, and a **set of ideas** which offer causal explanations to global affairs. This is so since it contains loose elements of all, but in such a diffuse manner that it cannot be relegated to just one category alone.

This chapter is thus laid out in four parts. The first draws out crucial and relevant pillars of neoconservative thought which will provide the backbone for the subsequent chapter. The second part deals with neoconservatism as an approach to foreign policy, and the third deals with neoconservatism as an ideology. Fourth, the chapter will discuss neoconservatism's intellectual development, from classical conservatism to its modern iteration.

¹⁴ Monteiro's theory is built from key questions on the unipolar world explaining certain features under it as well as laying out a grand strategy (2014; pp. 3 – 4).

A. An explanation for international phenomena:

The following lays out neoconservative ideas on key issues relating to international politics, and will be used as the foundation for the following chapter.

1. Hegemony:

The overarching theme in the neoconservative canon, with regards to international politics is an unwavering and overwhelming preference for hegemony. A hegemon is defined in material terms as “a state that is so powerful that it dominates all other states in the system. No other state has the military wherewithal to put up a serious fight against it. In essence, a hegemon is the only great power in the system” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 40). Mearsheimer’s definition entails thus the dominance and monopoly over great material possessions in the international system. Keohane (1984) extends further the notion of hegemony, as a global leader that shapes and facilitates cooperation. For Keohane, the US created a world order characterized by free markets and multilateral cooperation, which is in turn underpinned by their military strength (1984; pp. 136 – 137). Importantly, for Keohane, the hegemon is built on some form of consent and acquiescence by others (p. 137). This of course is similar to the Gramscian notion of hegemony, posited as being constituted mostly by consent (ibid; Cox, 1983; p. 164). Interpreting Gramsci, Cox wrote that it involved the careful coordination of interests of the powerful with those below them, and thus world order is not pure dominance, but characterized by considerable harmony (p. 168; 171). The neoconservative perspective on hegemony – as will be developed further- is closer to Keohane’s and Gramsci’s than the neo-realist material school, in that it is a mixture of preference shaping, combined with material strength.

The neoconservative vision of American hegemony began to take shape in the 1990’s with much more fervor and confidence than before. Krauthammer declared the US as the Unipole, and Kagan and Kristol called for the US to maintain its newfound power position (Solomon, 2013). The strong belief in the benefits of hegemony helps to explain further ideas of the neoconservatives – that is, it is the common thread in much of their subsequent tenets.

Two dominant goals underpin the drive towards hegemony: one is a **strategic** goal, in which the US presides over a secured, stable and economically prosperous world, and the other being a more **moral** or ideological, value laden goal, wherein the US presides over a world in

which its values flourish (for instance Cheney, 1993; p. 4)¹⁵. These two goals- strategic and moral – work in tandem with the other throughout the neoconservative vision of hegemony and world power. The neoconservative approach to world politics is thus one in which the US plays – or must play – a key role in maintaining order, peace and prosperity to fulfill strategic and ideological ends.

What is American Hegemony?

Addressing that hegemony may be construed as immoral, Kristol and Kagan offer a definition of such power: “...a hegemon is nothing more or less than a leader with preponderant influence and authority over all others in its domain.” (1996, p. 20). This preponderance for the neoconservatives is one in which the United States acts as a **manager of the international system**, maintaining a standard of norms, and seeking overall systemic stability.¹⁶ They describe the US order – the product of hegemony - with references to American supremacy in the military, global economic leadership, its successful dissemination of the idea of liberal democracy, and the export of its culture (Kristol and Kagan, 2004; p. 57). This combination of non-material power, or ideas (including political and economic ideology, dominance in IO’s, as well as culture and Western norms) and material power (possession of a sophisticated military, nuclear weapons, and a sprawling economy) provides the backbone for much of neoconservative thought on the US and its international outlook.

In addition to leadership and dominance at the global scale, neoconservatives sometimes view the world in **regions**, wherein they describe situations of regional hegemonies. The neoconservative preference is for the US to have control over other areas, so it is the hegemon in all strategic pockets of the world.¹⁷ This of course finds precedent in John Mearsheimer’s assertion

¹⁵ In full, then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney outlined the goals of the US in the Post Cold War context as, “the survival of the United States as a free and independent nation, with its fundamental values intact and its institutions and people secure; a healthy and growing U.S. economy to ensure opportunity for individual prosperity and resources for national endeavors at home and abroad; healthy, cooperative and politically vigorous relations with allies and friendly nations; and a stable and secure world, where political and economic freedom, human rights and democratic institutions flourish.” Cheney, Dick “Defense Strategy for the 1990’s: The Regional Defense Strategy” *Department of Defense*, January 1993. Web.

¹⁶ The idea has oscillated between a diffuse set of ideas on the topic before the 1990’s, to full calls for the US to act as a world policeman in the 1990’s and into the 2000’s, followed by a more moderated tone on the US’s leadership, noting its role is to maintain order in the system and deter undesirable behaviour, without going as far as the Bush administration in Iraq 2003 (eg Stephens 2014)

¹⁷ See Wolfowitz, 1992; Cheney, 1993

that regional hegemonies are far more common and are more likely to exist – wherein states pursue power within their own sphere - than true global hegemony (2001; p. 41). In the neoconservative worldview, the US acts as a hegemon in a global sense, and a regional sense, by presiding over certain spheres in which their interests lie.¹⁸

Why Hegemony?

For neoconservatives, hegemony acts as a bulwark against systemic instability and conflict. They point to the lessons learnt of the two world wars, as proof that in the absence of a preponderant state exercising its leadership lies abject destruction and war (Cheney, 1993; p. 5, pp. 8 – 9)¹⁹. A liberal continent, or network of states cannot be guaranteed to last on their own without descending into war– especially in the absence of a leader, wrote Kristol and Kagan and Bret Stephens with reference to the eve of the First World War, in which Europe was the most inter-connected and liberal it had ever been (Kristol and Kagan, 2004, pp 60 – 61; Stephens, 2014, pp 139 – 140). For neoconservatives, multipolarity brings with it security dilemmas and thus perpetual fighting amongst other states (Cooper, 2011; p. 110).

Hegemony therefore concerns the stake not just of *one* state and its survival, but of the whole system in world politics. Neoconservatives stress that a state with immense power is *obligated* out of duty to act in areas where it can. As early as 1967 in the fledgling days of neoconservative thought, Irving Kristol wrote "...a great power does not have the range of freedom of action...it is entangled in a web of responsibilities from which there is no hope of escape" (p. 84). Not only will active leadership accrue security benefits, but it is a moral function of preponderant power, they argue. This interplay of a strategic and security imperatives, and moral duties has been a motif present in neoconservatism in its early days to present.

¹⁸ One can argue that neoconservatives prefer using terms like Regional Security to make more palatable the idea of US global influence and reach. For instance, Dick Cheney's Regional Defense Strategy (1993) spoke extensively of the need for the US to act as a world leader, without framing it in terms of global hegemony, instead using it in the context of regional security.

¹⁹ "Only a nation that is strong enough to act decisively can provide the leadership needed to encourage others to resist aggression. Collective security failed in the 1930s because no strong power was willing to provide the leadership behind which less powerful countries could rally against Fascism. It worked in the Gulf because the United States was willing and able to provide that leadership. Thus, even when a broad potential coalition exists, leadership will be necessary to realize it." (Cheney, 2017; pp 8 – 9).

What kind of Hegemony? *Active Hegemony*

American hegemony must likewise be maintained actively, as opposed to *passively* enjoying the fruits of its power: “We must not squander the position of security we achieved at great sacrifice through the Cold War, nor eliminate our ability to shape an uncertain future security environment in ways favorable to us and those who share our values” wrote then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney in 1993, after the Cold War (p. 2). In their essay “National Interest and Global Responsibility,” Kristol and Kagan urged that the US ought to not be tempted to adopt a passive foreign policy in the wake of victory on the Cold War (2004). Their core underlying logic is that the global peace and stability could collapse at any given moment (p. 61), which could be prevented if the US *constantly* provides security and spreads and maintains its ideology (2004).

The exact reasons for actively maintaining a hegemonic world order with the US at the top are outlined by other writers as well. For Stephens (2014), the issue at hand is the *stability* and fundamental predictability of the international liberal status quo. The US created the current rules of the game, and in contrast to Keohane (1984) who believed cooperation could withstand the death of hegemony (pp. 31- 32), neoconservatives conversely believe the world order will collapse with the hegemon’s retreat or decline. This is relevant in the two situations of the US: in the *presence* of a great enemy, the US must safeguard its position and the security of the democratic world, and in the *absence* of such an enemy, the US must maintain its unipolar position over a world of its free market and democratic creations, lest a new foe eventually overtake or usurp it (Kristol and Kagan, 1996).

The latter is of great concern to the neoconservatives. In 1992, Wolfowitz suggested that even in the newfound victory of the Cold War, the US had to be prepared to stave off any challenging state: “Our strategy must now refocus on precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor” (p. 4)²⁰. Kristol and Kagan additionally wrote “...American statesmen today ought to recognize that their charge is not to await the arrival of the next great threat, but rather to shape the international environment to prevent such a threat from arising in the first place.” (2004; p. 63). Described thus is not just unipolarity, one where the shares of power in the

²⁰ NB, quotes from Wolfowitz, 1992 were taken from redacted text which were later filled in, therefore the veracity of these cannot be guaranteed.

global system are concentrated in one state – but rather an almost messianic view of global power, that it *can* and *should* actively re-shape and fashion the world in an image it finds desirable.

Active hegemony thus sees the United States creating and maintaining a stable international order, whereas a passive power is much more reactionary: “By contrast, the vital interest standard is that of a ‘normal’ power that awaits a dramatic challenge before it rouses itself into action.” (Kristol and Kagan, 2004, p. 65).

Absence of Hegemony

i. Global Instability and Conflict

In the absence of the US exerting its leadership, neoconservatives envision an abyss of chaos. As mentioned before, the lessons neoconservatives drew from the breakdown of the League of Nations, leading to World War II, were not of the follies of naïve international cooperation, but the lack of a sufficiently strong enforcer. Niall Ferguson argues that the absence of hegemony breeds violence (2004; p. xi, xiii). He writes “...the most violent time in the history of an empire often comes at the moment of its dissolution, precisely because...the withdrawal of imperial troops unleashes a struggle between rival and local elites for control of the indigenous armed forces”, or in other words, a power vacuum emerges which is then filled by internecine conflict (2004; p. xi). Even though Ferguson specifically references a domestic context and the political infighting that occurs in the absence of empire, this speaks to a more general pattern of order and disorder with regards to an overarching power, which can apply within states and also to an international system.

According to Cooper, neoconservatives coalesced around this idea during the *détente* era in and in response to Nixon’s foreign policy: “Throughout the Nixon-Kissinger years of *detente*, neoconservatives also began to question the Nixonian assumption that war was a product of a world in which one state predominated. Order, they argued, was the product of the exertions of a benign and preponderant hegemon, not a world characterized by global multipolarity.” (2011, p. 105). This line of thought is notably similar to those theories of power transition, or the hegemonic war, or **hegemonic stability**. Essentially these argue that at the peak of power concentration, a hegemonic world order is stable, and as it loses its position, the likelihood of systemic conflict increases, since other states seek to replace it (Modelski, 1987; Gilpin 1988).

A clear fallout of the US failing to live up to its responsibilities is the effect it will have on **alliances**. As will be detailed further in the chapter, neoconservatives place much emphasis –

contrary to conventional thinking on the topic – on the importance of alliances to the US’s world order. In the neoconservative canon, especially after the Cold War and continuing today, they stress that a failure to act as a hegemon will result in a fracturing of the alliance system, where each state –pursuing security for themselves, or “foreign policy freelancing” as Stephens wrote, will exacerbate the probability of conflicts breaking out on a systemic level (Stephens, 2014, pp 158 - 162).

In short, the real problems begin when the hegemon does not act as it should, be it because of its decline, or unwillingness. This leads to a process by which the hegemon ultimately loses its position. Hence to maintain its status as a hegemon, it must continue acting as one. Kristol and Kagan suggest that should the US be removed from conflicts which do not initially affect the homeland, this becomes “...precisely the way for a superpower to cease being a superpower.” (2004, p. 67). By acting with immediacy and fervor, this “would make it less likely that challengers to regional stability would attempt to alter the status quo in their favor.” (ibid).

ii. Regional Hegemons and War

In the various iterations of Hegemonic Stability theory, another state is quick to replace the declining or retreating hegemon (Gilpin 1988). As mentioned before, neoconservatives believe in regional hegemonies, and this implies that some of the systemic events at play on the global scale can be replicated on a regional one. It is undesirable for them, if a potential regional hegemon (usually non-democratic) emerges. Wolfowitz, described as an adherent of said theory²¹, stressed in 1992 the need to defend the Asian region, as an overarching hegemon: “... by acting as a balancing force and prevent emergence of a vacuum or a regional hegemon.” (p. 21). This vacuum invites long lasting power struggles, instability and violent conflict, and, ultimately the emergence of another hegemon, which while technically giving some stability, will render a loss to the tactical advantage enjoyed by the US. For example, Reuel Marc Gerecht, noted the main implication of Iran getting the nuclear bomb was not any irrational move by their leadership to strike Israel, but rather, it would strengthen them to effectively balance the US in the Middle East, thereby siphoning away the US’s monopoly of influence in the region (2000, pp. 138 – 139).

²¹ Paul Wolfowitz has been described as “...arguably the most influential exponent of the neoconservative variant of hegemonic stability theory.” (Cooper, 2011; p. 109).

Why *America*? American Exceptionalism and the Neoconservatives

Neoconservatives adopt the view that the US should be the hegemon, owing to their fundamental adherence to American Exceptionalism (Cooper 2011, p. 2). For Niall Ferguson, the United States as an 'empire' contrary to its predecessors "...conspicuously lacks the voracious appetite for territorial expansion overseas that characterized the empire of the West European seaboard. It prefers the idea that foreigners will Americanize themselves without the need for formal rule" (2004; p. 13). But not only is the US different from previous great powers, but it also diverges from potential challengers. The neoconservatives paint rival states as having dastardly intentions, whereas the United States is seen as uniquely benign and undisputedly altruistic. Neoconservatives do express some level of ambiguity or tacit acceptance of some previous empires, such as Rome (e.g. Kagan, 2012; p 5) and with regards to Ferguson specifically, Great Britain. The commonality is that these embody a distinct *Western* lineage, and feeds into a romanticized idea that the United States is the heir of such a civilization, but with the crucial exception that with its democratic constitution and unique founding (eschewing aristocracy and adopting 'natural right') it perfected what Rome and Great Britain could not achieve. Kagan for instance suggests the US world order is particularly moral: "The most important features of today's world – the great spread of democracy, the prosperity, the prolonged great-power peace – have depended directly and indirectly on power and influence exercised by the United States. No other power could have or would have influenced the world the way Americans have because no other nation shares, or has ever shared, their peculiar combination of qualities" (2012; pp. 8 – 9).²² Thus while some other empires in the past are treated sympathetically, the United States is still seen as fundamentally different from them.

They consider US values as the ultimate benchmark of morality around the world, irrespective of country or culture: "...the principles of the Declaration of Independence are not merely the choices of a particular culture but are universal, enduring, "self-evident" truths" (Kristol and Kagan, 1996, p. 31). Therefore, to export US values is a pure moral necessity rather than an imposition, to the neoconservatives. Thus, having claim to the default mode of morality ties further into the idea of American Exceptionalism.

²² The qualities he refers to are its location, economy, democratic constitution, military (p. 9).

Finally, in a sort of feedback loop, the US is exceptional due to the massive power preponderance it has accumulated, which in turn, means that it is burdened with immense responsibility. “They [the conservatives] hark back...to the admonition of John Quincy Adams that America ought not go “abroad in search of monsters to destroy.” But why not? The alternative is to leave monsters on the loose, ravaging and pillaging to their heart’s content, as Americans stand by and watch,” wrote Kristol and Kagan in response to isolationist conservatives (1996, p. 31). They continue that with the US’s massive power preponderance, they *must* as a matter of duty, act overseas (ibid). Thus, in their world view, because the US is powerful, it must extend itself to help other states in the system, which of course, following from their espousal of active hegemony, in turn allows for the US to maintain its hegemonic standing.

2. An ideology about Ideology

Neoconservatism, as mentioned in the previous chapter places much emphasis on the power of ideas in global politics²³. They express a desire for an ideologically cohesive world, in which other states are democratic and more or less follow Western values. For instance, many references to alliances involve the basal criteria of being ideologically-like with the US: democratic and capitalistic²⁴.

Rapport (2008) suggested that neoconservatism is highly systemic, with ideology as the key means of conceiving of global order. He writes, “The distribution of ideologies among states determines the severity of conflict levels, which is to say, *the distribution of state identities defines the character of the international system’s structure*”; in other words, the distribution of ideology – also considered state identity, according to him - will have an effect on whether the world is stable and peaceful, or highly conflictual and disordered (Rapport, 2008; p. 275). This of course puts a constructivist spin on Waltz’s 1979’s writings on the distribution of state capability in world politics, but simply replaces material capability with ‘ideology’, in order to demonstrate that this

²³ See Flibbert, 2006, p. 313, 318 – 324; Rapport, 2008, p. 275 – 279; Williams, 2005; p. 308, 327 – 328; Caverley, 2010, p. 609; Solomon 2013, p. 101, 107 – 117; Pan and Turner 2016; p. 9, 11 – 13

²⁴ For instance, Dick Cheney wrote, “Our alliance structure ... represents a “silent victory” of building long-standing alliances and friendships with nations that constitute a prosperous, largely democratic, market-oriented zone of peace and prosperity that encompasses more than two-thirds of the world’s economy.” (Cheney, 1993; p. 9).

is the key domain of concern for neoconservatives – as if to be the constructivist mirror of Waltz’s structural realism. As the thesis progresses however, this strict adherence of non-materialism in understanding neoconservatism is rejected for a more balanced view.

Cooper (2011) also suggests that according to the neoconservatives, as long as competing ideas exist in the international system with states holding “...immoderate ambitions”, there will be some level of conflict (p. 86). In other words, an ideological conflict in neoconservatism is taken to be a zero-sum game in the international system, since competing ideologies represent competing ways of life, in which each make claims of *the absolute and objective* means by which state and individual life should be conducted. Because of this, neoconservatives tend to consider ideologically different states as highly unlikely to be satisfied with a status quo, hence they hold such maximalist ambitions such as Nazi Germany or the USSR (eg Podhoretz, 1982, 1986 in 2004; p. 206). Consequentially, competing and disparate **ideologies can lead to undesirable state behavior** (Cooper, 2011; pp. 80 – 81). In the Cold War, “Nations subscribing to an opposing ideology, according to neoconservatives, [were] untrustworthy nations. *Power and ideology* are presented as the key drivers of a country’s foreign policy” [emphasis added]. (ibid). This then manifests itself in the nature or character of the regime of states, which will be explained further in this chapter.

This is such, since neoconservatives believe in the immense power of **ideas to shape perceptions, attitudes and thus behaviors towards others** – within states amongst individuals, and as a result of this, *between* states in their relations with another. Within states, an ideology can take root either promoted by its leadership, or organically through the population like the Russian Revolution. When a state has been transformed, this then alters its relations with other states, since its leaders now embody the ideology. In both contexts – within and between states – ideas are taken to be highly influential in the developments of history. At an extreme manifestation of this, Norman Podhoretz suggested that more than historical experience, it was the sheer power of *ideas* [of radical state transformation] which fueled the genocidal Khmer Rouge (1982, 1983; pp. 208 - 209). More frequently noted by the neoconservatives, is the manner with which ideas alone can **alter various realities** and concepts of truth. For instance, on critiquing Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, and his wider career, Joshua Muravchik suggests it was he who helped create a climate of Western hostility towards Israel, by “redefining Arabs and Muslims as the moral equivalent of blacks and in casting Israel as the racist white oppressor”, and for ultimately turning

the tide on the issue of Zionism²⁵ (2013, p. 18). It is this ability of ideas to change preferences or interests and as a result, behaviors, that neoconservatives place *almost* equal (but not totally equal) emphasis to the ideological war as they do on material preponderance.

Even more consequentially, in his speech to the UN in response to the Zionism is Racism declaration, Daniel Patrick Moynahan alluded to the ease with which *differing realities* could be created just through words and ideas: "...this [declaration on Zionism] is a lie but it is a lie which the United Nations *has now declared to be a truth*, the actual truth must be restated." (Moynahan, 1975, 1996, p. 94 [emphasis added]). Implied here is that a war of ideology exists, and he who wins gets to create and write some universally accepted version of the truth. Irving Kristol wrote similarly, expressing the view that the Cold War was not just a clash of separate ideas and dominance of hegemony, but also the ability to define and re-define a new mode of human rights and ethics (1986, 1987)²⁶.

The US may remain strong in material terms, but neoconservatives are dissatisfied with an increasingly unstable ideological landscape. Without an ideological cohesion running under the current of America's **global hegemony**, neoconservatives see a power that is hollow and ready to collapse. In Moynahan's speech he crucially noted that issuing such declarations were not mere words, but "there are real consequences to folly and venality" (1975, 1996, p. 94)²⁷. In other words, given the sheer power of ideas to alter behaviors, neoconservatives place considerable emphasis

²⁵ "Once, Zionism had tapped into the older leftism, seeing itself as a workers' movement. But instead in the latter twentieth century – and in considerable part thanks to the impact of Edward Said – it became redefined as a movement of white people competing for land with people of color. This transformation meant that from then on the left would be aligned overwhelmingly and ardently against Israel" (Muravchik, 2013; p. 21).

²⁶ In his essay, this was in the context of the new form of human rights that was adopted by the UN which he viewed as deeply non-Western and allowed for a moral equivalence between the Western capitalistic states and others (pp. 220 – 221).

²⁷ Moynahan at the same time also introduces the seductive influence of the USSR and Pan-Arab rhetoric on such states to behave in what neoconservatives would deem morally questionably ways. But more importantly, and as a consequence of this, he continued later in the speech that stretching the definition of racism to include Zionism would dilute the idea of racism and this weaken the cause of human rights in the future "The harm will arise first because it will strip from racism the precise and abhorrent meaning that it still precariously holds today. How will the peoples of the world feel about racism, and about the need to struggle against it, when they are told that it is an idea to broad as to include the Jewish National Liberation Movement?" (Moynahan, 1975, 1996; p. 98). The implication he described here is that changing the meaning of things alters realities and thus alters behaviours.

on both the US's material power preponderance, and the US winning the war of ideas in the world, since the latter is a reinforcement of power and can guarantee genuine and long lasting global support. In other words, while incredibly important to neoconservatism, ideas are taken to have just a slightly secondary role to materialism. This will be emphasized further in chapter 3.

3. Human nature as flexible

One underlying and important tenet of neoconservatism drawn out by Aaron Rapport (2008) is the malleability of man (pp. 262 - 266). Rather than defining humans as fixed, with sets of behaviors from birth, they are shaped and conditioned by their environments, a belief that thus opens up their subsequent ideas on the efficacy of regime change and democratization (ibid). Cooper suggests that neoconservatives favoured regime change in Iraq in order to transform those citizens in the Middle East (Cooper, 2011, p. 97). Neoconservatives held, he writes, "a remarkable amount of liberal faith in the perfectibility and malleability of man." (ibid). This however captures only one small portion of the Iraq War, which can overall be considered a venture to shift the geopolitical calculus of the Middle East by transforming one more state to be less averse to the United States than Saddam Hussein's Iraq was. Additionally, it might be an exaggeration to suggest that neoconservatives believe that human nature can be "perfected".

On the other hand, supposed neoconservative forebear Leo Strauss suggested that man was *innately* power hungry and desired domination but not because of *primitive* imperatives to war as Hobbes suggested, but because he was distinctly human and could project *ambitions* into the future (Drolet, 2011; pp. 65 – 66). The topic of human nature in neoconservatism is thus muddled if one were to adopt Strauss's view. Neoconservatism in its more modern incarnation takes a more flexible view of human nature. The subsequent chapter will outline that certain regimes, and thus individuals in these regimes, do conform to Strauss's ideas, although it is not that this is *strictly innate*. Rather, the will to ambition and dominance is *learned*.

For instance, in 1978, Irving Kristol, writing with regards to domestic social programs, suggested that liberals were misguided in thinking that man was *innately* good, thereby *mostly* rejecting the idea of man having innate tendencies (1978, p. 212 in 1996). Instead, humans could be reformed if one changed their 'motivations', and so thus their behaviours would be altered

(Kristol, 1978, 1996; p. 210 - 211).²⁸ State policy, a change of ideology and exposure to freer trade for instance could change man's preferences and thus his behaviours. Given that change is possible, it lends for an interpretation that man is not strictly, innately and naturally imbued with certain preferences and behaviours.

Interestingly, this is one area where they depart from their conservative forebears. Traditional conservatives suggested that ideologies which supposed that man could be reshaped or reformed, were of the sort that led to radical and disastrous change (O'Sullivan, 2013, p. 293). Neoconservatives to the contrary hold that man is easily shaped by his environment, but unlike those on the other end of the spectrum, do not actually mention any idea of *perfecting* humans.

This idea of human nature is deeply foundational, and by itself is rarely explicated by the neoconservatives. Instead, it acts as the base on which some of their other perspectives are built. Given their other viewpoints which will be discussed below, one can come to this conclusion that neoconservatives take human nature as flexible, through working backwards (or top-down) from their views on certain ideas in global politics, such as regime type affecting the character of its citizens and economic prosperity determining the longevity of democracy.

Strategies

4. Regime Type and Democratization

Therefore, most academics on the topic concur that neoconservatives consider the regime type – man's environment - to have profound effects on citizens, which underlies the pursuit of democratization projects (Rapport, 2008, p. 269 – 270; Schmidt and Williams, 2008, p. 203). Thus, for the neoconservatives, to change the regime, one would in effect change the character, preferences and behavior of the citizens.

Regime type is thus a main driver of **state behavior** according to the neoconservatives (Cooper, 2011). References to allies in the neoconservative canon involve *democratic* states, and the source of much belligerence comes from those which are not democratic, as well as a need for the US to block the rise of regional *non-democratic* powers²⁹ (Cheney, 1993). Kristol and Kagan's explanation for this is that non-democratic regimes operate in a world in which the US's economic

²⁸ Former juvenile delinquents outgrew their early deviousness if they entered the institution of marriage, and older criminals likewise were reformed either through marriage or religion, Kristol suggested (1978, 1996; pp 210 – 211).

²⁹ See Cheney, 1993, p. 8 for instance

and moral principles are dominant, and so to derive popularity, or “legitimacy” on the home-front, they challenge the prevailing status quo (ie the United States) (2004; pp. 68 – 69). It is because these states have “no means of acquiring legitimacy from their domestic policies, they... seek the nationalist legitimacy that comes from ‘standing up’ to an external enemy.” (Kristol and Kagan, 2004, p. 69). Such states will thus inevitably come in some form of conflict with the United States, owing to the very nature of their regime type. It is futile, they write further, to try to use the principles of the democratic and liberal world to get these regimes to cooperate, since such ideals “...serve as obstacles to their ambitions and even threats to their existence.” (ibid).

Given the **democratic peace theory**, the more democracies exist in the world, the better off the US will be, as the logic goes (Drolet, 2010, p. 97). This is evident in the literature of the neoconservatives, with references to a strategic band of democratic allies, or the “democratic “zone of peace”” (Cheney, 1993; p. 4; p. 7). The **allies** of the US are portrayed as democratic, ideologically similar states to the US, and theirs and the US’s adversaries are regimes averse to the democratic, free market ideas.³⁰ It is unsurprising then, that none of the Axis of Evil states – Iraq, Iran and North Korea – were democratic in a Western, liberal sense. For John Bolton, these were highly discordant and insolent vis a vis the status quo laid out by the US to eliminate the proliferation of biological weapons (2004; pp. 121 – 123). Thus, for the neoconservatives, ideological differences become a necessary prerequisite of hostile state behavior and possible future challenges.

Diplomacy with such states is often, (but not always) rejected by neocons. Cooper suggests that underpinning the neoconservative rejection of détente in the Cold War was the belief that the USSR, due to its totalitarianism, could not be reasoned with (Cooper, 2011; p. 102). Tellingly, Kristol and Kagan argue that above all else it was the character of the Soviet Union regime that was an impediment to peace in the Cold War, which ended only when the regime itself imploded (2004, p. 69). Thus, to attain cooperation, stability and peace in the world the US must change the very regimes that are the cause of much discord, as opposed to trying to reason with them (Kristol and Kagan, 2004; p. 70). They are not conceived of by neoconservatives as states with rational

³⁰ Kristol and Kagan paint a hypothetical bleak future of threats posed to allies and to the US by China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and Iraq, none of whom are liberal democracies or were allies of the US (2004, p. 60).

reasons for attaining such capabilities for survival, but rather fundamentally nefarious with sinister motives.

For this reason, many writers consider the **spread of democracy** as integral to neoconservatism (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, p. 199 – 200; Lowbeer Lewis, 2009, p. 77; Caverley, 2010, p. 606 – 607). The idea of changing regimes has been favoured by neoconservatives very much widely since the 1990's. Kristol and Kagan suggest various means by which the US can attain regime change around the world, ranging from covert action, sanctions, support for rebels and military occupation (2004, p. 70). The two are unequivocal on the issue of non-democratic regimes: "When it comes to dealing with tyrannical regimes, especially those with the power to do us or our allies harm, the United States should seek not coexistence but transformation." (ibid). Dick Cheney, in a more moderated tone, suggested the US ought to pursue a sustained policy of democracy promotion through cooperation, assistance on counter terrorism, humanitarian aid and so forth (1993, p. 4)³¹. Thus, regime change for the neoconservatives, rather than *always* being military occupations, takes several forms, sometimes discreet or more overt means.

5. Neoconservatives and the Military

Neoconservatives, particularly since the latter years of the Cold War, have been almost united in the policy prescription that the United States must maintain a massive lead in military supremacy, constantly innovating with high levels of funding for research and development, and prepared for any attack³². For James W. Caesar, the neoconservative stance on the military is unique, since it is used not just for deterrence, but overall, as a key tool of foreign policy in the sense that on one hand, a massive military deters other states from attacking the US, and on the other, that military might can be useful to achieve desired ends in areas that are not necessarily

³¹ "Within the broader national security policy of encouraging the spread and consolidation of democratic government and open economic systems, the Defense Department furthers these ends through efforts to counter terrorism, drug trafficking, and other threats to internal democratic order, assistance to peacekeeping efforts; the provision of humanitarian and security assistance... [etc]" (Cheney, 1993; p. 4).

³² See Cheney's section, Technological Superiority (1993, pp 10 – 11), as well as p. 14: "We should provide forces with capabilities that minimize the need to trade American lives with tyrants and aggressors who do not care about their own people. Thus, our response to regional crises must be decisive, requiring the high-quality personnel and technological edge to win quickly and with minimum casualties."

linked to the military (2000 p. 27). Kristol and Kagan advocated installing troops for a considerable time to oust the regimes of Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic, and drew parallels to those benefits reaped from the US's occupation in post-War Japan and Germany (Kristol, and Kagan, 2004, p. 70). Their preference was for the US not just to quickly strike a regime and leave, but to station a long-standing presence. Niall Ferguson (2004) similarly suggested that the United States ought to supplement its military precision with some sustained stabilizing force. They thus place great faith in the nation building, regime changing, deterring, and stabilizing effects that their military grants.

For this reason, they have consistently advocated for higher than current levels of defense spending (eg. Kristol and Kagan, 1996, 2004). High expenditure is a function of their desired goal of active hegemony. The massive lead that the US enjoys over states will be lost if it does not continually seek to maintain or even expand this superiority: "...even as we reduce our forces in size overall, we must not carelessly destroy their quality or their technological superiority...[H]igh-quality personnel and technological superiority represent capabilities *that would take decades to restore if foolishly lost in this time of reductions*" (Cheney, 1993; pp 2 – 3). [Emphasis added].

But it is a misreading of the literature to suggest that neoconservatives desire the use of the military at any given opportunity. In 1993's Regional Defense Strategy, Dick Cheney advocated for the US to assist in the fostering of democratic and free markets in the newly dissolved Soviet Union, but suggested military action when other actions fail (Cheney, 1993, p. 2)³³. Wolfowitz likewise in 1992 outlined that in conflicts of lesser importance, multilateral action, peacekeeping or humanitarian aid may be used (1992, p. 4). But it is worth noting that Wolfowitz still mentioned the use of the military as a viable response option (ibid). On the threats posed by Iran and North Korea, Max Boot wrote that while military force can be used, it is not the primary preference: "The objective does not mean, however, that neocons are agitating for pre-emptive war. They do not rule out force if necessary. But their preferred solution is to use political, diplomatic, economic, and military pressure, short of actual war, to bring down these dictators..." (2004; pp. 49 – 50).

³³ "Yet, even as we hope to increasingly rely on collective approaches to solve international problems, we recognize that a collective effort will not always be timely and, in the absence of U.S. leadership, may not gel. Where the stakes so merit, we must have forces ready to protect our critical interests." (Cheney, 1993; p. 2)

Since the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), neoconservatives have been in support of *precise* strikes (Cooper, 2011; pp. 130 - 133). As the students of Albert Wohlstetter, many favour high **precision** in the military, since it allows for a *cleaner* and more efficient way of conducting war: "...he [Wohlstetter] wished to make American power more usable by making it more discriminate, thereby easier to use. By making American power more discriminate, so the thinking went, one manages to both enhance the range of options available to policy-makers and cleanse war of its attendant horrors"³⁴ (Cooper, 2011; pp. 130 - 131). Precision in the military then leads to their ideas of **preemption**, wherein they point definitively to precise and preemptive *strikes* as a deterrent to rogue states.

For instance, Kristol and Kagan wrote of the necessity of the United States to manage troubled areas before they devolved into a regional crisis (2004; p. 65). The foreign policy of the United States should be "...more rather than less inclined to weigh in when crises erupt, and *preferably before they erupt*" (ibid [emphasis added]). Even in the aftermath of the Iraq War, where neoconservatives were highly criticized for their adherence to preemptive wars, Stephens favoured pre-emptive strikes, albeit insinuating a preference for precise uses of the military, as opposed to major occupations (2014). While this may technically count as a war, it is not an *occupation* in the sense of Iraq 2003. This is one area where neoconservatives have changed their views, with high levels of support leading up to Iraq and the 2007 Surge, and the moderating of such support after 2008.

6. Neoliberal economics

If military action is just one tool in shaping a world into a cornucopia of democracies, the promotion of free markets and capitalism are additionally given great importance.

On the domestic front, Irving Kristol placed at the fore in 2003 the neoconservative preference for **economic growth** through tax cuts, increasing overall wealth, thereby rejecting the deterministic notion of inevitable class struggle in society (p. 191). This of course ties in with the repeated notion that equality of rights should be privileged over equality of entitlement (Kristol, 1976, p. 150). Wealth is not something that should or must be redistributed, they argue, rather more of it can be created, so as to allow everyone to benefit. In his 1977 essay, Kristol advocated

³⁴ ibid

supply side economics or “supply-side fiscal policy” which “sees such growth arising from a free response ... only the private sector can bring us sustained economic growth” (p. 153), and charged that the public sector cannot be trusted with economic growth (1977).

This logic, of absolute growth, as opposed to redistribution, extends into their international outlook. At this level, privatization and free markets not only increase the *financial* prosperity of states, but also the overall prosperity. Seymour Martin Lipset linked the idea of sustained wealth to the **continuation of democracy** (1959). Lipset affirmed that higher levels wealth within states were correlated with the presence of sustained, long lasting and healthy democracies (1959; pp. 75 – 77). He wrote, “From Aristotle down to the present, men have argued that *only in a wealthy society* in which relatively few citizens lived in real poverty could a situation exist in which the *mass of the population could intelligently participate in politics* and could develop the self-restraint necessary to avoid succumbing to the appeals of irresponsible demagogues.” (Lipset, 1959; p. 75, [emphasis added]). In other words, wealth in a state would allow for better informed and responsible political participation within the wider populace. Lipset found further that “...the factors subsumed under economic development carry with it the political correlate of democracy.” (1959, p. 80). Specifically, democracy is sustained if the economic growth leads to a substantial middle class, as this “...plays a mitigating role in moderating conflict since it is able to reward moderate and democratic parties and penalize extremist groups” (p. 83).

This idea – empirically asserted by Lipset in the late 1950’s before neoconservative thought came to the fore - subsequently became seared deep within the neoconservative ethos: if the world is to have democracies - inherently more amenable to the US - and greater wealth produces more stable democracies, then this is a highly viable path to achieve the desired end (of a democratized world). Given then, the neoconservative preference for democratization, the pursuit of policies which increase the wealth within nations can in turn grow the number of sustainable democracies. But this was an idea which took a while to take root in neoconservatism, since as Wolfowitz wrote, it was only in the Reagan administration that democracy promotion became cemented in US foreign policy (2000; p. 319)³⁵. The neoconservative intellectual path towards democratization can

³⁵ Wolfowitz writes that during the Reagan administration there was considerable tension and push-back on the topic of Human Rights, but when democracy became a mantle of the administration, Wolfowitz claims this helped turn the tide of the Cold War. He writes “Fortunately, then-Deputy Secretary of State William Clark, a personal friend of the president, successfully led an effort to preserve the office [of Human Rights], and human rights and the promotion of democracy became major features of Reagan administration

be read as follows: democracy was always favoured as the best possible regime, but the means towards achieving this, and integrating this into a steady foreign policy only took root later (the 1980's onwards) – and came after a steady evolution of ideas coalescing around the means and ends of democratization.

Additionally, as Gerson (1996) writes, neoconservative ideas on economics only really appeared in the 1970s' (pp. 199 – 200), but antecedents like Lipset and Hayek, as well as Adam Smith were already assimilated in their perspectives up to this point - particularly because of their natural aversion to socialism (pp 200 – 201).

The neoconservative perspective on this is an arc from morality to strategy. Irving Kristol was keen to emphasize the moral aspects of free markets– while stressing the importance of not just the wild accumulation of profits but a strong work ethic that capitalism allows (1979; p. 157). But as neoconservatism progressed through the Cold War (with the highly neo-liberal Washington Consensus) and particularly in the 1990's when the US was the undisputed hegemon, writers began expressing in much stronger terms **international economics as a tool of US power**. In extolling the benevolent hegemony of the US in the 1990's by means of military support to its allies in key regions of the world, Kristol and Kagan also importantly noted that the US had fulfilled its role as economic hegemon. “During the same period,” they write, referring to the post-Cold war years, “the United States made a thousand decisions in international economic forums, both as a government and as an amalgam of large corporations and individual entrepreneurs, that shaped the lives and fortunes of billions around the globe” (1996; p. 21), expressing that the US was not just militarily expansive, but economically so. They continue, “America influenced both the external and internal behavior of other countries through the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank” (ibid). As will be later developed in this chapter, neoconservatives affirm that their vision of hegemony does not preclude leadership in such organizations. Additionally, as with their other rationales given for *active* hegemony, they express that the opening of markets and spread of capitalism is not inevitable, but needs to be deliberately and actively pursued (Ferguson, 2004 p. 186; 300).³⁶

foreign policy. There can be little doubt that this aspect of policy contributed in an important way to our triumph in the Cold War.” (Wolfowitz, 2000; p. 319).

³⁶ “No matter how persuasive the arguments for economic openness, it seems, nation states cling to their tariffs, quotas and subsidies. By contrast in the first era of globalization, from the mid- nineteenth century until the First World War, economic openness was imposed by colonial powers not only on Asian and

Economic influence also **shapes the fundamental ideology of states and individuals**. Kristol and Kagan continue on the point, writing, “The enormous web of the global economic system, with the United States at the center, combined with the pervasive influence of American ideas and culture, allowed Americans to wield influence in many other ways of which they were entirely unconscious.” (1996, p. 21). Leadership in the international economy thus allows for the export of non-material aspects of power. This acquiescence and affinity implicit in neoconservatism is very much in the Cox-Gramscian sense of shaping the preferences of others as well as Lukes’ idea on the third face of power, which suggests that powerful actors fundamentally shape the preferences of others so that they in turn readily do what the powerful want of them (Cox, 1983; Lukes, 2005).

Thus, America’s role on the international economic front is twofold: on the one hand, it allows for the continual promotion of economic policies which can strengthen stronger democracies. On the other hand, and this is taken from an overarching and broader perspective – the US is at the helm of the international financial architecture so as to maintain the norms and rules, acting like a stabilizing hegemon, as well as a preference shaping hegemon.

7. Hegemony, International Organizations and the Neocons

One key point that extends from their economic perspective, is that neoconservatives are in favour of international institutions, rather than wholly opposed to them, as some suggest³⁷. Cox (1983) in interpreting Gramsci, wrote that the hegemon uses international organizations to maintain its position since it allows for the spread of its ideology, the reshaping the rules of the game to its favour and to “absorb counter-hegemonic ideas” (p.172). Additionally, for Keohane, US hegemony is characterized not just by military strength, but its role in creating the post WWII economic order, which is characterized by regimes and US dominance in several IO’s (1984). Rather than hoping to tear them down, neoconservatives recognize that the US benefits from these as they are another channel of promoting US ideas as well as retaining a sense of *legitimacy*. This is applicable not just for the Bretton Woods system, but international organizations in general.

African colonies, but also on South America and even Japan. To be more precise, free trade spread because of Britain’s power and Britain’s example.” (Ferguson, 2004, p. 186).

³⁷ Hurst writes that the neoconservatives find that the most effective means to maintain peace in the world is through unilateral action (pp. 79 - 80).

Ferguson for instance asserts thus that the United Nations, rather than being “an alternative to the United States. ...is a creature of the United States” (2004; p. 134).

This is one area where the academic literature on neoconservatism suffers and is erroneous in ignoring the non-militaristic parts of the perspective. Writers suggest that a preference for unipolarity and hegemony is incompatible with multilateralism, using Iraq 2003 as an example, of the US shunning the United Nations Security Council, and they suggest that neoconservatives overall have little interest in such international bodies (Lowbeer Lewis, 2009, p. 79; Schmidt and Williams, 2008, pp. 198 - 199).

They are of course accurate to argue neoconservatives are not open to all types of international organizations, since much criticism has been, and continues to be levelled at the United Nations and its various affiliates, which for neocons, seem like conduits for anti-Western angst (for instance, Daniel Patrick Moynahan’s 1975 speech to the UN). It is likewise easy to see why some academics accept at face value 1), the multitudinous complaints about the United Nations, particularly on their attitudes towards Israel and general aversion to US hegemony, and 2), a strict preference for hegemony, as an overarching contrast to multilateralism. Max Boot for instance suggested that neoconservatives “are wary of granting multilateral institutions (such as the United Nations) a veto over U.S. action” ³⁸ (2004; p. 50). Additionally, neoconservatives do add the caveat that the US could – through its sheer capability – act unilaterally if it sees fit.³⁹

However, Cox himself writes that beneath this critical veneer, the US as hegemon still benefits from, and exerts some influence over such bodies (1983; pp. 172 -173). Thus, a complete withdrawal from the UN would lie in contrast to neoconservative principles on the topic (of continued leadership in these organizations).

