

**Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation**

**The Rise of Neoconservative Foreign Policy and its Impact  
on American-Iranian Relations (1973-1976)**

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**The Rise of Neoconservative Foreign Policy and its Impact on American-Iranian Relations (1973-1976)**

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Rasha Fuad M. Awale



## Table of Contents

<b>List of Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Acknowledgment.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 1: The Evolution of Neoconservative Foreign Policy.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.2. Neoconservatism Unmasked: A Complex Political Movement .....</b>	<b>25</b>
1.2.1. The Founding Fathers of Neoconservatism The Birth of a Political Movement..	28
1.2.2. The “Scoop Jackson Democrats” From McGovern Critics to Reagan Supporters .....	30
1.2.3. The Third-Generation Neoconservatives of the Post-Cold War Era.....	33
<b>1.3. Neoconservative Foreign Policy: Ideology and Key Principles .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>1.4. The 1973 War and the Emergence of a Neoconservative Foreign policy .....</b>	<b>42</b>
1.4.1. The Impact of the Oil Crisis on American Hegemony .....	43
1.4.2. Navigating Transatlantic Relations during the Oil Crisis .....	44
1.4.3. Neoconservative Solutions to the Crisis in Atlantic Relations.....	47
<b>1.5. The 1973 War: Neoconservatives Forging Alliances .....</b>	<b>49</b>
1.5.1. Challenging Détente and Reclaiming American Power: Neoconservative Alliance with Cold Warrior and Liberal Hawks .....	52
1.5.2. The Pro-Israel Coalition of Neoconservatives.....	56
<b>1.6. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Twisted Narratives:The Neoconservative Pursuit of War for Oil in the 1970s .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>2.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>2.2. Neoconservative “Gunboat Diplomacy” .....</b>	<b>63</b>
2.2.1. Building a Legal Framework to Justify the Use of Military Force .....	71
2.2.2. The “Vital Interest” Rhetoric .....	76
2.2.3. Prioritizing Israel’s Interests over American Interests.....	78
<b>2.3. The Neoconservative Orientalist Discourse.....</b>	<b>87</b>
2.3.1. The “Immoral Right” of Oil Producing Countries to Their Oil.....	88
2.3.2. “Undemocratic” and “Medieval” Middle East .....	90
2.3.3. The “Arab” oil.....	93
<b>2.4. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>103</b>

<b>Chapter 3: The New International Economic Order: Neoconservative Discourse, Iranian Influence, and Human Rights Dynamics .....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>3.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>3.2. Neoconservative Rhetoric against NIEO .....</b>	<b>108</b>
3.2.1. Third World Countries are Demagogues, Suppressive, and Harbor a Nuanced Animosity toward the West.....	110
3.2.2. The New Economic Order Would Increase Inequality and Destabilizes the World.....	112
3.2.3. NIEO Will Lead to Nuclear Proliferation .....	117
3.2.4. A New Economic Order Would Lead to Israel’s Annihilation.....	128
<b>3.3. Iran’s Role in “The Unholy Alliance” Between OPEC and Third World Countries.....</b>	<b>130</b>
3.3.1. Iran’s Oil Coup.....	132
3.3.2. Iran’s “Intellectual Leadership” of OPEC .....	136
3.3.3. OPEC’s Weapons.....	140
<b>3.4. The Neoconservative Human Rights Framework.....</b>	<b>142</b>
3.4.1. NIEO and the Issue of Human Rights.....	147
3.4.2. The Infamous Resolution.....	152
<b>3.5. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Geopolitical Realities: The Middle East, Beyond Neoconservative Ideology .....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>4.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>4.2. Understanding Iranian Politics.....</b>	<b>162</b>
4.2.1. Iran’s 1953 <i>Coup D’état</i> .....	166
4.2.2. Iran, a Regional Hegemon.....	169
4.2.3. The Oil Wealth and the Emergence of the Religious Opposition in Iran .....	174
4.2.4. Implications of Iran’s Pro-American/Pro-Israeli Position on Iran’s Domestic Affairs .....	177
<b>4.3. Political Decision-Making in Arab Countries: Strategic Imperatives vs. Ideological Considerations .....</b>	<b>183</b>
4.3.1. The Gulf Countries and the Palestinian Cause .....	185
4.3.2. Gulf-Iranian Relations Prior to the Oil Crisis.....	187
<b>4.4. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Replacing the Shah: The New Oil Regime in the Middle East.....</b>	<b>197</b>

<b>5.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>5.2. The Regional Ramifications of the Neoconservative War Campaign.....</b>	<b>199</b>
5.2.1. Settling Territorial and Political Disputes in the Gulf.....	202
5.2.2. The Aftermath of Reconciliation: The Gulf States and the Iraq-Iran Nexus.....	209
5.2.3. Iran’s Military Buildup and the Neoconservative Opposition.....	213
<b>5.3. Breaking the Shah.....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>5.4. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>331</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>343</b>

## **List of Abbreviations**

ABM – Anti-Ballistic Missile

AEI – American Enterprise Institute

AEOI – Atomic Energy Organization of Iran

AIOC – Anglo-Iranian Oil Company

CDM – The Coalition for Democratic Majority

CENTO – Central Treaty Organization, it was also known as Middle East Treaty Organization and Baghdad Pact

