

The Evolution of Democratisation Policy in the Neoconservative Thinking: Factors of Change

Abstract:

Neoconservatives had always been passionate defenders of American liberal democracy, but their relation to the principle has changed through phases. Basically, Neoconservatives' changing positions to the principle has moved from just an attachment to a belief to the degree that they had called to its forcible spreading abroad. In the immediate post-communist era their relationship to democracy embodied in the positions they held to ensure the principle efficacy without a serious need to its spreading. A decade later, neoconservatives held that forcible democracy fostering became central to the American foreign policy agenda. To understand the dramatic change in the evolution of democratization policy in the neoconservative thinking, this article argues for three main factors: the unsurpassed position the United States gained following the collapse of bipolarity has helped the emergence of more radical neoconservatives rather than prudent elders, the impact of democracy promotion discourses including Francis Fukuyama's 'End of History' thesis and the democratic peace theory.

Keywords: Evolution ; Democratization Policy ; Neoconservative Thinking ; Post-Communist ; World ; Factors ; Change

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ملخص:

لطالما دافع المحافظين الجدد عن الديمقراطية الليبرالية الأمريكية بحماس لكن علاقتهم بالمبدأ تغيرت على عدة مراحل. أساسا لقد تغيرت علاقتهم بالمبدأ من مجرد ارتباط اعتقادي حتى بلغت بمطالبة نشر الديمقراطية خارج حدود الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية حتى وان تطلب الامر التدخل العسكري. في الفترة بعد سقوط الشيوعية تجسدت علاقتهم بالديمقراطية في مختلف المناصب التي شغلها المحافظون الجدد في المؤسسات الأمريكية التي تضمن استمرارية مفعولية المبدأ. بعد عقد من الزمن اعتبر المحافظون الجدد ان تعزيز الديمقراطية القسرية أصبح امرا محوريا في اجندة السياسة الأمريكية الخارجية. يسعى هذا المقال لفهم تطور مبدأ الديمقراطية في فكر المحافظين الجدد ويذكر ثلاثة عوامل رئيسية: سقوط الثنائية القطبية في العالم ساهم في ظهور جيل جديد متطرف من المحافظين الجدد خلاف الجيل الذي سبقهم، تأثير خطاب تعزيز الديمقراطية بما في ذلك أطروحة فرانسيس فوكوياما 'نهاية التاريخ' ونظرية السلام الديمقراطية.

Introduction:

There exists now plentiful evidence that neoconservatives held critical positions within the Bush administration and that they achieved dominance over US making decision to democratize the Iraqi regime in 2003. This was widely seen by critics as the culmination of ideas that had long been articulated by neoconservatives.

Indeed, neoconservative academic records demonstrate that the origins of neoconservative democracy support are traced back to the 60's and the 70's of the last decade, even before they were named neoconservatives.

At the time, a group of Jews growing disillusionment with the Democratic Party had led many of them moved from the Democratic Party to the Republican where they found refuge to their beliefs of supporting America's war in Vietnam. The aftermath of the Vietnam War had created a movement of alien group of both Democrats and Republicans, who wished that the United States power should be used to promote US values and to influence world order.

Later, neoconservatives held key positions in central democratic institutes and organizations of the United States to keep an eye open for the government management of the perspective. Then, the development of liberal democracy promotion in their discourse leapt quickly during the 1980's. Mainly, there existed generational differences among neoconservatives^(*) over the role the United States should play in the international arena as many of them held influential posts in the Reagan administration. During the 1990's, their views concerning democracy were reflected in their writings in magazines and news papers after they were distanced from government. In a more organized way, forcible democratization policy becomes the hallmark of neoconservative thinking by the beginning of the 21st century. This article argues that the decline of bipolarity in international system, the emergence of a new ambitious neoconservative generation, the impact of Fukuyama's 'End of History' and the democratic peace theory discourses, had all contributed to frame the extended meaning of democracy among neoconservatives from just a belief that they share to a much more interventionist foreign policy agenda for the United States.