It is no surprise then, that despite vociferous criticism of the UN, neoconservatives do not espouse a breakdown of such entities. Boot writes on the UN that neoconservatives “are happy to make common cause with the United Nations when doing so will serve U.S. interests. Some neocons (myself included) are even willing to cede the United Nations some authority in Iraq in order to bring more countries into the coalition” (2004; p. 50). Ferguson (2004) wrote extensively

³⁸ But he maintains that this is “a long way from unilateralism” (ibid)

³⁹ “A future President will need options allowing him to lead and, where the international reaction proves sluggish or inadequate, to act independently to protect our critical interests.” (Cheney, 1993; p. 9).

in favour of the US acting alongside with other states to achieve legitimacy, and to divide the necessary labour to maintain the world order. For instance, he suggested that the task of nation building in Iraq could be shared up equally between the US and the UN, as well as with the IMF (Ferguson, 2004; p. 166, p. 224). Cheney likewise wrote in 1993, that the US order complements and facilitates international cooperation (p. 9).⁴⁰

Additionally, the US maintains the *Western* led international order by means of forming **ideationally-like organizations**. Rapport acknowledges that the US chooses alliances, based on friendship, or Wendt's (1999) Kantian culture of anarchy, under a neoconservative framework (2008, p. 280-281). This accounts for why the United States has stayed in NATO and remains a highly active member⁴¹. It also explains why for organizations with markedly different sets of different ideologies, the US avoids them (eg. OPEC, Non-Aligned Movement, UN General Assembly). On this, Max Boot suggests part of the neoconservative hesitance towards the United Nations is their "anti-Americanism" (2004; p. 50).

An additional caveat is that neoconservatives do not mind multilateral organizations, provided they are **not truly multilateral**, with one country, one vote system. Organizations that suppose full multilateralism on the principle that sovereignty means all states are fundamentally equal, takes away the hegemonic advantage the US has. Neoconservatives tend to criticize liberal notions that international organizations must engage in the levelling of all states – not respective of ideology, size, morality, economy, history of cooperation etc. – including the US, to be at the behest of such bodies⁴² (Caesar, 2000, p. 35). If on the contrary, the US can exert influence over an international organization and shape its ideas to its interest, and have states cooperate as such, the US benefits. The US enjoys great influence through its participation in the Bretton Woods system, and NATO, which serve its goals in an ideological sense, and also strategically.⁴³

⁴⁰ "In the end, there is no contradiction between U.S. leadership and multilateral action; history shows precisely that U.S. leadership is the necessary prerequisite for effective international action." (p. 9).

⁴¹ "...neocons have been vocal advocates of expanding NATO and sending its forces into Afghanistan and Iraq" (Boot, 2004, p. 50).

⁴² Liberalism "...favors the subordination of the will of nations to international enforcement regimes and to norms interpreted by international bodies and judges." (p. 35)

⁴³ On the topic of NATO, Wolfowitz expressed the importance of maintaining it, while at the same time, ensuring that the US maintains a crucial role in it "...it is of fundamental importance to preserve NATO as the primary instrument of Western defense and security, as well as the channel for U.S. influence and participation in European security affairs. While the United States supports the goal of European

In short, neoconservatives endorse the continuation of international organizations, to the extent that either the US maintains a key role of leadership, or such organizations do not serve to balance against or ideologically counter the US.

8. Bandwagoning and Alliances

Central to the neoconservative idea of the hegemon and cooperation is the notion of bandwagoning (Cooper, 2011, p. 118). John Mearsheimer writes that this involves the concession of one's strength towards a more powerful other in order "to get at least some small portion of the spoils of war" (Mearsheimer, 2001; pp. 162 – 163; **139**). Neoconservatives describe a more amiable version of bandwagoning, whereby both weak and powerful states prefer to align with the US. Part of benevolent hegemony they argue, is making and keeping allies, "...And America's allies are in a better position than those who are not its allies" wrote Kristol and Kagan (1996; p. 21). They continue, noting "Instead of having to compete for dominant global influence with many other powers, therefore, the United States finds both the Europeans and the Japanese ... supportive of its world leadership role" (1996; p. 22). Therefore, rather than challenging the US for its position, or, alternatively, challenging it so that its hegemony never comes to fruition, neoconservatives believe that powerful and capable states prefer to align with the US because they benefit from such an arrangement.

In Keohane's *After Hegemony*, benefits to other states are the stabilization of the monetary system, allowing for easier access to oil, opening markets for better flow of goods and the overall predictability of the international financial system (Keohane, 1984, p. 139; 180). Building on this and going further, some neoconservatives posit that states bandwagon because of the values which the US represents: "Our fundamental belief in democracy and human rights gives other nations confidence that our significant military power threatens no one's aspirations for peaceful democratic progress." (Cheney, 1993; p. 7), thus weaving into the fore the exceptionalism of a benevolent US. They suggest additionally it is due to the fact that the US provides an overarching protection: "The principle concern of America's allies these days is not that it will be too dominant but that it will withdraw." (Kristol and Kagan, 1996; p. 22). The majority of states will thus not challenge the US since it has provided several public goods onto the international system.

integration, we must seek to prevent the emergence of European-only security arrangements which would undermine NATO, particularly the alliance's integrated command structure" (Wolfowitz, 1992; p. 18)

Strategic imperative of alliances

Neoconservatives likewise stress the importance of alliances to the US. Despite any post-Cold War temptation to be a global colossus, Cheney outlined the need for a web of alliances of ideologically and economically congruent states, which demonstrates a united front of strength and cooperation (1993, p. 2)⁴⁴. He continues, stressing the strategic logic: “This **zone of peace** offers a framework for security not through competitive rivalries in arms, but through cooperative approaches and collective security institutions. The combination of these trends has given our nation and our alliances great depth for our strategic position.” (ibid). The United States is therefore stronger because it presides over compliant and cooperative states, as opposed to shielding itself from constant balancing against it. Additionally, a band of democracies, in projecting strength and a unity, acts as a deterrent of sorts to ideologically different states.

For Max Boot, alliances can assist in the US’s fulfillment of its global responsibilities (2004). He writes “Neocons...are committed above all to U.S. global leadership, and they know that the costs of such leadership (including peacekeeping and nation-building) are so high that the United States needs allies to share the burden” (2004; p. 50). Some express that **transnational international problems** impel the United States to work with others. Niall Ferguson argues that balance of power politics is simply irrelevant to today’s security arena - while Europe *once* was a concert of power play between aspiring hegemonies, today’s threats are transnational (terrorism, climate change etc.) which require cooperation (2004, p. 296). Likewise, John Bolton advocated the use of multilateral action in non-proliferation regimes which he wrote “requires above all, effective use, improvement, and law enforcement of the multilateral tools at our disposal – both arms-control and non-proliferation treaties and export-control regimes.” (2004, p. 121). The task of hegemony thus, requires a global division of labour amongst states and cooperation on key trans-border issues.

Another strategic end of alliances, is that the US can **elicit more desirable behavior** from its allies than it would from its adversaries. Stephens (2014) wrote “The core purpose of Pax Americana isn’t merely to deter our adversaries; it is to make sure that our allies are not tempted

⁴⁴ “Our alliances, built during our struggle of Containment, are one of the great sources of our strength in this new era. They represent a democratic “zone of peace,” a community of democratic nations bound together by a web of political, economic, and security ties.” (Cheney, 1993; p. 2)

to take matters into their own hands when they feel their security is at stake” (2014; p.159). Likewise, the 1993 Regional Defense Strategy placed as its second national security goal the preservation of the US’s security alliances, which “...avoids the renationalization of security policies.” (Cheney, 1993; p. 4). Hence, if states are under the security umbrella of the United States, they would be less likely to pursue security for themselves, thereby permitting the US to maintain its monopoly on global military might. As will be mentioned in the subsequent chapter relating theory to neoconservatism, the approach borrows a relational idea of military power, i.e., a military gain or advancement by one state is mutually exclusive to another, and so incremental increases in might of one state incrementally decrease the perceived power and influence – at least in the military – of the hegemon.

The Moral/ideological function of alliances and cooperation

Alliances – particularly with democratic states – also serve an ideological and moral function for the neoconservatives, thus fulfilling their dual vision for the US, comprising of strategic and moral ends (of the strengthening of democracy). Neoconservatives suggest that the US has an ethical obligation to assist struggling democratic states in hostile regions (Cooper, 2011; p. 34). For Kristol and Kagan, the network of alliances that the US enjoys are not just strategic but “...constitute the heart of the liberal democratic civilization that the United States seeks to preserve and extend.” (p. 66). Therefore, since US hegemony rests on a foundation of strategic imperatives and ideological motivations, a web of liberal democratic allies furthers the US goal of spreading their ideals.

Finally, they are vocal in rejecting unilateralism, on the grounds that it lacks morality, since it is almost an abandonment of its democratic allies in a precarious world.⁴⁵ Niall Ferguson in 2004 stressed greatly the need for the US to work not alone, but with other like-states, as well as the United Nations (2004). He writes, “...isolationism, is not so splendid after all” (2004; p. 297). A key point to make of *course*, is that the United States should work with cooperative and preferably, ideologically similar states. This is evident when Cheney writes that the US ought not “allow our

⁴⁵ Kristol and Kagan write “The notion that the United States could somehow ‘go it alone’ and maintain its pre-eminence without its allies is strategically misguided. It is also morally bankrupt. What would ‘American leadership’ mean in the absence of its democratic allies? What kind of nation would the United States be if it allowed Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Israel, Poland, and other democratic nations to fend for themselves against the myriad challenges they will face?” (Kristol and Kagan, 2004, p. 66).

critical interests to depend solely on international mechanisms that can be blocked by countries whose interests may be very different from our own” (1993; p. 4).

*

In short, neoconservatism leans heavily towards hegemonic preservation. In noting this, it is especially important to explicate that hegemony is not *either* economic strength, *or* military dominance. It is, in the neoconservative view, a deeply extensive phenomenon, one which is built on several complementary pillars. Cox’s notion of Gramscian hegemony best describes this: “World hegemony is describable as a social structure, an economic structure, and a political structure; and it cannot be simply one of these things but must be all three” (1983; p. 171). For the neoconservatives, it is ubiquitous and constantly working to maintain its hold on others.

B. An Approach to foreign policy

A fundamental goal of neoconservatives is not just to criticize or describe policy, but to have some direct impact on it (Cooper, 2011; p. 3, 44). Previous work has discussed that neoconservatives have managed to influence power – usually painted as the influential disciples of Leo Strauss (Norton, 2004), a perspective often rejected by neoconservatives themselves (Boot, 2004; Wolfson, 2004). Additionally, some writers have focused on the construction of their then-highly persuasive ideas (like Flibbert 2006 and Solomon, 2013). What these accounts lack however, is any note of how neoconservatives think foreign policy is made. Ideas are powerful, but actually shaping policy does require at times, some material conduit like institutional frameworks, popular input or characteristics of leaders and so forth. This section will focus on neoconservative ideas and explanations for foreign policy inputs, as well as the recommended and explained outputs, and the foreign policy process.

i. Foreign policy inputs

The National Interest:

As the basis of the foreign policy of a state, neoconservatives present a broad and value laden concept of the national interest. Schmidt and Williams describe the neoconservative national interest as reflective of the cultural and moral health of the liberal polity, whereby an a-moral

version of the national interest is totally shunned as moral bankruptcy (2008; pp. 309 – 310). In broader terms, Kristol and Kagan suggest that the National Interest ought to be taken as not just material ideas like power, but also non-material forces like “beliefs, principles, and perceptions, which cannot be quantified”, and additionally, it must weight highly morals, credibility and principles, in *addition* to strategic concerns (2004 pp. 64 – 65, 74; 1996, p. 27). Still, they do not write that foreign policy takes morals as more important than strategy: the promotion of capitalism and political freedoms, Kristol and Kagan write, was “...not Wilsonian idealist whimsy” (1996; p. 27) but rather a policy that “...had practical aims and, in the end, delivered strategic benefits.” (1996; p. 28). Hence, the key input in preferred foreign policy is the cognizance of the United States’ principles and commitment to other states and individuals, in addition to strategic concerns.

Principles: As such, neoconservatives believe that statesmen must adhere to the principles of the US in its conduct of foreign policy and other states. The neoconservative literature from the 1960’s to present is littered with accusations of the US of committing ‘appeasement’ and capitulation to its enemies. For this reason, Cooper suggests that the neoconservatives were highly critical of the policy of détente, seen as a betrayal of the US’s previous zero-tolerance of Soviet communism (Cooper, 2011; p. 102). The neoconservative preference is to deter, challenge or even remove undesirable leaders and regimes immediately in key regions, as opposed to prolonging tense relations. For instance, Kristol and Kagan criticized the Clinton administration of conducting diplomacy with non-allies (2004; p. 59). Rather than waste political capital negotiating with their enemies in vain, out of principle, the US should instead protect its allies (Kristol and Kagan, 2004; p. 68).

Neoconservatives however have been fairly flexible on this issue. On alliances with non-democratic regimes to defeat what they deem worse adversaries, Kristol and Kagan call these “tactical deviations” and Jeane Kirkpatrick suggested in 1979 that the United States draw a line between totalitarians and authoritarians, whereby the latter, while undemocratic, was still better suited for cooperation than the former (Kristol and Kagan, 2004; p. 68; Kirkpatrick, 1979). For Kristol and Kagan, such relations were of a last resort nature in which “...there was no viable democratic alternative.” (2004; p. 68). Since the neoconservative perspective on foreign policy is equal parts strategy and morals, the former sometimes seems more rational than adherence to pure principles.

Popular Input: The population according to the neoconservatives, swings between pride and shame regarding American power, and is easily subject to the short-term waves of emotion following conflict and demonstrations of American power. The neoconservative relationship with the democratic population is thus tenuous (Caverley, 2010; pp. 602 – 603; Drolet, 2010, p. 98 – 100). Caverley writes “neoconservatism seeks to point out the debilitating effects of democracy that prevent such a government from spending appropriate levels of its wealth on military power, and from employing any military power that it does possess.” (p. 602). Writing in 1974, Irving Kristol suggested that *republicanism* entailed the recognition that obligation to a greater collective is more important than obligation to the individual wants - this entailed a “republican virtue” which meant a person must be “public-spirited”(pp. 67 – 68). He explained, “It means curbing one’s passions and moderating one’s opinions in order to achieve a large consensus that will ensure domestic tranquility” (1974; p. 68). This is their *desired* view for the US population rather than a description.

Given the high variability in voters’ preferences and the lack of a long-term vision, neoconservatives believe that a foreign policy that factors in the inputs of the populace is unfocused and detrimental. In *Why We Were in Vietnam*, Podhoretz ascribes some blame for the premature end of US involvement, to the anti-war hysteria that swept the new left, the press and campuses (1982, 1983)⁴⁶. According to Ferguson (2004) the political/election system contributes to a foreign policy “attention deficit” (p. 293), in that there is a certain lack of continuity in foreign affairs and hence an overall uncertainty in projects that require great commitment.

In 1996, Kristol and Kagan decried the acquiescence of conservatives towards the domestic leaning populace: “Now conservatives tailor their foreign and defense policies to fit the presumed new political reality: an American public that is indifferent, if not hostile, to foreign policy and commitments abroad, more interested in balancing the budget than in leading the world, and more intent on cashing in the “peace dividend” than on spending to deter and fight future wars.” (1996; p. 19). Rather than compromising on one’s principles to win over the population, Kristol and

⁴⁶ For instance, Podhoretz wrote of the futility of President Nixon’s defense of the war against domestic criticisms from the New York Times in particular “...we expended most of our energy in effect negotiating with ourselves” (p. 145). Earlier, he excoriated the rise of the “anti-anti-communism” of the likes of Noam Chomsky and Hans Morgenthau (pp. 99 – 107). While he is keen on noting that popular input actually had no real impact on the ultimate decisions of Nixon, he insinuates that each president felt a certain degree of pressure from the population, which they in turn, factored into their own calculus to end the war in order to appease an agitated country (p. 171)

Kagan write instead that the population is highly fluid – and thus can be persuaded – into support for their vision, as evinced by the popularity of President Reagan’s foreign policy: “...he [Reagan] refused to accept the limits on American power imposed by the domestic political realities that others assumed were fixed.” (Kristol and Kagan, 1996; p. 19). To turn this around, they suggest it imperative that the American populace is made aware of the importance of the US’s role overseas, which they write is highly possible: “History also shows, however, that the American people can be summoned to meet the challenges of global leadership if statesmen make the case loudly, cogently and persistently” (Kristol and Kagan, 1996; pp. 26-27, **29**). But it is not just proper framing of a message, they write, that can change the minds of Americans, but rather dramatic real-life events, such as the Korean War and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (pp. 29 – 30). In other words, to restore a sense of purpose to the otherwise insular facing liberal polity as Williams (2005) described, neoconservatives suggest that conflicts of a grandiose scale (usually entailing a clash of ideologies) can stir Americans into sentiments more in support of its hegemonic responsibilities.

ii. Foreign policy process:

○ *Short term vs Long Term prospects*

In terms of the process of foreign policy, neoconservatives adopt a long-term perspective for the US. Stephen G Brooks explained that states that “heavily discount the future”, perceive the future as highly uncertain, given pressing current security challenges (1997, p. 450). With this fearful outlook, this means that military priorities of the short term are privileged over the economic concerns in the long run, and additionally, they tend to act on the mere possibility of conflict (ibid). However since the 1990’s with undisputed power preponderance, the survival of the US as a sovereign state is more or less assured, and so neoconservatives do not subscribe to the belief that the future is wholly uncertain. Certain policy documents like Dick Cheney’s 1993 Regional Defense Strategy, describe the US as having to plan way ahead for future unknown challenges (p. 7), thus on the understanding that the future is assured and thus long-term policies should be considered, but predicated on the understanding that the future may be wrought with peril. Additionally, neoconservatives suggest that rather than making a trade-off between the military and the economy, they tend to focus on policies that will strengthen the US in both. To put it differently, survival of the US as a sovereign state for neoconservatives is irrelevant. It is

shaping the global order and maintaining it that is of concern, and this requires the dual policies of short term measures (like pre-emptive strikes) and long term ones (like economic leadership).

- *Strategy and Rational action and Expected Utility*

Even with their moral concerns, in deciding whether to intervene in any particular place, the United States is, and should be a rational actor, weighing the costs and benefits of any given action. Neoconservatives adhere in part to the expected utility in decision making which is the “...perspective that actors weight the utilities of differed outcomes by their probabilities, calculate costs and benefits of all alternative policies, and choose the option with the highest utility.” (Brooks, 1997; p. 454). To intervene in any given conflict then, the United States, according to the neoconservatives, will, and should assess the moral imperative of such an action and, crucially, the strategic costs and benefits to the United States. In the Cold War, Norman Podhoretz expressed relative comfort at the fact that the United States had foregone intervention in Czechoslovakia from the grips of the USSR, since, the costs of such an action (a direct confrontation with the USSR) were higher than any benefit (1982, pp. 26-27).

Adherence to expected utility by neoconservatives may be scoffed at more formal or academic voices. But essentially, neoconservatives express the same *process* of decision making, but ultimately diverge when it comes to judgements of how rational the goals are. At a basal level, neoconservatives consider themselves and others to be *procedurally* rational since they have assessed which is the best course of action (the procedure) to achieve whatever ends they have sought out. But since they differ with other thinkers in their assessments of *those* ends, it becomes an issue of *instrumental* rationality, which concerns the assessment of how rational the actual *end goal* is.

But contrary to some other thinkers, neoconservatives often judge the best outcomes for the US to be inextricably tied to morals as well. Especially since the end of the Cold War, they have stressed that morally compelling cases overseas are in themselves of strategic concern to the US, since they can develop into something costlier (eg Kristol and Kagan, 2005, p. 65).

- *Probability vs possibility*

Brooks also discussed the differences between state behavior acting on the possibility of war, vs state behavior and policy regarding the *probability* of war (1997, pp. 448). Acting on the

notion that war is *possible* indicates a more binary notion: that war is either possible or it is impossible (ibid). If one state calculates that there is in fact the possibility of conflict with another, it will act on the basis of this calculation (ibid). Conversely, probability of war indicates a spectrum of high likelihood to low likelihood. States in this regard act on the idea of how probable war is with another.

Kristol and Kagan write that the US should be "...inclined to weigh in when crises erupt, and preferably before they erupt." (2004, p. 65). The latter points crucially to a unique element in neoconservatism, a form of *pre-emption*. This in turn is supposed on the notion of possibility, as opposed to probability. They suggested that moral crises overseas, like Bosnia, if left unchecked, can turn into de-stabilizing phenomena in key regions, thus rendering the need for a larger US involvement than what would have been needed in the first instance (Kristol and Kagan, 2004, p. 65). Additionally, the possibility that those states in the Axis of Evil could strike its allies is sufficient grounds to act on preemption, wrote Max Boot, who suggested the US work on regime change in North Korea and Iran (2004, p. 49). He wrote further, expressing possibility-scenario thinking: "Regime change may seem like a radical policy but it is actually the best way to prevent a nuclear crisis that could lead to war" (Boot, 2004, p. 50) The mere *possibility* that moral crises or rogue regimes can escalate into major conflicts requiring US assistance later down the line indicates that neoconservatives have a tendency to privilege possibility over probability.

Brooks specifically suggests that those who discount the future— i.e. that present gains are weighted more than future gains, and also may be weighted relative to these future ones— tend to act on the mere possibility of war (1997, p. 450). But neoconservatism does not suggest that discounting the future *and* possibility- based calculation are equivalent. As mentioned before, neoconservatives, because of the sheer power of the US, consider the survival of the US as a sovereign state to be guaranteed, and hence they make policies based on a long shadow of the future. In essence, the ideal neoconservative foreign policy does not discount the future highly. In fact, the foreign policy is fundamentally *driven* by a high likelihood of the future but in contrast with Brooks, neoconservatives also act on a possibility-basis combined with a low discount rate of the future. When it comes to possibility of war vs probability of war, neoconservatives would *like* for the US to act on a *possibility* basis. The US must always be prepared to defend itself, as the possibility of an attack is always imminent. Considering their attitudes towards an insolent Iranian regime, they have been consistent in maintaining that – owing to the possibility of a nuclear

armed Iran striking Tel Aviv for instance – there is a need to dismantle their nuclear capabilities (for example, Norman Podhoretz, 2007, who passionately urged the US to strike Iran’s inchoate nuclear capabilities).

○ *Individuals and Foreign Policy*

Cooper (2011) has suggested that neoconservatives do not pay attention to the role of statesmen and their idiosyncrasies in the carving of foreign policies (p. 86). However, neoconservatives do emphasize individual preferences with regards to why certain policies come (or do not come) into fruition. Norman Podhoretz for instance traces the background of Lyndon B. Johnson - shaped by the early inaction of the United States in the second world war - as a possible explanation for his determination to increase involvement in Vietnam (1982, 1983, pp. 64 – 65).

Ultimately, follies and victories of foreign policies are usually attributed not to faceless organizations, populism or zeitgeist. Rather, at almost each point in contemporary history neoconservatives zone in one or a few particular set of individuals, pinned to each major action. Podhoretz for instance focuses much on Nixon and Kissinger regarding the latter stages of the Vietnam war, writing for instance, that Nixon was compelled to appease the highly critical New York Times and overall population (1982, 1983, p. 145). Focusing not on bureaucracies or the populace, he writes that it was each presidential administration that moved further and further away from the Truman doctrine over the course of the Cold War (pp. 169 – 171). Interestingly, despite writing critically earlier on the counter culture, Podhoretz ultimately suggested that the full movement of the war, from the start to escalation to withdrawal, had little to do with popular input (p. 171). It was, as he writes, due to the mistakes of the individual presidents in charge of the war: “If, then, Kennedy tried to apply containment in Vietnam on the military cheap, and Johnson tried to make it work on the political cheap, Nixon tried to salvage it on the strategic cheap. All three failed. That these were failures of leadership is certain. Kennedy failed in prudential wisdom; Johnson failed in political judgement; Nixon failed in strategic realism.” (ibid). Similarly, in 2004, Niall Ferguson criticized Lyndon B. Johnson’s leadership, by stating that the President failed in his duties to effectively elucidate to the US populace the importance of the Vietnam War (p. 99).

Recently, much of their opposition to the Obama administration was criticism of his temperament, intransigence, and left leanings. Stephens for instance, criticized President Obama’s

personality⁴⁷ – an inability to listen to dissenting voices⁴⁸ – as a hindrance to the US’s foreign policy, as well as his uncompromising left-wing vision for the US overseas (2011; 2014, pp. 77 - 80). Finally, they have been clear in noting the problems that President Trump’s personality and temperament would impose on the US’s policies. John Podhoretz in 2016 passionately wrote on the eve of the election, “Trump is unfit to be president of the United States...for reasons having nothing to do with policy. Simply put, he is an unspeakable human being...”. Max Boot suggested that his personality rendered him simply unfit for office “Trump lacks a presidential temperament. He gets flustered in debates. Imagine how he’d perform in a crisis.” (2016). For the neoconservatives, institutional frameworks are not a safety valve that will come into play in the absence of proper leadership. It is the leadership itself that guides the character of US foreign policy.

iii. Foreign policy outputs and goals

o Continuity and cooperation

Certain parts of the neoconservative foreign policy output favour continuity in world affairs. One salient area is that of the “security umbrellas” wherein the US pledges protection to allies, with the expectation of nuclear non- proliferation⁴⁹. This allows for the United States to maintain nuclear advantages over other states, and extract certain desirable behaviours from its allies. It is both strategic, and fulfills the moral obligations to allies. In this sense therefore, neoconservatives do not favour massive variations in its long-standing security assurances to its allies, as such a change can lead to unexpected, undesirable behaviors. It also entails continued leadership in alliances and the international organizations it created.

⁴⁷ Stephens also criticized the President’s foreign policy style, suggesting that he was far more concerned instead with how he was perceived by his electorate (2014; p. 16)

⁴⁸ He writes: “Mr. Obama, by contrast, appears to consider himself immune from error. ... It also explains his insulting and politically inept habit of suggesting—whether the issue is health care, or Arab-Israeli peace, ... that the fault always lies in the failure of his audiences to listen attentively. It doesn't. In politics, a failure of communication is always the fault of the communicator.” In “Is Obama Smart?” by Bret Stephens, in the *Wall Street Journal*. August 9, 2011.

⁴⁹ Cheney, 1993, p. 13 “The nuclear umbrella that the United States has extended over our allies has helped deter attack successfully for four decades. This has been a risk-reducing and cost-saving measure for us all; it is one we can afford fiscally to continue and one that our interests cannot afford to let lapse.”

- *High defense expenditure: 3.5% - 5% of GDP*

Neoconservatives express support for a sustained and high level of expenditure on defense, with a figure usually hovering around 3.5% of GDP, up from 3%, with some advocating up to 5% (Kristol and Kagan, 2004; p. 66; Stephens, 2014; p. 218). The rationale for this is that it allows the US to engage freely in procurement, and research and development of new weapons (Kristol and Kagan, 1996; p. 25). “It is simply what the United States will require to keep the peace and defend its interests over the coming decades.” (ibid). But in addition to a high level of expenditure on the military to meet its hegemonic needs, Kristol and Kagan suggest this also renders a deterrence of sort (p. 26). The United States, with a massive, sprawling and advanced military demonstrates a de facto deterrence to any potential challenger ⁵⁰ (ibid). Larger defense budgets also allow the US to be flexible, suggests Stephens (2014, p. 76). The high costs of the military then, are offset by the relative cheapness of preventing a war, they suggest further⁵¹ (Kristol and Kagan, 1996, p. 26).

C. An Ideology

In addition to neoconservatism having much to say about the role of ideologies in the world, there are also indicators that neoconservatism can be – partly – defined *as an ideology itself*. Traditional conservatives have rejected vehemently the label of ideology to their brand, describing themselves as anti-ideologists, as those staunchly opposed to what they deemed ideology – a dogmatic and revolutionary idea that sought to dismantle a previous order (Kirk, 1953, 1986; O’Sullivan, 2013; p. 293). For the conservatives and some neoconservatives, ideology is seen as promising utopia and leading to ruin along the way (ibid). In painting ideology in such narrow and polemic terms, as compared to the way academia studies it, neoconservatives themselves tend to shy away from the ideology label, using instead loose terms like Kristol’s “*Persuasion*”. Since classical conservatives, and hence their progenies, the neoconservatives, have expressed an

⁵⁰ “The more Washington is able to make clear that it is futile to compete with American power, either in size of forces or in technological capabilities, the less chance there is that countries like China or Iran will entertain ambitions of upsetting the present world order.” (p. 26).

⁵¹ “Americans should be glad their country’s defense capabilities are as great as those of the next six powers combined. Indeed, they may even want to enshrine this disparity in U.S defense strategy.” (Kristol and Kagan, 1996, p. 26)

unreserved disdain for ideology, in which they have placed radical ideas and Marxism, Kristol's use of the word "persuasion" helps convince its adherents that what they subscribe to, is in fact, *not* an ideology. But Kristol's definition of "persuasion" is hardly well fleshed out. He defines it as "one that manifests itself over time, but erratically, and one whose meaning we clearly glimpse only in retrospect." (2011; 1973; p. 190). The use of the word "persuasion" is merely a semantic denial of ideology.

The conservative anathema to ideology is misplaced. Modern academics, have suggested that ideology be studied in a more nuanced manner, as opposed to those who paint them as radical dogmas (Freeden et al, 2012, 2013, p. v). Ideologies are loosely defined by Freeden as "...clusters of ideas, beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes usually held by identifiable groups, that provide directives, even plans, of action for public policy-making in an endeavour to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social and political arrangements of a state or other political community." (Freeden, 2004, p. 6). As will be detailed further in chapter 3 on distinguishing between a theory and an ideology, Freeden's conceptualization of ideology is far different from the negative view of it held by conservatives. Far from being a plague looming over society waiting to begin a path to radical utopia as some conservatives would describe, ideologies, as laid out by Freeden are ideas that are meant to be enacted to influence societies and states. They are not simply content with describing how things are, but they are intent on offering some means of ameliorating what is imperfect. This more academic definition of an ideology helps to capture neoconservatism as a set of ideas not content to merely remain in the realm of description, but hoping – fervently at times – to shape American domestic and foreign policy. In fact, as Freeden stresses, the recognition and study of ideologies is highly crucial since forms of ideological thinking are present at almost all levels of society.⁵²

Therefore, the use of the term 'persuasion' notwithstanding, when Kristol further defines the goal of neoconservatism "to convert the Republican Party and American conservatism in general, against their respective wills, into a new kind of conservative politics suitable to governing a modern democracy," (2003; p. 190) this fits squarely into the definition of ideology.

⁵² "Ideologies, let it be emphasized, are evident in the entire field of thinking about political ends and principles, and virtually all members of a society have political views and values they promote and defend." (Freeden, 2004; p. 6).

Further, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter in more detail, neoconservatism is an ideology because it claims to hold the absolute truth on values, politics, ethics and so forth. As Freedman writes of ideologies "...they aim to give precise definition to the essentially contested meanings of the major political concepts" (2004; p. 6).⁵³ "Doubt", Freedman writes, "is not one of the most obvious features of ideological discourse." (ibid).

This is one of the key pieces of evidence that points to neoconservatism being an ideology. Hardly ever in the neoconservative corpus exists any equivocating on what they believe. Their writings are often filled with conviction on their world view, prescriptions and values. In fact, their forebears, Leo Strauss and his student Allan Bloom were notable in their rejection of equivocating on morality, values and history.

Now that it is established that neoconservatism is an ideology, what kind of ideology is it? In the context of O'Sullivan's terminology of **conservative ideologies**: reactionary, radical, moderate and the **New Right**, all of which deal with how conservatism contends with democratic changes and nihilism, neoconservatism falls into the last (O'Sullivan, 2013, p. 294). Extending on this, James W. Caesar differentiates isolationist conservatives and international conservatives, the latter who "stand ready to employ American influence to help shape a stable world order and promote fundamental American principles." (2000; p. 27). The internationalists are the neoconservatives in this instance. Moreover, within the New Right, neoconservatism is distinguished as an ideology through its moral concerns: "The moralism evident in [Irving] Kristol's thought was reflected more generally in the neoconservative belief that American foreign policy during the Cold War had been too reluctant to promote the universal triumph of democracy..." (O'Sullivan, 2013; p. 306)⁵⁴.

⁵³ "In other words, they aim to decontest those concepts and endorse one of the multiple conceptions those concepts invariably accrue but which, importantly, the concepts cannot contain simultaneously: is equality to be understood as equality of opportunity, or need, of respect, or of outcome?" Crucially, he writes "the production of a high degree of certainty in these defining and ordering activities [i.e. meaning, priority and position of the concepts] ensures that ideologies are integrally intertwined with politics; ideologies too are crucially locked into the process of choosing among alternative paths of action and of subsequent decision-making" (ibid).

⁵⁴ He continues discussing neoconservatism as an ideology in the context of the domestic front, particularly on that of the welfare state, and their beliefs in personal accountability, which led to poor reception in the wider public (ibid).

Given that neoconservatism has much to do with American power preponderance it can be classed additionally, as not just a conservative ideology, but an **ideology of imperialism**. Duncan Bell's (2013) study on ideologies of empire for instance, describes certain key features of neoconservatism (without mentioning this particular approach), particularly on ideas of justification, which "seek to legitimate the creation, reproduction, or expansion of empire" (p. 538). If then, ideologies of empire seek to frame in a positive and persuasive manner, the purpose and expansion of an empire, as Bell suggests, then, neoconservatism's positive take on US hegemony denotes some parallels with such ideas.

Bell also suggests that **ideas of civilization**, the division of the world into types of cultures and ideas, is a mode of "Euro-American imperial imaginary" (2013; p. 540), [where imaginaries are seen as the foundations, or more basic versions of ideologies (p. 538)]. The consequence of using civilizations to divide the world is that it "...invokes a standard of assessment and a regime of difference – it demands the drawing of normatively significant boundaries between the 'advanced' and the 'backward'..." (p. 540). Neoconservatives do use ideologies and *regime type* to stratify the world, into democracies and non-democracies, where the latter, for the most part is held as inferior to the former, and whose sovereignty can at times be violated (Rapport, 2008; Cooper, 2011; p. 56). A more direct form of this stratification comes from Samuel P. Huntington's Clash of Civilizations thesis, which posited that the Islamic world would come into inevitable conflict with other civilizations (1996; p. 183). While most neoconservatives have tended not to conform to the civilizational concept of Huntington, instead looking at threats from individual states and groups, they do in fact stratify the world according to *regime type*, which in turn dictates their preferences for alliances and certain modes of behavior (eg interventionism) for the United States.

Another implication for the civilizational division in such an ideology is that, where Huntington envisioned conflict, other civilizationists saw fertile ground for transformation: "...the civilized people of the world had a right, or even a duty, to spread civilization to the backward" (Bell, 2013; p. 541). Additionally, there was the idea that empire is justified if carried out by a benevolent state, as opposed to "another more rapacious imperial state" (Bell, 2013; p. 543). This of course resembles the innate moral imperative that is imbued in the neoconservative literature, like Niall Ferguson who explicitly suggested that certain parts of the world were so disadvantaged that they needed external assistance to develop (2004; p. 183; 198). Ferguson wrote that those

states required “intervention by a foreign power capable of constructing the basic institutional foundations that are indispensable for economic development”, in other words, a benevolent and transformative empire would be the salvation of such states, in such ideologies.

Expanding on this, in describing the types of **justifications for empire**, Bell outlines “**liberal civilization**” which concerns moral imperatives for empire (2013; p. 543, 546), and “**republican**” which implicates the health of the core state of the empire, which both fit neoconservatism (2013; p. 543, 546 – 547)⁵⁵. For Niall Ferguson, liberal imperatives to the United States’ foreign visions are not exclusive to them, as idealism has been present in many modern empires from Britain's "white man's burden" to France's "civilizing mission", early America's manifest destiny and the current US "responsibilities of power" (2004; p. 23). "The fact is that liberal empires nearly always proclaim their own altruism" (ibid). Given this then, neoconservatism, in placing great weight to the moral underpinnings of the United States through the spread and promotion of liberty, does appear (in part) as a modern ideology of empire.

The other justification for empire – republican - entails that it will in turn improve the character of the citizenry of the core state of the empire (Bell, 2013; pp. 546 – 547). As briefly mentioned previously, some neoconservatives, but not all, also stress that given the comforts that American liberalism grants, the society falls into a state of hedonism and nihilism (Schmidt and Williams, 2008; p. 215; Williams 2005; Kristol and Kagan, 2004, pp 73 - 74). Kristol and Kagan write that a sense of honour of the US in its foreign policy can revive the national spirit of its citizens (ibid).

However, one must express caution at wholly subsuming neoconservatism into ideologies of empire. For one, neoconservatives, while endorsing a highly interventionist and active role for the US tend not to – with the exception of Niall Ferguson (2004) - go so far as to call for empire. The neoconservative idea is more modern, envisioning the US not as an empire but as a manager of the international system; where, by virtue of its moral superiority, is given the sole right, burden or privilege to manage the system to ensure that it becomes ideologically and economically congruent. Stephens (2014) for instance has suggested that the United States find a middle ground between George W. Bush’s overextension of the US, and President Obama’s minimalistic foreign

⁵⁵ Other types of justification by Bell are “commercial exploitation”, which involve economic imperatives (p. 543, 544 – 545), “realist geopolitical” which involves great power politics (p 543, 544), and the “martialist” justification which suggests that war can improve the masculine spirit (p. 543, 547).

policy. He suggests that the US should be the policeman of the world, punishing deviances as a means of deterrence (ibid, p. 102.). While burned by the backlash from the Iraq war, Stephens still encapsulates much of the neoconservative thought on US power since the 1990's, where the US maintains dominance in the global economy, military and command of the commons, without being territorially expansive in the vein of previous empires.

Therefore, while neoconservatism does share some overlap with some ideologies of empire given that it is a 20th century ideology, it is not wholly an ideology of *empire*.

Given that ideologies are also concerned with how their ideas can come to fruition in society, it is worth noting another aspect of neoconservatism: **its rhetoric, discourse and the way in which it frames its messages**. According to Alan Finlayson, "...an ideology is not only the substantive propositions that make up its content. It is also a form, a way in which propositions are presented and justified" (2013; p. 197). According to Andrew Flibbert, it was the immense power of neoconservative ideas at the time which swayed the Bush administration into Iraq by crafting a holistic image of purpose, problem, means and solution (2006).⁵⁶ Likewise, Solomon (2013) focused on the plateauing of Neoconservative ideas in the 1990's when the US was without an adversary. Krauthammer's essay, "The Unipolar Moment" left little room for urgency and stark choices for the US, whereas Kagan and Kristol's essay was "exemplary in its hierarchical constructions of self and other⁵⁷." (Solomon, 2013; p. 113). Whereas Krauthammer suggested the US had achieved self-fulfillment or self-actualization through its new found unipolarity, Kagan and Kristol, according to Solomon, re-framed the situation where the US is never self-fulfilled, thus always leaving something to aim for (2013). By constantly framing the US as so close to – but never fully attaining – a sense of complete control over its adversaries, neoconservatives in the vein of Kagan and Kristol imbue their message with a sense of evolving and current relevance and appeal. This is what Solomon credits as reviving neoconservative support in the 1990's after many a eulogy.

Part D. Intellectual Development: From Burke to Bloom

⁵⁶ These involved the *purpose* as the US being the Benevolent Hegemon (p. 331- 336), the *problem* being a binary framing of the world, between good and evil (pp. 336 – 341) a *solution* of regime change (p. 341 -343), with *means* of the military (pp. 343-344).

⁵⁷ i.e., the self being the US, and the other, being the wider world (Solomon, 2013, p. 113)

For some writers, neoconservatism's intellectual roots date back to the Enlightenment, whereas for others, it stems from Leo Strauss's teachings in America. The following section discusses the *intellectual* developments of neoconservatism, from traditional conservatism, all the way to the 1960's, as opposed to its development as a political movement.

The goal is to trace the deep intellectual roots of the movement, to understand the basis of some of its ideas, and why it ultimately became *neo* conservative, breaking from its classical forbear. The section also illustrates the extent to which neoconservatism shares overlap with classical liberalism, as many of its adherents boast. Additionally, the section analyses the history between Leo Strauss's ideas and just what impact these had on the development of neoconservatism. The Strauss connection, as will later be developed, is a *contentious* - and relatively new thesis (introduced in 2003) - since it connotes implicit ideas of conspiracy and secrecy (Lilla, 2016; pp. 62 – 63). With Cooper (2011) suggesting neoconservatism as more the product of the enlightenment than Strauss (p. 29), there is also considerable tension concerning just which antecedent has had more impact on the development of the field, a puzzle hoped to be solved in this section.

Traditional antecedents of neoconservatism: From the Enlightenment to the 20th Century

Conservatism, Liberalism and the Neocons

i. Putting the Neo in Conservatism

Classical conservatism undeniably laid the seeds from which neoconservatism sprouted, but at what point did they depart? This section assesses neoconservative writings against conservatism as interpreted by Russell Kirk, a “new conservative” but not neoconservative, commonly seen as re-popularizing conservatism and Burke's philosophies in the 1950's (Wolfson, 2004, p. 217). Kirk is chosen for analysis since he is described as part of those 20th century conservatives who held “...a hatred of modern civilization, with its perceived technological displacements of the spiritual” (Gerson, 1996; p. 41). Kirk in essence is known as a modern day but *classical* conservative, who tried to re-popularize through his book, the various strands of conservatism in all its variations: traditional, liberal, critical, English and so forth (Wolfson, 2004; p. 217). But trying to resurrect men like Edmund Burke in the 1950's US to appeal to the masses was an ill-fated endeavour since, as Wolfson suggests, the United States was never built on the

aristocracy that classical conservatives implicitly endorsed (Wolfson, 2004; pp. 218 – 219), and just a decade later neo-conservatism would emerge as a burgeoning but vocal and palatable usurper of classical conservatism.

For Wolfson, the issue at the heart of the various conservative strains was how to deal with modernity (2004; p. 217). The crux of traditional conservatism was a great discomfort with modernity, whereas neoconservatives are much more accepting of it, albeit with some caution (ibid). A strong disdain of modernity resigns classical conservatism to looking back at a more venerated but bygone time, but the essence of neoconservatism is that it is a forward-looking form of conservatism. While neoconservatives too held disdain for the radicals of the New Left, and what they saw as the debasement of culture, they were hardly committed to the old in such an intractable way as their classical antecedents. This can be due to their origin. Classical conservatism emerged in Europe and Great Britain where feudalism and aristocracy were embedded into society, and to preserve an old order would be to preserve aristocracy, but, neoconservatism emerged in the US with no history of such aristocracy (Gerson, 1996; p. 2) and thus had no real incentive to put up a strong struggle against the inevitable march toward modernity since they had little interest in a past order.

- **Utilitarianism:**

While more prevalent in classical conservatism, both schools do express reservations of the utilitarian principles of engineering states and societies to achieve maximum efficiency and utility. The spirit of Bentham and Mill is seen to have sapped any sense of ambition, goals, virtue, work ethic and creativity, thus suppressing the true nature of man – which while flawed, is still diverse and bursting with idiosyncrasies (Kirk, 1953; 1986; pp. 68 – 69; p 115; 121; 222, 230).

While the utilitarian debate has died down, neoconservatives from time to time criticize approaches that seem to take too homogenous a conceptualization of human nature. Irving Kristol criticized the lack of nuance in Keynes's what he considered a strictly mathematical approach to economics, writing that it ignored individual motivations and human idiosyncrasies (1977; 1981; pp. 161 – 163). Kristol's suggestion that contrary to Keynesian economics, "Supply-side economics may be viewed as a kind of "humanistic" rebellion against the mathematical-

mechanical type of economic analysis...” (p. 164) is in spirit similar to the traditional conservative’s opposition to utilitarianism⁵⁸ (Kirk, 1953, 1986; pp 68 - 69).