CPD– The Committee on the Present Danger CPD

DPG– Defense Policy Guidance DPG

IAEA – International Atomic Energy Agency

IDF – Israel Defense Force

IEA – International Energy Agency

IOAO – International Oil and Aid Organization

MCPL – Members of Congress for Peace through Law

NATO –North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NIE – National Intelligence Estimates

NIEO – New International Economic Order

NPT – Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

OAU – Organization of African Unity

OPEAC –Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries

OPEC –Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organization

PNAC – the Project for New American Century

SALT I and SALT II– Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Interim Agreement

SAVAK – Iranian intelligence service

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UN – United Nations

UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

## Acknowledgments

This thesis began in 2003, sparked by a trip with my father to downtown Amman to purchase my first cell phone. The street behind my father's shop was filled with women dressed in black, selling tobacco, matches, and sets of cards bearing Saddam Hussein's image. My father, a non-smoker, bought a kilo of tobacco from one of the women, who was singing a sad *mawwāl* [traditional genre of vocal music] that brought tears to his eyes. In his shop, my father explained to me that these women were Iraqi refugees, reminding me that we, too, had once been refugees. That day, after we went home my father had to explain the tobacco purchase to my mother while I began collecting news clippings about the invasion of Iraq in an attempt to explain why anyone would choose war.

In 2008, I wrote a paper on neoconservative theory for the Middle East Studies Center, which earned sixth place in a national competition among Jordanian universities. However, the project was set aside until I began my Ph.D. a decade later, driven to understand why the same individuals who initiated the war on Iraq were now advocating for another conflict, this time against Iran.

I would first and foremost like to thank Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala for his blessings and for bringing all the wonderful people into my life, knowing that they would be everything I needed on this journey.

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# Introduction

## 1. Background

In the 1970s, US dominance encountered challenges not just from the Soviet Union but also from various factors that undermined the American-led liberal world order and had far-reaching implications for global geopolitics and energy security.<sup>1</sup> These factors included the costly American war in Vietnam, the worldwide economic crisis, primarily triggered by the 1973 oil embargo and the subsequent rise in oil prices, the emergence of cartels controlling raw materials, and the calls from developing nations for a new international economic order. Simultaneously, the 1973 oil embargo was seen by oil-producing nations, notably under the leadership of Iran's Shah, as an opportunity to take control of oil prices and production levels, which had previously been dictated by international oil corporations. Consequently, these transformations had a distinct impact on the Middle East, where the surge in oil prices brought about increased wealth and political influence of oil producing countries in the region.

During this period, a group of intellectuals and politicians, often referred to as Neoconservatives, among them many Jewish individuals, shifted their attention from domestic matters to foreign policy issues due to the challenges posed by the 1973 war and the economic and political repercussions of the oil embargo. These individuals were prominently involved in think tanks such as the Committee for Democratic Majority (CDM), the Committee for Present Danger (CPD), the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), as well as journals like *Commentary* magazine and *Public Interest*. They utilized these platforms to promote a confrontational foreign policy approach rather than one based on interdependence. As this thesis demonstrates, these Neoconservatives adopted narratives that perceived the rise of regional power in the Middle East as a threat to both Israel and the critical Gulf oil fields, which they considered as paramount for safeguarding and asserting the dominance of the Western liberal world order. They promoted invading and occupying the Arab oil fields of the Gulf following the 1973 oil crisis, called on the US to take a confrontational stand against Third World countries in the UN and other international organizations; they also defended human rights violations and the racial/ethnic policies of countries that were perceived as part of the Western alliance, notably, Israel and South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> These implications included the emergence of Euro-communism in Western Europe, the collapse of pro-Western right-wing dictatorships in Spain, Portugal, and Greece, exposing the oil fields to the Soviets threat due to the oil cutoff that paralyzed US military stations in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.

This thesis investigates and analyzes the narratives presented by the Neoconservatives regarding US foreign policy toward the Middle East, with a special focus on Iran, during the period from 1973 to 1976. It examines key issues that affected the politics of the region at the time. Prominently, the rise of OPEC power, the Arab-Israeli conflict, human rights and democracy, regional arms race dynamics, the calls for new international economic order, and the pursuit of nuclear power by non-industrial countries. It also sheds light on how neoconservatives played a pivotal role in shaping divergent narratives that heightened geopolitical tensions and influenced the power dynamics in the Middle East in a way that was not necessary in line with US political and economic interests, specifically, in the case of Iran. As Iran, with its vast oil reserves, abundant manpower, and strategic location, emerged as a prime threat to American domination over the Gulf.

## **2. What is Neoconservatism and Who is Neoconservative?**

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the “godfather of neoconservatism,” Irving Kristol, addressed the purpose that should inform the foreign policy of the United States: “It is very difficult for a great power—a world power—to articulate a foreign policy in the absence of an enemy worthy of the name. It is after all one’s enemy that helps define one’s ‘national interest’ in whatever form that definition might take.”<sup>2</sup> Kristol’s argument is true to a great extent, we are defined by our enemies as much as by our friends, and by what we agree on as much as by what we oppose. When it comes to neoconservatism, this has been the case, as animosity has always been a crucial element of the Neoconservative creed.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Neoconservatives started out as leftist Trotskyists who were adversaries of their Stalinist counterparts; in the 1950s and 1960s, they opposed the New Left, the counterculture, and the anti-Vietnam war movement; in the 1970s they disowned their leftist past and merged with the right; during the Cold War years, they rejected calls for coexistence, containment, and détente policies, and pushed for a hardliner anti-communist foreign policy. Beyond defining the Neoconservatives by their enemies, the term “neoconservatism” itself has always been “one of the most misunderstood concepts in the political lexicon,” as the sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset concluded in his attempt to contrast the myths and realities of neoconservatism.<sup>3</sup> The socialist Michael Harrington coined the term neoconservatism with the intention of undermining and labelling political opponents and not

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<sup>2</sup> Irving Kristol. “Defining Our National Interest.” *The National Interest*, no. 21 (1990): 16, accessed January 23 July 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42894692>.