Generational Differences among Neoconservatives:

Certainly, the collapse of the Soviet empire left a huge gap in the American foreign policy and the neoconservative movement now confronted a question it had not faced for half a century: What should the basis of American foreign policy be? The neoconservative consensus by the end of the Cold War was facing a serious state of disagreement between those who advocated the “narrower” meaning of American national interest, and those who believed that the United States’ post-Cold War key role should be a democratic crusade. Neoconservatives’ first generation leaders such as: Irving Kristol, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Nathan Glazer and others, generally argued for a limited role for American foreign policy and for a careful focus on its national interest. Meanwhile, younger neoconservative figures like: Joshua Muravchik, Penn Kemble, Carl Gershman and Charles Krauthammer were more ambitious and called for a transcendental advancement of democracy.

Jeane Kirkpatrick contended that in spite of the truth that liberal democracy was the best strategy for the improvement of human rights and their societies and it was the duty of the United States to spread it wherever possible, it threatened to “put the U.S. once more on the side of history’s “losers” as history “gives no better grounds for believing that democracy comes easily, quickly, or for the asking” [1]. She emphasized the idea stating that “it is not the American purpose to establish ‘Universal dominance’ [...] not even the universal dominance of democracy”, even if it is enormously desirable for the U.S. to encourage democratic institutions everywhere [2].

Kristol, neo-conservatism’s ‘godfather’, further argued that “the futility of a foreign policy whose purpose is to “enhance democracy” abroad is apparent to most Americans, and so the end of the Cold War has led to resurgence of an

isolationist temper” [3]. Glazer Nathan was also the one who echoed the American return to isolation in its foreign policy as he argued against American continued military commitments abroad for the expansion of democracy and freedom as it is not a part of American crusade against the threat of Communism. He asserted rather, for “promoting and recommending those universal principles to which [Americans] are attached, it is now time to *withdraw* to something closer to the modest role that the Founding Fathers intended”. In Glazer view, it was not part of American job “to be the policeman of the world” [4]. These positions were surprising for the reason that neoconservatives were closely associated with the abandonment of détente during Reagan’s first term in office. Among second-generation neoconservatives who believed that the United States needed to act more assertively in attempting to democratize countries before it would be too late to deal with particularly Third World dictators, were Carl Gershman, Joshua Muravchik and Charles Krauthammer. Gershman would remain one of the major proponents of an active attempt by the United States to help fostering democracy around the world. He argued that democracy promotion should be a central concern for the United States and it could be done on “limited source” for helping those countries who accepted to help themselves, but the U.S. “cannot force others to do what they are not prepared or willing to do for themselves” [5].

Muravchik also was one of early supporters of the idea of democratization as he defended the newly formed National Endowment for Democracy (NED). He noted that “The endowment's mandate defies the pessimistic conventional wisdom about the prospects for democracy in the third world and about the ability of the United States to enhance those prospects” [6]. He stated that promoting democracy was desirable for many reasons, but if it had not been advantageous in terms of the cold war, other reasons would have counted little.

“But if I was right that promoting democracy was a god antidote to communism, is it relevant to the era after communism?” [7].

Both Muravchik and Gershman were very enthusiastic when supporting democracy promotion following the end of the Cold War. But their support of democracy seemed to be rhetorical as it was not coupled with the unipolar post-Communist status the United States gained and this was simply described by Charles Krauthammer as “The Unipolar Moment”. For him the decline of Communism “made the world safe for democracy” and its advancement abroad should be “the touchstone of a new ideological American foreign policy” [8].

The beginning of the 1980’s marked differences within neoconservatism between the older and younger generations of neoconservatives on the question of democracy promotion. Actually, first and second-generation neoconservatives drew different lessons from the collapse of Communism. For the first generation, as represented by Irving Kristol and Jeane Kirkpatrick, the lesson was that America should not destabilize dictators, and that democracy promotion was neither a differential matter nor simply the core of opposition. In contrast, for second-generation neoconservatives, the lesson was that the United States needed to act more assertively in attempting to democratize countries before it would be too late to deal with.