To give another example, neoconservatives reject the mechanization of humanity in policy areas beyond economics as well. For instance, contemporary neoconservatives criticize grand policies like that of China’s one child (and now two child) policies, which are designed to engineer an entire state through shaping, dictating and restricting the preferences of their individual citizens in the name of state efficiency (Stephens, 2015. A).⁵⁹ In another column, Stephens suggested that despite its internal imperfections, the United States was far more prosperous and productive than China, owing to a much less intervening and controlling government (2015.B). *However*, whereas the traditional conservatives reacted to utilitarian principles as a threat to the romantic ideals (Kirk, 1953; 1986; p. 115), neoconservatives centered their disapproval on the inefficacy of such ideas with regards to *policy*.

By placing utilitarian state organization on a pedestal, conservatives and neoconservatives consider this a path that ultimately condones totalitarians. For instance, in Saul Bellow’s 2000 biography of his friend, Allan Bloom, *Ravelstein*, the titular character mocked what he saw as liberal thinkers’ inane solicitude of dictators, who excelled in efficiently and neatly executing statecraft and state development, ignoring their questionable human rights behaviors: “Hitler was a dream of political leaders. Whatever he wanted done was done, and quickly. No muss, no fuss. Very different from parliamentary government.” (Bellow, 2000, p. 21), wrote Bellow, mockingly.

⁵⁸ Kirk describes Burke’s views on the follies of the extreme structuring of man and society, also echoing many neoconservative critiques of such social experiments “If society is treated as a simple contraption to be managed on mathematical lines – the Jacobins and the Benthamites and most other radicals so regarded it – then man will be degraded into something much less than a partner in the moral contract that unites the dead, the living, and those yet unborn, the bond between God and man” (pp. 68 – 69).

⁵⁹ It is worth noting the way in which Stephens considers Paul Erlich, who popularized notions – and thus fears – on the Population Bomb and consequential resource shortages: “It’s also not surprising that someone like Mr. Ehrlich, trained as an entomologist, would be tempted to think of human beings as merely a larger type of insect.” (2015 A). Erlich in Stephens’s interpretation then, strips mankind of his individuality and all its possible contributions. Stephens, Bret “The Tyranny of a Big Idea” *The Wall Street Journal*. Nov. 2, 2015.

Stephens has also criticized the manner with which liberal commentators praise Chinese efforts at modernization and development, suggesting that they ignore the unnatural – and futile – state engineering (2015. B), in America for One Day, in *The Wall Street Journal*. Sept. 21, 2015.

Neoconservatism, like its conservative forebear claims to be loathe in sacrificing individual liberty on the altar of utilitarian statecraft.

- **Utopia:**

Stemming from this, conservatism expressed profound doubts on the efficacy and need of ideologies which promised utopia by way of discarding the current foundations on which society was built (Kirk, 1953; 1986). The root of this trepidation was the strict rejection that that man and society could be perfected⁶⁰ (Kirk, 1953, 1986; pp. iii- iv; 94, p.162; p. 472). Conservatism was born as the blowback against the radical and wantonly transformative ideas of the day – the rejection of traditionalism, the idea that man could be perfected, the newfound preference for full democracy and centralization, and of economic “levelling” (Kirk, 1953, 1986; p. 10). Burke believed that liberty had been hard fought and needed to be maintained through “...retaining those habits of thought and action which guided the savage in his slow and weary ascent to the state of civil social man” (Kirk, 1953; 1986; pp. 20 – 21). The path to utopia therefore, discarded all caution, previous progress and older ideas. Classical conservatives thus, proclaimed the venerability of the current institutions, since they existed having had decades – even centuries of slow but gradual correction (Gerson, 1996; p. 17).

Expressing similar apprehension, Irving Kristol suggested that the French Revolution failed since it rejected its previous societal foundations, whereas the Anglo Scottish enlightenment was more cautious in its approach (1976). This reverence for the old, and an unwillingness to *wantonly* reform is what ultimately puts the conservatism in neoconservatism. For the radicals, utilitarian principles promised utopia, an interplay of means and ends not desired by conservatives and the neocons, owing to its impossibility, discarding of old principles and overall recklessness.

- **Key differences:**

A major difference between the two is that neoconservatism focuses a large part on the international role of the US and Western states. The neoconservative impulse to maintain active

⁶⁰ “...these French theorists make a moral and psychological blunder quite as grace: they think that, men naturally being equal, society will be perfect when this state of equality enters into legislation ...The perfectionist who expects to reform society upon the tableland of equality is ignorant of the real character of progress.” (Kirk, 1986; p. 94).

hegemony appears in contrast to its cautious forbear. The only real commonality on this in the conservative canon comes from Benjamin Disraeli who advocated imperialism to materially compensate for a resource burdened Britain, since prospects of conservatism thriving in a poor country were low (Kirk, 1953; 1986; p. 376). But whereas this suggests imperial expansion to maintain the *survival* of the home-state and to politically save conservatism, neoconservatives promote hegemonic rule to maintain not the survival of the US in a basic sense- since its vast territory and population assures this - but to maintain leadership overseas, which accrues strategic benefits.

To explain this difference, it can be suggested that neoconservatism is highly concerned with the policies of the state, much more so than conservatism. Adam Wolfson notes that traditional conservatism was much more concerned with philosophical writings and “cultural recovery” than influencing policy (2004; p. 218). In other words, conservatism was more of a philosophical reaction to other ideologies, whereas neoconservatism quickly aimed to influence policies, or criticize direct policies.

Likewise, Irving Kristol wrote that neoconservatism was focused on ameliorating policies, and adding solutions, whereas previous conservatism was much more critical (Kristol, 1995; p. 176). Since neoconservatism quickly became concerned with influencing action, it was also interested in appealing to the populace. Their contention with conservatism is the unpalatability of it, where conservatism’s intransigence to modernity was considered futile (Wolfson, 2004; p 222). Additionally, neoconservatives are highly supportive of transforming the citizenry through proper messaging, as opposed to “...seeking to overcome it, or just as inadvisably, as some more literary conservatives in fact do, scorning it.” (ibid). Therefore, conservatism in the classical sense failed to be properly adopted by Americans, whereas neoconservatives were keen on their ideas being sold properly. Irving Kristol was keen to elucidate some key points of differentiation between the two. He wrote of the new conservatism that, “The political tonality was different”, i.e., that the liberal background of many of its thinkers and their optimistic view distinguished them from traditional conservatism (Kristol, 1995; p. 176).

ii. Liberalism and Neoconservatism

On the other hand, neoconservatives are happy to admit their bloc sprouted from liberalism. The first wave of neoconservatives were former Trotsky-ists and quasi socialists, dismayed by the

New Deal, and as is oft said, were galvanized in opposition to the new left in the 1960's (Boot, 2004, p. 46).⁶¹ As Cussett (2008) writes in tracing the history of neoconservative thought, its liberal basis allowed it to be differentiated from conservatives (p. 185). Their criticism of society and policy was not with the goal to return to some gilded old age, but in a liberal sense, always looking forward. As Cussett wrote of their development in the 1960's and 1970's, "Their liberal heritage...was what gave the neoconservatives a tactical edge. Instead of a conservative platform characterized by inertia, they promoted one oriented toward change, taking initiative and moving forward." (p. 185).

One key trace of liberalism in neoconservative writings is their desire for interventionism, which indicates that they privilege the **right of the individual** over that of the state, which comes from Enlightenment principles (Cooper, 2011, p. 56). Neoconservatives, Cooper writes, will "...not consider state sovereignty to be an inviolate right" (ibid). Indeed, in his 1975 speech to the UN, Moynahan made note of human rights, which envisioned man as separate from the state (1975, 1996, pp 98 – 99). He said that human rights appeared "...when European philosophers of the seventeenth century began to argue that man was a being *whose existence was independent from that of the State...* [emphasis added]" (pp. 98 – 99). He continued that political rights emerged "...of claims that the individual could justly make against the State; it was because the individual was seen as so separate from the State that he could make legitimate demands upon it" (p 99). This particular notion is shared by *liberal hawks*⁶²(Cooper, 2011, p. 56). If the individual is separated from the state, any violation of sovereignty in the name of morality is not contrary to human rights in the view of neoconservatives.

Neoconservatives however are **not full liberals**. Very notably, Jean François Drolet has been critical of such links, suggesting it to be inherently illiberal, pointing to hegemony and not magnanimity as the main impetus to promote democracies and their very limited concept of democracy itself (2010; pp. 98 – 100). A reading of the neoconservative literature does indicate a great trepidation of democracy. Irving Kristol's writings for instance are peppered with instances

⁶¹ He however notes that subsequent generations of neoconservatives shifted away from the Democratic party and moved closer to the GOP (Boot, 2004; pp 46 – 47)

⁶² Cooper mentions writers like Christopher Hitchens who rejected the amorality of Kissinger's foreign policy, in favour of the principled neoconservative vision (p. 57). Other liberal hawks notable for congruence with neoconservatives are Peter Beinart and Anne Marie Slaughter.

rejecting *full* democracy, in a populist sense, and preferences for man to be more loyal to an overarching idea (a “republican virtue”, 1974) as well as ideas that mankind requires restraints on his behavior (1965, 1974, 1987). Additionally, on the topic of **Wilsonian idealism**, Max Boot admits some overlap with liberalism, albeit with the caveat that neoconservatives are willing to use the military to achieve their desired ends (2004). He writes on Wilsonian Liberalism, the label commonly given to describe neoconservatives,

“The neocons have scant regard for Wilson himself, whom they regard as hopelessly naïve. Instead, they are ‘hard Wilsonians,’ who place their faith not in pieces of paper but in power, specifically US power...Neocons believe the United States should use force when necessary to champion its ideals as well as its interests, not only out of sheer humanitarianism but also because the spread of liberal democracy improves U.S. security, while crimes against humanity inevitably make the world a more dangerous place” (2004, p. 49).

In other words then, neoconservatives have liberal motivations, but use non-liberal means to attain them. Boot thus explicates how neoconservatism is the hybrid of liberalism and pragmatism.

Because the desired foreign policies of neoconservatism, and their vision of the world are said to be liberal they are often considered *idealists*, but, James W. Caesar writes “...it marks a terrible poverty of thinking to claim that any foreign policy that goes beyond asserting concrete economic or immediate strategic interests – any policy that mentions “values” – becomes ipso facto “idealistic” or “Wilsonian”” (Caesar, 2000; p. 31). Neoconservatism – or conservative internationalism as he writes – is much more complex and layered than mere naïve idealism, the meaning which is invoked using the “Wilsonian” label. For Caesar, this brand of foreign policy thinking – neo-conservatism – is unique since it straddles both values and strategic concerns (2000; p. 32).

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Thus, while neoconservatism is linked to conservatism due to its name, it is better considered as the child of both liberalism and conservatism, similar to the “liberal conservatives” like Tocqueville, who saw that liberalism “...was conservatism of a sort: it tended to conserve liberty...” (Kirk, 1953, 1986; p. 186). These early thinkers, he writes, expressed caution of ideas of economic “levelling”, encroaching governments and other ideas which would have impinged on individual liberties and which lay in contrast to basic human nature (ibid). Neoconservatism

thus holds the spirit of the two: the cautious approach to change in world politics and an aversion to radical ideologies, with a hopeful and optimistic notion that power, backed by virtues, values and good intentions, can create a more stable and prosperous world.

The 20th century: The Genesis of a Movement

The Strauss Connection

In contrast to classical thinkers who lived and died long before the 20th century, the presence of Leo Strauss in American academia points to a much greater tangible and pedagogical influence on the neoconservatives. Several writers have tried to draw links between Strauss and the neoconservatives, particularly in the aftermath of the Iraq War 2003 (Lilla, 2016, p. 62). Anne Norton's (2004) book in particular referred to the disciples of Strauss as broadly those "Straussians" [the neoconservatives] who consider conflict as redemptive to society (p. 153), who debased political discourse into polemics (p. 173), and adopted a wildly utopian view of what to do with society (p. 174). Norton essentially portrayed the Straussians as those men who infiltrated and distorted key parts of government, academia and discourse. Their common link is the German émigré who died in 1973 (Drolet, 2011; p 57). The idea of a "cabal" or tight knit organization around Strauss has been a contentious one, strongly rejected by the neoconservatives (Halper and Clarke, 2004; p 64)⁶³. As Lilla points out, a tight knit group holding mysterious ideas with the ultimate plan to control societies contains thinly veiled anti-Semitic tropes (2016; p. 62). Since the connection to Strauss yields wildly passionate and disparate answers depending on whom one asks, the following section assesses to what extent Strauss actually did influence the neoconservatives.

Six Degrees of Leo Strauss?

In terms of the US-based neoconservative "network" there are paths that do lead to Strauss, albeit with a few degrees of separation. In several accounts of Strauss's impact on neoconservatism, it reads as though the philosopher were Rome, and all roads led to him. Leo

⁶³ "Today's neo-conservatives generally write affectionately about him [Strauss] as a philosopher but become intensely defensive when it is suggested that modern neo-conservatism owes any debt to Strauss... They see the suggestions of Straussian influence, alongside similar claims of Trotskyite influence, as part of a dastardly campaign by their adversaries to blacken their reputations" (Halper and Clarke, 2004; p. 64).

Strauss did teach Allan Bloom, who would go on to write the best seller *The Closing of the American Mind* of 1987 (Cooper, 2011; p. 26). Bloom in turn was a teacher of Wolfowitz (ibid). Irving Kristol credited Strauss with some influence (Cooper 2011; pp. 25-26) and in 1952 emphatically and positively reviewed Strauss's *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, and of course Irving Kristol's impact on the movement has been undisputed, with Gerson in 1996 suggesting Kristol to be *the* central figure in the movement (p. 13).

Writers like Norton have tried to draw the links between Strauss and the neoconservatives to understand why exactly the US went to war in Iraq in 2003 (Lilla, 2016; p. 62).⁶⁴ But crucially, the links between Strauss's teachings and invading Iraq are dubious and spurious. As Cooper suggests "One is always left wondering how exactly Strauss's ideas correspond with those of the neoconservative foreign policy intellectuals" (2011; p. 26). Even tangible interaction with and influence by Strauss is limited in neoconservatism. Consider the following passage linking Strauss to Bill Kristol:

"...among those who studied with Strauss at the Chicago School was Harry Jaffa, who introduced fellow intellectual Harvey Mansfield to Straussian ideas. Mansfield subsequently went on to Harvard and educated the high profile neo-conservatives William Kristol and Andrew Sullivan, who became a senior editor at the *New Republic*." (Halper and Clarke, 2004; p. 62).

What the above insinuates is that Bill Kristol is a Straussian, because he was taught by someone who was *exposed* to Strauss's ideas by someone else. To infer that neoconservatives are Straussian based on such vague links is to engage in highly spurious logic. Despite multiple degrees of separation between Strauss and several neo-conservatism, the Strauss connection is erroneously accepted by many writers.

Paul Wolfowitz has directly downplayed the influence of Strauss on his own thinking, instead crediting military and nuclear strategist Albert Wohlstetter with his ideas on the precision

⁶⁴ "The anniversary of his [Strauss's] death happened to coincide with the American invasion of Iraq, and in the lead-up to the war, journalists began noticing that several of its prominent advocates had studied in the Straussian school. The idea began circulating that Strauss himself was the master thinker behind the interventionist policy of democracy promotion developed by American neoconservatives. Writers who had never read him trawled his dense commentaries on ancient, medieval, and modern political thought looking for incriminating evidence. Finding none, some suggested that Strauss never wrote what he thought, that his secret political doctrines were passed on esoterically to adepts who subsequently infiltrated American government and operated duplicitously. At the ideological fringes the term "cabal" was occasionally employed, in ignorance (one hopes) of its anti-Semitic connotations." (Lilla, 2016; p. 62).

of weapons deployment (Cooper, 2011; p. 30; Halper and Clarke, 2004; p. 63). This idea has profoundly shaped the neoconservative idea that wars could be fought “cleanly” and efficiently, as tools of swift system management. Such ideas are not present in Leo Strauss’ philosophy.

Wohlstetter in turn, had little to do with Strauss (Cooper; 2011; p. 30), and little evidence exists directly linking Strauss to Daniel Patrick Moynahan, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Norman Podhoretz, and Donald Kagan, who emerged *parallel* to Strauss, that is, at the similar time, but almost independently of his influence. While anyone who studied under Allan Bloom –of which there were many according to Saul Bellow’s biography of him – would be connected, this is merely by proxy to Strauss, who died in 1973. Even Allan Bloom died fairly early, in the 1990’s. Strauss’s death at the start of the movement diminished the direct influence from his pedagogical methods, and for younger neoconservatives like Niall Ferguson and Max Boot who neither met Strauss nor studied at the University of Chicago, the links to Strauss even by proxy are totally null.

Given such a poverty of direct links, is the Strauss connection really valid? To answer this, it is necessary to instead look not at the network, but at the ideas of Strauss.

Strauss’s Intellectual Legacy and the Neoconservatives

Cussett writes of two dual paths that created the neoconservatism of today. One was the rejection of the counter culture and New Left of the 1960’s, characterized by sustained anti-communism by Norman Podhoretz and Irving Kristol (2008; p. 184). The second branch came from Leo Strauss who would teach Allan Bloom and Irving Kristol, and attempted to insert a level of objectivity in history particularly, on the concepts of good and evil (2008; p. 185).

1. For some, what Strauss imparted on the movement was the idea that **nihilism** needed to be fought in society and democracy had to be defended, although the extent of this idea is limited in wider neoconservatism (Lilla, 2016; pp. 62 – 63; Cooper, 2011, pp. 28 - 29).

Williams (2005) for instance has greatly emphasized this as a key point in neoconservative thought, particularly in the works of Irving Kristol. Indeed, the senior Kristol did credit Strauss with impacting some of his ideas, and did engage in the 1950’s with his work in commentary (eg. 1952; Cooper, 2011; pp. 25 - 26). Strauss – who Jean François Drolet argues was far more influenced by Nietzsche than he admitted (2011) - imparted a Nietzschean concept behind the criticism of cultural relativism, which produced an apathy akin to the Last Man of sorts. The following from Saul Bellow’s *Ravelstein* seems to echo this view:

““Never, on the material side, have huge populations been better protected from hunger and sickness. And this partial release from the struggle for survival makes people naïve. By this I mean their wishful fantasies are unchecked. You begin, in accordance with an unformulated agreement, to accept the terms, invariably falsified, on which others present themselves. You deaden your critical powers. You stifle your shrewdness.” (Bellow, 2000; pp. 25 – 26, summarizing Allan Bloom’s ideas, lifted from his teacher, Strauss).

Early neoconservatives borrowed from Strauss’s ideas on the path of a nihilistic society. Strauss was undeniably influenced by the fall of the Weimar Republic, and the wider apathy of society numbed their ability to foresee a clear and present danger on the horizon. When Bloom wrote, “I keep being reminded of the newsreel pictures of Frenchmen splashing happily in the water at the seashore, enjoying the paid annual vacations legislated by Léon Blum’s Popular Front government. It was 1936, the same year Hitler was permitted to occupy the Rhineland. All our big causes [in modern society of the 1980’s] amount to that kind of vacation” (Bloom, 1987; p. 239), this clearly demonstrates influence from Strauss who not only emphasized nihilism but was direct witness to this time in Europe. In essence, a luxuriated society led to a morally blind society, easily dismantled from forces which they could not see.

But aside from some aspects of Bloom’s and Irving Kristol’s writings, this is not so much present in neoconservatism. As Cooper (2011) suggests, an overreliance on Kristol- while a key figure – tends to limit generalizations over all of the neocon canon. This notion of nihilism has been relegated to backburner status in more contemporary neoconservatism, and in particular, it has little direct relevance to their international perspectives.

The *origin* of Strauss’ thought lay in a blow-back against Heidegger who blamed Socrates for **the decay of western life** (Lilla, 2016; p. 45). Strauss conversely suggested “...the trouble in Western civilization began when early-modern and Enlightenment thinkers turned away from the Greek tradition and tried to reestablish philosophy and politics on new foundations.” (ibid). The ancients –Greek philosophers- posited an unattainable ideal as the highest point for which man could aim, which was in turn discarded by the “moderns” in the form of nihilist Nietzsche and Heidegger (Drolet, 2011; p. 75). The modern philosophers –or those post-enlightenment - not only introduced this nihilism but questioned an objective and absolutist basis of morals (developed further in this section), which in turn contributed to the decline of modern society (ibid). When a

society had nothing to look towards - no gilded end goal - this would lead it on a path to ruin, according to Strauss (Drolet, 2011; p. 76). Halper and Clarke contend that Strauss's suggestion that modernity led to 20th century totalitarianism, since it eschewed the values of an older order, directly correlates to neoconservative tenets (Halper and Clarke, 2004; p. 65), although this is still a vague connection to make. For Drolet, Strauss's criticism of modernity in a liberal state informed much of the neoconservative intellectual thought from the 1960's onwards (2011; p. 53). Indeed, early conservatives, and some early neoconservatives expressed irate frustration with the onslaught of modernity. Allan Bloom for instance, polemically critiqued the newfound debasement of culture in the 1980's, going as far to suggest that rock music of the day was similar to cannibalism and witch hunts of the past (1987; p. 75)⁶⁵. But neoconservatism – especially the perspectives on an international level with which this paper is concerned – hardly features this pessimism and high-brow disdain for modern philistinism. Additionally, since the 1990's, reflections on the creeping nihilism of the West have either been reduced in the canon to irrelevancy, or, they have tended to concern domestic discussions, particularly on the state of newer generations.

2. By suggesting **virtue and morals** could never have an objective definition but were **subjective**, was akin to a nihilism of sorts according to Strauss (Cusset, 2008; p. 185).

Strauss essentially held that the “moral” could not be reduced to relativist analyses, and questions on morality ultimately produced a clear understanding of “friend and enemy” or good and evil (Drolet, 2011; pp. 62 – 63). Since its emergence in the enlightenment, liberalism, according to Strauss, muddied the concept of morals and what was objectively right (Drolet, 2011; p. 63). This led to the introduction of subjectivity and questioning of the moral, and “Philosophy quickly lost confidence in itself as a way to absolute truth, giving rise of relativism and nihilism in the nineteenth century” (Lilla, 2016; p. 49). In other words, in contrast with the ‘ancients’ the new philosophers eschewed the idea that there was an absolute meaning to morals, existence and purpose. Jeane Kirkpatrick for instance, criticized the deliberate ambiguous definitions of morality proposed by the Soviet Union (1986), and Daniel Patrick Moynahan's (1975) rebuke of the United Nations' redefinition of ‘racism’ to further political ends suggests a similar sentiment.

⁶⁵ “People of future civilizations will wonder at this [the rock music culture of young people] and find it as incomprehensible as we do the caste system, witch-burning, harems, cannibalism and gladiatorial combats” (Bloom, 1987; p. 75)

For Cusset, “Strauss aimed to wrest the concept of natural law away from the menace of historical relativism and demonstrate the “primary reality” of distinctions between good and evil, fact and value.” (2008; p. 185). This blow back against what they saw as French theory’s insufferable nuance or “nihilism”, he suggests, bled into the neoconservative idea that order would not sustain itself, but it required active reinforcement, through the Broken Windows policing method for instance, and militarily on an international front (Cusset, 2008; pp. 185 -186). This interpretation of Straussianism provides a strong link with neoconservatism, but marks a wide intellectual leap. There is still a considerable bridge between a rejection of moral relativism and order maintenance in the sense of *empire*, which Cusset does not seem to account for.

But the rejection of relative morals, and a relativism of culture still provides a baseline of neoconservative thought, both domestic and international. In the context of this paper or thesis, absolutism of morals lends to the idea of American exceptionalism, and to the notion that democracy is the best possible type of regime for a state. While later on, in the theory section (chapter 3), it is suggested that there are some logical underpinnings within the approach that *can* preclude the idea of moral absolutism, still, this particular analysis is made from an assessment and synthesis of neoconservatism. The rejection of moral relativism features for the most part, as a foundational and baseline idea of neoconservatism. And tellingly, despite several reformulations of the ideology since the 1960’s, this has remained a core idea underpinning other tenets.

3. Another key idea in Straussianism is the idea that philosophers needed to choose between **Athens and Jerusalem**, or reason vs revelation (Lilla, 2016; p. 47).

Socrates, Strauss suggested, embodied “perpetual questioning beholden to no theological or political authority”; in essence, Socrates championed the pursuit of philosophy without being restricted by an overbearing body (ibid). When Strauss suggested this, he referred to those theological regimes in which philosophers needed to conceal their ideas in their work (Kristol, 1952) since ‘reason’ could possibly dismantle the mistruths on which theologies were built. For Strauss was heavily influenced by his life as a Jewish intellectual as the Weimar republic fell to Nazi forces (Drolet, 2011), and so suspicion of authorities inevitably imbued his work. This experience however, never beset the American neoconservatives, who were free and remain so, to express their ideas in the United States. In essence, the idea that reason could dismantle a society which rests on divine revelation and thus risked persecution by authorities (Drolet, 2011; p. 81;

Lilla, 2016) is unique to Strauss, and bespoke to an experience developing one's intellectuality under conditions of totalitarianism.

But, he did note that 'reason' and 'revelation' were not mutually exclusive: "Although he sometimes seems to suggest that philosophy and religion are antithetical alternatives, Strauss in fact maintains that the two are locked into a mutually sustaining relationship which has for hundreds of years accounted for the vitality of Western civilization" (Drolet, 2011; p. 81).⁶⁶ However, it is difficult to find this dichotomy within neoconservatism. Despite concerning themselves with totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, neoconservatism does not address the writing style of thinkers in such states and the issue of reason potential destruction of religiously built societies. Even Allan Bloom's book *The Closing of the American Mind*, borrows much of Strauss's ideas, does not touch on this. Neoconservatism since the 1960's has refrained from abstract academic reflections on the nature of writing, so it is natural that this idea would be shorn off from the movement's key ideas.

4. Natural Right

Strauss emphasized the idea of natural right in his 1953 *Natural Right and History*, and is the idea which perhaps contains the most overlap in neoconservatism of all his other works. Natural right, exemplified in the US declaration of Independence, entailed the idea that man was born with a certain set of inalienable rights (Strauss, 1953, p. 1).⁶⁷ This, he suggested was *the* standard by which to judge others and create subsequent laws (pp. 2-3). But rejecting this, however, "...is tantamount to saying that all right is positive right, and this means that what is right is determined exclusively by the legislators and the courts of the various countries" (p. 2). The implication of abandoning natural right then are those wildly disparate, divergent and almost contradictory laws in the world, since they have eschewed the common baseline standard.

⁶⁶ This amounted to a dilemma, where although Strauss suggested choosing one or the other, society held both: "Without authoritative assumptions regarding morality and mortality, which religion can provide, no society can hold itself together. Yet without freedom from authority, philosophers cannot pursue truth wherever it might lead them" (Lilla, 2016; p. 47)

⁶⁷ The pinnacle of natural right thought is phrased in the US declaration of independence, as quoted in Strauss, 1953 "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." (ibid).

Neoconservatism of course arose largely in response to newfound passion in liberalism in the Cold War. The strong stance on an inalienable right of man provided much material in the conservative case against liberals, who they excoriated for accepting the otherwise immoral communist regimes. When Strauss wrote in 1953 "...generous liberals view the abandonment of natural right not only with placidity but with relief" implying that such a rejection would lead to blind acceptance of all, he essentially outlined the neoconservative counter-view that would be prominent from the 1960's onwards (p. 5). Liberals were averse to natural right since there was considerable "...tension between the respect for diversity or individuality and the recognition of natural right" (ibid).

Natural right however was not unique to Strauss, but a long-standing issue that vexed philosophers who wanted to understand *nature* and how it came far before civilization and human-created traditions (1953; pp. 91 – 92). "Nature is older than any tradition; hence it is more venerable than any tradition" wrote Strauss, expressing the early thought that nature is far more foundational to mankind than his or her creations or constructs (p. 92).^{68 69}

Strauss at times also expressed some discomfort with **democracies**, suggesting that they were not fully representational, but only reflected the interests of the majority (1959; pp. 103-104). "What claims to be common good is, in fact the interest of a part which claims to be a whole...", he wrote of a democratic 'city' (p. 104). Thus, Strauss presumably meant that democratic regimes tended to enforce an idea of good that was based on *convention* and not *nature*, since convention artificially privileged the voices of some over the other, whereas nature made no such distinctions. Neoconservatives conversely tend to view democracies with the highest regard

⁶⁸ "The discovery of nature or of the fundamental distinction between nature and convention is the necessary condition for the emergence of the idea of natural right" (Strauss, 1953; p. 93). It is interesting to note that Strauss does note that "natural right", despite its apparent objective nature, can vary from society to society and be adopted to justify one's 'civilization' (pp. 98 – 99). "...this means that the natural right teacher will identify natural right with those notions of justice that are cherished by his own society or by his own 'civilization'. By speaking of natural right, he will do nothing else than claim universal validity for the prejudices of his group" (p. 99).

⁶⁹ Strauss introduces the idea that "convention" is mutually exclusive to nature, since it is a human imposition (1953). Convention he writes, is what leads humans to make divisions amongst themselves since it "...arbitrarily cuts off one segment of the human race and sets it off against the rest." (1953; p. 104). "...the distinction between Greeks and barbarians is merely conventional...The same applies to the distinction between free men and slaves." (ibid). "egalitarian natural right" Strauss writes, (1953; p. 118) "...finds its most simply expression in the thesis that all men are by nature free and equal" (ibid).

of all other types of regimes, while still expressing discomfort with the manner in which democracies impede full statecraft (eg Caverley, 2010). The *theory* – in chapter 3- suggests that democracies may be the highest form of political behavior, since it represents the furthest position away from the atavistic state of nature- this thus borrows Hobbes’ negative and pessimistic view of such a state; but this contrasts with Strauss, who held that nature was the source of good, and society and the state were impositions overlaid on this good (eg. 1953; pp. 250 – 251). The neoconservative *theory* (note, not as it exists in its current form) considers that man is entitled to justice and liberty and so forth. But the state of nature cannot grant this to man, since it is uncultivated and animal-like. Democracy is the highest form since it can effectively grant those rights to which man is entitled.

The neoconservative position is conversely similar to that of Burke (as interpreted by Strauss), who held man’s *existence* before morals and virtues was highly imperfect (Strauss; 1953; p. 296). According to Strauss, Burke’s view was that “...the state of nature and “the full rights of men” which belong to it cannot supply that standard for civilized life. All wants of our nature – certainly, all higher wants of our nature – point away from the state of nature toward civil society: not “the state of rude nature” but civil society is the true state of nature” (Strauss, 1953; p. 296). For Burke, civil society, or the state, can correct the deficiencies of the state of nature.

Burke’s writings overall exalted the British constitution as the pinnacle of social and political organization, but Strauss writes that this appraisal was because it was seen as natural, as one that developed in its own time and was not artificially and suddenly imposed (Strauss, 1953; p. 314). The constitution was seen as the unparalleled best, similar to Plato’s *Republic* (Strauss, 1953; p. 314; 321). Likewise, when neoconservatives praise America’s exceptionalism, owing to its history, founding, constitution and extraordinary responsibilities, this is similar to Burke’s high regard of Britain. Both ideas take that a perfect constitution is not only possible but already exists, and both feature some understanding of “the natural”, where for Burke this was in how the constitution was developed (Strauss, 1953; p. 323). In essence, Strauss alludes to some sort of tension between the state, and nature, a problem hardly developed in neoconservatism, since the state is *not necessarily* seen as a potential infringement on natural right.

But Strauss would teach **Allan Bloom**⁷⁰ who would go on to present the idea of natural right to a more bespoke perspective for Americans – in addition to an overall rejection of relativism. Bloom for instance, criticized 20th century social science which tried to do away with absolutism. He wrote for instance, that when the US is criticized for “...wanting to impose “the American way of life” on all people without respect for their cultures... the United States does so in the name of self-evident truths that apply to the good of all men.” (Bloom; 1987; p. 191). Bloom’s book therefore helped to revive the idea of natural right and the resultant moral absolutism, which then fed into a greater pride in some purpose of the United States. In fact, because of the sheer popularity of Bloom’s book, it can be argued that he had a greater influence in shaping some neoconservative thought than his teacher. Bloom essentially took Strauss’s dense perspectives on the issue and made it more palatable to non-academic readers in the United States.

The idea that natural right is deeply fundamental to the human condition and so cannot be bent or eroded in any way lends for an immensely **uncompromising and principled** belief in behavior which has come to characterize parts of neoconservative thought. In Strauss portraying it as the essential part of existence and society, this opens up the interpretation that it must be defended where under threat. Allan Bloom explicated this idea in his book, writing that the Civil War could not simply be negotiated away or even resolved through elections since the issue directly infringed on the fundamental issue of equality of human beings (Bloom, 1987; p. 29). He wrote “...popular sovereignty on the question of black slavery was impermissible even if it would enable us to avoid the clear and present danger of a bloody civil war.” (ibid). To erode natural right, in other words, is such a grave violation that it renders action no less short of complete eradication of the offender.

This idea of strong defense of natural right is a clear *evolution* of Straussian thought. It is the clearest link between Straussianism and neoconservatism. This is an idea that still underpins parts of neoconservatism, that non-democratic regimes cannot be negotiated with, and military intervention is necessary in human rights offenses. According to Lilla “From reading Strauss his disciples learn that although philosophers should not try to realize ideal cities, they do bear responsibility for the cities in which they find themselves. From their teachers they then learn

⁷⁰ Saul Bellow’s novel/roman a clef *Ravelstein* (2000) makes several references to a philosopher, esoteric in his pedagogy, at the University of Chicago named Felix Davarr, presumably a pseudonym for Leo Strauss, who taught Allan Bloom (called Abe Ravelstein in the book).

about the importance of defending liberal democracy against the threats it faces, at home and abroad.” (2016; p. 63)⁷¹. However, while the essence rings true, this is still a bit of an exaggeration.

In recognizing that Strauss did not elucidate the *hegemonic aims* of neoconservatives, it becomes a grotesque exaggeration to associate Strauss with what we know as neoconservatism. Strauss additionally never elucidated the idea that the military and trade liberalization could be efficacious tools of spreading the US’s values. What realistically happened to his ideas and the neoconservatives, was a synthesis over the next 2 decades, (from his death in 1973 to the 1990’s), formulated by popular debate, reaction to perceived university-leftism, and the newfound role of the US as a unipolar power. It was in short, the natural evolution of thought, utilizing some of Strauss’s ideas but also developing its own conclusions and suggestions.

Indeed, Strauss had little interest in politics, remained academic, and rarely focused on American issues (Lilla, 2016; pp. 58 – 59). Neoconservatism, as a **movement** and ideology needed a catalyst to consolidate its ideas, to bring it out from esoterica to the masses. Strauss – who died in 1973 when it was still a fledgling ideology - provided some key intellectual pillars that would remain with neoconservatism, but he was not directly responsible for its development as a movement.

To conclude this sub-section, Strauss can be credited with reviving or re-popularizing the idea of natural right and elucidating the idea of historical and moral absolutism. These in turn would help form the core or foundation of neoconservative thought, which remains intact today. Revisiting the network of Strauss, links exist but have their limitations. He directly taught Allan Bloom, who then influenced Paul Wolfowitz and Francis Fukuyama⁷². Strauss also was linked to Irving Kristol by Kristol’s own admission. Since many other thinkers at the time were influenced by Bloom’s bestseller, Strauss was – by proxy – influential, since his ideas on objective morality and natural right were imbued in the 1987 book. But Strauss’s influence was limited on the neoconservatives, many of whom emerged after his death in the 1970’s, or who developed their

⁷¹ He continues “After that they are fed a lot of cloying scholarship about the American founding, the glories of statesmanship, the burden of prudence, and the need for civic virtue. They are also encouraged to think that America has been slipping into nihilism since the 1960’s and that, however vulgar, right wing populism and religious fundamentalism contribute to the nation’s recovering its basic sense of right and wrong. This is the path that led from the seminar rooms in Chicago to the right-wing political-media foundation complex in Washington that has transformed American politics over the past five decades”

⁷² Wroe, Nicholas “History’s Pallbearer” *The Guardian*. 11 May, 2002. Web. Accessed. 06 Dec, 2017.

ideas independent of his direct influence without any firm evidence linking them to Strauss. Examples of the latter include Daniel Patrick Moynahan, a Ph.D. from Tufts⁷³, Jeanne Kirkpatrick⁷⁴, educated at Columbia and Norman Podhoretz, also educated at Columbia⁷⁵. The younger neoconservatives, while also passing through Strauss's employer – the University of Chicago – would end up developing ideas much more bespoke to modern discourse, utilizing just as a baseline level, Strauss's ideas. In fact, according to Gerson, the most pivotal thinker to neoconservatism was, above all others, Irving Kristol (1996; p. 13),⁷⁶ and Kristol's perspectives are not at all wholly reducible to Strauss.

To suggest that Strauss's ideas led to the Iraq war of 2003 is to perform immense wrangling of connections by proxy and the filling in of missing parts in a network. Strauss was influential, there is no doubt of that. But his influence must not be overstated to validate a thesis of conspiracy.

1960's Onwards

While Irving Kristol has attributed Strauss to the development of his ideas (Cooper, 2011; p. 25), it is undeniable that as a *movement*, mobilizing its theoretical and intellectual underpinnings drawn from Liberalism, conservatism and Straussianism, neoconservatism would have remained abstract and esoteric had it not been for its elucidation by Kristol, Podhoretz, Bloom, and then Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan. Much is written elsewhere on the genesis of *neoconservatism* as we know it in the 1960's, in reaction to the New Left. Given the wealth of work on the topic, particularly Mark Gerson's 1996 volume on the history of neoconservatism, this particular section on the 1960's and 1970's will be brief.

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⁷³ Wessell, Nils Y. "Remembering Daniel Patrick Moynahan" *Tufts Journal*. Date unknown. Web. Accessed Dec 06 2017.

⁷⁴ Jackson, Harold, "Jeane Kirkpatrick" (obituary) *The Guardian*. Dec 9, 2006. Web. Accessed 06 Dec 2017.

⁷⁵ Goldberg, Matthew "Alumni Updates: Norman Podhoretz '50 Awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom" *Columbia College Today*. 2004. Web. Accessed Dec 06, 2017.

⁷⁶ "No neoconservative I interviewed discussed his or her work without extensive reference to Irving Kristol. This is no coincidence. Neoconservatives know that they are part of a unique movement, building off a base of distinct principle, with Kristol a few years in front of the rest in his thinking." (Gerson, 1996; p. 13).

“It used to be said that the revolution devours its children. It now appears that these children have devoured this revolution” (Kristol, Irving 1965 p. 117).

Thus, Kristol outlined the essence of the neoconservative exodus from liberalism in the 1960’s, where the radical Left transformed the movement to one that was unrecognizable to the likes of Kristol and his peers. But this much has been stated elsewhere. Yet it should be noted that neoconservatism in the 1960s’ and 1970’s was still mostly a domestically oriented ideology – discussing issues of identity, affirmative action, and one that focused much on virtue, morals and ethics. These ideas later would inform the foundation of neoconservatism (particularly from the 1990’s onwards, with Kristol and Kagan urging a more morally informed foreign policy [1996]), but would not evolve as the *thrust* of neoconservatism.

In the **1980s** the movement rallied around the rejection of cultural and moral relativism, evidence of an intellectual Straussian link. “Contrary to the multicultural model...conservatives championed the universalist, integrationist theories of a dominant, hierarchical culture to which one should submit. In their eyes, the excesses of the 1960’s and the resulting culture wars twenty years later had shown up the limitations of the old American “melting pot,” which now needed a radical reform, using set principles, to salvage and pull together what remained.” (Cusset, 2008; p. 175). The backlash against the dominance of male-Western perspectives in academia in the 1980s’ (see Cusset, 2003, p. 167 – 171) undeniably led Allan Bloom to write his 1987’s book which lamented the diffusion of cultural acceptance away from said Occidentalism and towards diverse, multicultural and disparate identity-political perspectives.

By this time, (neo) conservatives were effectively embedded in popular media and helped to create a counter-discourse against perceived political correctness in academia and American culture (Cusset, 2008; pp. 175 – 176)⁷⁷. For Cusset, this was “a veritable ideological crusade at work, with extensive resources and ambitious goals: recover an academic world overrun by “radicals,” and promote the development of a conservative “counter-intelligentsia.” (2008; p. 182). Because the “left” were so consumed in the 1980s with identity-oriented issues, they were profoundly scattered and hardly unified, a division which allowed the reaction against them - the new or neo conservatives – to consolidate and achieve greater influence because of their unity (Cusset, 2008; p. 187).

⁷⁷ Cusset writes in the context of French theory’s influence in the US, that the conservatives blamed this body for newfound political correctness and identity-studies (2008; p. 177)

The peak of neoconservative ideas occurred in the **1990's** all the way to the Iraq War. This was a period in which neoconservatism – while not overwhelmingly popular amongst voters – was able to influence policy. The key thinkers at this time were Robert Kagan, Bill Kristol, and Charles Krauthammer. The ideology shifted largely from domestic concerns, and strengthened its foreign policy perspectives. The most famous neoconservative essays of the 1990s for instance – Kristol and Kagan's (1996) "Toward a Neo-Reganite Foreign Policy" and Charles Krauthammer's (1991) "The Unipolar Moment" – were both international in perspective and published in *Foreign Affairs* magazine i.e., a publication not just circulated within neoconservative circles. Their ideas began to consolidate considerably on the foreign policy front, refining some of their ideas from virtue, nihilism and American exceptionalism, to notions that concerned "benevolent hegemony", unipolarity and alliances. Thus, the 1990's saw the evolution of neoconservatism from a domestically oriented ideology to one that was more concerned with foreign policy and used more social scientific terms. The movement therefore moved further and further away from the esoterica of Strauss and philosophy of Edmund Burke.

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The original question posed at the start of the section, was which intellectual movement had the greatest impact on the development of the field? Straussian thought does not inform the totality of neoconservative ideas. Neoconservative perspectives are rather a combination of classical conservatism's trepidation of radical change and utilitarianism in society, classical liberalism's emphasis on individualism, and Strauss's ideas on natural right. And what has made neoconservatism unique is the addition as of late (since the 1990's) of a greater refinement of thought particularly with regards to foreign affairs. Less and less have neoconservatives argued for the redemption of a society from nihilism, and more and more have they been stressing on issues of system management, instability and conflict and peace.

Neoconservatism has also shown a propensity to be highly adaptable and evolutionary while retaining a core set of beliefs. These beliefs in turn stem back to Strauss, conservatism and liberalism. It is important however, not to suggest that any one of these are singularly responsible for the ideology.

This section thus concludes that while neoconservatism's intellectual history is deep, and rich this only forms the core of its ideas. Neoconservatism has continued to adapt and change

across the last few decades, adding more perspectives to its corpus, thereby further distinguishing itself from Burke, Tocqueville, Strauss and even Bloom.

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The chapter has overall demonstrated a markedly wider conceptualization of neoconservatism. Notably, a common trope associated with the ideology – the preemptive war – features very minimally in neoconservative writings. This is to say, that while their unfettered belief in the RMA does not preclude the use of pre-emptive strikes, still, this is not a key and underlying core tenet of their world view. When broadening the use of neoconservative sources, in time and widening the authors used, this introduces working “tenets” of the approach to include an emphasis on alliances, and neo liberal economics/free trade, as well as some positive mention of multilateralism. In all, the approach comes together to reveal a profoundly hegemonic-centric one, that is, one that above pre-emptive strikes and nation building, is an ideology of American hegemony.