<sup>3</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset. “Neoconservatism: Myth and Reality,” *Society* 25, (July/August, 1988): 29, accessed January 23, 2021 <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02695739>.

with the intention of uniting the adherents of certain doctrines under one banner or a political body. As such, the term “neoconservatism” drew a lot of confusion over the years — not just in terms of understanding its premises but also in defining the categories by which it can be applied to people. The way the term evolved increased this confusion, as the French historian Justin Vaïsse explained in his comprehensive history of neoconservatism:

From the 1960s to the 2000s, Neoconservatism transformed itself so thoroughly as to become unrecognizable. It moved from the left to the right side of the political chessboard. It shifted its focus from domestic issues to foreign affairs. In abandoning New York for Washington, it left the world of sociologists and intellectuals for that of influence and power.<sup>4</sup>

The inconsistency of neoconservatism was manifested by the fact that many of those who were considered influential neoconservatives rejected being labeled as such. For instance, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Daniel Bell were regarded by most historians as steadfast neoconservatives; nonetheless, they both rejected the label. The former suggested that he was a “modern version of a Wilsonian progressive,” while the latter confessed that he was socialist in economics, liberal in politics, and conservative in culture.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, among latter-day neoconservatives, many renounce the label as a reaction to the way the second war on Iraq unfolded. Paul Wolfowitz, for instance, described himself as a “Scoop Jackson Republican,” while Daniel Pipes unsubscribed to the label based on what he considered “differences with neo-conservative positions on the promotion of democracy and Iraq.”<sup>6</sup>

In addition, hardline politicians who pushed through neoconservative views, transformed them into political actions and foreign policy decisions, and were largely associated with neoconservative foreign policy were commonly described as neoconservative allies, enablers, and bedfellows while others were themselves considered to be neoconservatives. To give an example, in the administration of George W. Bush, politicians like Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, though staunch advocates of neoconservative ideas, were not

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<sup>4</sup> Justin Vaïsse. *Neoconservatism, The Biography of a Movement*. (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2011), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Irving Kristol. *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays 1942-2009*. (New York: Basic Books, 2011) 148; Gary Dorrien. *The Neoconservative Mind: Politics, Culture, and the War of Ideology*. (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993), 4; Daniel Bell. *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), xi.

<sup>6</sup> Bill Keller. “The Sunshine Warrior” *The New York Times*, Sept. 22, 2002, accessed October 21, 2021 <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/22/magazine/the-sunshine-warrior.html>. Daniel Pipes, “A Neo-Conservative’s Caution,” *Daniel Pipes*, March 8, 2005 <https://www.danielpipes.org/2447/a-neo-conservatives-caution>, accessed April 9, 2009.

considered neoconservatives themselves in most of the accounts that studied neoconservatism.<sup>7</sup> However, we find the same names lumped together with or presented as neoconservatives when talking about neoconservative foreign policy, particularly in scholarship that deals with the US Global War on Terror and the invasion of Iraq.

How, then, do we define who a neoconservative is? Drawing on the work of historians such as Steinfels, Dorrien, Velasco, Vaïsse, Ehrman, and Friedman, I consider a neoconservative figure to be a person who is either consensually considered as such by historians or is a self-proclaimed neoconservative (e.g., Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Richard Pipes, Sidney Hook, Albert Wohlstetter, Edward Luttwak, and Walter Laqueur).<sup>8</sup> In contrast, I define an ally of neoconservatives to be one who teamed up with neoconservatives, advocated and/or implemented their foreign policy views In the period this thesis covers: figures like James Schlesinger, who served as the Director of the CIA and Defense Secretary during the Nixon administration; Donald Rumsfeld, who was President Ford's White House Chief of Staff and US Ambassador to NATO; Dick Cheney, Ford's Assistant and later Rumsfeld's successor as Chief of Staff; William E. Simon, Director of the Federal Energy Office and US Secretary of Treasury under Nixon and Ford; and George W. H. Bush, who was the US Ambassador to the UN under Nixon and later became the Director of the CIA under Ford; Senators Henry Jackson, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Ronald Reagan as well as their respective aides (Richard Perle, Elliot Abrams, Richard Armitage, Richard Pipes, and Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith among others). In addition to these figures, when I refer to a person as a neoconservative or a neoconservative ally, I justify my claim in the text itself or the footnotes.