“End of History” Thesis: The Groundwork for Democracy Promotion

Fukuyama’s work has not only been regarded important to provide key contribution to the Western political discourse of the early post-Cold War period, it has also played a central role in establishing a foundation for a neoconservative thought. Though Fukuyama declared his withdrawal later from the group and accused the George W. Bush administration of misinterpreting his work [10].

Fukuyama's "End of History" thesis and its extended version *The End of History and the Last Man* provided a compelling paper as it theoretically explained how and why a global liberal order was now more possible than ever before. The 'End of History' was published at a time when fundamental political changes occurred and offered the Western victory over the Soviet Union thus the victory of liberal democracy over communism. Fukuyama highlighted the victory of liberal democracy in the Cold War and the teleological future of humanity. He argues that "History" as conceived in the understanding of the great German philosopher Hegel, eventually would end when mankind would achieve a form of society that satisfy its deepest longings that is the liberal state. Fukuyama contends in '*The End of History and the Last Man*' that "the end of history" "did not mean that the natural cycle of birth, life, and death would end" rather; it meant the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" [11].

Having established the pillars of liberal democracy and stated why liberal democracy represents the final stage of human evolution, Fukuyama then turns to explain: how democracy itself comes about in a society. According to Fukuyama that liberal democracy represents the end of history but it does not occur spontaneously in a given society. Accordingly, "wise and effective statesmen" have a significant role in the rise up of liberal democracy [12].

To understand the thesis effect on the evolution of neoconservatives' democracy perspective, a contribution of Fukuyama's reflections on culture is needed. He argues that the views about certain cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration before a society will be able to make the transition to democracy, are mistaken. He exemplified with German and Japanese authoritarian states which turned quickly into democracies following the Second World War [13]. Another theme which reflects neoconservative thinking on democracy is the

absence of cultural barriers that pose a fundamental challenge to the birth of democracy in states.

However, in the extended version of 'The End of History and the Last Man', he holds that the gradual liberal democracy process will make most of world's states belong to "post-historical part" [14]. Moreover, he warns of conflicts that will occur among 'post-historic' states and the remaining 'historic' countries for a variety of reasons until the former will overcome the latter. He refers regularly that the way to the end of history will neither be characterized with smoothness nor it will be easily achieved in a short period.

Fukuyama criticized deeply following realism in foreign affairs. While realism was "appropriate" to explain events of the Cold War, he argues, in the post-Cold War era, realism had become a "theoretical framework beyond its appointed time". According to Fukuyama, realists were wrong when they suggest that domestic political regimes do not necessarily influence their foreign policy behaviour. He believes that domestic behaviour of states matters. Liberal societies have "fundamentally un-warlike character" and it is reflected in the peaceful relations they maintain among one another that results in liberal democracies do not go to war with each other [15].

Therefore, Fukuyama thesis provided neoconservatives with a theoretical set of interests that colored their arguments for interventionist policies of democratization. It included a number of key themes that influenced the neoconservative thinking in that period. He glorified liberal democracy and he emphasized that it will not be developed automatically and randomly in a given society, instead it needs wise statesmen like neoconservatives to bring it into reality. He further explained that there existed no cultural barriers that could prevent a state from becoming democratic and so all non-democratic states can

convert to democracies. Fukuyama referred that realism was no more suitable in the post-Cold War era and so liberal democracy is the best to fulfill the shortage. Finally, he mentioned that the domestic politics of states is very influential as it might affect their foreign policy behaviours, particularly as liberal democracies do not go to war against each other and that authoritarian states can produce terrorists who can damage peace in the world.

The Democratic Peace Theory for Armed Intervention:

The neoconservative foreign policy paradigm of democracy promotion was strongly influenced by a simplified version of the Democratic Peace Theory which democracy by definition is equaled to peace. During the 1990s, the theory was revisited by liberal scholars to imply a strong need for democracy promotion policies and its conclusions of peace in international sphere. Basically, the Democratic Peace Theory argues for a clear connection that exists between democratic states and the absence of war among them.