Further, the chapter has noted that neoconservatism also offers some perspectives on foreign policy making of a state and how this should ideally take place. Their overall notion centers around the idea that values and pragmatism are not mutually exclusive but mutually complementary for the success of the United States.

The chapter has also noted that neoconservatism is also an ideology, despite the protests of some traditional conservatives against that label. When using a strictly academic understanding of the term “ideology” it is clear that neoconservatism does fit this owing to its strong desire not just to describe phenomena but to enact change. The reason for describing neoconservatism in a threefold manner – a loose set of explanatory ideas, an approach to foreign policy and an ideology – is meant to showcase how broad neoconservatism is. This can be of immense benefit when converting it into a theory, particularly since it already features some fairly well fleshed out ideas on world phenomena and some ideas on foreign policy. It also means that there can be some limitations in transferring something that is partially an ideology into a theory. This will be the task of the second half of the next chapter.

The chapter above also traced the intellectual development of neoconservatism to illustrate the depth and breadth of the approach. By departing from classical conservatism and evolving

from Leo Strauss's particular ideas, while still retaining the essence of both, neoconservatism has shown itself to be a highly adaptable ideology, bespoke to the United States, while also capable of evolution.

The next task in the thesis is to take the above information, particularly the newfound understanding of neoconservatism, and assess whether it can in fact be a theory of international politics. This will be done by re-assessing neoconservatism with other theories.

Chapter 3: A Neoconservative Theory of International Politics?

Given the previous chapter's broadening of neoconservatism, it is necessary to re-assess it with the most common IR theories from each of the major paradigms. As such, this will constitute the first part of this chapter. Following from this, the second part of this chapter will transition to a broader discussion of the nature of theorizing in international relations, and its relationship with ideologies. The final part of the chapter is the culmination of the previous pages. It demonstrates the construction of the theory of neoconservatism as a theory of international politics. A final word will be made assessing this theory and avenues for further research.

PART I One Neoconservatism, Many Theories

A. Neoconservatism and Realism

One need not look far in either works to find that neoconservatives and realists hold mutual disdain for one another. In the Kristol and Kagan edited volume *Present Dangers*, James W. Caesar (2000) suggested that realists consider their anodyne non-emotive vision of statecraft to be the most superior option, underhandedly criticizing the neoconservatives: "... Above all they [the realists] pride themselves on avoiding the excesses of what they call "ideology". They base their thinking on the touchstone of the "national interest," a concept which they purport to be uniquely able to understand" (2000, p. 27).

Neoconservatives themselves hold such thinkers in no high regard. Aside from Krauthammer's misuse⁷⁸ of the term in 2004, conflating several neoconservative principles (like

⁷⁸ Throughout his 2004 essay, Krauthammer fails to distinguish realism from neo realism, as well as their theorists' almost consistent opposition to US military ventures overseas. Instead, Krauthammer paints a

pre-emption and unipolar order) with realism (2004; pp. 9 – 11), many neoconservatives consider an adherence to stark power politics to be highly a-moral and unfeasible⁷⁹. However, neoconservatism tends to share similar concepts with realist theories such as polarity, self-help, and a systemic understanding of international politics. This duality, a shared ontology but normative and personal differences, will be addressed in the section below. It should be noted, that theories of “hegemonic realism” (Levy, 2002; p. 354), are analyzed separately from the realist paradigm because of its hegemonic concentration.

Conceptual similarities

Caverley (2010) has noted that neoconservatism and realist theories fundamentally share the same starting points on conceptualizing the world. This thesis however, considers that while there is considerable overlap in starting assumptions, still, realism does not capture everything in neoconservatism (particularly its focus on non-material factors).

Nonetheless, this paper considers neoconservatism to be broadly systemic in nature (given its accounts of unipolarity), and considers states to be the key, although not the only, actors of importance in world politics. Given this systemic understanding, the distribution of power and capabilities are important, as with certain realist theories (Waltz’s structural realism and the hegemonic stability theories). Power, like in realism, is defined materially⁸⁰ although neoconservatives would add further that it is also non-material, like influence. The thesis also considers that the concept of anarchy – the absence of real authority in world politics – is compatible within neoconservatism, although this is more of a background feature over which hegemony is overlaid (and hegemony helps to mitigate anarchy’s effects). Additionally, just as realist theories analyze status quo states and revisionist states (Levy, 2002; p. 353), so too does neoconservatism. In fact, this terminology is integrated into the neoconservative theory later in the chapter. Further, given the *neo – neo* synthesis (Waeber, 1996 p. 163- 164) which saw newer

typical view of ‘realism’ as an approach that favours military action *sans* humanitarian imperatives – a parochial reading of the paradigm.

⁷⁹ See Williams and Schmidt (2008; pp. 309 – 310); Kristol and Kagan (pp. 64 – 65, 74, 2004; 1996, p. 27)

⁸⁰ See Schmidt, 2005 p. 528.

iterations of liberal theories adopting these assumptions, neo realism, neo liberal theories (of IR) and neoconservatism all share some fundamental starting points of the world.

Classical realism

At a basal level, classical realism is an account of international politics that focuses on power seeking states. Built from Thucydides, then Machiavelli, then Morgenthau⁸¹ and then later refined into neo-realism by Waltz, it has been held in contrast with neoconservatism. Still, given the expansion of neoconservative ideas in the last chapter, it is worth briefly comparing the two approaches.

Classical realism expressed the idea that conflict in world politics was due to the naturally violent dispositions of man (Waltz, 1954 *in* 1969 pp. 17-18).⁸² “The pessimists, while accepting the derivation of the balance of power and war from human nature, see little if any possibility of man righting himself,” wrote Waltz of such early classical realists (1969; p. 20). The previous chapter outlined however, that contrary to taking a fixed view of human nature, neoconservatives (in a very foundationally analytic way) take human nature to be malleable (Rapport, 2008; pp. 262 – 266). In any case, nothing in neoconservative writings points to any particular view that human nature is fixed in one way to produce conflict. Humans may be inclined towards conflict in certain societies, but this is usually the result of ideologies imbued in them by leaders.

But returning to classical realists, their pessimistic view of human nature allows for states to be more prone to war. Classical realists point to power struggles as derived from this as the source of conflict between and amongst states. Thucydides the Greek historian, and supposed first realist, ascribed the start of the Peloponnesian War to the Spartans who felt compelled to destroy

⁸¹ While this can be found in common textbooks on international relations, this is heavily contested by Schmidt 2002 who suggests such a lineage is artificially imposed to bestow onto the field greater legitimacy (pp. 7 – 8).

⁸² “Chapter II: International Conflict and Human Behavior” by Kenneth Waltz in *Man, The State and War* provides an account and critique of those early approaches which suggested individuals were to blame for conflicts (pp. 16 – 41; 1954, 1959, 1969 ed.). While his chapter is not limited to classical realists but also pacifists who suggested reforming human nature to avert war, his analysis and critique tackle approaches which present the causes of various phenomena in international politics as due to human *nature*, and those which dealt with human *behavior*. In this section neoconservatism is assessed only its views of human *nature* as a contributor or cause of conflict, in this immediate task of comparing neoconservatism with classical realism.

the emergent Athenian empire (Kagan, 2009; pp. 39 – 41⁸³). Thucydides wrote, “...I think that the truest explanation, although it has been the least noticed, was the growth of Athens to a great power, which brought fear to the Spartans and compelled war.” (Kagan, 2009; p. 39; Thucydides 1.23.5-6).⁸⁴ Thucydides continued “...the situation became unendurable and the Spartans decided they must try with all their resolution to destroy that power if they could and to launch this war.” (Kagan, 2009; p. 41; Thucydides 1.118.2). This rationale for one of the earliest recorded great power conflicts features the underlying basis of a *power imperative*. Sparta, fearing the loss of its power to an emergent Athens undertook violent conflict to maintain its standing. While this is an extremely parochial understanding of the conflict (and Kagan’s book outlines more of the historical intricacies), this provides the baseline assumption of classical realism, that **the pursuit of power** was the fear or desire of states vis-a-vis power and this inevitably took them to war. Indeed, this notion that two hegemons or empires simply cannot exist at the same time in a system without an existential conflict breaking out is similar in neoconservatism. As Kagan writes of this tension, “The Spartans were simply not yet prepared to share hegemony with Athens, nor were the Athenians prepared to accept Spartan checks on their ambitions.” (2009 p; 44).

Still, the implicit suggestion that the hitherto dominant state would in fact *initiate* a conflict out of fear of displacement is generally rejected in the neoconservative canon. This is evinced by the repeated assertions that challengers or possible challengers to American status quo are aggressive – far more so than the US – and so are much more likely to initiate a power conflict than the US. When Thucydides writes “I think the truest cause but the one least spoken of was that the Athenians had grown powerful, which presented an object of fear to the Spartans and forced them to go to war.” (Kagan, 2009; p. 44), there is some commonality with the neoconservative ideas that such an increase in power does in fact lead to fear, *but* they diverge in Thucydides ascribing causality to the hegemonic state.

⁸³ The “Kagan” here is Donald Kagan, father of Robert Kagan (a heavily cited neoconservative in this thesis) and himself a signatory of the Project for the New American Century’s *Rebuilding America’s Defenses* (2000). Donald Kagan is in a unique position in this section, being both a neoconservative and a prominent historian of Thucydides’ writings.

⁸⁴ Kagan notes that this translation is taken “...from Charles Foster Smith’s in the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; and London: William Heineman Ltd., 1930), sometimes emended by me...” (2010; p. 235).

In terms of modern IR theory, Hans Morgenthau is considered a pioneer of not just classical realism but International Relations (Williams, 2007, p. 1). The previous chapter outlined some disagreements between Morgenthau and neoconservative thought, with the key debate concerning the definition of the national interest as either in a purely rational manner (for instance, without consideration of morals) or with some type of principled foundation.^{85 86} Their differences go back to a fundamentally different understanding of states and how they are affected by **ideology**, where differing ideological dispositions profoundly alter the character, desires, ambitions and behaviours of a state. As such, an ideological war is a zero-sum game, since it involves the very way of life and constitution of morals, a conceptualization ignored in realism which favors not sentiment but strategy and survival/power.⁸⁷ Cox suggests Morgenthau believed the Soviet Union to be, rather than an existential and megalomaniacal state, a normal country and which ought to be treated so (2007; pp. 176 – 177). This, for the neoconservatives, was the pragmatic but moral miscalculation that neoconservatives would have been loath to adopt. On this type of thought, of adversarial leaders manipulating perspectives in their favour, Norman Podhoretz wrote: “Hitler ... was a revolutionary seeking to overturn the going international system and to replace it with a new order dominated by Germany... For tactical reasons and in order to mislead, Hitler sometimes pretended that all he wanted was the satisfaction of specific grievances, and those who were taken in by this pretense not unreasonably thought they could “do business” with him.” (Podhoretz, 1982, 1986 in

⁸⁵ See Michael Williams, 2005

⁸⁶ Their differences also concern different interpretations of what is moral as well. During and after the Iraq war, theorists of the realist broad-church and neoconservatism criticized each other’s views regarding the war. This was very similar to the rival discourses surrounding the Vietnam war, four decades prior, also between the early realists and early neoconservatives. Michael Cox details to a great extent Morgenthau’s impassioned critique of the Vietnam war, which he said ultimately became seen on moral grounds by the realist “The war, he [Morgenthau] now began to argue in ways ‘seemingly at odds with his realist perspective’, was not merely unwise and ill-advised but unjust, genocidal and possible even motivated by a racist disdain for Asians.” (2007; p. 184). On the contrary, early neoconservative thinkers like Norman Podhoretz expressed that Vietnam was a highly moral war in its cause, to protect the South Vietnamese from the horrors of communism (1982, 1983; e.g. p. 172). In other words, a tepid and cautious foreign policy was always the more ethical choice than an over-active one, according to Morgenthau.

⁸⁷ Cox writes that Morgenthau held that liberalism in international politics was unfeasible and therefore should not be pursued as a matter of policy. According to Cox, Morgenthau held “...deep and abiding suspicion of liberalism as an international project. Morgenthau may not have been illiberal himself. Still, he always drew a sharp distinction between what was feasible within the boundaries of states, and what was possible in determining relations between them.” (2007, p. 171).

2004, pp. 205 – 206). Similarly, with the Soviet Union, Podhoretz suggested that they were “...the same kind of threat, and [posed] the same narrow range of choices, to the West.” (p. 206). In other words, those like Morgenthau who had dismissed the Soviets as reasonable but misunderstood, had fundamentally walked into the same trap that the Soviets – and the Nazis before them (at least for a time) - had designed, according to the neoconservatives. Ideology, as Podhoretz suggested, was a key variable that informed their judgement (p. 205).⁸⁸

Further is Morgenthau’s insistence on a **level of prudence** or at least caution to be engaged in world politics (Williams, 2007, p. 10; Lang, 2007). Anthony Lang Jr. suggests that Morgenthau espoused the idea of *diplomacy* as the only real ethical means of statecraft, which thus leads to a sense of moderation in foreign policy (Lang, 2007, p. 31)⁸⁹. “Indeed, the first ‘rule’ of successful diplomacy is the elimination of the ‘crusading spirit’, a rule that conforms well to the Aristotelian idea of virtue as being about moderation between extremes.” (ibid).⁹⁰ Williams implies that this informed contemporary realist ideas on the War in Iraq (2007, p. 10); and naturally this provides a theoretical contrast with neoconservatives who consider prudential statecraft as foolhardy. Norman Podhoretz rebuked those who favoured diplomacy with the Soviet Union: “...the conflict between the Soviet Union and the West is not subject to resolution by the traditional tools of

⁸⁸ “But what if the Soviet Union is not a “normal” nation-state? What if in this case ideology overrides interest in the traditional sense?” (Podhoretz, 1982, 1986, in 2004; p. 205).

⁸⁹ Lang suggests that Morgenthau would have favoured military action in response to the September 11th attacks, but suggests it would not have been to “...defend American values” (p. 37), although this itself is a contentious assertion since some classical realists like Arnold Wolfers have noted the inherent prevalence of values in discussions of national security - “Those who advocate a policy devoted to national security are not always aware of the fact ...that they are passing a moral judgement when they advise a nation to pursue the goal of national security...” (Wolfers 1952; p. 489). He continues, “Decision makers are faced with the moral problem ...of choosing first the values which deserve protection, with national independence ranking high not merely for its own sake but for the guarantee it may offer to values like liberty, justice and peace.” (Wolfers, 1952, p. 500). Nonetheless, following from Lang’s analysis, it may be fair to argue that still, Morgenthau – and the other classical realists - most likely would not have waged a disproportionate full-scale military operation like the neoconservatives favoured in response to a terrorist attack since the *sovereignty* of the US was not at stake in the ‘War on Terror’. One can argue that in keeping with rational actor decision making, a sense of greater proportionality in military reactions tends to characterize classical and defensive realist theories.

⁹⁰ This cautious manner of state conduct described by Morgenthau lies in contrast to highly parochial and intuitive interpretations of classical realism which consider it as coarsely violent (Lang, 2007, p. 18).

diplomacy. Or, to put the point another way, given the nature of the Soviet threat, détente is not possible (1982, 1986 *in* 2004; p. 206).⁹¹

As with the neo realists, Morgenthau discussed the idea of **balance of power**, but, rather than considering it as an inevitable product of an anarchic system (that is, balance of outcome of the system), Morgenthau suggested it was a *deliberate policy* by statesmen, i.e., it was balance-as-policy (Little, 2007, p. 138). This interpretation gives far more agency to statesmen, something that neoconservatism vaguely touches on in its emphasis on the predilections and preferences of individual leaders. Little writes, “When Morgenthau views the balance of power as a universal phenomenon, he assumes that statesmen have always been acutely conscious of their own power base and the power possessed by their neighbours.” (2007, p. 139). Because power is difficult to assess, Morgenthau - at least in Little’s constructivist revisionism - suggested that statesmen in turn relied on identities and ideas to engage in balancing⁹² (2007; p. 158). Neoconservatives would likewise suggest that states would not balance out of some overarching mechanism but rather because of *choice*, and this choice would likewise depend on state preferences. In contrast to the classical realist position which tends to ignore ideological differences, states in *neoconservatism* will accept a *dominant* state (and therefore do not engage in a balance of power) if there is some ideological affinity and, *especially* if they are more inclined towards security, as opposed to *power*. This latter inclination is influenced by the character of these states (their type of regime, with democracies more inclined towards security). This point will be developed throughout this chapter.

Neo Realism:

Structural/Defensive

Neoconservatism can appear as the direct opposite of Waltz’s structural realism theory. While sharing very similar concepts, material power, a structural understanding of world politics

⁹¹ But instead of calling for military measures, Podhoretz called for a more suspicious reading of the Soviet Union. He suggested that because the US had “limited aims” in diplomacy whereas the Soviets had “unlimited aims”, this meant the USSR would always come away from negotiations with an advantage. (p. 206). He wrote, “Even a deal that on the surface promises mutual benefits will work out to the advantage of the side pursuing a strategy of victory over the side pursuing a strategy of accommodation and peace.” (ibid).

⁹² The implication of course, Little notes, is that Morgenthau may be better assessed as a precursor to constructivist thought (2007; p. 158).

(at least implicitly for neoconservatives) and the concept of polarity, the two fundamentally differ on the resultant phenomena in world politics.

Waltz posited that states are compelled towards **helping themselves** owing to the impositions of **anarchy**, thereby denoting a highly fatalistic concept of world politics in the modern state system (Waltz, 1986, pp. 100 - 104). Waltz sought to flatten all states into a simpler and more parsimonious conceptualization, where they are *all self interested*, a function of anarchy (Wendt, 1999, p. 248). In so doing, he managed to – within his theory at least – bypass any obstructive counter explanations that anarchy can produce differing behaviors (ibid). As Alexander Wendt writes, such a proposal is rejected by liberalism in IR, preferring instead to think of state interest as varied and determined domestically (ibid). Conversely, in neoconservatism, as the last chapter demonstrated, states need not resort to such measures of protection if there is a strong and overarching state, in essence, to circumvent such effects of anarchy. In other words, neoconservatives see *Pax Americana* as the successful superimposition of hierarchy over anarchy, and so the latter is manageable, and does not necessarily produce effects like self-help, relative gains and security dilemmas as fatalistic inevitabilities of an international system.

This ultimately goes back to a **fundamental disagreement on the feasibility of hegemony**. Waltz suggests that hegemony will not materialize owing to balancing (1986, p. 127), since a balance of power exists due to structural constraints imposed by an anarchic system (Waltz, 1986, p. 116). Crucially, within this system, Waltz posited that bipolarity would be the most stable, since the poles balanced each other out (Waltz, 1979 *e.g.* p.161). For the neoconservatives, the presence of hegemony itself ensures that there are neither incentives for balancing against it, nor do they believe that anarchy will necessarily constrain states to act in certain self-interested (insular) ways, following more the above mentioned classical realist view on conscious balancing (Little, 2007 pp 138 – 139). As such, states and statesmen have much more willpower in neoconservatism than in Waltz’s structural realism. As will be mentioned further in the chapter, neoconservatives agree much more with the hegemonic stability theorists who suggest that a concentration of unipolarity is the most stable.

Analytically as well, Waltz removed any consideration of **domestic features** of states, such as the character of their leadership or economy, or “...questions about the kinds of political leaders, social and economic institutions, and ideological commitments states may have” (1986, p. 71, 94). Instead, what matters to Waltz is the capabilities of states (1986; p. 94).

Neoconservatives however, are generally guided analytically by the **regime type**. Not only should this inform the policy of the US towards other states, but it has a key impact on the direction of and events in international politics according to them. Non-democracies, following from the neoconservative's borrowing from the democratic peace theory (explained later), behave in certain ways that uphold the status quo of the post-World War II order. The regime and makeup of the state determines which actions it may take. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, possible challengers of a status quo tend to be driven by *power*, and in turn, most likely do not have a democratic constitution. This is evinced by the discursive separation that neoconservatives make between allies (identified usually as democracies) and aggressors (usually considered non-democracies) (eg. see Wolfowitz, 2000).⁹³

Similarities: as mentioned above, the two approaches do have similarities, including a shared ontology. Waltz stresses that changes of a state's **relative capabilities** are key in his theory (1986, p. 73). Neoconservatives likewise also agree that this is highly important, since a state's increase in power in a particular region (such as the attainment of a nuclear weapon) is taken to be a key change in the geopolitical calculus of that area [such as a nuclear endowed Iran or a potentially communist Afghanistan, and communist South East Asia]. In fact, this paper argues that neoconservatism, while placing emphasis on ideology, still holds that any great material shift in power or capabilities can be a tipping point towards conflict amongst states. On this, neoconservatives likewise share a *modified* view of the idea that **gains in the international system are relative**. Waltz suggested that in a system of anarchy, one state's gain is mutually exclusive to another's (1979). Any change in material capability, notably nuclear endowment [or increased ideological influence], is taken to be relative to the power enjoyed by a hegemon in the neoconservative view, in that it leeches away the influence of the dominant state, since the world is not large enough for two superpowers or two dominant ideologies.

On this topic of relative gains in the international system, neoconservatism provides not so much of a contrast with Waltz's view, but its own elaboration which comes with its heavy focus

⁹³ For instance, Wolfowitz makes reference to "a hostile power" that may "dominate" Europe, Asia and the Middle East (2000; p. 311), and those "ruthless leaders, whose real goal is to change the existing power relationship..." (p. 322). The previous chapter noted that neoconservatism imbues such qualities in non-democratic states.

on hegemony. For neoconservatives, relative gains occur in two complementary areas - a reduction in **influence**, and a reduction in the **material** share of power.

Concerning the reduction of influence, gains by any state in one area of war winning capabilities generally entail a relative reduction in *influential* power on the part of the hegemon. To put it more clearly, when the United States assures another state's security, this means that this state is now dependent on, and generally must fall under the influence of the United States. But should this reliant state become less dependent by expanding their military capabilities, this incrementally reduces the United States' influential power over them. Materially, the United States' dominance declines relatively since the very idea of *unipolarity* presupposes a finite amount of material power in the system.⁹⁴

Neoconservatism lumps materialism and influence as complementary conceptions of power, since a material base of power can (in their view) be translated to influence over others. Thus, if *any* state, be it allied or adversarial, expands its military, this results in a relative loss of power of the hegemon since the hegemon has lost considerable monopoly on war winning abilities and thus the leverage that comes with this. It should be clarified however, that material dominance is not the only path to influencing other states in neoconservatism, but within the parameters of this present discussion (on the shared ideas of relative gains in both neoconservatism and defensive

⁹⁴ A useful way of conceptualizing this is demonstrated by Singer' et. al (1972, 2012) National Material Capabilities listing (ver. 5), which records data on population, military size, iron and steel production and so forth. These capabilities then are calculated to assess each state's share of material power in the international system in each year. This score is the Composite Index of National Capabilities, which lies on a scale of 0 – 1, where 1 means a state has *all* the material power in the system, and 0 means that a state has none (Greig and Enterline, 2017, pp 7 – 8). Every year, the sum of all states' shares is 1, so each state's CINC is a fraction or decimal (ibid). As such, a great increase in one state's share of CINC will lower another's. This mutual exclusion and concept of finite power in the system (hence power sums to 1) is partially adopted into this paper's understanding of neoconservatism. However, it should be noted that this is relevant to *military* capabilities and dominance, but, economic growth is considered to be more absolute than relative in neoconservatism. On this latter, recall chapter 2 in which Irving Kristol was quoted as suggesting economic growth to be possible in an absolute sense. Neoconservatives' views on economic growth are thus exempt from their ideas on finite military power, since economic growth, in their neo liberal conceptualization, is not taken to be beholden to any zero-sum concept (hence their disdain for policies like taxation of wealthier classes).

It should also be noted that Singer's et al's conceptualization is not necessarily bespoke to concepts of hegemony and unipolarity, but, the practice of summing material power to 1 is adopted in this paper to be congruent with the idea of *maximum hegemony*. As will later be introduced in the thesis, neoconservatism will adopt this idea of "maximum hegemony" which the value within the zero-to-one scale in which a state is so powerful that no other state or group of states can effectively counter balance it.

realism, and the nuanced differences between the two on the topic), a hegemon's material dominance involves influence over allies.

While this conceptualization takes liberties with the realist-centric debate on power as either influential *or* material, neoconservatism adopts a view that influence does not necessarily preclude some sort of materialism supporting it.

Offensive Realism

Whereas the system according to Waltz drives states to be concerned with their security first and foremost, Mearsheimer revised this assumption to suggest that instead states are driven towards power-seeking, since this in turn assures their security (2001; 2014). As with Waltz's theory, Mearsheimer's is also fatalistic. States are enslaved to the system which forces them to "act aggressively toward each other" when really what they want, but cannot pursue, is security (Mearsheimer, 2011, 2014; p. 3). Neoconservatives would reject this overly – tragic account of world politics, and give more agency to states and their statesmen.

This means that the main goal and natural pursuit of states would be regional hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2014; pp 40 - 41)⁹⁵. Neoconservatives very similarly express that *some* states would like to achieve this type of role in their region (although they are not systemically *compelled* to this), and the two approaches do share this assumption of the existence and importance of regional hegemony (eg Wolfowitz, 1992). For Mearsheimer it indicates that states would seek power in their very proximate zone of influence, whereas for neoconservatives, it offers a geopolitical opportunity for another state (the US) to extend its influence, as a distant power, *sans* territorial acquisition. But, a key difference, is that while offensive realism holds that states are driven towards regional hegemony out of a baseline imperative for survival, neoconservatives suggest that states pursue such a course out of *ambition*, and so seek to create hegemony in a global sense, as if to replace the existing global hegemon. One such example of this is Norman Podhoretz's description of states like the USSR and Nazi Germany as having "unlimited aims" (1982, 1986 *in* 2004; p. 206), or extreme ambitions to superpower-status.

⁹⁵ Mearsheimer suggests that true world hegemony has never existed, and instead, realistically it is hegemony at a regional level that is highly possible (ibid).

Therefore, whereas offensive realism considers that hegemonic desires of states may be limited (regional), and neoconservatism suggests that such aims are essentially *insatiable*, this involves a difference concerning the importance of regime type and relation to the hegemon. For neoconservatives, both the **regime type** and the **feelings of affinity or enmity** towards the hegemon are key determinants in whether a state will have such “unlimited aims” of maximalist hegemony or not, an explanation not featured in Mearsheimer’s theory.

Neoconservatives would suggest states friendly to the United States are hardly likely to challenge it. As Baldwin suggests, criticizing neorealist theories, “The idea that American policy-makers spend a lot of time calculating the capabilities of Canada or the United Kingdom in general, or in the abstract, seems rather far-fetched.” (2002; p. 183). Realism in general tends not to feature such feelings of friendship and animosity between and amongst states, whereas neoconservatives suggest that this is one important determinant of state behavior. Mearsheimer however, does zone in on *China* as a possible adversary to the United States in the future, and suggests that even if it were to be democratic, it will still challenge the US.⁹⁶ “Great powers”, he writes, “are rarely content with the current distribution of power; on the contrary; they face a constant incentive to change it in their favour” (2001, 2014, p. 2)⁹⁷. However, Mearsheimer offers little explanation as to why China would challenge the US but not, say, 21st century Germany.

On this, there is a crucial point that will be noted in the neoconservative theory. Where in some realist theories states seek power (Offensive realism by John Mearsheimer sees power

⁹⁶ He writes “Whether China is democratic and deeply enmeshed in the global economy or autocratic and autarkic will have little effect on its behavior, because democracies care about security as much as non-democracies do, and hegemony is the best way for any state to guarantee its own survival.” (2001, 2014; p. 4).

⁹⁷ Mearsheimer rejects engagement with China as a viable option, suggesting that their economic growth will be redirected to militarization, which will then lead them to challenge the US’s regional hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region (ibid). The implication – that the US ought to not engage with China economically – is a difficult one for neoconservatives to consider given their free market preferences. Niall Ferguson for instance (2004) has suggested working with the Chinese as opposed to challenging them (p. 261). However, the neoconservatives at the same time do share some suspicion of the Chinese mounting a threat to the US’s regional hegemony, but rather than isolating China or treating it in an adversarial manner, they suggest co-opting it so that it has no desire to replace the US hegemonic system (Wolfowitz, 2000, p. 325). As Wolfowitz suggests, isolating China may increase feelings of “enmity” which can only exacerbate the likelihood of a future conflict (ibid). This inclusion of feelings of “enmity” marks another difference with realist theories of many variants, few of which focus on inter-state *emotions* and *feelings* as crucial factors in international politics.

seeking based on a security imperative) and other approaches like Waltz's 1979 theory see states seeking security, neoconservatism expresses that whether a state chooses to do one of the two heavily **depends on their regime type**, although level of dependence and/or affinity to the hegemon also factor in.⁹⁸ In essence, *states that wish to challenge the status quo do so out of ambition and power, not out of a baseline survival imperative*. Conversely, *states that seek security are more likely to be allies of the hegemon*. In turn, these imperatives are directly related to what type of ideology and regime type the state has adopted. This will be featured more in depth in the last section of this chapter.

Ultimately, as previous work has demonstrated, neoconservatism cannot be subsumed into defensive and offensive neo-realist theories, owing to their inability to look into the regime type of states and fatalism of systemic forces compelling actors to behave in ways they otherwise would not want to do if they enjoyed free will.

Neo Classical Realism

One theory which has been suggested to account for neoconservatism is neo classical realism, owing to its emphasis on regime type (Caverley, 2010), which the above variants failed to consider. Fareed Zakaria's perspective – also called “state-centered realism”⁹⁹, is an approach that studies “state power” or decision making at the state level to explain state behavior, and thus international systemic phenomena (Zakaria, 1998; p. 9)¹⁰⁰. Zakaria, a former student of Samuel Huntington, constructed a theory of *foreign policy*, in order to explain state behavior in the international system (1998, p. 14)¹⁰¹. As such, it gives much greater power to the role of leaders

⁹⁸ Other writers like Cooper have suggested that regime type is important in this regard (2011; pp. 80 – 81). However, this paper goes more in depth, by extrapolating from the canon that some states seek power, and others seek security, and explains *why* exactly this is so.

⁹⁹ See p. 35, in Zakaria, 1998

¹⁰⁰ “This study demonstrates that a domestic variable, state power, can be introduced into a systemic theory without undermining the theory's basic premises.” (p. 9).

¹⁰¹ “A theory of foreign policy sheds light on the reasons for a nation's efforts – the search for allies, the attempt to annex a colony – but it cannot account for the results of those efforts”, which are in turn explained by theories of international politics, he suggests (Zakaria, 1998, p. 14).

and diplomats in conducting statecraft and driving international affairs (p. 35)¹⁰² as opposed to states being constricted by anarchic forces. The previous chapter similarly established that neoconservatives place much emphasis on the ability, character, judgement, and preferences of individual leaders (with specific references to the US presidents, but also in this paper, this can be analytically stretched to states other than the US as well)¹⁰³.

Building on *classical* realism, state centered realism sees power as a key feature in state motivations, i.e., leaders will expand their states if they “*perceive a relative increase in state power*” (Zakaria, 1998; p. 38). Ultimately, this goes back to the *ability* of the state to undertake such expansionist or internationalist policies (pp. 38 – 39)¹⁰⁴. Conversely, neoconservatives contend that the US is deeply limited from carrying out its full potential or the neoconservative vision *because* the will of the people (who are more cautious or domestically inclined) acts as a constraint (Caverley, 2010; pp. 602- 603). For neoconservatism, this is a deeply troubling facet of democracy: *because* the US is a democracy it has a moral right to lead the world, but it is also because it is democratically constituted it cannot *fully* carry this through. While the US may clearly have the material power to expand internationally, it lacks the democratic consent to so do. Neoconservatism is fairly insistent on this point as a constraint for democracies, and similarly, Zakaria suggests “...the least attractive of major central institutions from a statist perspective is Congress, which is so susceptible to the influence of private interests.” (p. 40). But crucially, Zakaria does not mention that the democratic process itself, and not just the venal influence of lobbies, provides for limiting factors.

¹⁰² “Statesmen, not nations, confront the international system, and they have access to only that fraction of national power that the state apparatus can extract for its purposes.” (p. 35). He writes further that the theory “...seeks to bring the state back into realism. It recognizes that statesmen encounter not only pressures from the international system but also constraints that are the consequences of state structure, chiefly the degree to which national power can be converted to state power.” (p. 38).

¹⁰³ Donald Kagan, in interpreting Thucydides finds that the Greek historian found democracy “...can be effective only when led by a strong, wise, competent, unselfish leader like Pericles. Without such guidance a true democracy is likely to go astray and follow the advice of unfit, irresponsible, and selfish demagogic leaders who will lead the state into factious disputes, grandiose and dangerous undertakings, and disaster.” (p. 234).

¹⁰⁴ “The stronger the state, the greater its ability to extract national power for its ends.” (p. 38), and “The second dimension of state strength concerns its central policy-making apparatus: does the state possess sufficient capacity and cohesion to carry out its wishes?” (p. 39).

In Caverley's (2010) paper which strongly argued that neoconservatism was a form of neoclassical realism, it was suggested that the two share at a fundamental level, a notion that world politics is conflictual, power is of utmost importance and states are the key actors (p. 597). But assuming that neoconservatism can be subsumed into neoclassical realism using these tenets is hardly a gripping conclusion by Caverley, since these ideas are broadly held by wider realism. Further, this ignores ideational aspects of neoconservatism, and the notion that conflict can be circumvented through system management, i.e., an overarching state (a hegemon) seeking to correct aberrations at the systemic level like global conflicts and global economic crises. On this, and very crucially, neo classical realism does not account for systemic level phenomena like stability of international economic markets, alliances and cooperation, and international security in the way that neoconservatism mentions. While Zakaria does not necessarily preclude a systemic focus (basing his state centrism in a systemic context [p. 9; 41]), the theory offers a paucity of explaining systemic level occurrences, whereas neoconservatism offers its own accounts for such, particularly on the causes of international conflict, i.e., conflict which takes place at the systemic level (for instance, Bret Stephens' description of "supra systemic" disorder [2014]).

Finally, and to refute suggestions that neoconservatism can be absorbed into realism, and in particular to refute Caverley's assumption that neoconservatism fits into neoclassical realism, neo classical realism lacks any real normative ideas, which characterize neoconservatism. For this reason, neo classical realism should be rejected as an overarching theory under which neoconservatism fits.

The above has demonstrated that while sharing similar assumptions as to how the world can be analyzed, and sharing similar concepts (like the system and polarity, which will later be folded into the neoconservative theory), neither classical, defensive (Waltz's), offensive nor neo classical realism can successfully explain neoconservatism. Therefore, neoconservatism ultimately *is not* a realist theory of international politics.

B. Neoconservatism and Liberalism

Given neoconservatism's emphasis on the value of alliances, appeals to morality, and adherence to democratization, one can reasonably draw links with some liberal theories of international relations. This section focuses on comparing neoconservatism to Classical Liberalism, then the democratic peace theory, and then neo-liberal (IR) theory.

Classical or Kantian liberalism supposes that rights and liberties of individuals (rights of free speech and personal property; equal entitlement to various social benefits) rest on the democratic consent of the people (Doyle, 1983 A, p. 207). Given Doyle's taxonomy of "laissez-faire liberalism" and "social welfare", neoconservatives privilege the former, which entails free markets and smaller governments (Doyle, 1983 A; pp. 207 – 208). But both, he suggests, accept four basic principles: being individual freedom of expression, representative legislatures, private property and supply/demand dictated economics, a combination which differentiates liberal states from colonial, monarchical, communist and other regimes (Doyle, 1983 A; pp. 207 – 209).

While all these fit into neoconservative views (domestically and internationally), their notions still involve the *balance* of humanitarian sentiment and strategic gain, and so are not guided *purely* by solicitude for liberalism in trouble.¹⁰⁵ Neoconservatives reject any foreign policy that is purely one or the other. In this context of liberalism, Krauthammer criticized Liberal interventionism of the Clinton administration as those "... fights for right and good, *devoid of raw national interest...* [which were] ...morally pristine enough to justify the use of force [for the liberal internationalists]." (Krauthammer, 2004, p. 5). Krauthammer emphasizes the necessity to include not just sentiment, but precisely a firmer concept of the national interest "...as defined by a Great Power: shaping the international environment by projecting power abroad to secure economic, political, and strategic goods." (ibid).

Pure multilateralism, another ideal of liberal international relations is also rejected by neoconservatives, which they see as siphoning power from the US.¹⁰⁶ Because America is fundamentally exceptional due to its sheer amassed powers and the tremendous responsibilities

¹⁰⁵ "We will support democracy everywhere, but we will commit blood and treasure only in places where there is a strategic necessity—meaning, places central to the larger war against the existential enemy, the enemy that poses a global mortal threat to freedom." Krauthammer wrote (2004, p. 16).

¹⁰⁶ Krauthammer tellingly writes, "Their obvious net effect is to temper American power. Who, after all, was really going to be most constrained by these treaties? The ABM amendments were aimed squarely at American advances and strategic defenses, not at Russia, which lags hopelessly behind. The Kyoto Protocol exempted India and China. The nuclear test ban would have seriously degraded the American nuclear arsenal. And the land mine treaty (which the Clinton administration spent months negotiating but, in the end, met so much Pentagon resistance that even Clinton could not initial it) would have had a devastating impact on U.S. conventional forces, particularly at the DMZ in Korea," wrote Krauthammer (2004, p. 6). He continued, "But that, you see, is the whole point of the multilateral enterprise: To reduce American freedom of action by making it subservient to, dependent on, constricted by the will—and interests—of other nations." (ibid)

that follow (which then go on to accrue more power for the US, a cycle outlined in chapter 2), it cannot be constrained by the levelling nature of multilateralism. The common link underlying those neoconservatives who criticize the United Nations (e.g. Moynahan, 1975), and those like Ferguson (2004) who explicitly endorse multilateralism, is a strong rejection of the *levelling* of the United States to the status of other states. In any context, the US must be above other states. Krauthammer writes “...multilateralism imposed on Great Powers, and particularly on a unipolar power, is intended to *restrain* that power.” (2004, p. 8).

Still, even though it seems as if neoconservatism has more differences with liberalism than similarities, it is important to go beyond what they state at face value. While Krauthammer rebukes the liberal internationalists, criticizing their goal to “...transform the international system from the Hobbesian universe into a Lockean universe. To turn the state of nature into a norm-driven community... In short, to remake the international system in the image of domestic civil society.” (2004; p. 8), this of course, to pull one’s lens back, *is* similar - however not identical - to the goal of the neoconservatives – a world with democratic and willingly cooperative states. It just so happens that neoconservatism is much more linked to self-interest (i.e., the preservation of hegemony) than liberals and liberal hawks.¹⁰⁷ Krauthammer of course does exaggerate the altruism of liberalism. IR theories of liberalism entail a concept of self-interest: ideas like cooperation, free trade and international law are all means to the self-interested end of state preservation through the avoidance of conflict and self-defeating economic policies. The difference is that the neoconservative concept of self-interest is *hegemonic* in nature – i.e., concerning the preservation of *one particular state*: the hegemon. From the perspective of the neoconservatives, peace and cooperation are only possible through the strength and preservation of this one state, whereas IR liberal theories tend to avoid the encouragement of a single dominant state.

Democratic Peace Theory

Underpinning the core logic of the neoconservative support for liberal democracy is the **democratic peace thesis**, that democracies are more prone to mutual peace than war. Krauthammer writes on the efficacy and benefits of pursuing a foreign policy that tries to spread

¹⁰⁷ Krauthammer makes it clear that whereas the liberal internationalists may want to ultimately “...abolish the very idea of state power and national interest,” which will effectively corrode the idea of the US as a hegemon - contrary to neoconservative views on American exceptionalism (2004; pp. 8 – 9).

democracy, echoing the democratic peace thesis, (though not discussing the Democratic Peace finding that democracies are still prone to conflict with *non*-democracies): “Democracies are inherently more friendly to the United States, less belligerent to their neighbors, and generally more inclined to peace.” (2004 p. 15). Of course, he notes that neoconservatives support the spread of democracy for *both* moral and strategic ends. “What it [democratic globalism]¹⁰⁸ can teach realism is that the spread of democracy is not just an end but a means, an indispensable means for securing American interests.” (Krauthammer, 2004, p. 15).

Throughout the neoconservative literature is a tendency to cast non-liberal-democratic states as obstreperous, and bent on status quo revisionism. The previous section on realism very briefly touched on the idea that allies seek *security* and non-allies seek *power*, a difference which lies in part to their respective regime types. Allies in the neoconservative literature are most likely to be *democracies*, and those that reject the United States as a world leader are often painted as *non-democracies*. As such, it is only democracies (and liberal democracies usually) that are capable of peace according to neoconservatives. Since their approach is highly prescriptive, neoconservatives actively espouse democracy promotion to create a much more manageable and pacifistic world, in turn built on the foundation of the democratic peace theory or thesis. Given this perspective, it may be highly tempting to suggest that, in fact, the democratic peace theory captures large portions of the ideology.

The intellectual precursor of said approach, Immanuel Kant, suggested various antecedents for a “perpetual peace” to be attained by a community of states. Of the six articles enumerating these antecedents, **two** are of great relevance to neoconservatism. On the first relevant article, Kant writes “Any state, of whatever extent, shall never pass under the dominion of another state, whether by inheritance, exchange, purchase or donation” (Kant, 1796; p. 3). Kant expressed the underlying logic of sovereignty, viewing a state as a singular unit capable and entitled to its own governance, “...to incorporate it with another state, would be to reduce it from a moral person, to the condition of a thing, which contradicts the idea of a social compact, without which one cannot conceive of a right over a people.” (pp. 3 – 4). Contrary to previous iterations of hegemony in world history, the role of the US envisioned by the neocons is not one of territorial conquest. For the first time in

¹⁰⁸ “Democratic globalism” is Krauthammer’s preferred foreign policy approach, which in this dissertation, is subsumed under neoconservatism.

Western history, a behemoth state has declined to absorb numerous other territories, and this is a feature of US rule with which the neoconservatives are content (Ferguson, 2004; p. x; xii). Their version of democratization is merely *conversion*, not necessarily *conquest*. As Krauthammer writes, “we are unlike Rome, unlike Britain and France and Spain and the other classical empires of modern times, in that *we do not hunger for territory*. The use of the word “empire” in the American context is ridiculous.” (2004, p. 2). Territorial acquisition is rejected most likely on the grounds of inefficiency, high cost, domestic aversion, and a denial of agency. But as the theory section will demonstrate, neoconservatives do favourably express the efficacy of the use of force (the military) to achieve certain ends like democratization. But to reinforce the wider point of this paragraph, neoconservatives for the most part in their corpus tend to implicitly reject the modus operandi of previous empires like Great Britain which built their rule by absorbing multiple territories into their own for several hundred years, and essentially micro-managing the administration of these colonies. What neoconservatives share with Kant thus is that traditional colonization is an inefficient manner of achieving firm and autonomous democracies. Thus, following from Kant’s prerequisite to international peace, neoconservatives likewise adopt the more modern and liberal view of maintaining states’ sovereignty in the long term.