### 3. Hypothesis

As will be demonstrated in the second chapter of this thesis, following the 1973 war and the subsequent oil embargo, the neoconservatives and their allies, despite their efforts, failed to muster the support needed to initiate a war to invade and occupy the Gulf's oil fields. Instead, they pursued an alternative plan aimed at breaking OPEC's control over oil prices and weakening Iran, the only power that posed a challenge to US domination in the region. Iran,

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Men who are Changing America's Politics*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), Dorrien. *The Neoconservative*; Jesús Velasco. *Neoconservatives in U.S. Foreign Policy under Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush: Voices behind the Throne*. (Washington: Johns Hopkins UP, 2010); Vaïsse. *Neoconservatism*; John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs 1945-1994*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995), and Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

like the other Arab countries in the Gulf region, was influenced by the US call for military action. Starting in 1975, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's foreign and oil policies no longer aligned with the interests of Israel and the United States. These shifts in the Shah's policies included supporting further increase in oil prices, dropping Iran's aid to Kurdish opposition north of Iraq, siding with the Palestinians on the issue of the occupation of 1967 territories, advocating for the withdrawal of American troops stationed in the Gulf, pursuing nuclear ambitions, supporting the calls for a new international economic order, and increasing the cooperation with the USSR. The neoconservatives and their allies in the administration, Congress, and the American media, pursued a campaign (detailed in subsequent chapters) to tarnish his image, portraying him as an unstable megalomaniac with aspirations to build a nuclear weapons arsenal. They also actively worked to ensure that the administration shifted its alliance from the Shah in favor of forming a new alliance with Saudi Arabia, with the hope of moderating OPEC's policies. This ultimately served the purpose of dominating Gulf oil, reducing Iran's and Iraq's influence in the region, and eliminating the use of oil as a weapon in any future war involving Israel.

The neoconservatives' objectives aligned with those of Saudi Arabia, which saw a strong alliance with the US as a means to:

1. Secure US support and protection against radical powers in Yemen, Oman, and Egypt,
2. Assume leadership within OPEC, enabling Saudi Arabia to control oil prices and consequently limit Iran and Iraq's military spending capabilities,
3. Mitigate invasion threats from the US, Israel, or Iran.

The dissertation also shows how neoconservative policies and rhetoric influenced the Shah and the Gulf leaders' perception of American reliability and support, thus shaping their decisions regarding domestic and regional matters. By choosing to focus on the impact of the neoconservative rhetoric and policies on Iran during this period of time, the dissertation challenges the common perception that the deterioration of American-Iranian relations began when President Carter took office and introduced his human rights foreign policy. It provides an alternative narrative that traces the hostility toward the Iranian regime during the administrations of Nixon and Ford, particularly because after the fall of the Shah in 1979, many neoconservatives pointed the finger at President Carter's human rights foreign policy as the chief cause. For instance, accounts by Irving Kristol,<sup>9</sup> Michael A. Ledeen and William H.

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<sup>9</sup> Irving Kristol, "Mr. Carter and Iran," *Wall Street Journal*, December 28, 1979.

Lewis, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, and even more so recent accounts by Pollack, Takeyh, Clawson and Rubin presented the relationship between America and Iran prior to the Carter administration as a strong alliance.<sup>10</sup> They claim that the two countries' relations only deteriorated when Jimmy Carter ascended to power and implemented his human rights foreign policy which in retrospect impacted the Shah's domestic decisions and pressured him into making political reforms that empowered his opponents, e.g., releasing political prisoners and allowing a greater degree of free speech and protesting rights. This narrative, nonetheless, ignored (1) the impact of the various neoconservative calls for invading the oil producing countries on the political environment of the Middle East; (2) the impact of the global struggle for economic and sovereignty rights on the Shah's political decisions as well as on the Iranian domestic front; (3) Israel's occupation of Palestine and the effects of her treatment of Palestinians on Iran and the Arab countries' political awareness; (4) the pronounced effect of the critical rhetoric and policies of the Nixon and Ford administrations on the Shah's regional decisions; and (5) the American-Saudi alliance that aimed to freeze oil prices and transfer OPEC leadership from Iran to Saudi Arabia, which, consequently, induced an economic crisis in Iran.

Hence, the case of Iran proves how the neoconservative fixation on the issue of controlling the oil fields and protecting Israel's expansionist policies were self-defeating; it mischaracterized the region's complexities and increased worldwide hostility toward the US. Through their platforms (think tanks and journals) and positions in the administration and the Congress, the neoconservatives tempered with the political dynamics of the Middle East and pushed for policies that did not serve US interests in the long run. This played a role in the downfall of the Shah, the rise of the Mullah's regime to power in Iran, and fueled anti-American sentiments among Arab, Muslim, and Third World countries.

#### **4. Methodology, Literature Review, and Scope of Study**

The dissertation draws from a wide array of primary and secondary sources. Seminal books by Steinfels, Dorrien, Kristol, Ehrman, Friedman, Fukuyama, Velasco, Vaïsse, and Ahmad, were used to explore the historical context and the development of neoconservatism, to distinguish

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<sup>10</sup>Michael A. Ledeen & William H. Lewis "Carter and the Fall of the Shah: The Inside Story," *The Washington Quarterly*, Volume 3, issue 2 (1980): 3-40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01636608009451461>, Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships & Double Standards," *World Affairs* 170, no. 2 (2007): 61-73. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20672794>. Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin. *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos*. (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2005).

it from other political creeds, to define its principles and themes, and to outline the various phases through which it evolved.<sup>11</sup>

The historical analysis within this research identifies key events, such as the 1973 war, the subsequent oil embargo, the evolution of the New International Economic Order, and their aftermath. It traces the development of American-Iranian relations and draws from a diverse range of texts, including declassified documents from the Nixon and Ford administrations, Congressional hearings as well as memoirs of Iranian, American, and Saudi officials.<sup>12</sup> The dissertation analyzes the neoconservative approach toward these events and how they fundamentally affected US policy in the Middle East. This thesis also provides a diplomatic history and geopolitical contextualization of these events, focusing on Iran's domestic and foreign relations.