Early forms of democratic peace theory introduced by Michael Doyle and Bruce Russett did not provide implications for an interventionist foreign policy; instead it was rather concerned with explaining a theoretical understanding of the importance of peace among democracies. Doyle emphasized the evidence that democratic states might “exacerbate intervention against weak nonliberal” states [16], but they are likely to act against imprudent actions in attempts of expanding the theme of democratic peace by force. According to Bruce, the reason for rare war occurrence among democratic states laid on the fact that popular support is needed for wars the case that object to the same norms in other democratic societies to recognize that other democracies are similarly constrained [17]. Consequently, these can be the same ideas that “prod these states into war with illiberal states” [18].

In spite of its scholarly nature, some activist circles of liberal internationalism interpreted democratic theory as a piece that includes clear implications for interventionist foreign policy. Larry Diamond, the leading contemporary scholar in the field of democracy studies, wrote that the only choice he believes to confront the fundamental threats to democratic global order and thus offers hope of enhancing international peace and security is “the path of democratic globalism”[19]. Democratic globalization supports democratization through using military power if necessary. Consequently, it is by spreading democratic values through using force that liberal world can assure its security and to make sure that the increasing states belong to the same zone of peace [20].

The version of democratic peace that was articulated and embraced by neoconservatives during the 1990’s was clearly originated in activist liberals’ interpretation of the theory as leading neoconservative figures had always been asserting that democracy resulted to peace and the possibility of military intervention to do so. Natan Sharansky maintained that: “only when the world is free will the world be safe” [21], and therefore encouraging the spread of democratic governments was very important as it was theoretically proved its effectiveness to bring about peace between states. His views were deeply influential since they evidently colored President George W. Bush’s attitudes that link up peace to democracy. Assertively, the president distributed Sharansky’s book, *The Case for Democracy*, among his top officials and recommended its reading [22]. As a justification for the use of power abroad, democratic peace theory added significant theoretical depth to neoconservative arguments for American military intervention in the pursuit of democracy.

The new version produced by Larry Diamond believed that only by using military force to spread democratic values that the liberal world can assure its security and that the increasing states would belong to the same zone of peace. As a justification for the use of power abroad, democratic peace theory added significant theoretical depth to neoconservative arguments for American military intervention in the pursuit of democracy. The version of democratic peace that was articulated and embraced by neoconservatives by the end of the twentieth century was clearly originated in activist liberals' interpretation of the theory. Leading neoconservative figures had always been asserting that democracy resulted to peace, even with the possibility of forcible intervention.

Conclusion:

The theoretical and historical experiences decisively influenced the formulation of democracy promotion policy in neoconservatism. This article demonstrates that the collapse of the Eastern Block restraints had freed neoconservatives to pursue a more radical agenda of interventionist democratization, but it cannot fully explain the evolution of democracy principle in their thinking. The unrivalled position the United States gained following the collapse of bipolarity has created the gap for second generation neoconservatives to apply more ambitious measures of American power to bring about democracy to non-democratic states, unlike first generation neoconservatives who suspected its necessity and called for restricted foreign strategy.

Actually, neoconservative generational differences were not essentially on doubting the effectiveness of democratization paradigm. Rather, it was on the basis of timing and whether or not the United States was ready to adopt it for its foreign policy. They also exploited the End of History widespread academic influence to publicly claim democracy promotion advantages in the post-communist world. While that the democratic peace theory influence embodies in its support for the use of military power to achieve democratization and its emphasis on peaceful coexistence among democratic governments. Neoconservatives primarily encountered these liberal theories and implied their

conclusions for arguing democracy promotion through the use of power at the heart of American interest.

Notes:

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(*)-According to scholars, neoconservatives belong to two generations:

First generation neoconservatives were born before the Second World War (before 1939). Figures like: Irving Kristol, Jane Kirkpatrick, and Nathan Glazer were concerned with the policy debates of the 1960s and 1970s.

Second generation neoconservatives were born during or after the Second World War (during or after 1939). Figures like: Joshua

Muravchik, Charles Krauthammer, Richard Perle, Carl Gershman, and others were more associated with the Cold War and post-Cold war debates.