On the other hand, this does not mean that neoconservatives have unbridled respect for the sovereignty of other states. Given human rights abuses, they advocate for the change of regimes, often through military action.¹⁰⁹ This falls in line with the key liberal belief of the rights of the individual as an agential entity and not a mere object (Doyle, 1983 A, p. 206; Cooper, 2011; p. 56). Kant broadly writes against interventionism in the second relevant article, “No state shall by force interfere with either the constitution or government of another state.” (Kant, 1796, p. 7)¹¹⁰. But when the state itself has been ruptured in a civil war, and so its very composition is no more,

¹⁰⁹ For example, Stephens criticized nonintervention at the fall of Srebrenica which resulted in what would otherwise have been an avoidable ethnic cleansing (2014; pp. 212 – 213)

¹¹⁰ He does make room for intervention, when human rights are abused, “What is there that can authorize such a step? Perhaps the offense given to the subjects of another state,” (ibid). But, he weakly cautions against such, suggesting that such internal activities of another state are precisely why another should refrain from intervention, implying a contagion of sorts. Kant writes, in one translation, “...the example of anarchy may, on the contrary, warn them of the danger they run by exposing themselves to it.” (1796, p. 7). In another translation, it reads, “Rather the example of the evil into which a state has fallen because of its lawlessness should serve as a warning” (1796; p. 1). From Constitution.org. Web. Accessed 25 September 2017

he suggests this might be additional grounds for intervention since the state is but a shell of its former self (Kant, 1796; pp. 7 -8). “To lend assistance to one of the parties cannot then be esteemed an interference with the government, it being then in a state of anarchy” (Kant, 1796, p. 7). When neoconservatives support intervention in states, it is not necessarily because they have ruptured into two starkly opposing sides. Pre-emptive or precision strikes, embargoes against rogue regimes, and other means of regime change do not require the scenario painted by Kant. In fact, for neoconservatives, such a splitting of a state is precisely the disorder they wish to avoid in any given region of world politics, and so the US ought to not *wait* for such an occasion to arise. A respect for the sovereign and unitary “constitution” of a state in other words, is not a limiting or defining factor for intervention.

To achieve some form of ‘perpetual peace’, Kant proposes “**a pacific alliance**” which can assure mutual peace amongst states (1796; p. 24). “This alliance does not tend to any dominion over a state, but solely to the certain maintenance of the liberty of each particular state” (pp. 24 – 25). While neoconservatives advocate for the pacifying effects of alliances, their version sees, not complete equality amongst states, but a certain degree of *functional differentiation*, with precisely one state at the top contrary to Kant, meaning that states do carry out different duties and functions in the international system, with only the hegemon carrying out a leadership role.

With **modern democratic peace theory**, in the vein of international relations, Michael Doyle suggests that liberal states enjoy better relations with each other than liberal states with non-liberal ones (1983A, p. 206). But *why* are they peace prone? The Kantian **logic for democratic pacifism** is, according to Doyle “...once the aggressive interests of absolutists monarchies are tamed and once the habit of respect for individual rights is engrained by republican government, wars would appear as the disaster to the people’s welfare that he [Kant] and other liberals thought them to be.” (Doyle, 1983, A, p. 229). Therefore, since war is to be consented to by the populace in a democracy (or representative legislature as referenced by Kant)¹¹¹, armed conflict is unlikely since it would intuitively run counter to the interests that the people have deemed for themselves¹¹².

¹¹¹ Kant defines such a regime as “...the only one established upon principles compatible with, first the liberty of all the members of a society in the quality of men; second, with the submission of all to a common legislation, as subjects; and third, with the right of equality, which all share as members of a state” (1796, pp. 14 – 15). This he writes, is the only possible regime that “can lead to a perpetual peace” (p 16).

¹¹² Kant writes that the foundation of such a state, built from the will of the people, makes war unlikely: “...to decree war, would be to the citizens to decree against themselves and all the calamities of war, such

The explicitly stated logic for democratic peace according to Kagan and Kristol, mentioned in the last chapter, is that non democratic leaders have “...no means of acquiring legitimacy from their domestic policies, [and so they]...seek the nationalist legitimacy that comes from ‘standing up’ to an external enemy.” (Kristol and Kagan, 2004, p. 69). But interpreting the neoconservative canon a bit more can yield the following synthesis or core logic to democratic peace. Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington produced starkly different works on the state of liberalism in short succession. For Fukuyama, history had reached the key endpoint in liberalism (1989). The world—having exhausted inferior options – had come to now settle on liberal democracy as a way of life (ibid). Huntington conversely proposed that democracies moved in waves, where citizens embraced such a mode of politics, only to tire of it and eschew it in favour of populism, fascism or some other alternative (1991). While coming to different conclusions on the future of democracy, both imply that *democracies are the most advanced and least atavistic mode of politics*. For Fukuyama, liberalism and its associated democracy, are the end point of history, imbuing higher ideals into a refined (albeit apathetic) Last Man. For Huntington, democracy is the peak of a society before it regresses to a less effective and illiberal state. What both have in common however, is that liberal-democracy is the highest stage of human political advancement. It is most sophisticated and furthest away from a ‘state of nature’, imbuing its citizens with more enlightened ideas. As such, its leaders and people are disinclined towards conquest and more in favour of pacifism – at least to each other.

As Doyle writes, “A separate peace exists among liberal states.” (1983 A; p. 232). This thus explains their willingness to ignore the sovereignty of regimes with which they do not agree. Doyle suggests as much, writing that mutual dyads of democracies tend to be far more peace prone than those dyads with democratic and non-democratic state (ibid).¹¹³ Krauthammer suggests that

as fighting in person, furnishing from their own means towards the expense of war; painfully to repair the deviations it occasions; and, to fill up the measure of evils, load upon themselves the weight of a national debt, that would embitter even peace itself, and which, on account of constant new wars, can never be liquidated.” (1796; p. 16). In other words then, the sheer economic and personal loss of such conflicts that citizens will have to bear is a disincentive to such conflict. On the other hand, in states which are not built on the consent and say of the people, leaders can make war as a more common occurrence (1796; pp. 16 – 17).

¹¹³ “Even though liberal states have become involved in numerous wars with non-liberal states, constitutionally secure liberal states have yet to engage in war with one another” (Doyle, 1983, A, p. 213).

adversarial states would comply with the US if the United States wielded punitive force, which in turn acts as a deterrent for future potential transgressors¹¹⁴ (2004, p. 6). Doyle continues that democracy acts as an intervening variable that helps block wars from arising even in tense relations (1983, A, pp. 215 – 216). And, like Dick Cheney’s reference to a “Zone of Peace” of democracies, demonstrating and fulfilling a united front against a diffuse (or less well-organized enemy), Doyle suggests that democracies can unite against non-democracies, reneging on previous alliances (1983 A, p 216).¹¹⁵

Additionally, at the core of neoconservatism is *hegemonic* pacifism. On the contrary, Doyle rejects that hegemony is *the* unparalleled guardian of peace. He suggests that the US and Britain failed to keep the peace: “...the liberal peace cannot be attributed merely to effective international policing by a predominant hegemon – Britain in the nineteenth century, the United States in the postwar period.” (1983 A, p. 223). Neoconservatives would argue that the United States has in fact managed to keep *systemic peace* since the end of the Second World War, a war whose cause was the absence of a hegemon. Doyle writes further that there need not be a hegemon for peace, since “...the liberal peace persisted in the interwar period when international society lacked a predominant hegemonic power” (ibid), to which neoconservatives would suggest, this was *precisely* that abyss in history that led to the second world war, owing to a lack of real leadership.¹¹⁶

Doyle also suggests that hegemons do not assure peace in all areas of the globe, citing conflicts under British and American rule (ibid). He writes “...this explanation overestimates hegemonic control in both periods. Neither England nor the United States was able to prevent direct challenges to its interests (colonial competition in the nineteenth century, Middle East diplomacy and conflicts over trading with the enemy in the postwar period.) Where then was the capacity to prevent all armed conflicts between liberal regimes, many of which were remote and others strategically or economically insignificant?” (ibid). In other words, since the hegemon

¹¹⁴ “Was it moral suasion that made Qaddafi see the wisdom of giving up his weapons of mass destruction? Or Iran agree for the first time to spot nuclear inspections? It was the suasion of the bayonet. It was the ignominious fall of Saddam—and the desire of interested spectators not to be next on the list... Rogue states are, by definition, impervious to moral suasion.” Krauthammer, 2004, p. 6).

¹¹⁵ Specifically, Doyle references Italy in World War 1 (p. 216).

¹¹⁶ And to add further, the 1920’s and 1930’s were marred by economic shocks which Charles Kindleberger blamed on the absence of leadership, as well as violence from the early 1930’s leading up to 1939 (1987).

cannot assure universal peace in its shadow, one cannot credit it for any pacifying effect. In the vein of neo-conservatism and hegemonic stability theories however, the peace that the hegemon lends to the world takes place at the *systemic* level. Therefore, great, violent and intense wars like the World Wars are averted with the presence of an overarching state. Neoconservatives at least, make room for some level of conflict which does not upend a particular world order. Bret Stephens for instance allows for some room with “sub-systemic” disorder or unpredictability (2014; pp. 143 – 144), and Krauthammer suggests that the US should not solve every single internecine conflict in the world.¹¹⁷

Neoconservatism, while sharing some key ideas of democratic peace theory, also cannot be subsumed into this. For one, the democratic peace approach –Kant notwithstanding –lacks an account for *why* democracies do not fight (Frieden and Lake, 2005; pp 142 – 143), whereas this logic may be interpreted in the neoconservative literature. Additionally, there is little serious consideration within the theory that a liberal democratic peace is underpinned by a hegemon, which is a defining feature of neoconservatism. Further, neoconservatism outlines very key manners by which democratization can occur, whereas Doyle suggests that liberal foreign policies against non-liberal states may turn into “crusades”, since these policies may adopt a proselytizing character (Doyle, 1983 B, p. 324), an interpretation neoconservatives reject, suggesting instead that such campaigns can be correctly managed, and with Wohlstetter’s ideas on military *precision*, can avoid being mired in a decades-long violent conflict. Finally, neoconservatism’s stance on democracy is not its core and defining pillar, but one of many important ideas. Its foundation stands instead on hegemonic management of the global system. Hence, it is a theory that simply cannot account for wider neoconservatism.

Neo Liberalism

This paper has already made note of how, counterintuitively, neoconservatism places considerable emphasis on cooperation in global politics. Given this interpretation, a reasonable avenue of theoretical subsumption can be neoliberal theories in international relations. Keohane’s 1984 work suggests that institutions created to foster cooperation on a global scale have been the

¹¹⁷ “We are friends to all, but we come ashore only where it really counts. And where it counts today is that Islamic crescent stretching from North Africa to Afghanistan” (Krauthammer, 2004; pp. 18 – 19).

work of a hegemon. Neoconservatives similarly ascribe the modern world system to that of the United States. Where the two diverge is that Keohane makes it his central point that cooperation can persist with the collapse, decline or absence of hegemony (1984, p. 85 for instance)¹¹⁸. “[R]egimes are easier to maintain than they are to create,” writes Keohane (1984, p. 100). They can likewise outlive the hegemon since they are effective information providers – as opposed to potential replacements of states (p. 101).¹¹⁹ Keohane essentially places considerable emphasis on how international regimes reduce the problem of uncertainty and lack of perfect information in the international system- a potential source of discord in an anarchic system (ibid).¹²⁰

Conversely, neoconservative thought is underpinned by the fragility of such norms and regimes in the absence of a leader. According to Robert Kagan, such arrangements fail to endure past an empire or state: “History shows that world orders, including our own, are transient. They rise and fall. And the institutions they erected, the beliefs that guided them, and the “norms” that shaped the relations among nations within them – they fall, too” (2012; p. 5).

Keohane describes such regimes as being autonomous entities that can exist apart from its initial creator, that in the absence of one singular state keeping the order, the IO (international organization) takes a life of its own (1984; p. 103). Thus, **regimes are described as producing essentially self-corrective behaviours** (Keohane, 1984 p. 97)¹²¹. His theory thus imbues international regimes with great inherent power, and so the international system does not require a hegemon to maintain a sense of cooperation and order. On the other hand, neoconservatives would suggest that international organizations and regimes have little agency of their own and

¹¹⁸ “...even if U.S. hegemonic leadership may have been a crucial factor in the creation of some contemporary international economic regimes, the continuation of hegemony is not necessarily essential for their continued viability” (1984; p. 85)

¹¹⁹ “Viewing international regimes as information-providing and transaction cost-reducing entities rather than as quasi- governmental rule makers helps us to understand such persistence.” (Keohane, 1984, p. 101).

¹²⁰ Crucially, this is why such regimes can outlive American hegemony: “Appreciating the significance of these information – producing patterns of action that become embedded in international regimes helps us understand further why the erosion of American hegemony during the 1970’s was not accompanied by an immediate collapse of cooperation, as the crude theory of hegemonic stability would have predicted.” (ibid).

¹²¹ “Regimes facilitate agreements by raising the anticipated costs of violating others’ property rights, by altering transaction costs through the clustering of issues and by providing reliable information to members. Regimes are relatively efficient institutions...since their principles, rules and institutions create linkages among issues that give actors incentives to reach mutually beneficial agreements.” (ibid)

require *states* to maintain some order. Free trade, economic liberalization and policies against tariffs are all subject to reversal since states can be inclined towards protectionism and so need a constant “imposition” by another state, strongly insinuating the hegemon (Kagan, 2012; pp. 37 – 38; 41 - 44), in contrast to Keohane who suggests that the regimes can assist member states (and not just the hegemonic state) in carrying out corrective behaviours.

Ultimately, the key difference is that neoconservatives see little redeeming qualities of a world without a leader, whereas Keohane makes it his central point to prove that such a world would continue. While both approaches address cooperation and share similar accounts as to initial causes of it, they ultimately depart on the idea of hegemony. For neoconservatives, because of its state centrism - or more particularly, its rejection that loose and diffuse regimes have sufficient will, cohesion and ability to produce desired outcomes, and belief in the stabilizing effects of the hegemon, any absence of it will lead to a breakdown of cooperation. Alliances and international organizations in the neoconservative view, rely on the effective leadership of the United States to continue.

C. Neoconservatism and Constructivism

Francis Fukuyama’s 1989 paper “The End of History” is notable in the emphasis it places on the importance of ideas.¹²² Fukuyama for instance, criticizes those pure [economically] materialist approaches which ascribe economic success to mere free market policies (1989; p. 5)¹²³.

¹²² Fukuyama for instance, makes reference to “The materialist bias of modern thought” – what he considers a result of Marxist thinking – which entails “our tendency to retreat into materialist or utilitarian explanations of political or historical phenomena, and our disinclination to believe in the autonomous power of ideas.” (1989, p. 4).

¹²³ He calls this the “Wall Street Journal school of deterministic materialism [which] habitually points to the stunning economic success of Asia in the past few decades as evidence of the viability of free market economics, with the implication that all societies would see similar development were they simply to allow their populations to pursue their material self-interest freely.” (p. 5). It should be noted that this is evidence of a tradition of ideas in neoconservatism. However, Fukuyama’s contention has not been widely shared by other neoconservatives, who while taking note of ideological or cultural impediments or influences on economic growth, do still tend to focus on the benefits of policy adjustment towards freer markets and liberalization. In other words the tension between materialism and ideas is not as distinct in wider neoconservatism, since it is an approach which blends the two, as the previous chapter demonstrated. Fukuyama writes as much, “I want to avoid the materialist determinism that says that liberal economics inevitably produces liberal politics, because I believe that both economics and politics presuppose an autonomous prior state of consciousness that makes them possible.” (1989, pp 6 -7).

An inclusion of ideas into any approach may intuitively draw comparisons with Wendt's constructivism. Rapport (2009) of course, has made direct links, suggesting that with some variation, neoconservatism best fits into the theory. The following section will assess constructivism – as conceptualized by Alexander Wendt – in relation to neoconservatism, regarding the tenets of identity and interest formation, as well as the cultures of anarchy. Since the 1999 publication of Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics*, constructivism has been regularly associated with Wendt. It should be briefly acknowledged that other variants of the theory exist, but owing to Wendt's prominence, the constructivism referred to from this point onwards in the thesis is Wendt's version.

Identity and Interest

Wendt suggested that state identities are **relational** – i.e., dependent on roles in the international system – which then inform interests, such as which states would be an ally or an adversary (1992; pp. 397 - 398). Neoconservatism likewise adopts a relational based concept of identity – albeit less technically framed and much more implicit. Their view is that the US is a superpower and (ideally should be) the “world policeman” (e.g. see Stephens, 2014). Other (friendly) states' role, in relation to this, is that of compliant ally. Likewise, states that are deemed *rogue* in nature are framed to be inherently anti-US, placing the US in the crosshairs of their triggers (eg see John Bolton, 2004 on the Axis of Evil). Crucially in Wendt's theory, the issue of identity is posited to be on a spectrum from “conceiving the other as anathema to the self to seeing it as an extension of the self” (1996; p. 52). Similarly, neoconservatism places a surprisingly heavy emphasis on affinity with other states, usually liberal and democratic, and tend to craft as “others” those which fail to conform to such a standard. Both neoconservatives and constructivists therefore see that states will craft alliances and ties based on constructs of Self and Other, which are in turn informed by their (social) identity (Wendt, 1996, pp 51 – 52). For Wendt, such identity is determined by emotion and not strategy and this explains why states are impelled to act collectively at times (1996, pp. 52 – 53). “This is a basis for feelings of solidarity, community, and loyalty...This facilitates collective action by increasing diffuse reciprocity and the willingness to bear costs without selective incentives” (Wendt, 1996, p. 53). While there is a strategic imperative for alliances in neoconservatism, the literature is also marked by a certain level of emotional affinity with allies, as if, following from Wendt, the US's allies *are* treated as an extension of the

referent point (the Self). The previous chapter touched on the appeals to a “liberal democratic civilization” (Kristol and Kagan, 2004; p. 66), which indicates at some level an emotional attachment to states seen as similar to the US.

Meanings

Wendt writes, going beyond materialist interpretations of state behaviour, “...people act toward objects...on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them. States act differently toward enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not” (1992; pp. 396 – 397). For the neoconservatives, the addition of the meanings as an intervening variable is neither revelatory nor contested. It is presupposed in their worldview that it is not just material capacity that determines relations but also the meanings behind this, specifically, the regime type, alignment with or against the US and ideology of a state. Still, the importance of “meanings” informed much of neoconservative thought in the Cold War, a conflict widely framed in ideological terms. Jeane Kirkpatrick for instance suggested that the Soviets were trying to expand their influence through manipulation of narratives: “We are living today in a revolutionary era in which the force which purports to be the great world revolution of our times, Marxist/Leninism, seeks by a variety of means, *including skillful semantic manipulations*, to extend its own hegemony. The Soviets have made extraordinarily great progress in extending their own influence and projecting their own semantic rules upon the rest of the world” she wrote of the manner by which the Soviets sought to re-frame meanings and concepts (Kirkpatrick, 1986; p. 1 [emphasis added]).¹²⁴

Like neoconservatism, constructivism too does not necessarily preclude material forces in global politics (Wendt, 1996, p. 49, 54). What makes constructivism so difficult to refute is that rather than rejecting key tenets of Waltz’s structural realism, it simply appends some core missing features, namely those surrounding non-material forces like ideas, identities, roles and so forth. Wendt for instance, like the neoconservatives *during* the Cold War emphasizing the ideological clash present, suggests that the Cold War was more of a “cultural structure” than a material one, where the former entails - but is not itself reducible to - patterns of conflict and cooperation (ibid).

¹²⁴ One such instance of the re-framing of the message was the moral parity or equivalence between the US and the USSR (Kirkpatrick, 1986, p. 2).

Similarly, neoconservatives have expressed during their Cold War literature a greater focus on the ideological aspects of the conflict as opposed to the material stakes. Kirkpatrick outlined the Soviets' actions in the Cold War as concerted efforts to undermine the very *legitimacy* of liberal democratic states (1986, p. 2).¹²⁵ This however is one area where neoconservatism has demonstrated some evolution, whereby in the 1990's they expressed greater materialism than seen before.

The Cultures of Anarchy

A particularly distinguishing point of Wendt's version of constructivism is his conceptualization of the cultures of anarchy which outlines the different modes of relations amongst states that can result under the condition of anarchy (Wendt, 1999). Wendt discusses how systemic changes can alter international politics leading to collective arrangements, such as interdependence and trade, as well as convergence on democratic ideas (1996; pp. 55 – 56). “The effect is to reduce heterogeneity ...among actors,” Wendt writes (1996; p. 56), and this comes across as similar to the end goals of neoconservatives, particularly on the ideological front. If the world is ideologically congruent, then this is more desirable from their hegemonic perspective. However, where Wendt describes a process towards collective identities, neoconservatives express a desired process towards homogeneity beneath the US. Still, this leads to the idea of the cultures of anarchy, which – in a crude and heuristic manner – can be described as the path from violence to peace, and animosity to affinity, between and amongst actors. Herein lies the strongest link between neoconservatism – as defined in this paper –and constructivism, which is Wendt's 1999 concept of the three cultures of anarchy.

Neoconservatism of course entails as a key idea an alliance system. Allies are usually compliant and US-friendly states in key geopolitical arenas and also are ideologically similar to

¹²⁵ “To destroy a society it is first necessary to delegitimize its basic institutions so as to detach the identifications and affection of its citizens from the institutions and authorities of the society marked for destruction” (Kirkpatrick, 1986, p. 2). While neoconservatism adheres to the profound belief that Western liberalism is the only viable means for a people to live, this action outlined by Kirkpatrick, undertaken by Nazi's and Marxists (ibid) will be undertaken by *any* side in a war of ideology and a way of life. Neoconservatives likewise delegitimize the moral and functional foundations of rival ideologies, such as political Islam, communism and diffuse populism. In a war of ideology there is no conceding to the other side. It requires the elimination of another ideology altogether.

the US in that they are democratic and conforming to free market principles.¹²⁶ This previously ignored aspect of neoconservatism draws it closer to Wendt's concept of cultures of anarchy which not only describes, but can possibly add a level of theoretical sophistication to the neoconservative perspectives on other states (i.e., not the hegemon/the US), from allies to adversaries.

At the heart of this concept is Wendt's suggestion that anarchy produces not one singular and constant type of behaviour as proposed by Kenneth Waltz, but rather *three* types of behaviours, which in turn depend on the type of "roles" states have (Wendt, 1999, p. 247). These, he writes are the Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian structures – or cultures - within anarchy (ibid).¹²⁷ As ideal-type constructs by his own admission, they each represent a dyadic construct of roles where "...at the core of each kind of anarchy is just one subject position: in Hobbesian cultures it is "enemy," in Lockean "rival," and in Kantian "friend." (1999, pp. 257 – 258). At the crux of this is that states do not make decisions based on other actors' material capabilities, but on the meanings, or the context that they have attached to these capabilities (such as military armaments) (1999, pp. 255 - 256). Explaining further, Wendt writes that enemies (under the Hobbesian anarchy) will use extreme violence to eliminate another actor, rivals (under the Lockean framework) will use limited means of violence in dealing with another, and of course friends (under the Kantian) will work together (1999, p. 258). Recalling the last chapter, the United States will behave differently towards those states which are allies and those which are adversaries or deemed aggressive.

In the **Hobbesian culture**, actors may discount the future, and so may be more inclined to extreme violence, and the structure may involve preemptive action, "lest the enemy get a fatal advantage from a first strike." (Wendt, 1999; p. 262). This relation of enmity, and the resultant

¹²⁶ Krauthammer emphasizes for instance, the importance of similar states in international cooperation: "...the European conceit that relations with all nations—regardless of ideology, regardless of culture, regardless even of open hostility— should be transacted on the EU model of suasion and norms and negotiations and solemn contractual agreements is an illusion. A fisheries treaty with Canada is something real. An Agreed Framework on plutonium processing with the likes of North Korea is not worth the paper it is written on." (2004, pp 9 – 10).

¹²⁷ Wendt suggests that that *social* elements are ultimately responsible for explaining the outcomes of *material* elements of actors, **and so each actor's concept and ideas of the other are factored in their respective decision making** (1999; p. 249). He writes thus, "To say that a structure is "social" is to say...actors take each other "into account" in choosing their actions." (ibid). He continues importantly that this is rooted in each actor's notion of the Self and Other, "and as such social structures are "distributions of ideas" ", where shared ideas between and among actors constitute "culture" (ibid).

mutual behavior is almost bespoke to the type of relations between the US and terrorist states, as outlined by Krauthammer's chosen course of action: "In a world of terrorists, terrorist states and weapons of mass destruction, the option of preemption is especially necessary. In the bipolar world of the Cold War, with a stable nonsuicidal adversary, deterrence could work. Deterrence does not work against people who ache for heaven. It does not work against *undeterrables*." (2004, p. 11). It ultimately descends into an atavistic quid pro quo where "Self mirrors Other, becomes *its* enemy, in order to survive" (Wendt, 1999, p. 263).

On the other hand, exemplifying the Westphalian system, Wendt suggests the **Lockean culture** is marked by mutual recognition of sovereignty (1999; pp. 279 – 280). Violence is more limited and states are not impelled to *destroy* the other (1999; p. 282).¹²⁸ Because states accept the idea of sovereignty as legitimate, the culture is perpetuated (Wendt, 1999; p. 288).

Wendt's differentiation amongst the three entails important nuances, *particularly* between the Hobbesian and Lockean. The Hobbesian anarchy produces "enmity" as the main emotion and mode of interaction between any two actors the Self and the Other, whereas the Lockean produces "rivalry" (1999, p. 260; 279). He writes:

"The distinction concerns the perceived scope of the Other's intentions, in particular whether he is thought to be trying to kill or enslave the Self or merely trying to beat or steal from him. Enmity and rivalry both imply that the Other does not fully recognize the Self and therefore may act in a "revisionist" fashion toward it, but the object of recognition and revisionism is different. An enemy does not recognize the right of the Self to exist as a free subject at all, therefore sees to "revise" the latter's life or liberty (call this "deep" revisionism). A rival, in contrast, is thought to recognize the Self's right to life and liberty, and therefore seeks to revise only its behavior or property ("shallow" revisionism)." (Wendt, 1999, pp. 260 – 261).

In other words, the Hobbesian culture is far more extreme in the violence and intransigence it produces than the Lockean, since in the former, actors do not recognize each other as similar beings. It is fundamentally atavistic and severe in its misunderstandings. At a basal level, neoconservatives are aware of the differences between the US's different enemies, for instance,

¹²⁸ When it reaches to a macro level, armed conflict becomes an accepted modus operandi but is also limited, balancing of power occurs and neutrality can effectively take place for a few actors, Wendt suggests (1999; pp. 283 – 285).

Russia in the 21st Century and the Islamic State. But, at a purely *emotive level*, actors in both types of relations or cultures are treated similarly, with extreme animosity. Whereas others may consider Lockean more palatable than Hobbesian – where ISIS may embody a Hobbesian construction of Self and Other, and Russia/Iran/Syria Lockean, - neoconservatives find both almost equally contemptible.

For instance, neoconservative language against the US’s adversaries is often laced in similar strong terms be it a sovereign state like Iran¹²⁹ or a marauding group like IS. It is more important for the US, according to neoconservatives, to maintain a consistency with regards to its foes – whoever they are deemed to be. Going back to the much mentioned notion of a principled foreign policy (and hence their rejection of *realpolitick*) they do not agree that the “enemy of my enemy is my friend”. In a more concrete example of this dynamic on the ground in Syria, neoconservatives were loath to cooperate with Russia and Syria to defeat ISIS¹³⁰.

Where Wendt suggested that Hobbesian structures produce little regard for the other and hence are more prone to **preemptive action** (p. 262), a practice noticeably lacking from the Lockean culture, for neoconservatives sovereign states can be dealt with preemptive action if they are deemed adversarial.¹³¹ If a state is deemed a direct and violent threat to its material/geostrategic (but also ideological) hegemony, the neoconservatives will deem them *persona non-grata*.

¹²⁹ Neoconservatives emphasize that both non compliant states and terrorist groups are alike in failing to respect human rights. For instance, “To their credit, [Trump] administration officials show no inclination, as their predecessors in the Obama administration did, to expect the truth from a regime that *brutalizes* its citizens, *funds terrorism* around the world, and abets *savagery* in Syria... No ordinary person would conclude that this is a government with which one would be wise to sign an accord.” (The Weekly Standard Editorial Board, 2017 [emphasis added]), from “Borrowed Time” by the Editors; *The Weekly Standard*. July 31st, 2017. Web. Accessed September 11th, 2017.

¹³⁰ “...the Assad-Iran-Russia axis push damages American national security interests in several ways. First, “the Assad regime” is effectively a vehicle for Iran and its proxies (along with Russia) to pursue their ambitions... second, arsonists generally do not make good firefighters. The pro-Assad coalition has waged war in Syria in ways that has radicalized the Syrian population and buttressed jihadists’ recruitment campaigns.” (Zarif, 2017). “How to Beat ISIS” in *The Weekly Standard* July 05, 2017. Web. Accessed September 11th, 2017.

¹³¹ “...the doctrine of preemption against openly hostile states pursuing weapons of mass destruction is an improvement on classical deterrence. Traditionally, we deterred the use of WMDs by the threat of retaliation after we’d been attacked—and that’s too late; the point of preemption is to deter the very acquisition of WMDs in the first place.” (Krauthammer, 2004, p. 11)

However, the idea of sovereignty *does* play a role in how they ultimately want to deal with these actors. For states, it is eventual cooptation, although the means to this end could entail violence. For terrorist groups, it is complete eradication since they are constituted mostly by their ideology (and so have no real territory or economy or tangible features in world politics from which a society can be salvaged). Still, a key difference in dealing with rogue states is that other thinkers may express caution about interfering with sovereign states, but, neoconservatives find their sovereignty hardly sacrosanct and hence espouse such measures such as covert and overt regime change and military strikes, as in the case of Yugoslavia and of course, Iraq (eg. Cooper, 2011, p. 56). Recall the last chapter that suggested that neoconservatives will privilege the rights of the individual over the abstract right of a state (e.g. Moynahan, 1975, 1996, pp 98 – 99; Cooper, 2011; p. 56). Such actions do demonstrate less of a stringent loyalty towards the sovereign ideal on the part of neoconservatives. In short, regarding the enemies of the United States according to the neoconservatives, the differences between Hobbesian and Lockean cultures of anarchy, are hardly a wide gulf. To clarify, whereas Wendtian constructivism supposes that Hobbesian and Lockean are distinct modes of relations between actors – with Lockean relations involving almost a stalemate owing to mutual respect of *sovereignty* - neoconservatives tend to blur the lines between the two, arguing that both types of foes of the hegemon cannot be managed, but should be *transformed*. In other words, whereas sovereignty becomes a key variable separating Lockean relations from feral Hobbesian ones for Wendt, neoconservatism tends to discard that this point of distinction is important concerning destruction of one actor and the respect of another.

On the other hand, the third and final culture, the **Kantian culture of anarchy**, partially accounts for alliances in neoconservatism. For Wendt, this is characterized by interactions based on friendship as opposed to enmity or rivalry (1999, p. 298). Collective action and non-violent dispute settlement characterize the behavior under this structure (Wendt, 1999, pp. 298 – 299). States enter into alliances, not through pure self-interest, but because they genuinely believe in cooperation and adherence to norms as a legitimate activity, and so such behavior is internalized (Wendt, 1999; p. 305). In neoconservatism, these shared ideas, adherence to norms and cooperative behavior are featured only *within* alliances (and not between allied states of the hegemon and those outside the alliance). Kirkpatrick for instance expressed the importance of

shared ideals and mutual affinity as underpinning alliances like NATO, that should this common link be weakened, this would threaten the very alliance itself (1986; p. 3)¹³².

Neoconservatives however go beyond constructivism, adding that such arrangements are underpinned by some sort of incentive (and so allies are dependent on a larger power). This then appends to Wendt the idea of alliance-dependency on a hegemon, which features heavily in the neoconservative corpus. Wendt instead suggests, “Real assurance here comes not from a Leviathan who enforces peace through central power...but from shared knowledge of each other’s peaceful intentions and behaviour.” (1999, p. 299). For neoconservatives, this “central power” is necessary to keep the arrangement together. The presence of shared ideas alone is insufficient and incapable of keeping such a system afloat. Krauthammer conversely suggests that hegemony is the prerequisite for effective collaboration: “...unilateralism is often the very road to multilateralism. As we learned from the Gulf War, it is the leadership of the United States—indeed, its willingness to act unilaterally if necessary—that galvanized the Gulf War coalition into existence. Without the president of the United States declaring “This will not stand” about the invasion of Kuwait—and making it clear that America would go it alone if it had to—there never would have been the great wall-to-wall coalition that is now so retroactively applauded and held up as a model of multilateralism.” (2004, p. 12).

Wendt suggests that at this level of anarchy, the ideas of Self and Other become intertwined, thus emphasizing how threats to another state are perceived as a threat to themselves: “...states identify with each other, seeing each other’s security not just as instrumentally related to their own, but as literally being their own. *The cognitive boundaries of the Self are extended to include the Other*; Self and Other form a single “cognitive region.”” (1999; p. 305 [emphasis added]). Neoconservatives would express a similar point, however not as extreme as Wendt’s. There is the crucial element of mutual self-interest involved in these arrangements. For instance, when the hegemon relaxes its commitments, the other members may seek their own security,

¹³² Kirkpatrick referenced the Soviet’s delegitimization of democracy as a tool to dismantle NATO, thereby expressing the view that NATO was as much constructed out of material threats as ideological “The NATO alliance among democracies simply cannot survive a widespread conviction amongst its members that there is no difference between the superpowers [the US and USSR]...To destroy the alliance, it is only necessary to deprive the citizens of democratic societies of a sense of shared moral purpose which underlies common identifications and common efforts. When our democratic allies can see no difference between American and Soviet behavior, then obviously there is no moral basis for a continuing association” (p. 3).

purely out of self-interest.¹³³ In essence, allies of the US are driven by self-interest over legitimacy, and not the other way around, as suggested by Wendt (1999; pp.303 -306).

Regarding **transformation**, neoconservatives suggest that a state can be brought out of a Lockean culture and into a Kantian one with the influence of a dominant guiding state. In the case of Japan, Fukuyama writes that such a path from nationalism and fascism was reversed and transposed with liberalism which was the result of hegemonic imposition of such values. (1989, p. 8). This is one example of the neoconservative conviction of the ability of one state to effectively *transform* the fundamental fabric of another state. Wendt makes little reference to such hegemonic behavior in the transformation of state interests and ideologies.

Ultimately, Wendt **opens up the possibility that the Kantian culture can ultimately create a “decentralized authority”** (1999; p. 308), which of course neoconservatives would disagree with, since their version of authority is singularly the US. He does however, express caution on any possible linearity from Hobbesian to Lockean to Kantianism in international politics, writing that “...there is no historical necessity, no guarantee, that the incentives for progressive change will overcome human weaknesses and the countervailing incentives to maintain the status quo. The passage of time may simply deepen bad norms, not create good ones.” (1999; p, 311).

However, Wendt does introduce a key point which lies in contrast with neoconservatism. He writes, “...although [there is] no guarantee that international time will move forward toward a Kantian culture, at least it is unlikely to move backward.” (Wendt, 1999, p. 251). He continues, “...one can argue that it will not move backward unless there is a big exogenous shock. Once a Lockean culture has been internalized there is little chance of it degenerating into a Hobbesian one, and similarly for Kantian into a Lockean.” (p. 312). The rationale he gives is that “once people have internalized the privilege of voting they will fight hard to keep it, making regression too costly.” (ibid). Neoconservatives would like for the world to move toward a Kantian culture – it

¹³³ This is best encapsulated by Bret Stephens’s criticism of the implications of the Obama Doctrine: “Iran will gradually shake free of sanctions and glide into a zone of nuclear ambiguity that will keep its adversaries guessing until it opts to make its capabilities known. Saudi Arabia will move swiftly to acquire a nuclear deterrent from its clients in Islamabad; Saudi billionaire Prince Alwaleed bin Talal made that clear to the [Wall Street] Journal last week when he indiscreetly discussed “the arrangement with Pakistan.” Egypt is beginning to ponder a nuclear option of its own while drawing closer to a security alliance with Russia.” (Stephens, 2013).

will after all, naturally allow states to be readily compliant with the US. But while this is their ambition, they hold that in reality it is very likely that the world or - to borrow the related terminology from Wendt - *structures* within the anarchic world can reverse (eg Kagan, 2012; pp 46 – 50).

Fukuyama, (1989) like Wendt, painted a linear path toward one goal, towards liberalism. He writes this is highly possible since man is capable of evolving and reforming¹³⁴. But neoconservatives have overwhelmingly tended to refute this unidirectional linearity. Instead, they tend to converge around an agreement with Samuel Huntington's (1991) *The Third Wave* – who suggested that the current era of democracy could possibly come to an end (Huntington, 1991; pp. 15 - 16). This “wave” is the current trend of democratization in the world which has existed since the 1970's when authoritarian regimes adopted democracy; neoconservatives suggest that this would ultimately “...crest, crash and recede” just like the two waves before it which dissolved into the very tyranny they once replaced (Stephens, 2014, p. 2)¹³⁵. **History then, is not a singular line moving away from some state of philistinism and illiberalism, but has the *potential* (although not destined) to repeat itself.** So, to refute both Wendt's faith in the Kantian culture, *and* the democratic peace thesis, although democracies do not fight, democracies are not *guaranteed* to last.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ “The automatic assumption that Russia shorn of its expansionist communist ideology should pick up where the czars left off just prior to the Bolshevik Revolution is therefore a curious one. *It assumes that the evolution of human consciousness has stood still in the meantime*, and that the Soviets, while picking up currently fashionable ideas in the realm of economics, will return to foreign policy views a century out of date in the rest of Europe.” (1989; Fukuyama, p. 16 [emphasis added])

¹³⁵ Stephens, Bret “What Samuel Huntington Knew” in *the Wall Street Journal*. April 22, 2014.

¹³⁶ However, it is important to note, that unlike some theories of international politics (like those under the hegemonic stability theories), neoconservatism is hardly a strict adherent of fatalism in world politics. While the international system has an innate tendency to repeat itself, it is implied in the corpus that this can be avoided through proper policies. As Stephens writes on the potential breaking of this current “Third Wave” implying that a reversal of Western policies can in fact avoid such a crest, “A West that shrinks from maintaining global order because doing so is difficult or discomfiting will invite challenges from nimble adversaries willing to take geopolitical gambles.” (2014, p. 2). It is implied thus that if the West acted with leadership, the end of the Third Wave can be delayed or cancelled altogether. It is evident from this that neoconservatives express a desire that other states (those outside of the West) should not or cannot be responsible for the path of civilization. Instead, neoconservatism suggests that this is a responsibility that falls squarely on the shoulders of the West – *particularly* the US. This introduces a key motif in neoconservatism, that the hegemon is tasked with tremendous responsibility and agency in world politics and its choices (or lack thereof) can have a fundamental impact on the world.

Neoconservatives will thus staunchly reject that the world is moving towards a harmonious collective, or as Wendt suggested “...even if there is no guarantee that the future of the international system will be better than its past, at least there is reason to think it will not be worse.” (1999, p. 312). While neoconservatives would like this to be the case, their foreboding pathos in most of their works post-1989 betrays that they believe the world to be at a constant tension with dark forces lurking beneath. While they do subscribe, roughly, to the notion of cultures of anarchy and that ideas can transform states’ identities and thus their interests, one cannot eliminate material shifts in the structure of world politics, or the collapse of democracy, which allows in their view, for other states to get onto the path to successfully challenge a world leader and thus a world order. It is for this reason it is worth looking into the links between neoconservatism and hegemonic stability theory.

D. Neoconservatism and Hegemonic Stability theory

Since the end of the Cold War, neoconservatives have been firm in their insistence that the world is unquestionably a unipolar one, where the vast reserves of power are concentrated in the US (eg Krauthammer, 1991; 2004). Theories of unipolarity and hegemony, despite being situated in a realist ontology, are analyzed as a separate thread in the thesis since they are better suited to neoconservatism’s foundational assumptions on the very nature of the current world (since 1945). The following section analyzes the similarities and differences between neoconservatism and theories of hegemonic stability (HST) – under which long cycles and the theory of hegemonic war would be subsumed.

The theory in question is pre-supposed on hegemony easily arising in world politics, thus putting it in contrast to balance-of-power-realists who suppose that states work with the intention of blocking hegemony (Levy, 2002; pp. 354- 355). Levy describes theories of hegemony as those which “...share realist assumptions but de-emphasize the importance of anarchy while emphasizing system management within a hierarchical order.” (2002; p. 355). The paper has now culminated to this point suggesting that in fact neoconservatism shares realist concepts but the idea of hegemony is an important factor. As such, theories of hegemonic stability are in a unique position to be compared to neoconservatism, since not only are they posited on the existence of hegemony, but, some strains, like neoconservatism imply or express beneficial effects of a world

leader on the international system. Additionally, both suggest that there are resultant stabilizing effects in both conflictual and economic relations due to the presence of a hegemon. This association of hegemonic stability theory and neoconservatism may irk some, like Robert Gilpin, who in 2005 denigrated neoconservatives as “Ideological Amateurs”, but nonetheless, of the main theories in IR, hegemonic stability theory and neoconservatism share considerable overlap which ought to be addressed.

By now it is evident that neoconservatives believe in the tremendous systemic benefits of a hegemon. Krauthammer for instance expresses this sentiment: “What does hold the international system together? What keeps it from degenerating into total anarchy? Not the phony security of treaties, not the best of goodwill among the nicer nations. In the unipolar world we inhabit, what stability we do enjoy today is owed to the overwhelming power and deterrent threat of the United States.” (Krauthammer, 2004, p. 10). He continues, “In the unipolar world, the closest thing to a centralized authority, to an enforcer of norms, is America—American power.” (ibid).

For theorists of hegemonic stability, one need not look too far into the past for an example of the type of disorder that springs in the absence of a leader. Charles Kindleberger’s ultimate finding of the Great Depression was that it was as severe and protracted as it was owing to the inability and unwillingness of states to step up to the role of global leader (1986, 1987). He wrote, “...the 1929 depression was so wide, so deep, and so long because the international economic system was rendered unstable by British inability and U.S unwillingness to assume responsibility for stabilizing it by discharging five functions¹³⁷...[which], I believe, must be organized and carried out by a single country that assumes responsibility for the system” (1986, 1987, p. 289). Kindleberger’s overall conclusion of the Great Depression was that protectionist policies (like the Smoot Hawley Tariff act), and reflexive inward turn of the Great Powers turned the period from sluggish growth to the great depression (1986, 1987). Niall Ferguson has likewise suggested that a dominant state is required to open up the world economy, lest it fall into its protectionist inclinations (2004; p. 186).

Where some lines of thought like Keohane’s place faith in the endurance of international organizations and regimes, it is worth reiterating Kagan’s (counter) suggestion that world leaders (hegemons) create particular orders in the international system, which then collapse in the absence

¹³⁷ The functions he specifies are the continuation of free markets, long term lending, being a lender of last resort, maintaining exchange rates and coordination of macro-economic policies amongst states (ibid).

of its initial creating force: “History shows that world orders, including our own, are transient. They rise and fall. And the institutions they erected, the beliefs that guided them and the “norms” that shaped the relations among nations within them – they fall too. Every international order in history has reflected the beliefs and interests of its strongest powers, and every international order has changed when power shifted to others with different beliefs and interests.” (Kagan, 2012 p. 5). The consequence that flows from this is that the world - now without its guiding institutions and norms - can fall into a state of uncertainty and instability.