All of the electronic documents cited in the research are extracted from reputable online sources that are academically reliable. These include George Washington University's National Security Archive website, and the US State Department Office of the Historian website. Both websites offer an advanced search engine that simplifies the process of finding documents. These documents can be found in the *State Department's Foreign Relations of the United States* series, particularly in Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford volumes. Congressional hearing records and reports for the Congress were extracted from the Hathi Trust Digital Library website, and US Government Publishing Office websites. News from Arabic newspapers mentioned in the dissertation were sourced from the University of Jordan newspaper archive and library.

I provide a close textual reading and a critical assessment of primary sources like books by neoconservatives, their contributions to books, and views as expressed in interviews and articles in newspapers, journals, and think tanks, including the following: Walter Laqueur, Edward Friedland, Paul Seabury, and Aaron Wildavsky, Joshua Muravchik, Jordan Paust, Albert P. Blaustein, and Adele Higgins, Edward Luttwak, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Eugen

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<sup>11</sup> Irving Kristol, *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays 1942-2009*. (New York: Basic Books, 2011); *Neoconservatism, The Biography of an Idea*. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dec, 1999); *Reflections of A Neoconservative: Looking Back, Looking Ahead*. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publisher, 1983). Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power and the Neoconservative Legacy*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006); Muhammad Idrees Ahmad. *The Road to Iraq, the Making of a Neoconservative War*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> E.g., Jeffrey Robinson, *Yamani: The Inside Story*. (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1989) Asadollah Alam. *The Shah and I: The Confidential Diary of Iran's Royal Court, 1969-1977*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991). Peter J. Ognibene, *Scoop: The Life and Politics of Henry M. Jackson*. (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Answers to History by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi*. (New York: Stein and Day, 1980).

Rostow, Robert C. Tucker, Norman Podhoretz, Irving Kristol, Douglas Feith, Albert Wohlstetter, Geoffrey Kemp, and Daniel Pipes.<sup>13</sup> In addition, I also included the publications of the American Enterprise Institute and *Commentary*.<sup>14</sup>

Along with the prominent neoconservative figures, this research also highlights the views and policies of individuals within the Nixon and Ford administrations whom I consider to be allies and implementers of neoconservative ideas. These individuals had a significant impact on US foreign policy decisions, particularly concerning the Middle East and Iran.

During the course of this research, a significant challenge arose due to the inaccessibility of primary materials from the CPD and CDM, despite their centrality to the subject matter of this study. The primary reason for this challenge was the absence of these materials in online sources or digital archives. Despite thorough and exhaustive efforts to locate these documents through traditional and digital means, the unavailability of these materials

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Laqueur. *Confrontation, the Middle-East War and World Politics*. (London: Wildwood House, 1974); “Détente: What’s left of it?” *The New York Times*, December 16, 1973, <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/12/16/archives/detente-whats-left-of-it-detente.htm>; “Russia Enters the Middle East,” *Foreign Affairs* 47, no. 2 (1969): 296–308. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20039374>; “The West in Retreat,” *Commentary*, August 1975. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/walter-laqueur/the-west-in-retreat/> “The Gathering Storm,” *Commentary*, August 1974. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/walter-laqueur/the-gathering-storm/>. Edward Friedland, Paul Seabury, and Aaron B Wildavsky, *The Great Détente Disaster: Oil and the Decline of American Foreign Policy*. (New York: Basic Books, 1975). Joshua Muravchik. *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy*. (Washington (D.C.): American Enterprise Inst, 1988). Edward N. Luttwak [Miles Ignotus]. “Seizing Arab Oil,” *Harper’s Magazine*, March 1975. <https://harpers.org/archive/1975/03/seizing-arab-oil/>. Daniel P. Moynihan and Suzanne Weaver, *A Dangerous Place: Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Defending America at the U.N.* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1980). Daniel Pipes. “Oil Wealth Confers New Dignity on Islam,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 1980. <https://www.danielpipes.org/17046/oil-wealth-confers-new-dignity-on-islam>. Eugene Rostow, “America Europe and the Middle East,” *Commentary*, February, 1974. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/eugene-rostow-2/america-europe-and-the-middle-east/>; “The Middle East Crisis and The Future of Atlantic Relations,” *Stichting Atlantische Commissie*, no. 193 (1974): 1-14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45343448>. Robert C. Tucker, “Oil: The Issue of American Intervention,” *Commentary Magazine*, January 1975. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/tucker-robert-w/oil-the-issue-of-american-intervention/>; “Further Reflections on Oil & Force,” *Commentary*, March, 1975. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/robert-tucker/further-reflections-on-oil-force/>; Norman Podhoretz, “Making the World Safe for Communism,” *Commentary*, April, 1976. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/norman-podhoretz/making-the-world-safe-for-communism/>. “The Abandonment of Israel,” *Commentary*, July 1976. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/norman-podhoretz/the-abandonment-of-israel/>; *Breaking Ranks: A Political Memoir*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1979). Douglas J. Feith. “The Oil Weapon Demystified,” *Policy Review*, 15, (Winter, 1981): 19-41. Albert and Roberta Willstatter, Victor Gilinsky, and Robert Gillette. *Nuclear Policies: Fuel without the Bomb: A Policy Study of the California Seminar on Arms Control and Foreign Policy*. (Washington: Ballinger, 1978). Robert Mantle and Geoffrey Kemp. “US. Military Sales to Iran,” Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1976, VIII. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31210024779827>.