Conflict & Peace HST and Long Cycles

While mostly famous for its foray into International Political Economy (Levy, 2002; p 355), hegemonic stability theory has also entered into assumptions of great power wars and the rise of challenging states. Neoconservatism is *particularly* concerned with the emergence of great systemic conflicts, the source of which can come from rising adversarial states. An extension of hegemonic stability theory gives rise to a cyclical reading of international politics. Works from Modelski’s Long Cycles in World Politics (1987) to Goldstein’s (1988) Long Waves in World Politics (1988) and recently Graham Allison’s Thucydides’ Trap (2014) all allude to some sort of common pattern in the history of world politics of the rise and fall of great states and empires.

One key theory that falls under this is Robert Gilpin’s theory of hegemonic war. Gilpin, interpreting Thucydides, suggested that the causes of the Peloponnesian War were the relative changes in the material power of states, a cause which can be generalized to wider international relations (Gilpin, 1988, p. 591). For neoconservatives concerned with the displacement of US power, the rise of China and the revival of Russian ambitions, appear to be potential trigger points for a great power war at the level of the system.

Recent work has also brought Thucydides into the fore, with Graham Allison’s (2014) “The Thucydides Trap”, a suggestion that rising states threaten the standing of dominant ones and hence this leads to war. In these interpretations of Thucydides, or theories of long cycles, lies the idea that at the peak of its power, a hegemon bestows onto the world system a level of economic stability and absence of great power conflict. But when the hegemon starts losing its power, either in absolute terms, or relative to another state that begins its own power accumulation, the hegemon – fearful of displacement – acts in a way to ultimately violently challenge the rising state. For neoconservatives, when a state (or any actor) begins to sense that a hegemon is weakening, they are *opportunistic* and seek to fill a power vacuum, eventually leading to conflict with hegemon.

This can occur within a state (ISIS in after Iraq 2011), within a region (the Middle East in the 2010's and Indochina in the 1970's) or in the world (evinced by the world wars). As an example, The Project for the New American Century's "Rebuilding America's Defenses" (2000) outlines this view of power shifts: "Up to now, they [potential challengers] have been deterred from doing so by the capability and global presence of American military power. But, as that power declines, relatively and absolutely, the happy conditions that follow from it will be inevitably undermined." (Donnelly, 2000, p. i).

But will a rising state *always* challenge the dominant one? To say yes is to subscribe to an almost ***exclusively materialistic*** conception of world politics. To borrow from Wendt, it is not that another country accrues great material power, but it matters what that country means to the US. Iran having a nuclear weapon is interpreted so differently from Israel nuclear capabilities by neoconservatives, due to differing state relations and regime type.

Additionally, Donald Kagan, in his (2009) study of Thucydides, comes away with a different interpretation of the Peloponnesian War. Rather than suggesting the violent meeting of a rising state with a dominant one as an innately natural and inescapable phenomenon, Kagan found the Greek historian considered man to be much more in charge of his affairs: "Thucydides' conception of the study of political behavior differs in a still more fundamental way from the determinism that has been held to underlie the physical sciences. He lays great emphasis on the **role of the individual** in history and on his ability to change its course." (Kagan, 2009; p. 15 [emphasis added]). This is a particularly important point by the neoconservatives, implicitly expressed elsewhere, but explicit here. Imbued in wider neoconservatism – especially in their domestic writings – is an idea of agency and personal control – as well as moral responsibility for outcomes. Neoconservatives, as outlined in the last chapter, tend to think of human beings as not permanently beholden to a particular class or circumstance. In the international sense, rather than ascribing events to a fatalistic concept of the international system, neoconservatives do ascribe much agency to individuals¹³⁸. Donald Kagan writes, in response to those who have eschewed a study of Thucydides in favour of more macro and environmental assessments: "Within those limits [of geography and demography], however, individuals and groups of human beings make

¹³⁸ This is most obvious when discussing people under the poverty line within the US. But the thesis here takes that this can be extrapolated to wider neoconservatism, not just opinions of those on welfare assistance.

decisions that are of vital importance, and those decisions that are military, diplomatic, and political influence ever larger groups of people in ways that can affect the very existence of peoples, nations, and the human race.” (2009; p. 230). What is key in this example is that neoconservatives stress that humans can change the tide of international relations, and so one can make the reasonable suggestion that they view agency as ultimately much more influential than structure.

A logical byproduct of this is that neoconservatives reject any strict adherence to **pre-destined cycles or waves in world politics**. The pattern of the long cycles in world politics under hegemonic stability is an attractive and heuristic concept, and one may be tempted to also subsume neoconservative ideas into this. After all, Great Britain, although violently challenged by Nazi Germany, gave way to United States hegemony, and following from Modelski’s suggestion that the passage of hegemons and world leaders has been a torch relay from one ally to the other (Modelski, 1987, pp. 229 – 230) then very empirical reality of Pax Americana is the present result of such cyclicity.¹³⁹ No matter what the United States does, some challenger in the future – following from this logic – will *inevitably* seek to usurp the world order, and its days as hegemon are limited.

But, counterintuitively, this is a key point of departure. Earlier, it was written that in contrast to Fukuyama’s “End of History” thesis, which posited that history had moved to its final stage, away from a state of tyranny and undemocratic predilections, other neoconservatives tended to view history as more in line with Samuel Huntington’s Three Waves of democracy. Huntington suggested that in recent history (since the 1820’s) democratization efforts witnessed two cycles of expansion and contraction (1991; p. 12). Huntington’s thesis takes a more cyclical understanding of world politics than Fukuyama’s. Yet, crucially, it is important to note that while in this context, neoconservatives express that the international system has a *tendency* to - if left alone - repeat itself, counter actions by states or a community of states can prevent or delay the recurrence of certain phenomena. To put it another way, while history does not move in a linear way, it is not

¹³⁹ Modelski and Allison separately find that challengers rarely become victors, and Modelski explicitly states the new hegemon was some sort of ally of the old. He goes on to suggest that the passage of hegemony or world leadership has been a lateral movement from East to West, which would have implied in 1987, an allusion to Japan peacefully replacing the US – a trendy topic of the day (pp. 229 – 230).

profoundly destined to move cyclically either, *if* statesmen can act wisely.^{140 141} According to Huntington, “Democracy will spread to the extent that those who exercise power in the world and in individual countries want it to spread,” thereby imbuing states with a high level of control over the course of global affairs (1991, p. 34).

While this type of optimism has been ridiculed since Woodrow Wilson, the approach is more analytically thorough than hegemonic stability theories only insofar that it discards a strict adherence to cycles. As Gilpin crucially noted back in 1981, (p. 205) **there lacks any real suggestion of what mechanism is involved in such cycles driving world politics**¹⁴². By eschewing HST’s tendency to suggest that a mechanism *must* be in place for cycles, *without even* addressing what this mechanism entails, neoconservatism avoids an analytic pitfall by leaving room for some aberrations to theoretical prediction. Importantly, in 2010, Niall Ferguson rejected the idea of cyclicity in world politics¹⁴³, rebuking theorists from Arnold Toynbee to Paul Kennedy, to Jared Diamond, asking, “What if history is not cyclical and slow moving, but arrhythmic – at times almost stationary, but also capable of accelerating suddenly, like a sports

¹⁴⁰ Huntington writes, “What might happen, however, if the American model ceases to embody strength and success, no longer seems to be the winning model? At the end of the 1980’s, many people were arguing that “American decline” was the true reality. If many people around the world come to see the United States as a fading power beset by political stagnation, economic inefficiency, and social chaos, its perceived failures will inevitably be seen as the failures of democracy, and the worldwide appeal of democracy will diminish.” (1991; pp. 15 – 16). This is not to say that Huntington views such a decline as *inevitable*. Rather, the decline of the Third Wave can happen if the United States loses its credibility, something that can be avoided according to neoconservatives.

¹⁴¹ Huntington also writes “History... does not sail ahead in a straight line, but when skilled and determined leaders are at the helm, it does move forward.” (Huntington, 1991, p. 34). In other words, Huntington rejects the sort of thesis of Fukuyama, but also does not subscribe to a tragic view of the waves of democracy.

¹⁴² Gilpin wrote, “until the mechanism that determines and generates the cycles is defined, the idea must remain speculative...” (Gilpin, 1981; p. 205).

¹⁴³ Ferguson’s rebuke is in the context of some thinkers suggesting that imperial decline would be avoided if a state never bothers to set out on a path of expansion. According to Thomas Cole, who painted the romantic opus *The Course of Empire* (1833 – 1836), which sees the rise of an empire from a pastoral state, then a massive war, and then a decay, Ferguson writes “The implicit suggestion was that the young American republic of Cole’s age would be better served by sticking to its bucolic first principles and resisting the imperial temptations of commerce, conquest, and colonization.” (p. 19). The subtext of course, much to the ire of neoconservatives, is that a state like the US will decline if it continues its internationalist path.

car?” (2010; p. 22)¹⁴⁴. This is a crucial point to make, and is one that differentiates neoconservatism not just from Long Cycle theories, but any approach that is dialectic or fatalistic in nature. Neoconservatism expresses fundamentally the notion of agency over destiny, of a sense of control over given situations.

Additionally, hegemonic stability theories often fall within the realist paradigm, and hence also fail to take into account **the internal dynamics** of a state. The cyclical concept suggests that great states meet their demise when challenged by a state that enjoys greater relative exponential growth. As an example, Ferguson, addressing the topic of imperial downfall, suggests that great states falter due to internal fiscal problems (2010; p. 30). Should the US debt make the US seem an unreliable debtor, Ferguson writes, this can damage the US in a much more profound sense, since it would have lost its credibility (p. 31).¹⁴⁵ It should be noted that neoconservatism as an ideology uniquely combines perceptions of power with material power. After all, actors (states other than the hegemon) make their decisions towards the hegemon based on what they *think* of this dominant state’s power, which may or may not reflect the objective reality of the hegemon’s material power. In other words, they do this since there is no real way that another state can accurately know the true reality of another state’s material endowments, and so perceptions of power act as a complementary concept to material power, and often the source of the perceived strength or weakness can be gleaned from the internal workings of the state.

A final difference between hegemonic stability theories in the vein of Gilpin, Goldstein and Modelski is that they view the UK, the US, Portugal and so forth, as being **ultimately highly similar** in that they exert leadership and hold a high concentration of material power, whereas neoconservatives tend to think of the US as unique in its power, particularly its ability to project

¹⁴⁴ The source of ‘acceleration’, he elaborates, are very present triggers - or immediate factors that cannot be predicted long in advance - of an event, not causal factors that stretch long into the past (pp. 23 – 24).

¹⁴⁵ “In imperial crises, it is not the material underpinnings of power that really matter but expectations about future power. The fiscal numbers ...cannot erode U.S. strength on their own, but they can work to weaken a long-assumed faith in the United States’ ability to weather any crisis.” Ferguson writes, (2010, p. 31). He continues, that should there be any sustained doubt as to the ability of the US to avoid defaulting, this can spread like wildfire, profoundly weakening the US as a great state: “...one day, a seemingly random piece of bad news – perhaps a negative report by a rating agency – will make the headlines during an otherwise quiet news cycle. Suddenly, it will be not just a few policy wonks who worry about the sustainability of U.S. fiscal policy but also the public at large, not to mention investors abroad. It is this shift that is crucial: a complex adaptive system is in big trouble when its component parts lose faith in its viability.” (p. 31). The implication of economic problems, he writes, is reductions to military expenditure which will negatively impact US foreign policy (2010, p. 32).

is power globally without extensive *ownership* of external territories. Krauthammer wrote, after the end of the Cold War, "...the Soviet Union died and something new was born, something utterly new – a unipolar world dominated by a single superpower unchecked by any rival and with decisive reach in every corner of the globe. This is a staggering new development in history, not seen since the fall of Rome." (2004, p. 1).

The thesis has hitherto worked under the assumption that of all the existing IR theories, those under the hegemonic stability approach are the best candidate for theoretical subsumption. After all, the two approaches - HST and neoconservatism- are premised on not only the frequency of hegemony in an international system, but also the benefits of such a powerful state in the international system. Particularly, Charles Kindleberger's impassioned refutation of the insularity and ruinous *self-help* behaviours in the Great Depression, instead of the potential coordinated policies of a hegemon, is similar to the neoconservative position that a hegemonic world is much more orderly than a diffuse, disparate multipolar world. When it comes to long cycles in world politics, neoconservatives reject a strict cyclicity to world politics, and they also consider the US as a fundamentally different state from previous hegemonies and empires – and so, implicitly is not destined to repeat the same behaviours of its predecessors. Complementing this, Deudney and Ikenberry provide a theoretical account for why the post 1945 world did not descend into balancing and competition amongst the great powers, which was largely expected by neorealism (1999; p. 182). In their theory of "liberal structuralism" – a liberal account of world order -, Deudney and Ikenberry suggest that these past few decades have been characterized by liberal states (ie. the West) engaging in "...co-binding – that is, they attempt to tie one another down by locking each other into institutions that mutually constrain one another." (1999; p. 182). Therefore, neoconservatism and structural liberalism strongly agree that the condition of anarchy does not necessarily encourage *conflict* but can facilitate *convergence*. Overwhelmingly, the two approaches reject a fatalistic view of world politics, subscribed to by several realist theories in IR. But what does seem to distinguish neoconservatism from structural liberalism is that much of the agency for this world order is situated in the United States (or the dominant state) and less its allies.

But it becomes apparent from the above that no singular theory can best explain neoconservatism. Neo liberal theories account for cooperation, but ignore the importance of hegemony. Realist and neo realist approaches of course, clash both academically and popularly with neoconservatives on almost every issue, but are, ontologically similar. And constructivism as

conceived by Wendt captures neoconservatism's notions of ideas and friendships in world politics, but downplays the role of material power and self-interest on the part of other actors and discounts the idea that the state system can regress.

So what then? It is evident that even when re-defining and broadening neoconservatism considerably, and introducing it to hegemonic or unipolar theories, it still cannot fit into any one theory. As the opening pages of the thesis demonstrated, there is a need to think of neoconservatism in theoretical terms. To apply existing theories would be to ignore some parts of US state behavior. Therefore, after exhausting the most reasonable options, the following will seek to build a theory out of neoconservatism.

PART II Ideologies vs Theories of International Politics

Before proceeding to theory construction, it is important to address the characteristics of theories in international relations, as well as their relationship with ideologies. The previous chapter established that neoconservatism is partly an ideology, as well as an approach to foreign policy, *and* a loose set of explanatory writings. Given its ideological attributes, it is necessary to differentiate between theories and ideologies in order to construct a theory *out of* something that is partly an ideology. Finally, for the purposes of this paper, a theory of international politics will be defined.

Theories of International Relations

The differences between ideologies and theories of social sciences - while present - are much more nuanced and subtle than those differences between theories of social and natural sciences. To put it another way, if one conceived of a spectrum ranging from deductively-structured scientific theories of the natural world with law like assumptions on the one hand, and political ideologies on the other end, theories of the social sciences might appear to fall somewhere in the middle, closer to philosophies and political *thought*.¹⁴⁶ The following section lays out certain

¹⁴⁶ But political thought itself is broadly defined. According to Freedman it is "...not just straightforwardly equivalent to what people say (and write) that they think about political issues, or even what we hear (and read) them saying. It is highly sensitive to the diverse methods it employs to determine which kinds of thinking are political, and which issues are within the remit of the scholars who study political thinking. Differences in political thought have become increasingly reflective of splits and specializations among its

weaknesses of social scientific theories to justify the idea that while distinct, they may not necessarily be the clear antithesis of ideologies.

Insofar that scientific theories are conceived of in a logical, positivistic understanding, there are considerable differences with ideologies. In this light, **scientific theories** reject interpretation and subjectivity, and supposedly produce knowledge in a strictly neutral manner (Gimbel, 2016, p. 73). Conversely, ideologies are constructed by distinctly human processes of language constructions and an overwhelming belief in the infallibility of one's ideas (Freeden, 2004; p. 6).¹⁴⁷ Yet, this positivistic understanding is much more dominant in the natural sciences than the social world, and so the polarization between theories (conceived of in a positivist manner) and ideology becomes less clear when dealing with broader **social sciences**, in which political science, psychology, sociology and international relations lie. The strict positivist model of research, in which observations must be purely observed without any human interpretation, finds uneasy ground in this broad-church (Gimbel, 2016, p. 73)¹⁴⁸.

In the natural sciences, theories are tested, and altered and eventually perfected into undisputed laws after a series of experiments. According to Frieden and Lake however, IR possesses certain unique theories, particularly nuclear deterrence, which make **testing either impossible or highly unethical**, such as nuclear deterrence (2005; p. 141)¹⁴⁹. Similarly, the nature

students, and the divergence between some philosophers and some students of ideology is the most significant, and the least understood, among these.” (Freeden, 2004; p. 3). Therefore political thought is highly idiosyncratic based on who chooses to study what under it, and what methods they decide to use.

¹⁴⁷ Freedon writes that ideologies involve the “control of political language”, and they “aim to give precise definition to the essentially contested meanings of the major political concepts...” (ibid). Crucially, Freedon has suggested that a recognition of fallibility of its ideas is not within an ideology's forte (2004; p. 6). Recall chapter 2, in which it was quoted, “Doubt is not one of the most obvious features of ideological discourse. In the eagerness of ideologists to establish an uncontested framework for political decision making, assertion will frequently replace demonstration and proof” (ibid). In other words, ideology for the most part explicitly tend to assert their ideas to be absolute and accurate.

¹⁴⁸ He writes, “...objects of social scientific study are themselves conscious subjects that, unlike the objects of natural scientific study, have their own notions of how they should behave.” (p. 73)

¹⁴⁹ Given this however, Frieden and Lake do argue still that “systematic empirical testing” is required to make IR much more relevant (2005; p. 137). They write, “...we believe that the accuracy—thus relevance—of international relations as a discipline requires that it become more scientific in approach... Relevance requires better theory and better-designed tests to fulfill the expectations and needs of those who make policy, or simply those who want to understand better our complex world.” (ibid). This thesis proposes however that despite this overall goal, considerable obstacles inherent in *some* theories – *particularly*

of theorizing at the level of the system (formulating and testing hypotheses of the entire international system) makes it highly difficult to perform *totally* randomized, controlled experiments with generalizable findings, as well as pursuing quantitative and rigid work that allows for theoretical growth and development, since closed systems present in the natural sciences are not easily replicable in IR (Sayer, 1992, pp. 123 – 124). Additionally, while quantitative work has become increasingly popular in international relations, these tend to be based on a certain set of highly imperfect indicators, in turn, built from proxy variables.¹⁵⁰

Additionally, **international relations** as a discipline itself is one of the **newest** in the social sciences, thereby vastly limiting the breadth of its corpus – in that as a field featuring testing of theories in line with the criteria of modern research parameters (a consideration of ethics, objectivity, a recognition of replicability, and at least attempted neutrality), and the novelty of IR (as a *science* and not philosophy), it is still in an infancy stage. Added to the difficulty of testing its theories, much of the history of international relations itself is marred not by testing and eventual convergence of agreement on explanations, but continual debates and conflicts or the inter-paradigmatic debates (Sayer, 1992; p. 116; Waever, 1996; Schmidt, 2002).¹⁵¹ These events in the academy have culminated in a field that possesses, not a series of sophisticated and testable theories that can eventually become undisputed laws, but rather a motley of semi-theories, doomed to remain so¹⁵². One might argue that IR theories as they exist can be better conceived of as

theories of the international system which are grand in scale and difficult to study in a randomized experiment – can prevent this desired testing.

¹⁵⁰ For instance, the Singer et.al (1972, 2012) National Material Capabilities data set makes possible the testing of systemic theories, through its indicator, the CINC (the Composite Index of National Capability), which measures the share of a state's material power in the world system, as a fraction of 1. This in turn however, is calculated on six other variables (such as urban populations, and iron and steel productions) which may not necessarily be the most germane in a modern context of systemic power, or even correctly calculated for every country or every year.

¹⁵¹ Sayer writes "...it is often said that progress is inhibited in social science by the lack of theory and the impossibility of experiments." (p. 116). He does note however that "While experiments are indeed impossible, they are not always necessary for discovering mechanism, though they are helpful for clarifying their effects since conditions are controlled." (ibid).

Waever (1996) traces the inter-paradigmatic debates and Brian C. Schmidt (2002) also takes note of the development of the field, albeit with some contention with how it has been presented.

¹⁵² Frieden and Lake suggest however that IR theorizing can be improved by more rigorous testing and theorizing: "...the accuracy – thus relevance – of international relations as a discipline requires that it become more scientific in approach." (Frieden and Lake, 2005; p. 137). They argue for a more scientific purpose in IR as opposed to a philosophizing or borderline political orientation: "...International Relations

philosophies, but, given trends in social sciences towards the scientific method, this may be an unpopular terminology considering the types of topics like those featured in conflict studies and the international political economy (which do feature quantifiable variables [and therefore easier to test]) that are studied in IR.

It becomes apparent then, that the strict benchmarks pegged to theories in the natural sciences are more loosely applied, and sometimes ignored altogether in international relations theories. The consequence for this paper is thus, that the theory of neoconservatism may not really be able to feature all the characteristics of natural-science theories, for while these theories may be *called* IR theories, they are in reality, better suited to be International Relations *thought*.

Theories vs Ideologies

Still, it would be the most pedestrian thinking to simply suggest that IR theories and ideologies are essentially the same. The thesis makes clear that the two *do* have differences, with the caveat that the differences may not be as strong as some may intuitively suggest. The dominant area of departure between the two used in this thesis is the explicated level of **attachment to a particular state**, people, race, religion, class and so forth. When dealing with theories of *international relations* and ideologies, a key distinction is the specificity of a particular national perspective and ethos, and attachment to a particular state. To put it clearly, international relations theories explicitly claim to achieve a level of disconnectedness from specific states. On the other hand, ideologies are open regarding their specific attachment particular groups or interests. As Freedden notes, ideologies are those belief systems “held by identifiable groups” (2004; p. 6). Neoconservatism is quite direct and open concerning its commitment to – and belief in the moral superiority of - a particular civilization (the West), a value system (natural right) and a country (the US). After all, the idea of *American exceptionalism*, as detailed in the previous chapter, is the most telling sign of highly ideological bent of the approach. Alternatively, theories rarely acknowledge their commitments to a particular national interest. It is an explicit goal of theorists to be as removed from a state’s interest as they can be, although implicitly - and in the objective

is most useful not when its practitioners use their detailed empirical knowledge to offer opinions, however intelligent and well informed, but when they can identify with some confidence the causal forces that drive foreign policy and international interactions” (ibid).

reality - theorists may very well have particular commitments underlying their work. The point of differentiation is that ideologies (and neoconservatism in this context) are *open* about their commitments to a people/ideal/state, whereas these commitments in theories are concealed in an overall aim of scientific objectivity. In other words, the stated goal of theories is to be as neutral and anodyne as possible. As such, the attempt to refine neoconservatism into a theory would similarly try to fit this criteria that rejects the overt celebration of a particular national ethos. Therefore, the United States in the theory is no longer the focal point of the approach. Instead this will be replaced by a “hegemon” or “dominant state”, which can apply to other states given particular prerequisites. This idea of *statelessness* in IR theory will be developed further in the following section on “theory construction”.

Another point that may separate ideologies from theories is that of **function and purpose**. However, there is some ambiguity on this. Revisiting Freedman’s definition, he suggests that ideologies are intended to “provide directives, even plans of action for public policy-making in an endeavour to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social political arrangements of a state or other political community” (2004; p. 6). While this may stem directly from an ideology’s steadfast belief that its version of truth and morals is absolute, theories too tend to provide recommendations for statesmen in foreign policy. These may be implicitly, or directly stated, but the recommendations – where they exist - *do* ultimately flow from what a theorist has considered deficient in the world. Nonetheless, the two ultimately depart in *how* their recommendations are to be received by others. For while prescription often takes a secondary role in IR theory (behind explanation), this appears to be the dominant function of ideologies. Hence, ideologies have had considerable experience being formulated to be directly transmuted into societal change. In fact, one can offer that this is *the* end goal and main guiding purpose of an ideology – to enact change of some sort. On the other hand, theories can fulfill *several* functions in addition to recommendations, like prediction and explanation, and theorists are often hesitant to explain what they desire to be the end goal of their theories. After all, should a theorist explicate what he/she desires of their theory to ultimately achieve, this may open the door to accusations of loyalties to a very specific (national) interest. Thus, in the conversion of neoconservatism as an ideology to a theory therefore, there will be a considerable effort to draw out its explanatory ideas as opposed to creating a theory *purely* out of its recommendations. However, its end goals will still be clearly stated since this is an inherent part of neoconservatism.

Given that ideologies have a stated objective and are cognizant of what they really want to achieve, this introduces another possible differentiation which concerns all those tools the latter uses to further its end goal(s). These tools – intended to convince or convert individuals to their cause – include **linguistic constructions, appeals to morals and sentiment, and creation of mythos and tropes** (Finlayson, 2013). Since ideology is heavily concerned with being transferred into policies, and thus having a tangible impact, ideologists are heavily concerned with discourses, rhetoric, register and language so as to convince others of their message (Finlayson, 2013 pp. 206 - 210). Some work has been done in fact on how neoconservatives managed to re-frame their message in the 1990's to ensure that their ideas of an existential foe carried on long after the fall of the USSR (e.g. Solomon, 2013). Finlayson writes “Ideologies include within them a general theory of politics – of what it is, how it should be conducted, and of what is and is not legitimate or appropriate political conduct” (2013, p. 200). Ideologies then involve “...manipulation of those who cannot otherwise be brought to agreement.” (ibid). Theories on the other hand, compete with other theories, but tend not to veer into polemics in their messages, and if they do, will not acknowledge the use of this rhetorical tactic. Academic writing will not attack a dissenting view as rooted in moral bankruptcy or ethics (as neoconservatism will), but may point to a poverty of methodological rigour, an absence of theoretical cohesion and so forth. While persuasive tactics are still featured in academic writing, academics tend not to explicitly acknowledge the use of this, since there is the stated desire of maintaining objectivity and neutrality.

Finlayson additionally suggests that ideologues make their ideologies appealing through emotion, be it fear or sentiment (2013; p. 207). Sentimentality may be raised in neoconservatism by appeals to solicitude for its allies, or to America's 'exceptional' purpose. An explicit example of this is the association of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran by the Obama administration with Neville Chamberlain's capitulation to Hitler in the 1930's (see Stephens, “Worse than Munich” for instance [2013]). On this, ideologies also create distinct characters as heroes or relatable representatives (Finlayson, 2013, p. 207). He writes that American conservatism uses Ann Coulter and Sarah Palin as distinct characters, as well as Ronald Reagan (ibid). So too, do neoconservatives feature in their discourse characters like Reagan, Churchill in his resistance against the Nazi's vs the myopic Neville Chamberlain, and Abraham Lincoln in his unwavering commitment to morals and principles (eg. Bloom, 1987, p. 29). Any discussion of

neoconservatism as a potential theory will of course ignore this use of famous motifs and characters in history.

While neoconservatism is in part an ideology as demonstrated in the previous chapter, such elements must be removed in the construction of a theory of international politics. However, it should be noted that these elements have allowed for it to be a successful and fungible set of ideas, translating from ideas and essays into policies. Therefore in converting neoconservatism into a theory, its very language will be altered to adopt a more ‘academic’ tone, and it will consciously repress the strong celebration of a particular interest linked to a specific state or peoples.

So, what is a theory of International Politics?

So far, it has been demonstrated that theories of international relations cannot be held to the same standards as those in the natural sciences, but in spite of this, cannot be reduced to ideologies. So what then *is* a theory of international relations or international politics?

According to Frieden and Lake, theories of international relations are those which aim to provide of a systematic account of causality: “Theories of international relations aim to capture general features of events and processes in ways that highlight their principal causes.” (Frieden and Lake, 2005; p. 138). They add importantly, “...explicit attention to scientific rigor can provide a degree of generality and clarity that might not be obvious even to experienced policy makers” (ibid). In other words, theory in international relations is meant to provide cogent, rational and generalizable understanding of features in world politics.

On the topic of being broad and abstract with the goal of generalizability, theories of international relations may best fit into Max Weber’s description of “**ideal-types**” in the social sciences. Ideal type constructs can help in the conversion of some literal, specific or topical idea to be much more abstracted and thus generalizable. They also allow theories to be much more explanatory (i.e., getting to the heart of underlying logic, and causal mechanism at play in a phenomena) than descriptive (merely a superficial account of something in a literal sense, without delving into the underlying explanation of the *how* and *why*) - a distinction briefly touched on by Carlsnaes 2002)¹⁵³. Ideal types are particular concepts artificially transmuted for parsimony and

¹⁵³ Carlsnaes’ differentiation simply entails that explanation gets to the root of exploring something, by understanding and accounting for the causal principles and mechanisms, whereas description is merely an account of an event or phenomena in more literal terms than an explanation, by describing what something

ease of analysis under one framework or “construct” (Weber, 1994; p. 263). “This conceptual pattern brings together certain relationships and events of historical life into a complex, which is conceived of as an internally consistent system.” (ibid). Weber expands on his notion of the ideal-type, which is “...formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct...” (1994; pp. 263 – 264). In other words, for Weber social scientists would deliberately reorganize certain ideas in their theories to allow for greater internal consistency, analysis and generalizability. To relate this to International Relations, it suggests that theories of the field purposefully craft explanations and conceptualizations which are not always totally congruent with the varied and diverse reality of a situation. After all, IR provides theories of specific phenomena or answers to specific questions not to be theories of everything. Neoconservatism thus can reasonably be reformulated into a theory as an ideal type construct.

In this sense, the theory that will be constructed should not be expected to directly mirror the exact, literal and objective reality of neoconservatism and the US since the end of the second World War. This was the task of the previous chapter which linked directly neoconservatism with their observations of relevant political issues. Rather, the theory – being close to an ideal type – will attempt to construct explanations of a hypothetical case of what will be referred to as *peak* hegemony, or *maximum hegemony* a situation in which a state has accrued far more power and influence than in tangible reality the US has managed. While developed further in the theory section, peak hegemony refers to a situation in which a state has accrued the most amount of power in the world system that no other state (or coalition of states) can successfully balance against it. Previous footnotes have referenced Singer’s et al (1972) concept of the CINC (Composite Index of National Capability) which sums all states’ (material) capacities in the world to 1. The idea of peak hegemony refers to a fraction of 1 where no state or group of states can effectively compete with the hegemon. For empirical reference, the US has recently reached up to 0.15 (or 15%) in 1993, and 2002 – 2006 in a modern context, while smaller states like Canada may have a CINC value like 0.01 in a similar time (Singer et al., 1972; 2011; Greig and Enterline, 2017; pp. 7 - 8).

is, while not pointing out the underlying mechanisms at play, the causal forces, the confluence of factors contributing to something and so forth. (2002; p. 341)

Peak hegemony in the theory – as part of an ideal type construct – will be a much higher figure than 0.15 (the US’s modern peak¹⁵⁴), where mathematically it is impossible for other states to successfully challenge it (upwards of 0.6 can be thought of the peak hegemony range). This of course is a largely material conception of power, but it is one which subsumes influence in it. This will be expanded on in the theory section.

Additionally, that the theory is an ideal type will explain or account for why there are some discrepancies between the theory and neoconservatism. For instance, the theory will present allies of the hegemon as democratic states without any other major characteristics other than a survival imperative. On the other hand, neoconservatism *as it exists* presents allies of the US as somewhat diverse in characteristics, and behaviours.¹⁵⁵ In essence, neoconservatism discusses the different natures of states, but the theory version, for parsimony and generalizability, removes such variance.

Given that the last chapter outlined several key points of neoconservatism – its world view, the explanations for such, its ideas on foreign policy and its strategies for global politics, the following will re-address some of this with regards to **theory construction**.

No theory of international politics can be expected to explain the totality of international phenomena, so each theory fulfills different explanatory functions. Fareed Zakaria suggested that *different* theories in international relations can be identified based on their dependent variable, or what they try to explain (1998, p. 14). The independent variable, he suggests, is located in the level of analysis at which the phenomenon is supposed to take place (1998, p. 15). “Where one locates

¹⁵⁴ Singer et al., 1972; 2011

¹⁵⁵ As Paul Wolfowitz writes, “The United States is the leader and the dominant member of that alliance, but it is an alliance of democratic countries, not a collection of satellites responding without question to a superpower’s will.” (2000; p. 317). In the empirical reality, allies of the United States have diverse interests that go beyond a security imperative, that may mar relations with the hegemon from time to time (such as the need to please their own populations, whose desires may diverge from the United States’ desires, or ideological disagreements – e.g. French and German opposition to the Iraq War of 2003). The point here is that in a theory of maximum hegemony, diverse state interests are reduced to a broad survival imperative, and the accrual of an unparalleled amount of power by the hegemon ensures a relationship of dependence by other states, since this is their only feasible avenue of protection. As the theory will later demonstrate, allies will be unlikely to go against the hegemon’s will because they are also in agreement with its ideas and ideology.

the independent variable – at the international, national, bureaucratic, or decision-making level – determines the level of analysis” (ibid). This is a particularly useful way of conceiving of IR theories. Levels of analyses, in the simplest form, presented by Kenneth Waltz are man, or the **individual**, the **state**, and the international **system** which comprises of individuals, states, IO’s, money flows and other non-state actors interacting with each other in a sort of an idealized closed system (1954; 1959).

This thesis attempts to add an intervening explanans, of **ideology**.¹⁵⁶ This comprises the types of societies, cultures, and “civilizations” (in the tradition of Samuel P. Huntington) that operate, interact and sometimes come into conflict with the other. But given its fluidity, it will be featured in each of the three levels. Ideas are treated as an independent variable that may be present in each of the levels of analysis. This is because neoconservatism, very much like Wendt’s constructivism, considers ideas to be ubiquitous in their presence and influence. Ideological considerations and the influence of *ideas* help explain events at the individual, state and systemic levels. Additionally, the integration of the variable of ideology helps to account for the strong non-materialism evident in neoconservatism. While the theory that unfolds may read like a variant of realism, with its considerations of the system and the distribution of material power, there is still the crucial involvement of ideas which are taken into actors’ perceptions of a situation and thus their decision making.

While Wendt has criticized such an approach of using non-materialism to complement explanations of materialism, writing that it “...will always be vulnerable to the charge that [it is] derived from theories that emphasize the base variables of power and interest, merely mopping up unexplained variance” (Wendt, 1999 p. 93), dual use of materialism-non materialism loosely fits the role of ideas in neoconservatism. While they do not simply “mop up unexplained variance”, ideas do play a slightly lower role to materialism in neoconservatism. As briefly mentioned before, and worth reiterating, while neoconservatism places considerable emphasis on hegemony resting on both ideational influence and material power, the approach privileges ever so slightly materialism. This is so, since materialism is a precursor and prerequisite for hegemony. After all, *pure* material dominance in neoconservatism is a state of unipolarity. Unipolarity, then combined

¹⁵⁶ This is not completely original and goes back to Zakaria’s suggestion that “A theory of foreign policy must not ignore domestic politics, *national culture*, and individual decision-makers” (emphasis added. P. 16).

with ideological influence can become hegemony. Neoconservatism thus generally rejects Wendt's overly *idealist* conception that material factors are constituted by ideas (Wendt, 1999; p. 94). But his suggestion that "the meaning of power and content of interests are largely a function of ideas" (1999; p. 96) does in fact hold true in neoconservatism, where the notions of hegemony, global responsibilities, alliances and affinity which prop up the hegemon are fundamentally ideational. In short, neoconservatism rejects the *strong materialism* in realism and the *strong non materialism* in constructivism in favour of an approach that combines the two.

Ideas and ideology then feature in each of the levels of analyses. Additionally, the neoconservative theory of international politics is hardly limited to one dependent variable and one independent variable. Instead, for each key international phenomenon, there will be a separate DV and set of IV's for each, according to the neoconservative writings. The key independent variables of this study of concern are thus:

Man: individual preference, ideology of leaders and populations

State: regime type, state preferences (i.e., security or power; revisionism or accommodation)

System: distribution of power, degree of hegemonic influence

Additionally, the neoconservative theory of international politics does not view the levels of analyses as mutually exclusive, but as interacting facets of the international system¹⁵⁷.

Crucially, neoconservatism as a theory deals with answering questions of international politics in an explanatory sense, and providing recommendations. It deals with *causes (or 'why' questions)*, *strategies ('how to' questions)* and *foreign policy questions (the process of its making and the restrictions to achieving state goals –those recommendations outlined)*.^{158 159} These in turn are underpinned by the levels of analysis, i.e., their explanations will take place in at least one level of analysis.

¹⁵⁷ Zakaria writes similarly on theories of foreign policy "A good account of a nation's foreign policy will point to the role played by systemic as well as other factors." (p. 17).

¹⁵⁸ As mentioned earlier, this method of theory building is modelled on Monteiro's similar use of questions in crafting his Theory of Unipolar Politics (2014).

¹⁵⁹ Some academics seem to draw a dichotomy between theories of foreign policy and theories of international politics (e.g., Zakaria 1998; p. 14). Neoconservatism considers the two hardly mutually exclusive since foreign policy is a main driver of international affairs between and amongst states.

Putting the above two together (causes/strategies/foreign policy + the levels of analysis), below are the **specific questions** used to build the theory, through neoconservative lens, *which integrate the above*:

- A) Why would a state balance against or bandwagon with a hegemon?
- B) What factors explain why a state would *challenge* the hegemon in its regional sphere of interest?
- C) What factors explain the outbreak of a conflict at the level of the international system?
- D) What are the **strategies** put forth by neoconservatives to secure their ends? This is included, since *most* of the neoconservative writings are primarily concerned with recommendations for statesmen.
- E) How is **foreign policy** made, and what are some restrictions within the state to achieving the desired end goals of the state?

Stateless theories

Statelessness in IR – that is, the detachment of the theoretical perspective from the perspective of a particular state is a feature of international relations theories. None of the main theories for instance, have been explicitly written with any particular state of reference, and so there is need to reconcile this with neoconservatism. At the core of the neoconservative preference for hegemony is the explicit and dominant theme of American Exceptionalism, and all the values associated with the US (for instance, individualism, democracy, free market economics, decentralized state/small government etc). To apply neoconservatism to say, Chinese hegemony, is a reversal of several neoconservative core beliefs.

But as Brown (2001) writes, International Relations still concerns to a great extent the US and its interests. While it may offer a general sheen of neutrality, it still heavily concerns the US. IR, he writes, is “...parochial because the practical concerns of U.S. foreign policy continue implicitly or explicitly to dominate the thinking of a great many American scholars and this, though understandable enough, without doubt reflects a certain narrowness of view” (Brown, 2001; p. 204). As Brown suggests, the field evolved from a specifically Anglo-American version of liberal thinking and today, because of a dominance of American methods (and adoption of Rational choice models as the underlying basis of methods) IR is a highly *American* form of social science (Brown,

2001; p. 214, 216).¹⁶⁰ Hence, a theory of neoconservatism – which has been established to be highly US centric – is not entirely beyond the scope and tradition of theorizing in the field, since, even though disembodiment from a state is a goal of theories, *true* detachment from particular societies and interests is difficult to attain in IR theorizing.

Still, on the other hand, statelessness of neoconservatism can be achieved if it were to be a theory of **hegemony** (i.e. any state that is not only unipolar but acts as a system manager) and one that **subscribes to democracy as the optimal regime**. If one were to eliminate the US-centrism of neoconservatism, and think of it as an ideology/approach that can apply to *any* hegemon adopting *US-type* values, then neoconservatism can, among other things, apply to future hegemon that are the allies of the US. In fact, according to Modelski's work on Long Cycles, allies of the previous world leader have tended to replace them non-violently (1987; pp. 229 – 230). Whereas the leader would be violently challenged by another, this other state was often defeated (*ibid*). Given this, it is not unlikely that the neoconservative ideas can apply to any future hegemon provided it follows similar values as the US. On this, Wendt importantly differentiates between roles and role identities, which can be of importance in crafting a “stateless” theory. Role identities are “subjective self-understandings...” whereas roles are “objective, collectively constituted

¹⁶⁰ Brown writes of the weakness of this: “Because the dominant theory is universalist, because according to the model we are all potentially rational choosers – or neoliberal economic actors, to trace rational choice theory back to its roots – American social scientists often resent the suggestion that their theories are ethnocentric, and yet at least part of the inability of some American scholars – and, of course, it is important not to overgeneralize here – to get hold of such diverse phenomena as nationalism in Yugoslavia, the rise of radical Islam, Japanese trade policy, Singaporean approaches to human rights, and Somali resentment at being “helped” by outsiders, stems from the fact that various groups involved are *not* motivated by the same things that motivate the abstract persons who inhabit the rational choice models.” (Brown, 2001; p. 216). This contention – American assumptions of humans vs diverse wants and needs – helps to explain a characteristic of the neoconservative theory, i.e., one that contends that what it considers the most optimal form of global governance may not be universally accepted. By understanding that neoconservatism – while stateless in its theoretical form – is still somewhat uniquely American in its outlook, can explain variance in its acceptance, efficacy of application and so forth. As Brown writes further, “The real irony is that if American social science was *more* parochial it would have a better chance of getting things right. It is not American parochialism that is the problem; it is the *lack* of American parochialism that is the problem. If American social science were to be more overtly committed to promoting American values... it would have a better chance of understanding why other people who are not American are committed to promoting their own values (Cohen, 1996)” (Brown, 2001; pp. 216 – 217). Notwithstanding Brown's alternative use of the word parochialism (that American social science is not honest about its existing parochialism, and would succeed if it were “more parochial” i.e., more transparent of this fact), the last sentence of the quote and suggestion help explain neoconservative as a theory and how its limitations can be a benefit. Because it is specifically American in its outlook (despite stripping away the US as an explicit hegemon), it is more transparent in this regard and hence does not adopt a false guise of neutral universality.

positions that give meaning to those understandings.” (1999; p. 259). Role identities are in flux and always changing since people will adopt different role identities at different times whereas roles continue (ibid). The United States as the hegemon currently is a role identity – a fleeting and mutable position – whereas hegemony is a *role*, something that can be filled by any other actor.

Part iii. A Neoconservative Theory of International Politics

A. The Foundations of the Theory

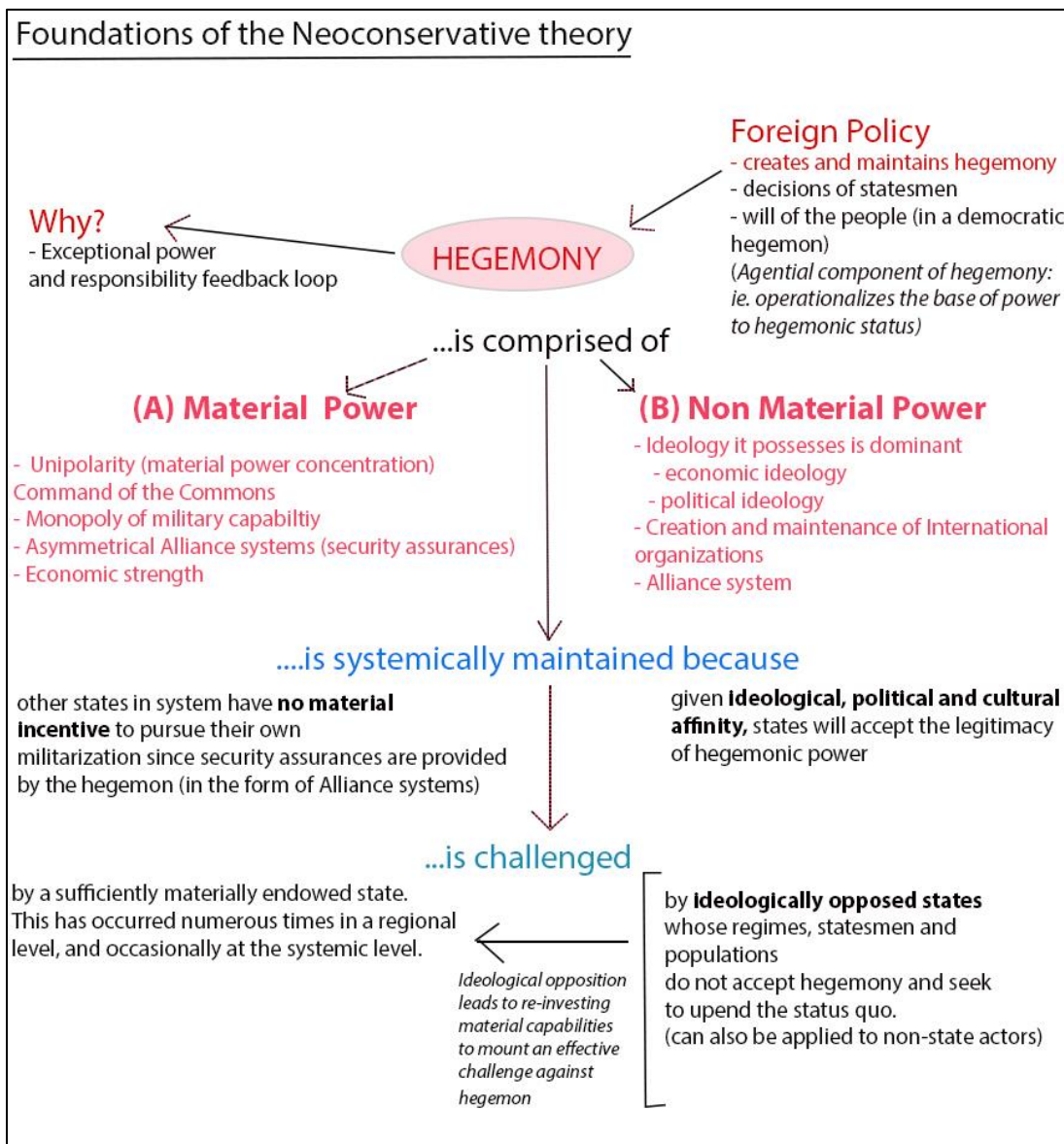


Figure 1 Foundations of the Theory. This diagram demonstrates the very basic points of the theory, dealing with hegemony, what it is, how it is maintained and potential challenges to it. The theory suggests that material factors and non-material factors are important to the definition and maintenance of hegemony. Therefore, the theory is roughly a synthesis between those approaches that are materialist in conception and those that are heavily ideational. However, it should be noted that the theory still privileges

materialism over ideas, since hegemony (materialism + ideas) is taken to be predicated on unipolarity which is a purely material configuration. To put it this way, hegemony, which involves the interplay of materialism and ideas, fundamentally requires that it be based out of unipolarity, a phenomenon traditionally defined purely in material terms.

As demonstrated by fig. 1, the neoconservative theory of international politics is a fundamentally **hegemonic** one. Underlying this is the idea of **power distribution** in the international system, thereby demonstrating a systemic understanding of world politics. It is not strictly a unipolar theory of international politics, since unipolarity merely denotes the concentration of power in a singular state. The state – the unipole – acts on the basis of this power and so becomes a hegemon¹⁶¹. Yet, for the neoconservatives, power is less *strictly* material, and more of a combination of material and non-material influence. If a state amasses the most nuclear weapons, it is not a hegemon. If a state has a formidable military, *and* can influence other states, politically, economically and culturally, it fits closer to the definition of a hegemonic state. Thus, the distribution of power concerns not just material power, but the distribution of those who are *relationally* powerful.

Hegemony is **created and maintained** by active policies by statesmen. In a democratic hegemon, this also relies on the will of the populace to maintain such a course for their state. **Foreign policy** thus is a key driver of the transition from *unipolar* power to *hegemonic* power. Hegemony thus is not a natural product of material power, but requires a certain degree of calculation.¹⁶²

Hegemony is maintained because it creates conditions for it to be **largely unchallenged**. It rests on a series of alliances, which (both the unified alliance *and* individual allies) are in turn reliant on the dominant state. Neoconservatives hold that states enter into cooperation primarily because they are self-interested, and seek **security**, evinced by their repeated fears that should the hegemon renege on its commitments, allies will form counter-coalitions and/or self-securitize.¹⁶³ While legitimacy, to borrow from Wendt (1999), is extremely important – hence their emphasis on “benevolent hegemony”¹⁶⁴ – ultimately, it is the self-interested motivations of actors that drive

¹⁶¹ The words “hegemon” “dominant state” and “world leader” are interchangeable in the theory.

¹⁶² For instance, Bret Stephens credits the actions of Dean Acheson and Harry Truman in 1947 for creating what would become Pax Americana (2014, pp. 24 – 29)

¹⁶³ Or foreign policy “freelancing” (Stephens, 2014)

¹⁶⁴ Kristol and Kagan, 1996

their behaviours (to cooperate). To put it another way, recognition of the legitimacy of the hegemon is a starting point on which to build alliances, but it may not assure the continuation of alliances. It is for this reason the above foundation of the theory (Fig. 1) posits that hegemony will not be challenged by allies should this dominant state continue its material assurances *in addition to* crafting a system of friendly states.

Conversely, states challenge the status quo associated with the hegemon if they are ideologically inclined *and* materially endowed. An ideological difference provides the will for a state to challenge the world order. Where allies seek **security**, challengers and potential challengers seek **power**. As Paul Wolfowitz writes, “one might observe a persistent source of misunderstanding between democracies, which look constantly for pragmatic solutions to resolve concrete problems in isolation, and *more ruthless leaders, whose real goal is to change the existing power relationship* and who misinterpret a democracy’s evident desire to resolve a dispute peacefully as a sign of weakness.” (2000, p. 322 [Emphasis added]). Power seeking ultimately comes from the ideological disparity which sees them as fundamentally rejecting the hegemon. Ideology acts as a catalyst for states feeling the need or desire for power. In other words, they do not recognize the legitimacy of the hegemon, whereas at a basal and fundamental level, allies do. Neoconservatives may also generalize from a state’s internal dynamic with their population to account for its external behavior: “...a China that governs its own people by force is more likely to try to impose its will on its neighbours, while conversely, a China that is democratic is more likely to respect the choice of its neighbours” (Wolfowitz, 2000; p. 326).

But in an overarching, **structural** sense (see Fig. 2) hegemony is fundamentally stable, if it is at the peak of its power. Following from certain theories of hegemonic stability outlined in the previous section, a unipolar state has stabilizing effects on the system. In this particular theory, the mechanism behind such stabilization is a lack of **competition** and presence of **security**. In a *multipolar* setting, where power is diffusely scattered among several states, competition for prestige and survival is a constant. Hence, units (states) are constantly interacting and competing with the other for some advantage over the other. In a *bipolar* setting, the two states are similarly competing with the other, since there is suspicion that one will destroy the other. A *unipolar* concentration however, is most inert since other actors (not the unipole) simply cannot compete with the dominant state. Combining unipolarity with benevolent-hegemonic functions – i.e. by co-opting other states as allies as opposed to destroying them - other states will also not have the

incentive to compete with (or try to replace) the hegemon. Hence in the theory, *true* hegemony, in which a country that *can* and *has* co-opted other actors into its fold, ultimately produces a state of inertia in the international system, i.e., the true apex of its power - the point at which it has accrued all the power and influence it possibly can – is a stabilized condition. The previous section put forth a working idea of “peak hegemony” borrowing from Singer’s et al (1972; 2011) CINC index of National Material Capabilities. A value of 0.6 out of a total of 1 (or possessing 60% of the global share of material capabilities) means that mathematically no other state can balance against it (parity becomes impossible) nor can a coalition of states counter balance against it (since the maximum amount of material power they can accumulate together will be at most 40% of the global share). 60% does not refer to the highest amount of power a state can possibly accrue, but it is the minimum amount of the share of power that a state needs in order to be considered a maximum hegemon. This 60% of course is *an enormously* high share of global material power – one which is quite empirically impossible. After all, the US has peaked at 0.38 in 1945 (Singer, et al, 1972; 2011). But, considering this theory is an *idealized proposition* of international politics, maximum or peak hegemony is a *heuristic benchmark* to demonstrate an unparalleled degree of preponderance.

Other power configurations have a considerable level of movement or instability inherent in them, because actors have the incentive and capacity to escape from their position, whereas in a state of maximum hegemony, this movement is suspended since actors neither want nor need to get out of their position in the system. But a key point of neoconservatism, which distinguishes it from other theories, is that the hegemonic state must *actively and constantly maintain* this monopoly on power and influence. If it remains the undisputed unipole and world leader, the system remains inert. But, if its influence wanes or is perceived to wane, this in turn triggers movement in the system back towards competition and survival.

B. Explanatory

The above has laid out the framework of the theory on what it assumes of the international system and state behavior. To reformulate the above in a more parsimonious manner, **the theory tries to account for or explain roughly 3 dependent variables of interest.**

These would be:

- A state's choice of alliance or status quo revisionism, that is, allying with the hegemon, or, challenging the hegemon (from here on referred to as 'status quo revisionism')
- Regional or sub-systemic conflict
- Systemic conflict

The second two are highly similar to, but not altogether identical to Bret Stephens' distinction between "subsystemic" and "suprasystemic" disorder (2014 p. 143). In his conceptualization, subsystemic *disorder* refers to economic shocks and "small wars" at a minor scope, which are treated as largely manageable (though not desirable) instances of disorder which occur in the parameters of state and individual expectations, whereas suprasystemic disorder is unpredictability at the level of the system (p. 144). The theory here builds on these concepts since the wider neoconservative literature does make reference to regional conflict *and* massive, overarching ones. But whereas Stephens downplays the former as commonplace in the international system, the neoconservative *theory* considers that it has the potential to become cumulative, i.e. sub-systemic instability can build into systemic conflict or "supra systemic conflict". In fact, all three dependent variables are cumulative. For the purposes of this thesis, subsystemic conflict is *regional* in nature. This is not an exclusive classification, i.e., not exclusive to regions (but technically applicable within states, or across more than one region but not quite the level of the international system), but one used in this theory to attain a greater degree of parsimony. Additionally, to be more in line with other popular IR theories, this theory uses the term "systemic" to describe phenomena that affects the entire international system, thereby discarding Stephens' affixation of "supra".

1. The first key dependent variable of concern is a state's choice to align (or bandwagon) with the hegemon.

The above touched on how allies seek security and thus bandwagon with the hegemon, and adversaries seek power and so will challenge the hegemon. But what will make a state an ally in the first place in order to choose security over power?

The key independent variable is the **regime type**. Regime type occurs at mostly the state level of analysis, but also involves individual preferences, and features ideology as a key factor. Specifically, it is suggested that democracies are most likely to be allies of the hegemon. But what

about democracy means that a state will be an ally? The impact of regime type on a state's choice to bandwagon with the hegemon can be further broken down conceptually and analytically.

Firstly, a state will *align* itself with a democratic hegemon if they consider this dominant state itself (its ideology, values and behavior) as **legitimate**¹⁶⁵. This elementally borrows from Alexander Wendt, who suggested that states enter into collective arrangements (Kantian culture of anarchy) if they perceive these as legitimate (1999). In neoconservatism, if a state (or actor) does not recognize the hegemon's status quo as valid i.e., they do not accept the ideology, morals, ethics and modus operandi of the dominant state, there is a *greater likelihood* that they will try to upend this. But why will a state recognize this legitimacy in the first place? To jump several steps back in this explanatory sequence, the *democratic* hegemon will be accepted by other states if these other states were ideologically similar – having similar values and a similar regime. Therefore, given a democratic state, *and* a democratic hegemon, there will be a recognition of the legitimacy of this hegemonic state's (attempted) world order.¹⁶⁶ This is similar to Wendt's Kantian culture of anarchy, in which two states are more inclined to see each other as similar and so will be more likely to align. However, - whereas Wendt rejects self-interest as a key motivator of states, in favour of the recognition of the legitimacy of a collective arrangement – neoconservatism still takes self-interest as a key factor in a state's decision to align with the hegemon.

Relatedly, a second key explanation concerns the *motive* of states. Given the (democratic) regime type a potential ally is more likely to seek ***security over power***.¹⁶⁷ But why would democracies be more inclined towards this? This can be broken down into two possible explanations. The first is that neoconservatism suggests that a democracy – based on debates, discourse, free speech, and developed from a fairly wealthy and thus philosophically sophisticated

¹⁶⁵ Recall the earlier point that legitimacy is still secondary to self-interest by states. However, it still provides a *foundational* starting point by which a state can be an ally.

¹⁶⁶ Kagan suggested that European states were much more accepting of potential US hegemony since it was a democratic state "...their [the US] style of working with allies had a democratic quality that permitted weaker powers a very unimperial autonomy" (Kagan, 2012; p. 19).

¹⁶⁷ Stephens, 2014, pp 158 – 162; Kristol and Kagan, 1996; p. 22 both instances describe allies as more oriented towards security, and hence try to maintain an alliance with an active hegemon.

society¹⁶⁸ – will have had their ambitions tamed.¹⁶⁹ The *more* democratic a state – that is the more politically sophisticated and participatory an electorate is – the less inclined it is to ambition, and more towards security. Just like Wendt’s (1999) description of the path of the cultures of anarchy from Hobbesian to Lockean to Kantian, so too does the democratizing process *within* a state see man evolve from an atavistic power-hungry condition in a non-democratic regime, to a cooperative and friendly mode of behaviour in democracy.¹⁷⁰

The second explanation, stemming from this is that (as will be explained in the foreign policy section) voters are considered to be more domestically and internally oriented. Should their voices impact the leadership of their state – which they inevitably do in a democratic state – their leaders likewise express the desire to be merely *secure* as opposed to powerful, the latter which seems like an overextension of the state.

The **state** itself will have **material incentives** to maintain its security. Should it recognize the hegemon as a trustworthy entity, this (democratic, security seeking) state will be highly likely to align itself with it for some sort of overarching protection. Additionally, depending on a guarantor means that the state can invest in other areas otherwise sacrificed if they were to provide their own security. This in turn would be highly favoured by voters who otherwise seek investments in “butter” over “guns”. This demonstrates that in democratic states there is the

¹⁶⁸ Recall earlier in this chapter in which it was suggested, following from Fukuyama (1989) and Huntington (1991), it can be interpreted that democracies are seen as the highest form of political organization, and the furthest from a state of nature, given variables like the satisfaction of basal needs (Lipset, 1959) and the inclusion of mass participation.

¹⁶⁹ Given the tamed ambitions of democratic states, a democratic hegemon may seem like an impossibility. Neoconservative theory can offer two accounts for how a democratic state may rise to such a position of dominance. One explanation is grounded in their account of the United States reluctantly adopting the superpower status post 1945, not out of lust for domination, but begrudgingly out of responsibility since no other state could or would do the job of system management (eg. Stephens, 2014). Two, as the foreign policy section will detail, since the hegemon is democratic, this will always be a check and even a limitation on the extent that the hegemon can pursue its policies. In a way, the idea of a **maximal democratic hegemon** (owning and maintaining a 60% share of the world’s resources) may be paradoxical owing to the limiting effects of democracy (pulling a state away from internationalism to domestic concerns). However, the foreign policy section does touch on the neoconservative idea that such a state can reach this position if the populace has been persuaded to the necessity of global leadership. The overall idea is that the democratic hegemon arises not because it lusts after power but because it was pushed into this position.

¹⁷⁰ While the democratic peace theory maintains that democratic states are peaceful only with each other, and are still prone to war with non-democracies, neoconservative theory suggests from this that a world *fully comprised* of democracies will be peaceful.

considerable importance of variables at the individual level of analysis (specifically individual preference). After all, individuals are considered in the theory to be much more inwardly focused (on the inner workings of the state and their domestic concerns as opposed to foreign policy concerns). This is a point which will be demonstrated even further in the *foreign policy* part of the theory. Additionally, neoconservatism expresses the economic effects of democracy (i.e., capitalistic policies help to cement democracies), and so within democratic states there will be a greater focus on economic well-being as opposed to military might.

2. Regional or sub systemic conflict

The above explained in the theory why states will align with the hegemon. Regime type accounts for why a state will be an ally, and also, why a state will be an adversary. This section moves on to understanding actual instances of challenges by these latter states. The key question here is what factors explain why a state would *challenge* the hegemon in a regional sense?

This type of ‘challenge’ or conflict can be distinguished from overall systemic conflict owing to its frequency in the international system. It can be defined for the purposes of this paper as a confrontation in a region between a dominant state and a rising or challenging one. Such examples would be the Gulf War 1991, Iraq 2003, instability in the Middle East in the 2010’s and the various proxy wars of the Cold War. Neoconservatism, as established in the previous chapter, does focus on the outbreak of regional conflict, stressing the need to maintain regional stability with the stabilizing effects of the hegemon’s presence and corrective actions¹⁷¹. These conflicts can be also described as “...a variety of theatre wars around the world, against separate and distinct adversaries pursuing separate and distinct goals” (Donnelly, 2000; p. 3), as opposed to one against a singular overarching threat like the USSR. In other words, what is of concern here is a type of conflict that is high in frequency, medium to high in regional destabilization, but low in global destabilization (this latter will be dealt with in #3 below). This idea of a regional challenge to the hegemon marks an elaboration from traditional hegemonic stability theories which tend to focus on challenging states as those which hold power on par with the dominant state. That is, the conflict is likely to take place at the global level. The neoconservative theory includes a challenge at the

¹⁷¹ See Wolfowitz, 1992; p. 21 for instance.

regional level where the state is unable to challenge the hegemon *globally* but has calculated that it can do so at the regional level where the hegemon is dominant.

In these frequent conflicts - which are below the level of the system but mimic systemic phenomena like a closed system¹⁷² (i.e. a region becomes a sufficiently autonomous [regional] sub system) - the neoconservative theory would offer that these are due to ideological differences. In essence, **ideology – and its resultant regime type - is *the* key independent variable** in contributing to a regional challenge against the hegemon. Ideology and regime type are inextricably intertwined in the theory, where the former imbues the latter with its characteristics, purpose and behaviours.¹⁷³ The logic for this independent variable is that the *less* democratic a state is, the greater their *ambitions for dominance*, i.e., the more inclined they are to seek power over survival¹⁷⁴. This is due to the following causal chain. Authoritarian and totalitarian states would be more likely to reject the legitimacy of a hegemon, and think of its dominance as an unjust imposition of a world order. Subsequently, the population would internalize this logic and may consent to, or even demand imperial expansion and nationalistic policies to replace this state.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² This suggestion is inspired by Barry Posen's (1993) work which attempted to apply the logic of the security dilemma (hitherto examined in a more global sense) to a civil (ethnic) conflict. Posen treated the collapse of authority (empire) within a state as analogous to anarchy in IR. Similarly, this thesis treats regions (international sub systems) as having characteristics similar to the global international system as a whole, such as polarity, the distribution of power across the system, bandwagoning etc. John Mearsheimer's (2001 *in* 2014) work focusing on hegemony at a regional level is another theoretical precedent for this particular conceptualization.

¹⁷³ For instance, the ideology of communism would result in authoritarian -to-totalitarian regimes, the ideology of fascism would result in totalitarian regimes, and the ideology of liberalism would result in democratic regimes.

¹⁷⁴ Kristol and Kagan suggest that regional- challenging states would "...attempt to alter the status quo [in a region] in their favor." (2004; p. 67). Nothing in the neoconservative canon indicates that this is because such states are security seeking. On the contrary, if they seek to alter the status quo, this may indicate that these states are power-seekers, intent on usurping the hegemon.

¹⁷⁵ While most approaches ignore the input of populations in non-democratic states, neoconservatism still provides considerable focus on these actors. This is important for two reasons – one, when democratization is initiated sometime in the future, it would be of tremendous benefit for the populace to already be inclined or at least mildly sympathetic to the democratic ideal. Two, and explained in the next footnote, at times neoconservatives suggest that dictators at times do take into account the pulse of their population and their preferences. This would ensure that their rule is not challenged.

¹⁷⁶ At the same time, in these regimes, the leaders have tremendous agency, and they, like their populations, have also internalized the notion that the existing hegemon is illegitimate. John Mearsheimer's offensive realist theory has suggested that great powers seek regional hegemony out of security concerns. Neoconservatism conversely suggests that states seek regional (and maybe global hegemony) out of a primeval ambition inherent in their regimes and their associated natural rejection of the existing (liberal) hegemonic status quo. This ideological disagreement means that states will be very much *inclined* to challenge the hegemon. This provides the desire to then redirect resources heavily towards militarization, which then provides them the actual *material means* of challenging the hegemon in its regional sphere of influence, even if these resources do not necessarily allow them to *successfully* challenge the hegemon. Such states may make that gamble that they can challenge the hegemon, even though at face value the probability of defeat may be high given the sheer material imbalance. They do however chance that the hegemon may not react, which in turn contributes to lowering the probability that such a small (regional) challenge will be defeated by the hegemon.

The above demonstrates their motivations and capabilities to challenge the hegemon. But when will they actually do so? Given that regions also display systemic characteristics like polarity and power distribution, these characteristics weigh heavily on a challenging state's decision to go to war. If they perceive any weakness of the hegemon's power, or a waning of their influence in the region, this is taken to be a power vacuum which they try to fill.¹⁷⁷ In other words, challenging

¹⁷⁶ A concrete example is Egypt's opposition to Israel until the Yom Kippur War (1973). Anwar Sadat's autobiography provides an account of Gamal Abdel Nasser's decision-making process in the months and weeks leading up to the 1967 war and in the immediate aftermath, in which survival of the Egyptian state was not at stake, but rather the Six Day War was the attempt at flexing the Arab League's power. Crucially, Sadat expressed that Nasser was likewise supported by the population before and after the 1967 war, which impacted Egypt's stance towards Israel and the US, even though they (the population) held no *direct* power in the decision-making process (Sadat, 1977). For more, see Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (1977).

¹⁷⁷ Using a comparative analysis, Niall Ferguson has suggested that when empires ended or withdrew from their colonies, this resulted in tremendous disorder owing to a power vacuum which disparate actors now hope to fill. He wrote "...the most violent time in the history of an empire often comes at the moment of its dissolution, precisely because...the withdrawal of imperial troops unleashes a struggle between rival and local elites for control of the indigenous armed forces" (2004; p. xi). Just as this deals with an imperial power within a confined territory, this also can be generalized to hegemony in a regional and also global setting, where the hegemon, like the empire, resides over a certain type of order, and in its absence, it is filled by opportunistic actors.

states are considered as *opportunistic* in their calculus, making their move to actually deploy or at least mobilize their military at the point at which the hegemon is deemed least able to effectively retaliate.

Regional conflicts can be contained if the adversary lacks military parity with the hegemon, *and* if the hegemon quickly deals them a decisive blow. However, such states can grow into systemic challengers, if they do not try to upend the status quo prematurely. This allows them to discreetly grow to the point of parity (or close enough) to the hegemon to then more effectively challenge the dominant state at the systemic level (see below). A state that is near parity with the hegemon may want to challenge it systemically so as to increase its chances of victory and fully usurping the hegemon globally, than risk a war of attrition at the regional level. This is one avenue by which a potential regional issue can grow to a systemic one. Another path is if the challenging state attempts status quo revisionism in its regional sphere of interest and is not met with resistance from the hegemon. This latter introduces the notion of agency and individual responsibility on the part of the hegemon since its possible failure to react to the challenger would contribute to the challenger's victory. This emphasizes the importance in neoconservatism of the dominant state of making those right choices in foreign policy, and the consequences of 'wrong' choices.

3. Systemic conflicts are much more damaging and less controllable.

The question of concern here is: what factors explain the outbreak of a conflict at the level of the international system?

In Stephens' definition of "suprasystemic unpredictability", it is defined as "...unpredictability that overwhelms our systems and damages the reference points by which we usually take stock of the world. This is the type of unpredictability that is both the cause and the major characteristic of the coming global disorder" (2014; p. 144). This captures the scope and stakes at risk in this level, where the very existence of a world order is at risk, and is the ultimate world problem that neoconservatives warn of in their writings, particularly in the 1990's when they renewed their calls for the maintenance of US hegemony.¹⁷⁸ But the theory goes beyond a matter of predictability, and deals with a fundamental issue of stability in the world system of which the consequences involve global peace (and economic prosperity). Instability at this level is

¹⁷⁸ Notably Kristol and Kagan (1996)

the great abyss that neoconservatives warn of in the **absence of hegemony, and is the most important issue at the heart of the neoconservative theory.**

The previous section drew parallels with hegemonic stability theory while rejecting its cyclicity. Neoconservatism expresses that systemic instability can occur *independently* of some *unseen mechanism* of cycles driving world politics. Modelski's (1987), Gilpin's (1988), and Allison's (2014) work altogether provide a theoretical antecedent for this. The crucial exception however, is that neoconservatism insists that it is the adversarial state which initiates conflict, not the hegemon.

The key independent variable concerns a systemic level of analysis that brings this conflict to the wider system. This in essence is the distribution of influence and power in the international system (or the distribution of power defined dually as capacity and influence). Neoconservative theory holds that, as the hegemon begins losing its monopoly on power, or, if this is perceived (since no one can *truly* know the objective reality of a situation, and instead develop their pool of information on what they interpret), the world returns to a bipolar or multipolar configuration, which outlined earlier, is much more active and unstable. This is so, since formerly allegiant actors are now **without a security guarantee**, and so they seek security of their own.¹⁷⁹ The alliance system built by the hegemon which not only demonstrated material power by capability aggregation (nuclear weapons, large economy, high population etc), but also by perception (of a united bloc – of a strong alliance), is now weakened, which in turn means the hegemon has lost a large portion of its *influential* power, and so its role as *hegemon* is in dire straits. Given that the hegemon is now without strong allies, this allows the system to begin moving towards a multipolar configuration.

Even if in a *purely* material conception the hegemon is still dominant in its power concentration, the actions of other states (not the hegemon) based on the perception of waning power can help to initiate a multipolar configuration (through militarization and declining proclivity to bandwagoning). Here, the issue of perception and ideas matters. States may not always calculate the strength of the unipole in terms of hard power concentration (like the Singer et. al (1972, 2012) Composite Index of National Capabilities score for instance), but they certainly act based on what they perceive to be the case. So, if the hegemon appears to be renegeing on its

¹⁷⁹ eg Stephens, 2014, pp 158 - 162.

commitments, and it seems as if it has lost a significant part of its material power, other states will act based on this.

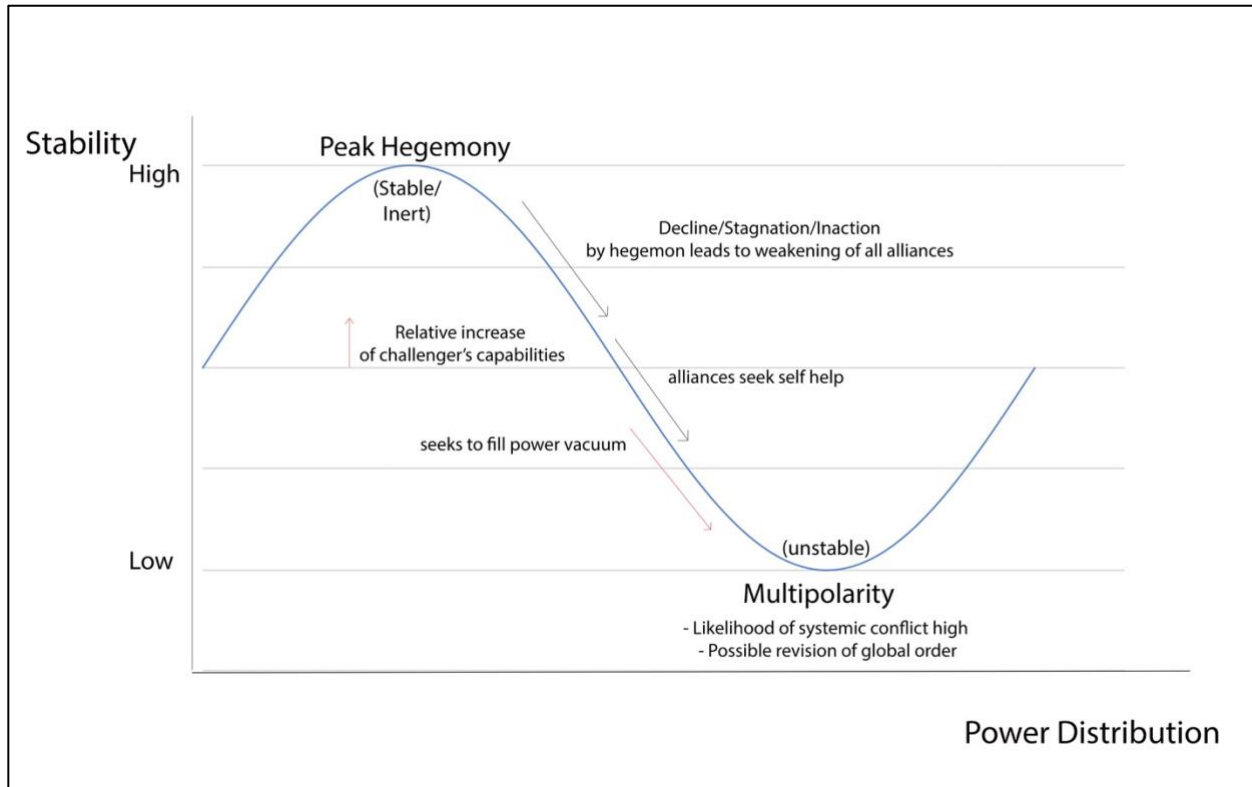


Figure 2 Movement from Unipolarity to unstable Multipolarity in Neoconservatism. NB. Weakening by hegemon has effects for both challengers and allies, who pursue actions which further destabilize the system

Figure 2 deals with inertia and movement in the international system. In physics, a ball will be at a state of *unstable equilibrium* at the very apex of a hill since it is subject to downward movement by any exerting force. In the neoconservative theory, the international system is on the contrary stable at the apex of hegemonic power, however, this is *maximum* stability – i.e., the most stable the world system can ever be. The movement away from this peak can be set off by the hegemon’s influential and material power ‘leaking’ away. This would give rise to much uncertainty and unpredictability, and the likelihood of conflict increases as actors move further and further from a unipolar/hegemonic configuration.

In physics, the object may come to rest comfortably in the trough of the hill – i.e., *stable equilibrium*, but by contrast, neoconservatism considers that this base, where the system is totally multipolar, and completely diffuse with power scattered amongst several disparate actors, is where

the system is plunged into deep, perilous straits, and where instability is almost certainly guaranteed.

Therefore, in the movement from **unipolarity** to **multipolarity**, the system becomes more unpredictable and more diffuse in the policies states adopt – in that no longer are the hegemon and its allies' policies totally congruent and in harmony with the other. Certain states may choose policies that are beyond what the hegemon may be prepared to deal with (particularly nuclear proliferation by allies in the absence of security assurances). In this regard, from the hegemon's perspective, policies become wildly *diffuse* as opposed to *concentrated in a convergence* that is manageable to it. In the unipolar configuration, where a unipole acts as a hegemon (i.e., it converts its material power to leadership), allies' needs for security are satisfied, and potential challengers' desires for power are not operationalized. Conversely multipolarity breeds significant "movement" since allies now *must* provide for their own security, and potential challengers *can* now seek to expand and fulfill their ambitions.

Crucially at this point, challenging states take advantage of the newfound weakness of the dominant state. But in order to challenge the hegemon (or former or weakening hegemon) in a manner that destabilizes the system, the state must have significant military power to be close to parity with the hegemon. To put it this way, regional conflicts are facilitated by an underlying ideological disagreement which pushes the potential challenging state to redirect resources to greatly strengthen their military, whereas in these grand, systemic conflicts, the challenger *already* has close-to-parity military capacity on top of this ideological disagreement.

The above dependent variables should not be taken as separate but as continuous, flowing into one and then the other. The whole causal process begins with a state's decision to challenge or align with a hegemon, then it discusses regional conflicts, and then systemic conflicts. These latter two ultimately stem from the very first. Given the causal chain, if a state has aligned with the hegemon because of material incentives or ideological affinity, it will not be the actor to challenge the dominant state in a sub-systemic setting, and systemically. If the hegemon's power wanes, this state will in turn seek to securitize as opposed to violently challenge the hegemon. It should be noted too, that this set of dependent variables that the theory seeks to study are not exhaustive. The theory can also be expanded to the causes of domestic and international (sub systemic and systemic) economic instability for instance.

Some **hypotheses** can be gleaned from the above to provide the groundwork for future testing and refinement. These hypotheses are listed here as well in order to inject some measure of falsifiability in the theory.

H1: The weaker a hegemon is, the higher the likelihood for status quo revisionism (sub-systemically or systemically).¹⁸⁰

H2: Status quo revisionists are highly likely to be non-democratic states.

These are the key hypotheses that underpin the theory, although not exhaustive. Separately, neither is particularly original. The first hypothesis is drawn from the hegemonic stability theories and the second is related to the democratic peace theory. What makes neoconservatism unique is this **combination** of hypotheses.

These hypotheses are provided to enable the potential testing of the validity of the neoconservative's theory's claims. Is it a theory that *effectively* helps to describe world politics? As mentioned earlier, this may be quite the task, since variables at the systemic level may be difficult to measure precisely. Importantly, the hypotheses should ideally be tested not separately, but in conjunction with one another. But should any be rejected, this undermines the strength of the theory of neoconservatism.

C. Strategies

The explanatory part of the theory above has made it clear that in the absence of a hegemon the international system becomes destabilized since its adversaries can act on their ambitions, and its allies must act on their needs for security. The previous chapter outlined that it is **active hegemony** that is key to understanding neoconservatism, since passive or latent power is akin to atrophy. For while the state of peak hegemony is an inert one in the sense that it tends to prevent

¹⁸⁰ The theory has frequently suggested the importance of perceptions and the objective reality concerning the strength and weakness of a hegemon and the other states' opinions of it. The theory considers that no actor can *truly know* the objective reality of a state's power base, and so relies on the perception of this. For the sake of being as parsimonious as possible, the hypothesis offers that in this regard, perceptions can very closely match the empirical reality of a hegemon's strength, and so there is *no* bi-directionality where a hegemon is perceived weak and is in reality strong, or vice versa.

systemic shocks (neither great war nor economic shocks are likely), the hegemon itself, by contrast, *cannot* be inert. Therefore, it must adopt certain continued measures to stave off the systemic conflict from actually happening, and to do so, this requires a **re-engineering of the international order** by the hegemon to avert such a challenge^{181 182}.

This lends itself to the following recommendations or “how to’s” in neoconservative theory. The goal is to **create** and **maintain** an environment that is conducive to keeping the hegemon at its peak power and influence and also to create and maintain a stable world. It is an overarching and ambitious vision, one which sees the environment shaped in the hegemon’s image. As Kristol and Kagan wrote “...American statesmen today ought to recognize that their charge is not to await the arrival of the next great threat, but rather to shape the international environment to prevent such a threat from arising in the first place.” (2004; p. 63). In essence, hegemony is not just a militarily powerful *state*, but like Cox’s notion of Gramscian hegemony is a ubiquitous presence, one which is “... is describable as a social structure, an economic structure, and a political structure; and it cannot be simply one of these things but must be all three” (1983; p. 171).

As such, the avenues of modelling the international environment rest on four pillars which complement each other. The first involves **preference shaping** so that the hegemon is accepted within the international community. It is a foundational means of shaping the environment, which informs or bleeds into the second and third. The second concerns **democratization**, where other states are guided by the hegemon towards democracy, taken to be the optimal regime type in the theory (given its ascribed pacifism). The third is **economic leadership** by the hegemon which demonstrates its influential power and norm setting. The fourth concerns the **militaristic dominance and global presence** of the hegemon. The first three – preference shaping, democratization and economic hegemony are just as crucial to the dominant state as encouraging the impression of a strong military. After all, without having shaped states into democracies, without guiding an economic environment favourable to its interests and without shaping the preferences of others so that they accept the hegemon’s rule, the hegemon is simply an imposing

¹⁸¹ “Our strategy must now refocus on precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor” (Wolfowitz, 1992; p. 4).

¹⁸² Dick Cheney in 1993, (1993; p. 2)

behemoth, rather than a benevolent entity. Should this be the case, it will invite quick challenge to its rule and suffer from a paucity or absence of allies.

i. Preference Shaping

The hegemon in this theory would require, that, in the first place, states seeking security need to recognize the hegemon as a reliable guarantor of security. In essence then, preference shaping is the first step towards alliances. After all, if a hegemon cannot convince others that it will respect their sovereignty and make good on its promises, then states will take their securitization elsewhere.

What is preference shaping and why does the hegemon need it?

On overarching international (economic) planning, Friedrich Hayek offered the pessimistic prognosis that it would inevitably entail coercion and rule by force given the numerous competing interests and opinions in the international community (1944; 2007; pp. 224 – 225).¹⁸³ In other words such an overarching style of rule would inevitably encounter problems due to different beliefs among states. But what Hayek failed to consider was a state circumventing this foundational problem. What if there were no “divergent ideals”¹⁸⁴ among actors? What if contrary to his idea that spreading one’s morals to others will inevitably lead to immoral imposition of ideals¹⁸⁵, the hegemon could *easily* do so?

The last chapter drew parallels between neoconservatism and the Gramscian version of hegemony, in which it involves the **reshaping of perceived interests** and coordination between the hegemon and other states to achieve a level of congruency (1983; p. 164, 168, 171). This then

¹⁸³ “In a small community common views on the relative importance of the main tasks, agreed standards of value, will exist on a great many subjects. But their number will become less and less the wider we throw the net; and, as there is less community of views, the necessity to rely on force and coercion increases....Planning on an international scale, even more than is true on a national scale, cannot be anything but a naked rule of force, an imposition by a small group on all the rest of that sort of standard employment which the planners think suitable for the rest.” (Hayek; 1944; 2007; pp. 224 – 225).

¹⁸⁴ Hayek, 1944, 2007; p. 226.

¹⁸⁵ “What these dangerous idealists do not see is that where the assumption of a moral responsibility involves that one’s moral views should by force be made to prevail over those dominant in other communities, the assumption of such responsibility may place one in a position in which it becomes impossible to act morally.” (Hayek, 1944; 2007; p. 229).

allows for hegemony to be much more readily accepted by states, and accounts for why in the theory, hegemony both enjoys both wide (across many actors) and deep (certain actors feel a sense of affinity with the hegemon) support in the system.

Therefore, a dominant state must create an international environment in which its rule is characterized by legitimacy and consent. In so doing, it somewhat requires on the part of the hegemon to shape the environment and perceptions of it so that others' inclinations are in line with the hegemon's, similar to Luke's (1974) third face of power. Lukes suggested that power is not just getting another actor to do something they otherwise would not have, but it involves at a foundational level transforming the preferences of an actor so that it readily does what the other wanted of them (Hay, 1997 p. 47). Lukes writes "...A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants. Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have - that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires?" (2005; p. 27). Lukes' strong language notwithstanding, hegemony in the neoconservative theory very similarly requires that it not just mechanically makes promises of security to others, but it conducts policies that shape other's preferences. For states to accept the hegemon, their preferences should have been shaped to *want* the fruits that the hegemon promises (systemic stability and security assurances). Since democratic states have a security imperative, they need to be persuaded that bandwagoning with the hegemon is the *best* way to achieve security as opposed to balancing against this state, or, seeking security by themselves (as isolated states each pursuing the policies they think are fit). This thus involves a sense of trust in the hegemon, and an acceptance of its ability to protect. Since security is such a serious concern of democratic states, these states must be strongly persuaded to put this issue in the hands of this dominant state.

Norms, regimes and multilateralism are a broad-church of tools to co-opt states into the dominant state's fore. This allows for two phenomena. One, these regimes and international organizations allow for other states to participate in system management *with* the hegemon. In this regard, neoconservatism partially shares its account of post-1945 cooperation with structural liberalism of Deudney and Ikenberry which suggested that the post WWII order has been characterized by "reciprocal co-binding" of practices, which keeps each state in check, thereby

creating more mutual and cooperative arrangements (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999; p. 182)¹⁸⁶. Similarly, in neoconservatism, these states are therefore given the perception that the dominant state is readily sharing its power, which crucially “overcomes the effects of anarchy *without producing hierarchy*” (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999; p. 182 [emphasis added]). It should be noted however, that in neoconservatism, there is *still* a level of hierarchy involved, with allies being secondary in power and responsibility belonging to the hegemon. Secondly, and more importantly, these bodies and alliances themselves express the ideas and ideologies espoused by the hegemon. The previous chapter mentioned that international organizations are used by the hegemon to spread its ideology, to engage in norm setting, and “absorb counter-hegemonic ideas” (Cox, 1983; p.172). **Cultural affinity** is another key area by which the hegemon shapes preferences. In exporting its culture as an attractive, viable way of life, individuals in other states may develop a sense of affinity and identification with images and schemas presented as desirable – this is of course Nye’s “soft power”, defined as “...the ability to establish preferences [which] tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as culture, ideology and institutions” (1991; p. 32).¹⁸⁷ As Nye continues, the use of culture is a particularly efficient form of power (1991; p. 193).¹⁸⁸ However, the ultimate avenue by which states will be more amenable to accepting hegemonic rule is if they are democracies. This is why **democratization** is a key strategy to maintain this type of dominance.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ They continue that American hegemony is characterized not by dominance but by “...far more reciprocity and legitimacy than an order based solely on superordinate and subordinate relations.” (1999; p. 185).

¹⁸⁷ He stresses the importance of this type of power :“Soft co-optive power is just as important as hard command power. If a state can make its power legitimate in the eyes of others it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow. If it can establish international norms that are consistent with its society, it will be less likely to have to change.” (Nye, 1991; p. 32).

¹⁸⁸ Nye adds: “Nicaraguan television played American shows even while the government fought American-backed guerillas. Similarly, Soviet teenagers wear blue jeans and seek American recordings...Of course there is an element of triviality and fad in popular behavior, but it is also true that a country that stands astride popular channels of communication has more opportunities to get its messages across and to affect the preferences of others” (Nye, 1991; pp. 193 – 194).

¹⁸⁹ Granted however, the hegemon’s allies are not guaranteed to acquiesce in every instance, as the empirical reality of disagreements with its allies demonstrate (such as European states with the JCPOA and the resistance of Germany and France in the run up to the Iraq War). However, in the parameters of the theory as an ideal type, these types of disagreements are hardly severe, since such resistance is hardly detrimental

ii. *Spread of Democracy*

The dominant state will seek to re-engineer its environment i) to be as unlikely as possible to challenge its status quo and ii) to create stability in regions and internationally. The theory suggests that the principal strategy hegemons will pursue to these ends is that of democratization, given democracies' pacifistic and cooperative with each other. However, and it is important to stress, democratization can be achieved through multiple avenues, not just through military action. A hegemon will seek to democratize other states through active means since democratization by osmosis or spillover is taken to be inefficacious¹⁹⁰. To do so, the hegemon will alter the internal composition of states through **social** and **economic** means, to allow for democratic rule to successfully take root¹⁹¹ ¹⁹². Neoconservative theory adds to Huntington that the internal conditions for democracy to take place – if absent or weak - would ideally require the imposition of the hegemon to create democracy in a *timeframe* suitable to the dominant state, i.e., these internal conditions if left to their own devices, would be inefficient and ineffective at producing democratic rule. Ideally, states would have not just the regime type of the hegemon, but a similar way of life, culture and ideology as well. ¹⁹³

to the core fabric of an alliance (particularly if the allied states are dependent on the hegemon for their security).