<sup>14</sup> John Duke Anthony ed., *The Middle East: Oil, Politics, and Development*. (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975); Pau. W. McCracken, et al. *The Energy Crisis* (Washington D.C., the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1973); Paul W. McCracken, et al. *The Energy Crisis Contrived?* (Washington D.C., the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1974); Melvin R. Laird et al. *Energy Policy: A New War Between the States?* (Washington D.C., the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975); Tom Bradley et al. *Offshore Oil: Costs and Benefits* (Washington D.C., the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1976).

remained a persistent obstacle. In response to this limitation, I turned to secondary resources by Velasco, Ehrman, and Vaïsse because they provided valuable insights and analyses of the work of these think tanks. Their books thoroughly analyzed a substantial portion of the CPD and CDM records and provided an overall assessment of their foreign policy approach, specifically toward the Middle East in the aftermath of the 1973 war and the oil crisis. Another limitation of the research was that most of the books dealing with American-Iranian relations approached the topic from a binary perspective, which often overlooked the regional context. They also tended to neglect Iran's relations with its neighboring countries as well as United States relations with Arab countries. Consequently, certain crucial aspects that impacted the political decisions of Iran and the Arab countries were not adequately addressed in the analyses of historians such as Clawson and Rubin, Pollack, and Takeyh.<sup>15</sup> This was especially clear in the case of the historical significance of the Arabstan region, which was entirely dropped from the analysis of some of the main resources that dealt with the American-Iranian relations, for instance Bill and Cooper.<sup>16</sup> To overcome these gaps in the research, Arabic secondary sources were consulted, including among others Al-Najar, Al-Hillo, Al-Manie, Talfahhe, Almosafar, and Zahlan.<sup>17</sup>

The omission of certain regional contextual factors which played a significant role in shaping the decision-making processes of both Arab and Iranian leaders during that period extended beyond the realm of Arab-Iranian relations. For instance, the Iranian stance on the Palestinian cause and the Shah's views on Third World activism were not addressed in most of the secondary sources that analyzed his domestic and regional decisions. To address this gap, I conducted an in-depth examination of primary sources, including the Shah's memoir and his published interviews with *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *Alahram*, *The Washington Post*,

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<sup>15</sup> Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin, *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos*. (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2005), Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America*. (New York: Random House, 2004) Ray Takeyh. *The Last Shah: America, Iran and the Fall of the Pahlavi Dynasty*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2021).

<sup>16</sup> James A. Bill. *The Eagle and the Lion: the Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*; Andrew Scott Cooper, *The Oil Kings: How the U.S., Iran, and Saudi Arabia Changed the Balance of Power in the Middle East*.

<sup>17</sup> Mustafa AlNajar, *the Political History of Arabian, 1897-1925*. [ التاريخ السياسي ] مصطفى عبد القادر النجار. 1925-1897 لإمارة عربستان العربية [ Cairo: Al-Maarif, 1971. Ali Neima AlHillo, Al-Ahwaz, Tribes and Dynasties: Demographic Study of Arab in Arabstan. [ بحث ديمغرافي للإنسان العربي على أرض ] علي نعمة الحلو، الأحواز قبائلها واسرها، 1970. The National Union of Kuwaiti Students. *The Arabian Gulf or another Palestine*. (Beirut: Al-Bayan, 1969). Mohammad Salleh Al-Mosffer, *Gulf to Gulf Relations: The Dilemma of Strategic Vacuum and Fragmentation* [ العلاقات الخليجية-الخليجية: محمد صالح المسفر، 2018] معضلة الفراغ الإستراتيجية والتجزئة. الدوحة: مركز الجزيرة للدراسات، 2018. Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States: The Presence at the Table*. (New York: Routledge, 2009) and *The Making of the Modern Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman*. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989)

*Time*, and *The New Republic*. To reflect the views of the Iranian people and the political atmosphere of Iran at the time, I consulted secondary resources like Shariati, and Algar.<sup>18</sup> I also examined Imam Khomeini's correspondence, speeches, and interviews.<sup>19</sup> On the relations among the Arab countries and between the Arab countries and Iran, I studied secondary sources like Heikal,<sup>20</sup> Bill, Pollack, and Al-Takriti.<sup>21</sup> These accounts provided context to Iran's domestic and regional affairs. However, it is important to note that these accounts are partial because at the time they were written many documents from the American archives had not been declassified. However, this issue did not persist in the more recent account, e.g., Offiler, Miglietta, Sargent, Alvandi, Cooper, and Takeyh.<sup>22</sup> These narratives were supported by the release of previously classified documents, offering a more thorough insight into US foreign policy in the region.