¹⁹⁰ “snowballing” or democratization by spillover or osmosis is not sufficient to create widespread democratization (Huntington, 1991; p. 16).

¹⁹¹ Huntington implies that democratization requires not just one type of reform, but a combination of political, cultural and economic transformation in states to be successful (1991, p. 33). For democracy to take root, this depends on “favorable internal conditions”, notably those that are economic and social in nature (p. 16). Therefore, he writes, even if the rest of the world is democratic, this exogenous context cannot create proper democracies if states themselves do not have the proper conducive internal conditions. See also Lipset (1959).

¹⁹² “In China, the obstacles to democratization are political, economic, and cultural; in Africa they are overwhelmingly economic; and in the rapidly developing countries of East Asia and in many Islamic countries, they are primarily cultural.” (Huntington, 1991, p. 31).

¹⁹³ Huntington writes “The Orthodox churches could emerge as a powerful influence for democracy in southeastern Europe and the Soviet Union. A Chinese proponent of *glasnost* could come to power in Beijing, or a new Jeffersonian-style Nasser could spread a democratic version of Pan-Arabism in the Middle East. Japan could use its growing economic clout to encourage human rights and democracy in the poor countries to which it makes loans and grants” (Huntington, 1991; p. 17). While Huntington describes a global and multilateral approach to ideological democratization, the broader neoconservative ideology

A key tool that facilitates the democratization of states is the use of economic processes to enact regime change. For Huntington, and wider neoconservatism, one key prerequisite for democracy's creation and longevity is **capitalism and neoliberal economics** (1991; p. 17). Writing in 1991, Huntington suggested that the IMF and World Bank, - creations of the hegemon, incidentally - can be used to augment and strengthen such favourable conditions for successful democratization by insisting on democratic rule as a prerequisite of economic assistance. "In the 1990s the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank could conceivably become much more forceful than they have heretofore been in making political democratization as well as economic liberalization a precondition for economic assistance." (Huntington, 1991, p. 17). While Huntington in this instance does not suggest that economic liberalization leads to democracy (as Lipset insinuated), his underlying logic is that states will be pressured (by those tools of the hegemon [the IMF and World Bank]) to alter the character of their political regimes to be more democratic, in order to access the economic support they desire. Still, both Lipset and Huntington have taken note of the correlations between wealth and democracy (Huntington, 1991, p. 31; Lipset, 1959)¹⁹⁴. This logic lends for a marriage between neoconservatism and neoliberal economics, which they believe is a viable pathway for economic growth. The previous chapter outlined Seymour Martin Lipset's suggestion that increased wealth within states correlates to **longevity of democracies** (1959 pp. 75 - 77). The logic behind this, is that once man's basic needs are fulfilled by attaining a comfortable middle class quality of life, he can now turn his attention to a qualitative criticism and improvement of his political environment, and has the luxury of partaking in matters of political and normative philosophy (Lipset, 1958 p. 75).¹⁹⁵ Trade

suggests that, like all roads leading to Rome, all pathways of global democratization here lead to the United States, - in that its ideals are seen (by neoconservatives) to be *unique* to the United States (despite being subsequently adopted by other states). Notions of natural right and moral absolutism are claimed by the United States first and foremost by neoconservatives. Following from Alan Bloom's 1987 (and other neoconservatives') adherence to moral and cultural absolutism, neoconservatives believe that democracy is best in other states if they are not just democratic but also similar in culture.

¹⁹⁴ "Poverty is a principal - probably *the* principal - obstacle to democratic development. The future of democracy depends on the future of economic development. Obstacles to economic development are the obstacles to the expansion of democracy." (Huntington, 1991; p. 31).

¹⁹⁵ To emphasize this point, it might be worth reiterating what Lipset wrote, "From Aristotle down to the present, men have argued that *only in a wealthy society* in which relatively few citizens lived in real poverty could a situation exist in which the *mass of the population could intelligently participate in politics* and

liberalization and privatization, considered in the theory to yield economic growth, should thus be used by the hegemon to open up states and facilitate some sort of **regime change**.

iii. Economy

Following from this, the neoconservative theory stresses that an economic arm of hegemonic power is important. The goals of the economic hegemon involve **stability of international financial system** through system management and coordinated economic policies, the use of economic policies to spread an **ideology**, and to achieve overall financial growth.

While earlier we witnessed Hayek's trepidation over an internationally planned economy, fearing it would yield the same tyranny he saw in domestic planning, he still suggested some form of a restraining international power in the global economy (1944, p. 231).¹⁹⁶ In essence, there was need for a body not just to proclaim normative concerns, but to *enforce* certain laws (pp. 232 – 233).¹⁹⁷ In the neoconservative theory, such an authority in the international economy is required, and the hegemon is the most fit to undertake this role and enforcement functions. Ameliorating the disorder described by Charles Kindleberger (1987) in relation to the Great Depression, the hegemon would guide common macroeconomic policies across states, facilitate trade openness, make available easy lines of credit for emergency situations. As with Huntington's suggestion that democratization will not occur on its own without constant reinforcement (1991), openness and liberal trade policies are not *natural* features of the international system. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ferguson wrote, "No matter how persuasive the arguments for economic

could *develop the self-restraint* necessary to avoid succumbing to the *appeals of irresponsible demagogues*." [emphasis added]

¹⁹⁶ "...there must be a power which can restrain the different nations from action harmful to their neighbours, a set of rules which defines what a state may do, and an authority capable of enforcing these rules." (Hayek, 1944, p. 231).

¹⁹⁷ Hayek wrote similarly "...the small [states] can preserve their independence in the international as in the national sphere only within a true system of law which guarantees both that certain rules are invariably enforced and that the authority which has the power to enforce these cannot use it for any other purpose." (p. 234). Although Hayek referenced the idea of federalism on the world stage (p. 233), and generally rejected a singular state from undertaking this, this provides a precedent for system management in neoconservatism which involves the constant enforcement of rules. "Neither an omnipotent superstate nor a loose association of "free nations" but a community of nations of free men must be our goal," he wrote (p. 235).

openness, it seems, nation states cling to their tariffs, quotas and subsidies. By contrast in the first era of globalization, from the mid- nineteenth century until the First World War, economic openness was imposed by colonial powers ... To be more precise, free trade spread because of Britain's power and Britain's example." (Ferguson, 2004, p. 186).

Crucially, the international economy itself acts as an **ideological bulwark** against an opponent offering an alternative ideology. This is of particular relevance when the ideologies are characterized by opposing views on economic processes. If the hegemon has several allies, and continues leadership in the international financial architecture (through its organizations), then this essentially creates an economic-ideological front against the other side. It not only leads global finance, but helps produce the perception that its economic ideology has gained significant ground. Additionally, by pegging loans, and opportunities for other states to develop, to reforms that facilitate democratization and privatization, the dominant state directly but subtly furthers its goal to democratize states.¹⁹⁸

Furthermore, trade openness encouraged by the hegemon leads to greater exposure *of* populations overseas *to* the hegemon's products.¹⁹⁹ This in turn can transform the preferences of other countries' citizens by cooptation.^{200 201} This in turn is a direct tool of the preference shaping of individuals, as Lukes (1974, 2005) described. In short, the ideological function of economic hegemony works to re-shape perceptions and make the hegemon more appealing.

¹⁹⁸ Notably the Washington Consensus of the 1980's by the IMF and World Bank which pegged neoliberal conditionalities to loans given to developing countries. These states, newly freed from colonialism and dabbling with socialism and protectionism were seen as ideal candidates for ideological-economic transformations.

¹⁹⁹ As Paul Wolfowitz wrote of the overarching phenomenon of globalization: "...the increasing interconnectedness of the world economy, occurs within the context of the global dominance of American economic and political ideas, accompanied by the spread of American mass culture." (Wolfowitz, 2000; p. 317).

²⁰⁰ Wolfowitz 2000; p.333. Wolfowitz suggested reshaping the international environment to deter long in advance the rise of an adversarial China, by, among others, the strengthening of "...the liberal democratic-free market consensus, including the global free-trade regime, with the goal of making the status quo attractive to all comers..."

²⁰¹ It is worth reiterating Kristol and Kagan's point on the United States, in which they stated, "The enormous web of the global economic system, with the United States at the center, combined with the pervasive influence of American ideas and culture, allowed Americans to wield influence in many other ways of which they were entirely unconscious." (1996, p. 21).

Additionally, the hegemon would seek to foster overall economic growth amongst states. In contrast to gains in the military, **economic growth is taken to be absolute** - i.e., a gain in one state is not considered a loss to another, *unless* they have proven themselves as a major status quo revisionist (which in any case is unlikely, given that the hegemon and its allies will economically starve such states so that they will not grow economically [see below]). Economic growth is considered mutually beneficial *and* attributed to liberalization policies by a hegemon.²⁰² Additionally, neoconservatives (*especially* Niall Ferguson) stress that the hegemon itself must be financially secure in order to finance its global leadership, and Krauthammer suggested US unipolarity would be at risk with a poor economy (1991; p. 26)²⁰³ They maintain that economic prosperity and *foreign* military ventures are not mutually exclusive, since economic prosperity is largely due to *domestic* choices.²⁰⁴

Further, some have suggested that hegemonies use economic tools in punitive ways by restricting access to capital and foreign currency from those deemed non-compliant (Bremmer, 2015; pp 8- 9)²⁰⁵. This “**weaponization of finance** – the systematic use of carrots (access to financial markets) and sticks (varied types of sanctions) as tools of coercive diplomacy” (ibid, p. 8) might be an option in non-violently dealing with opponents, since it draws little attention from the international community or the hegemon’s own voters, as opposed to the use of the military (Bremmer, 2015; p. 9)²⁰⁶. The hegemon can only do so by designing a financial system in which

²⁰² “For four centuries prior to 1950, global gross domestic product (GDP) rose by less than 1 percent a year. Since 1950 it has risen by an average of 4 percent a year, and billions of people have been lifted out of poverty” (Kagan, 2012; p. 3). He continues “Perhaps the stunning global economic growth of the past six decades reflects an economic order shaped by the world’s leading free-market economy.” (p. 4).

²⁰³ “...if America succeeds in running its economy into the ground, it will not be able to retain its unipolar role for long...But if the economy is run into the ground it will not be because of imperial overstretch...” (Krauthammer, 1991; p. 26).

²⁰⁴ Krauthammer writes “America’s low savings rate, poor educational system, stagnant productivity, declining work habits, rising demand for welfare state entitlements...have nothing at all to do with engagement in Europe” (ibid)

²⁰⁵ While Ian Bremmer is certainly no neoconservative, he is cited here for explicating a fundamentally hegemonic policy option.

²⁰⁶ Bremmer writes similarly “Of critical importance, the weaponization of finance is a tool that can be used with minimal cooperation from other governments” (p. 9).

other actors are dependent on the hegemon and must follow its rules. States that try to revise the status quo will risk punishment by isolation from such a system. However, there are limitations to this, for, while sanctioning can be used by the dominant state, it is not a *preferred* tool of statecraft in dealing with non-allies. For states that can pose a long-term systemic threat, the best bet is to co-opt them gradually.²⁰⁷ The section on preference shaping alludes to this. The logic of this is, the economy can act to entice them into the overall international economic architecture, allowing them economic growth, which in turn will foster long term democratization. A distinction however, occurs between *immediately* threatening states, and those that pose a *potential* threat in the long term. For the former, the hegemon and its allies will economically starve the state so that it changes course, but the latter entails co-option.

iv. Military

The hegemon under neoconservatism takes advantage of a sophisticated military so that *actively*, it is an efficacious and swift tool of foreign policy, and *passively*, but highly importantly, it contributes to the perception of the hegemon as formidable. As such, the military, even when not used, is itself a deterrent.²⁰⁸ But beyond its ability awe and deter others, four additional requirements underpin the military's importance and relevance for neoconservatives as a tool of hegemonic power. These are having a **global military presence**, maintaining **security guarantees** to other states, enjoying a monopoly of the system's **deadliest weapon** (nuclear capability) and executing immediate **political functions** if needed (such as the elimination of an errant government or assisting those rival factions of such).

As the PNAC report, *Rebuilding America's Defenses* (2000) noted "...it will be difficult to sustain the role of global guarantor without a **substantial overseas presence**." (Donnelly, 2000; p. 14). Just as the hegemon extends itself in subtle but omnipresent ways through the creation of IO's and facilitating ideological transformation, so too can this be promoted by a ubiquitous

²⁰⁷ See Wolfowitz, 2000; p. 325 "Despite the challenges that China's increasing strength will pose to the United States and its allies, it would be a mistake to treat China like the Soviet Union in the Cold War, restricting trade in order deliberately to weaken it or using trade as human rights leverage. A China weakened by such policies might take longer to become a military competitor; but what we might gain in that respect would be canceled out in enmity" (Wolfowitz, 2000; p. 325).

²⁰⁸ Much of these perspectives can be found in "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century" in *Project for a New American Century*, (or PNAC), for which the principal author is Thomas Donnelly (2000).

(global) presence of a military. Neoconservative theory suggests that the hegemon should police unclaimed frontiers and “the global commons” in order to prevent any other state gaining an advantage there. These ‘unclaimed frontiers’ might include those located in the sea, air, space and cyberspace.^{209 210} Additionally, even in “claimed” areas, or within particular sovereign states, neoconservatism suggests that the hegemon maintain a presence in key, strategic locations, in order to quickly restore order should a regional conflict or attempt at status quo revisionism occur, as well as to engage in monitoring of a region and potentially adversarial actors.^{211 212}

Secondly, the military of the hegemon and the protection it provides ultimately takes over the role of **other states’ provision of their own security**. Compliant states (allies) relinquish a certain level of military autonomy in exchange for guaranteed protection from the much larger and more efficacious armed forces of the hegemon. For the dominant state this means it can effectively preside over a singular security policy in any given region, as opposed to wildly disparate policies across several states as opposed to policies unified under the hegemon’s approval.^{213 214} As briefly mentioned before, neoconservatism considers that in the military realm gains are relative, in that incremental increases in war winning abilities by another reduce this relative advantage that the hegemon enjoys, and this applies to both allies and (potential) adversaries. While Wendt’s famous (1999) suggestion that nuclear weapons owned by North Korea hold a different meaning for the

²⁰⁹ See “Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century” in *Project for a New American Century*, which recommends the US “Control the new “International Commons” of space and “cyberspace,” and pave the way for the creation of a new military service – U.S. Space Forces –with the mission of space control (Donnelly; 2000; p. v.)

²¹⁰ “Just as Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote about “sea-power” at the beginning of the 20th century in this sense, American strategists will be forced to regard “space-power” in the 21st” (Donnelly, 2000 p. 55).

²¹¹ Donnelly, 2000 p. 10; 13.

²¹² “Whether established in permanent bases or on rotational deployments, the operations of U.S and allied forces abroad provide the first line of defense of what may be described as the ‘American security perimeter’.” (Donnelly, 2000; p 14).

²¹³ “...it is important that NATO not be replaced by the European Union, replacing the United States without a voice in European security affairs.” (Donnelly, 2000; p. 16).

²¹⁴ “The core purpose of Pax Americana isn’t merely to deter our adversaries; it is to make sure that our allies are not tempted to take matters into their own hands when they feel their security is at stake. Thus the United States offers nuclear guarantees to countries such as Germany, Japan, and South Korea because we do not want them acquiring nuclear capabilities of their own,” wrote Bret Stephens (2014; p. 159).

United States than those held by the UK does in fact apply to neoconservatism, the neoconservative theory would ideally prefer that allies be consistently militarily inferior to the hegemon. This is because, as mentioned earlier, hegemonic power of influence over others is pegged to dictating the military policies of other states – which is only possible in asymmetrical situations. But this of course means that the hegemon *must* continually act on its promises to its allies. “Our allies, for whom regional problems are vital security interest, will come to doubt our willingness to defend their interests if U.S forces withdraw into a Fortress America” stated the PNAC’s Rebuilding America’s Defenses (Donnelly, 2000; p. 14).

The third pillar of militarization in the neoconservative theory concerns **nuclear weapon dominance** (or dominance of the deadliest weapon at any given time). Nuclear superiority guarantees the survival of the hegemon as a *state* and also the hegemon as a unipolar power.²¹⁵ Nuclear parity with another state puts the hegemon in a more precarious situation, as both a state and a dominant great power, since it can be overtaken by the other. For this reason, the hegemon seeks non proliferation in other states, both its allies and potential challengers.²¹⁶ Even if global non-proliferation is unfeasible, the dominant state, the hegemon, can remain in a comfortable position if its capabilities outnumber those of other states, even surpassing combined capabilities of others.²¹⁷ In the same way that latent military strength can also be a deterrent by itself, a nuclear arsenal also dissuades other states from challenging it without necessarily being used.

²¹⁵ PNAC’s recommendation on this was to, “Maintain nuclear strategic superiority, basing the U.S. nuclear deterrent upon a global, nuclear net assessment that weights the full range of current and emerging threats, not merely the U.S. – Russia balance.” (Donnelly, 2000, p. iv).

²¹⁶ But such efforts are untenable through purely diplomatic means: “The ability to control this emerging threat [of nuclear, chemical, biological ballistic missiles] through traditional nonproliferation treaties is limited when the geopolitical and strategic advantages of such weapons are so apparent and so readily acquired.” (Donnelly, 2000; p. 52). [This however does not take into account the real possibility that nuclear proliferation may meet counter-action by threatened actors (both adversaries and allies), and so may be more of a geopolitical liability for a state with nuclear aspirations (Monteiro & Debs, 2014; p. 12)]. But following from this, neoconservative theory suggests that the actual tool of blocking proliferation should be, not diplomacy but anti-missile defense technology of satellite detection, interception, and destruction (Donnelly, 2000; pp. 52 – 53).

²¹⁷ “...what should finally drive the size and character of our nuclear forces is not numerical parity of Russian capabilities but maintaining American strategic superiority – and, with that superiority, a capability to deter possible hostile coalitions of nuclear powers.” (Donnelly, 2000, p. 8).

But what if the hegemon actually uses the military to deal a decisive win against a rogue regime? What should come next? The failings of the Iraq war which saw a protracted armed struggle in the face of the most formidable military (and its coalition), regionally and globally, forced neoconservatism to rethink its military strategy.²¹⁸ A fourth pillar to its military wing is the use of the military in asymmetrical conflicts, which draws out different functions from the military than in traditional forms of contemporary warfare. This takes the form of “counterinsurgency, counterterrorism and nation building” (Boot, 2014; p. 5).²¹⁹ This requires the military to adopt a more **political and social function**. Of course, this policy suggestion is also hardly held unanimously within the approach. Still, within the confines of the theory – a theory of maximum hegemony - it is a logical action by the dominant state, since this state has both the desire *and ability* to **fundamentally transform** an errant state so as to eliminate any problem in the long term. Additionally, since this is a theory of maximum hegemony, the dominant state will not just seek superficial or topical corrective measures in dealing with aberrations in the international system but will pursue a deeper policy of altering the character of an errant state.

Should some action – to eliminate a regional challenge to the status quo – result in a change of, or the fall of, a regime, the hegemon must act as a stabilizer of the state, and its military is a key and immediate tool of this.²²⁰ The logic behind this is that while the hegemon may provide

²¹⁸ PNAC’s report, published in 2000 maintained a somewhat distant tone from local militias and domestic troops as possible allies. Nothing like the US-Sunni coalition in Iraq from 2007 would have been mentioned in the report. It can be suggested that the military tactics of PNAC’s report were still far too conventional, which is ironic, since PNAC tried to bring the US military out of a Cold War era and into an age of new types of war. Thus tactics in Iraq from 2003 – 2007 [which some say were inspired by PNAC] resulted in the quagmire since it failed to understand truly a new type of war - particularly the long and protracted nature of the insurgency and sectarian tensions during the Iraq War, which entailed not just a matter of violence (and hence the use of brute force to solve), but a fundamental issue of society, ideology and religion. The problem with PNAC was therefore a matter a lack of imagination, in failing to consider that conflicts would require not just the sheer awesome tools of a revolutionized military, but social, ideological and political policies to complement the RMA.

²¹⁹ The logic Boot provides is that these unconventional actors “...seldom met U.S. forces in the open, which meant that they could not be defeated quickly. To beat such shadowy foes, American troops had to undertake the time-intensive, difficult work of what’s now known as counterinsurgency, counterterrorism and nation building.” (ibid).

²²⁰ See Boot, 2014, p. 6: “In Afghanistan and Iraq, the George W. Bush administration failed to adequately prepare for what the military calls “Phase IV,” the period after immediate victory – an oversight that allowed law and order to break down in both countries and insurgencies to metastasize. Yet Obama, despite his criticism of Bush’s conduct of the Iraq War, repeated the same mistake in Libya.”

attractive products through cultural exports and preference shaping, this not only can take several years to take effect, but can be severely hindered by a population still attached to a different ideology and who may loathe the fall of their regime. But a military embedded in a state can provide immediate stabilization and initiate societal transformation from within. This can involve interaction with local troops (Boot, 2014, p. 13), as well as coordination with other states and allies (Ferguson, 2004; p. 165). The idea is that should the hegemon decide to pursue regime change, it ought to be prepared for several years of commitment, “Otherwise, it shouldn’t bother to get involved in the first place” (Boot, 2014; p. 14).

The above recommendations that flow from the explanatory part of the neoconservative theory all serve to **craft, shape and manage the system** to the hegemon’s favour. The main logic behind this is to create an overall system that is unlikely to be conducive to the rise of a **challenger at the systemic level**.²²¹ The militarization recommended by the theory also provides for measures of defense in a regional conflictual setting. A huge and advanced military, the theory supposes, should suffice to deter any smaller state from launching an attack. And if they do anyway, they would be defeated in a decisive and swift manner. This should prevent a conflict at the level of the region from evolving into one at the level of the system. Overall, neoconservative theory is concerned with shaping the global and regional environments way in advance to avoid any such confrontation.²²²

²²¹ The hegemon must “perform “constabulary” duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions” (Donnelly, 2000, p. iv), in “Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century” in *Project for a New American Century*. Further, “By guaranteeing the security of our current allies and newly democratic nations in East Asia, the United States can help ensure that the rise of China is a peaceful one.” (Donnelly, 2000; p. 19). It continues, “Indeed, in time, American and allied power in the region may provide a spur to the process of democratization inside China itself.” (ibid).

²²² Environment shaping is multifold. The PNAC report continues that in South East Asia the US should act as an overall stabilizer in the region, not just in terms of security but also politically and economically. This in turn is facilitated by a US military presence there: “Control of key sea lines of communication, ensuring access to rapidly growing economies, maintaining regional stability while fostering closer ties to fledgling democracies and, perhaps most important, supporting the nascent trends towards political liberty are all enduring security interests for America. No US strategy can constrain a Chinese challenge to American regional leadership if our security guarantees to Southeast Asia are intermittent and US military presence a periodic affair.” (Donnelly, 2000; p. 19). Whereas PNAC overwhelmingly suggests that the military is *the* efficacious tool of hegemonic maintenance, this thesis suggests that neoconservatism more broadly does not rely *exclusively* on the military to shape the policies of other states. Along with the military,

D. Foreign policy

The above recommendations to maintain hegemony are tremendously ambitious and calculated. Hegemony in the theory, as mentioned, is neither fortuitous nor a natural evolution of systemic phenomena. It requires decisions by the state to create such a leadership role and to maintain this throughout. The hegemonic state is of course the focus of the theory. In this spirit, the following section attempts to outline the predicted foreign policy of the hegemonic state.

The general theory of neoconservatism elaborated in this thesis would reject **any intrinsic mutual exclusion between theories of international politics and theories of foreign policy**, a distinction previously emphasized by thinkers like Kenneth Waltz and Alexander Wendt (Carlsnaes, 2002; p. 331). The theory of neoconservatism offers explanatory tenets of the international system as a whole, and so fulfils a function of a theory of international politics. But *because* it also holds detailed recommendations for the dominant state, it becomes a logical step to offer *an account of foreign policy making* of the hegemon since this would explain how such a state can mobilize its resources from within to realize its ambitions. Crucially, an account of foreign policy can explain some of the limitations for the (democratic) hegemon's realizations of its goals. In this regard, it also fulfils a purpose as a theory of foreign policy, and in an overarching sense, the theory then is twofold – both accounting for international politics and the foreign policy of a particular state. The following therefore attempts to craft in a theoretical – and therefore abstracted – manner, the process of and constraints to foreign policy making of the hegemon.

A note on foreign policy analysis

Foreign policy analysis (FPA), like the theorization of international politics, holds little agreement among academics (Smith et al, 2008, 2012; p. 4). **Varying approaches** exist which separately deal with bureaucratic models, group dynamics, psychology, and so forth (ibid; Hudson, 2012, p. 19). According to Hudson however, original FPA stemmed from the works of Snyder, Rosenau and Sprout and Sprout, who focused on non-systemic phenomena like decision making,

key arms of the hegemon's reach are its ideological, economic and political instruments. Thus, transformations of the character and nature of other states therefore do not necessarily always require the backing of the hegemon's military forces.

actors, and psychology²²³, respectively (Hudson, 2012; pp. 13 – 15). Later works developed further group dynamics in foreign policy making (Hudson, 2012 pp. 19 - 20). Contemporary FPA approaches, particularly those of a liberal variant which extrapolate domestic features to construct theories of foreign policy, have built on five decades of research and debate, now concentrate on the political-psychological study of individual leaders, group dynamics, and the impact of societal and (domestic) political factors (Hudson, 2012; p. 31).

Additionally, there is considerable tension between **structure and agency**, where structural perspectives adopt the view that the international system profoundly influences foreign policy, and the agential view that states make their own policy independent of such constraints (Smith et. al, 2008, 2012; p. 6; Carlsnaes, 2002). Carlsnaes conversely writes “...it is generally recognized that in real life actors and structures do not exist in such a zero-sum relationship but, rather, that human agents and social structures are in a fundamental sense, dynamically interrelated entities, and that hence we cannot account fully for one without invoking the other.” (2012; p. 124).²²⁴ FPA can be studied by taking into account structural, dispositional and intentional aspects of actors and their environments (Carlsnaes, 2002; pp. 342 – 343). This helps to circumvent the strict agency–structure division, by accounting for the interplay and feedback loop of these facets. Intentional aspects of foreign policy concern actor’s desires and will and acts as a conceptual filler for “agency”, whereas structural elements are those which constrain or enable actors, while dispositional dimension helps to explain why actors are inclined towards certain intentions, behaviours and desires (ibid). The neoconservative theory similarly adopts such an interplay, except the primary structural constraint to foreign policy is the internal democratic process and the input of domestic voters (previously noted by Caverley, 2010, pp. 602 - 604). Democracy thus acts as a serious limiting factor to the hegemon’s desired end goals (ibid).

Thus, the foreign policy perspective of neoconservatism is marked by considerable tension between goals and internal restraints to those goals. The theory excludes international constraints

²²³ Specifically, Sprout and Sprout focused on the disparity between perception and reality of decision makers and groups in foreign policy (Hudson, 2012; p. 17).

²²⁴ He writes additionally “...in the ‘games real actors play’ (Scharpf, 1997) action is always a combination of purposive behavior, cognitive-psychological factors and the various structural phenomena characterizing societies and their environments, and hence explanations of actual foreign policy actions must perforce be able to give accounts that they do not by definition exclude or privilege any of these types of explanans.” (2002; p. 342).

– at least constraints based on the objections of other state actors -, since *maximum hegemony* technically requires little consent for its actions from other international actors.

Neoconservative Theory and Foreign Policy

This section takes place at a level below the international system, i.e., within the state, and is mostly concerned with how hegemony is *maintained* as opposed to created. In particular the theory deals with statesmen and the population, since it features a *democratic* hegemon. Statesmen are responsible for much of the actual process of designing and implementing foreign policy, but the population is a key deciding influence.

The guiding question here is: **what factors influence the making of the hegemon's foreign policy?** The template of FPA in a neoconservative perspective develops from a synthesis following broadly Carlsnaes' work on actors and structures, Stein's work on psychology, and Brighi and Hill's work on foreign policy implementation (2012). This template notably avoids bureaucratic models and group dynamics since i) there is a paucity of commentary on this in the neoconservative corpus, ii) the theory for now aims to be a parsimonious starting point for further expansion and refinement and iii), while a bureaucratic or group model may describe the United States, the thesis has attempted to create an ideal-type and hence a generalizable theory of international politics. Therefore, on the latter, all democratic hegemons will have at a foundational level electorates and statesmen, but not all will necessarily have an organizational compartmentalization like the United States.

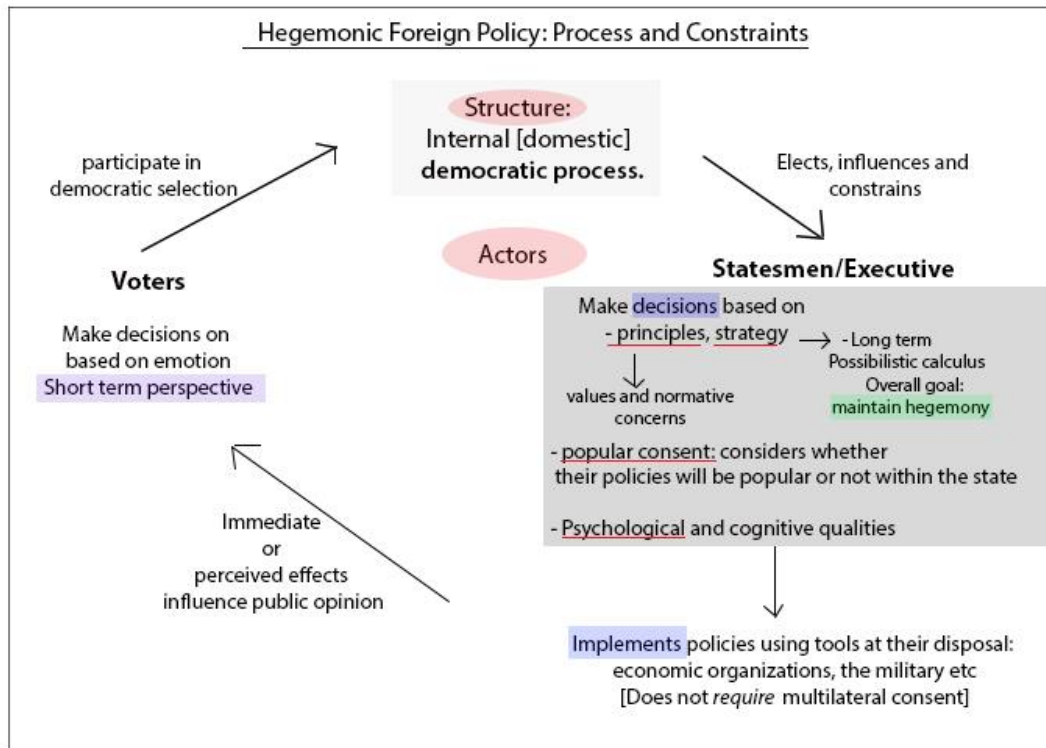


Figure 3 The foreign policy process of the democratic state, outlining basic processes and restrictions to policy making

Figure 3 summarizes the neoconservative understanding of foreign policy making. The process is facilitated by democratic selection of leaders by voters, who then base their decisions on principles and strategies, ideally aimed at maintaining hegemony. Their decision making is in turn shaped and influenced by their cognitive and psychological traits. Often times, they consider whether their actions will be well received domestically or not. In order to implement their policies, statesmen employ the various tools of the hegemon, being its military, economic pressure and organizations, or mobilizing its allies. None of this (in the theory) requires the consent of the international community. Based on the perception of these policies, the hegemon’s electorate votes in response to affirm or reject these policies. Ideally, according to neoconservatives, the population should not be such a limiting factor on the crafting of the foreign policy.

Structural Constraints: democracy and the electorate

In terms of the level of analysis, neoconservative FPA borrows from Carlsnaes’ approach in which there is still a **structure/agency dynamic** involved, but in turn, states hold the structures and individuals and groups represent the agential component, since “...states are not conceived as

unitary actors but rather as an institutional *structure* within which, and on behalf of which, individual decision makers act.” (Carlsnaes, 2012; p. 117). Likewise, neoclassical realism situates constraints to foreign policy making as stemming not from the international system but domestic and internal features (Hudson, 2012; p. 33; Brown; 2011).²²⁵ When focusing on international politics, neoconservative theory assigns agency to states, and structure to the international system. But when the theory focuses on foreign policy, the state becomes the structure and individuals become the agents.

The key **limiting factor** to the foreign policy of the hegemon comes from the **electoral process** (Caverley, 2010; p. 602)²²⁶, in turn enabled by the will of the voter, thus demonstrating the interaction of agency and structure, but more so, the impact of the structure of the ubiquitous and immutable democratic process on the population.²²⁷ The previous chapter illustrated that neoconservatism suggests that the voters’ commitment to international projects is highly fleeting. Where Stein suggests that individuals have a high tendency to remain consistent (2012 pp. 133 - 135)²²⁸, neoconservatives paint individuals as highly malleable and constantly changing based on their attention span, mood and frustrations.^{229 230} Podhoretz for instance, criticized those elements

²²⁵ Both authors reference/review Lobell et al. (2009) *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. 2009.

²²⁶ Caverley writes “...neoconservatism seeks to point out the debilitating effects of democracy that prevent such a government from spending appropriate levels of its wealth on military power, and from employing any military power that it does possess.” (p. 602).

²²⁷ Brighi and Hill write “...foreign policy behavior is produced via a dialectic interplay between the actor’s own *strategy* on the one hand and *context* on the other hand” and that it lies in contrast to the idea that “...(political) action could be reduced to either external constraints or internal preferences. If it is reasonable to assume that both elements are in play most of the time, what becomes interesting is to investigate how constraints and preferences interact, sometimes clashing and sometimes producing virtuous synergies.” (2012; p. 149). Additionally, actors and context interact in a material and ideational manner and there is constant feedback between the two (Brighi and Hill 2012; p. 150).

²²⁸ However, she notes that some studies have found that changes in opinion can occur, albeit in a slow and incremental manner, or if there is a massive amount of newly available information made to enact change (p. 135). Neoconservatives however suggest that this change is a common feature in a democratic state.

²²⁹ Americans, Robert Kagan writes “...have been a people of contradictory impulses and a most ambivalent view of what role, if any, they ought to play in the world.” (Kagan, 2012; p. 9).

²³⁰ Kagan additionally writes of Americans as imbued with deep contradictions, “Americans, in foreign policy, are torn to the point of schizophrenia. They are reluctant, then aggressive; asleep at the switch, then

of the new Left in the Vietnam war who in his view obstructed the discourse of anti-communism through moral relativism (1982; 1983, pp. 99 – 107). Importantly, emphasizing the structural constraint of democracy, Niall Ferguson suggested the United States' electoral system created an "attention deficit" vis-a-vis projects that ideally required long term commitments (2004; p. 293). In turn, because the hegemon is a democracy, this shapes the decision of the statesmen, also democratically elected. Foreign policy, in reality, in a democratic hegemon is constrained by the swinging pendulum of the population's will, from internationalism to isolationism.²³¹

However, it should be noted that even though this is a limiting factor, it is not an inevitability. As Boot writes, the populace is not *destined to* be severely averse to overseas engagement: "...In fact, Americans have shown impressive patience with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which explains why the United States has remained involved in those conflicts far longer than anyone initially imagined possible. The public may not be enthusiastic about these campaigns, but neither has the country seen protests of the scale it did during the Vietnam war." (Boot, 2014; p. 14). Additionally, while the population guides, influences and informs the trends of the hegemon's foreign policy, it is the statesmen or executive who actually *implement* it. The executive may have some freedom in terms of actually designing and implementing policies. Additionally, some like Kristol and Kagan suggest that even with a domestically-inclined population, proper leadership can reorient the populace towards support for global leadership (1996; p. 19; 26; 27; 29).

Therefore, a key aspect to hegemony is a leader keen on, and able to maintain global leadership. In other words, voters influence the general style of a foreign policy and can impact the longevity of any given venture, but leaders have *the most* power to guide the dominant state. This is why i) the quality of leadership is important and ii) there are certain features of global hegemony hardly affected by the democratic process since they are shaped by leaders and not the electorate, as will be explained a bit further.

quick on the trigger; indifferent, then obsessed, then indifferent again. They act out of a sense of responsibility and then resent and fear the burden of responsibility they have taken on themselves" (p. 14)

²³¹ Krauthammer (1991) discussed the appeal of isolationism, adopted by both liberals and conservatives (p. 23; 27- 28).

Leaders' preferences, predispositions

A growing body of work in political psychology provides different accounts for individual cognition in their decision making (Stein, 2012). Margaret Hermann and Joe D. Hagan suggest that leaders can be constrained based on what they *perceive* to be constraints, such as anarchy, or they can be enabled by their optimism (Hermann & Hagan, 1998; p. 126). Some decision makers are highly influenced by their environment or generational events, whereas others act with great agency, co-opting others into their views (Hermann and Hagan, 1998; p. 132). But where much work has been done on leaders and perceptions/misperceptions of a situation (Hudson, 2012, p. 24), the neoconservative perspective places more focus on leaders' preferences and at times, pathologies, and how this affects the course of the foreign policy of the hegemon. This in turn affects their relations with other states and their leaders, their risk aversion, or their preference for continuity or revision (or internationalism or isolationism). Recall the last chapter which mentioned neoconservative concerns about the persuasions of various presidents of the United States. Norman Podhoretz for instance blamed not popular input in ending the Vietnam War, but the decisions of Nixon and Kissinger, (1982, 1983, p. 145 pp. 169 – 171).²³² For Ferguson it was the communicative failure of Johnson (2004; p. 99), and the problems of President Obama for Stephens were his personality and intransigence to oppositional views (Stephens 2011, 2014). Additionally, several neoconservatives have been at the forefront of the *Never Trump* movement, highlighting the 45th president's psychological aberrations.

The relationship between leaders and foreign policy is a demonstration of both structure and agency. In a **structural** sense, the leader - as demonstrated in the diagram above – is a reflection of the will of the people, and also tries to satisfy the preferences of the population. They are therefore highly influenced by the population²³³. In turn, their psychological predilections will determine to what extent they will try to appease their population, renege on their campaign

²³² The previous chapter outlined Norman Podhoretz's ultimate contention with the way in which the Vietnam war was handled. He suggested that it was mostly due to the frenetic actions and mistakes of presidents. To reiterate his perspective, he wrote, "If, then, Kennedy tried to apply containment in Vietnam on the military cheap, and Johnson tried to make it work on the political cheap, Nixon tried to salvage it on the strategic cheap. All three failed. That these were failures of leadership is certain. Kennedy failed in prudential wisdom; Johnson failed in political judgement; Nixon failed in strategic realism." (p. 171).

²³³ "Observers of democracy from Tocqueville onward have identified the short-term perspective of the public as an obstacle to statesmanship; many policies may take time to bear fruit, and public willingness to pursue a line of policy in a steadfast manner may be lacking" (Wolfowitz, 2000; pp. 334 – 335).

promises or be more opaque in decision making. Hermann and Hagan find that leaders can acquiesce to domestic pressures which ultimately leads to "...a policy that is largely unresponsive to international pressures and involves little risk." (p. 129), in their domestic political arena.

But, while neoconservatism is rife with complaints about the American voter, and their internal and myopic preferences, one gets the sense that overall, they blame the leaders for caving to such fleeting desires and possibly, fleeting beliefs. In fact, studying the discourse of neoconservatism, they allocate more time to criticizing the failures of presidents as individuals, as opposed to excoriating the insular inclinations of the population, which instead feature as a background (but still crucial) variable. The statesman is thus the ultimate decision maker. Neoconservatives argue that leaders are not *destined* to be influenced by the population, but should these leaders hold an unwaveringly strong commitment to the hegemonic ideal, they can in turn influence their population (Kristol and Kagan, 1996). For this reason, psychological traits and leadership qualities are important in such a state.

Exclusions to the constraints of democracy

The thesis has widened the view of neoconservatism considerably from a perspective that favours militaristic unipolar action to one that is fundamentally hegemonic in several ways: ideationally, economically, militarily, politically and so forth. While voters can have an effect on the military ventures of a hegemon there are other features of hegemony that tend to be beyond the mandate of the voter, like international regimes and the spread of ideology.

Additionally, issues like dominance in international organizations, preference shaping and subtle-democratization tend to be much less politicized, as opposed to war and overseas occupations. This is why voters react much more dramatically to the US in Vietnam and Iraq, than to the Bretton Woods system, for instance. Therefore, those subtle and not-always evident instances of hegemony can endure even as the populace is disinclined towards global leadership.

Moreover, given the democratic structure, how did the hegemon ever even translate power into hegemony (i.e., material power into leadership and influence)? As it holds that democratic populations tend to waver in their beliefs, a neoconservative theory might suggest that this transition from unipolarity to hegemony is likely to have occurred at a peak time where the state was higher in material power than other states, and its population favoured – or at least were neutral

towards – the prospects of global leadership. The conundrum for neoconservatives is how the hegemon can *actively* maintain this situation given the ebb and flow of favorability.

*

The preceding pages have attempted to create a theory of international politics out of neoconservatism. In trying to detach neoconservatism from its exclusive association with the United States, the theory that results ends up treating hegemony in general terms as a stabilizing and beneficial phenomenon in world politics. The existence and persistence of such a global hegemon seems highly ambitious, but the historical precedent exists in the United States since the Second world war.

The theory does not capture all variations or account for deviations from its tenets. There have been instances or pockets of recent US history in which statesmen refused to adhere to the above (although none sought to dismantle fully the post World War II world order). Many states in the international system did not, and many still do not, accept US hegemony as legitimate. Still, US hegemony is not seen by NATO allies as the product of an international coup d'état, nor do the European great powers, nor Canada -- all similar to the US in political ideals -- try to upend this status quo. In conclusion, the above theory is in fact an ideal type, although it has tried to hew as closely to reality as possible by attempting to account for state preferences both to bandwagon with, as well as to challenge the world order.

Conclusion

The above paper has sought to assess neoconservatism as it relates to theory. The paper initially suggested that despite neoconservatism having influenced foreign policy arguably for decades, no theory of neoconservatism currently exists. This demonstrates a key gap in the field of international relations theorizing. If the purpose of international relations is to describe and explain global phenomena, then ignoring the perspectives of some influential and vocal thinkers in the US foreign policy discourse demonstrates a key weakness. The thesis aimed to re-define neoconservatism, as simultaneously a set of explanatory ideas, an approach to foreign policy, and an ideology. A study of the intellectual history and evolution of the movement was made to demonstrate its intellectual longevity and adaptability.

In light of this new conceptualization of neoconservatism, another attempt was made to compare it with a range of existing theories in IR. While this exercise revealed some new parallels

with existing theories, the overall finding was that still, even when broadening the conceptualization of neoconservatism, still, no existing IR theory could be said to effectively subsume the approach.

Finally, the theory of neoconservatism was built to be an explanatory and prescriptive one. The theory is mainly hegemonic in nature, and while stateless (or eliminating the American-centricism of the ideology), it still holds to democracy as the optimal regime type. The theory provides an account of cooperation and regional and systemic stability. It provides a host of recommendations, centering on democracy, the military and the economy and the necessity and possibility of shaping the preferences of other actors. The theory also included an account of foreign policy making, as well as constraints on the leaders of democratic hegemons that prevent them from fully attaining their desired goals.

Future work is required to refine the theory and then test it, if possible, to assess its actual viability in explaining international phenomena.

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