## 5. Theoretical Framework

The dissertation argues that the neoconservative foreign policy approach in the 1970s was constructed within the framework of four theories: The first is Melvin Small and J. David Singer's *Democratic Peace* theory, which posits that lasting peace depends on states becoming republics with legislators to check the power of monarchs (or presidents) to make war.<sup>23</sup> This theory also suggests that democracies generally tend to be more peaceful than authoritarian governments and that democracies almost never fight other democracies. The reliance on this framework was used by the neoconservatives to justify supporting authoritarian and right wing dictatorships in the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America. As long as those regimes allied themselves with the US, neoconservatives argued that authoritarian regimes were more likely to turn into democracies in the long run, for their human rights violations were neither

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<sup>18</sup> Ali Shariati, *My Father and Mother We Are Accused, Islam and the Schools of the West - The Complete Archeology*, and *Al-Hussein – Adam's Heir*; Hamid Algar, *the Roots of Islamic Revolution in Iran: four lectures*

<sup>19</sup> Khomeini, Ruhollah. *Ṣaḥīfah-ye Imām: An Anthology of Imam Khomeinī's Speeches, Messages, Interviews, Decrees, Religious Permissions and Letters*. Vol.1, 6, 9, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Mohamed Heikal. *Iran, The Untold Story: An Insider's Account of America's Iranian adventure and its Consequences for the Future* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

<sup>21</sup> Saleem Taha Altakriti, *the Arabic Resistance in the Arabian Gulf*. [سليم طه التكريتي، المقاومة العربية في الخليج] (Baghdad: Al-Rasheed, 1982). (بغداد: دار الرشيد، 1982).

<sup>22</sup> Ben Offiler. *US Foreign Policy and the Modernization of Iran: Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon and the Shah*. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). John P. Miglietta, *American Alliance Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1992: Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002) Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The United States and Iran in the Cold War*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014). Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Joshua S. Goldstein, and Jon C. W. Pevehouse. *International Relations*. (Boston: Pearson Education, 2017) 80-81.

systematic nor consistent, but rather circumstantial.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, if the US were to refrain from supporting its allies, they argued that this would leverage totalitarian regimes to whom the USSR's support would remain intact.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the lack of democracy among Middle Eastern countries was used and is still being used by neoconservatives as a justification for advocating the morality of taking military action against these countries. This framework also provided the moral grounds for US support of Israel's anti-Palestinian and South Africa's apartheid policies and protected these two countries from having to face accountability under international law.<sup>26</sup>

In the case of Iran, I argue that the fluctuation of the US stance from the Shah's regime influenced Reza Pahlavi's view of American reliability and drove him toward greater cooperation with the USSR.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the inconsistency in the US support and criticism of the Shah's human rights conduct left the Iranian people skeptical of the sincerity of American criticism, viewing it as a mere political show rather than a genuine concern. This skepticism not only affected their perception of US policy but also made them hesitant to take the Shah's political reforms seriously. Furthermore, it led them to question the moral ground of American criticism of the leaders of the Islamic revolution, as they saw it as potentially driven by political expediency rather than a principled stance on human rights and democracy.

The second theory used by the neoconservatives to construct their foreign policy framework was Charles P. Kindleberger's "hegemonic stability" theory. This theory argues that a dominant power can establish stability and order by reducing chaos, discouraging aggression, fostering free trade, and resolving, or at least managing, conflicts among smaller states.<sup>28</sup> The neoconservatives have consistently employed this framework to depict the US as the world's sole dealer in "benevolent hegemony." They argue that the removal of any competing hegemony, whether in terms of military power or ideology, is a moral imperative, even if it necessitates taking preemptive measures against potential threats.<sup>29</sup> In this context, the neoconservatives consistently promoted the narrative that Middle East oil is "the lifeblood

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<sup>24</sup> See subchapter 3.4.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> See subchapter 3.4 for details.

<sup>27</sup> See subchapters 5.2.1 and 5.2.2.

<sup>28</sup> Goldstein, and Pevehouse, *International Relations*, 50.

<sup>29</sup> William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 75.4 (1996): 18-32, accessed 19 July 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1996-07-01/toward-neo-reaganite-foreign-policy>. The concept of "benevolent hegemony" was first used by Kristol and Kagan, however, the tendency of idealizing the US hegemony is a frequent occurrence in the writings of neoconservatives and it will be further demonstrated in chapters 1 and 2.

of the West,” an indispensable source of Western liberal strength and a safeguard for its survival. Accordingly, controlling oil resources becomes a strategic imperative for preserving US hegemony, i.e., the only guarantee of global stability. This theory was the basis of neoconservatives’ rhetoric against communism and Islam.

The third theory on which neoconservatives based their foreign policy narratives toward the region, is Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations”. Although the “clash of civilizations” theory was not rigorously or scientifically studied until the 1990s, its fundamental principles had been advocated by the neoconservatives since the 1970s. Their narratives regarding the Middle East were constructed to portray various political issues (such as the 1973 war, the oil embargo, NIEO, nuclear ambitions, anti-Americanism) as rooted in the Arab/Muslim desire to undermine Western civilization. In other words, neoconservatives employed the main premise in Huntington’s theory, which suggested that civilizational conflicts were at the basis for global conflicts to argue that only power could effectively safeguard US interests in the Middle East and ensure global stability.<sup>30</sup>

The fourth theory employed is Orientalism. According to neoconservative narratives, political solutions and peace negotiations with Muslim countries were destined to fail because, in the neoconservative view, the ultimate goal of Arabs/Muslims was not primarily economic or political, but ideological. Their desire for vengeance and to rectify the humiliations imposed by Western colonialism took precedence over their aspirations for peace and stability. The utilization of the “clash of civilizations” intercedes with the revival of the old Orientalist tradition of portraying the Middle East and its “natives” as irrational, unstable, and untrustworthy, branding them as opponents of democracy, modernity, and liberalism, who could only be dealt with through the use of force. In Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, orientalism is defined as the “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>31</sup> By limiting the Orient within the realm of Orientalist discourse, the Orient, according to Said’s thesis, was managed and produced “politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively” in a way that would serve the West’s political and cultural needs and interests— these include justifying colonialism and affirming Christianity—without providing a nuanced characterization of the Orient.<sup>32</sup> By analyzing the neoconservatives’ rhetoric toward the Middle East, the Arabs, and the Muslims, we can see the way in which the neoconservatives recycled the orientalist narratives that justified the 18th and

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<sup>30</sup> See subchapters 2.3., 2.3.1, 2.3.2., 2.3.3., and 3.2.

<sup>31</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 2003), 3.

<sup>32</sup> See subchapter 2.3. for details.

19th century European colonialism and imperialism to provide a perpetual justification for what would otherwise be considered a blunt display of power and hegemony.

## **6. Outline and Structure of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is organized into the following five chapters:

The present introductory chapter provides an overview of background, methodology, theoretical framework, hypothesis, and structure of the dissertation. The first chapter, titled “The Evolution of Neoconservative Foreign Policy,” provides a historiography of neoconservatism, introducing its influential figures and tracing the development of their views within the political landscape. Then it reveals the defining characteristics of neoconservative ideology and its roots in US political traditions. The chapter proceeds to examine the events of the 1973 war and the subsequent oil embargo, analyzing their historical context, economic and political implications, and geopolitical importance.

The second chapter, titled “The Neoconservatives’ First War,” demonstrates how prominent neoconservative figures were the leading voices that called for a war to invade and occupy the oil fields of the Gulf following the 1973 oil crisis. It proposes that their calls were ideological, motivated by their support to Israel. It aims to reveal the way in which the neoconservatives constructed their narratives and to provide the rationale for the policies adopted by Iran and the Arab countries in the years that followed. Additionally, it examines how the call for invading the oil fields impacted the power dynamic in the region and influenced the political decisions of the region’s leaders.

The third chapter, titled “The New International Economic Order: Neoconservative Discourse, Iranian Influence, and Human Rights Dynamics,” establishes Iran’s leadership of OPEC during the oil crisis and explores how Iran successfully aligned the goals of oil-producing countries for high oil prices with the aspirations of Third World nations for economic rights and the New International Economic Order (NIEO). The chapter aims to demonstrate why the neoconservatives perceived such an alliance as the main threat to Israel’s survival and the United States’ ability to win the Cold War. Furthermore, the chapter links the neoconservatives in the Ford administration to the shift in US’ policy toward Iran as a result of the change in its oil and foreign policies—due to the neoconservative war campaign. It presents the neoconservative efforts in 1974-1975 to replace the American-Iranian alliance with an American-Saudi alliance by attacking the Shah’s armament, nuclear ambitions, and oil policies. Lastly, the chapter explains the role neoconservatives played in constructing the US human

rights foreign policy framework and how the neoconservatives politicized the issue of human rights in a way that discredited the US and harmed its interests.

The fourth chapter, titled “Geopolitical Realities,” focuses on deconstructing the narratives used by the neoconservatives about the Gulf region. The chapter analyzes the American-Iranian relations prior to the 1973 oil crisis and US political involvement in Iran, especially by orchestrating the 1953 *coup d'état*. Then it explains the special connection the Nixon administration had with the Shah’s regime as part of the Twin Pillars Strategy and then the Nixon Doctrine; it shows how US support empowered the Shah and allowed him to presume a regional hegemony. The chapter aims to situate American-Iranian relations prior and after the oil crisis within a broader regional context, hence, to clarify the rationale behind the alliances and political decisions of Iran and the Arab oil producing countries in the period that followed the neoconservative war campaign. It argues that the neoconservative narratives did not understand nor reflect the political and social environment in the region accurately. The chapter provides a more nuanced understanding of the Middle East by highlighting the complexities within and between the region’s countries, ultimately arguing that the neoconservatives’ failure to comprehend these dynamics led to policies detrimental to US interests both in the short and long term.

The fifth chapter, titled “Breaking the Shah,” focuses on the pivotal year of 1976 in the history of American-Iranian relations. The chapter discusses and highlights the major events that took place in that year, namely: 1) the unraveling of the US alliance with the Shah, 2) Saudi Arabia’s ascent to the leadership of OPEC and its economic war against Iran, and 3) the emergence of the first organized opposition to the Shah in Iran. The chapter aims to illustrate the role of neoconservatives in these events and how they, along with their allies in the administration, Congress, and the American media, systematically pursued a campaign to smear the Shah and pressure him to align his foreign and oil policy with American and Israeli interests. The chapter argues that beside its impact on the US policy toward Iran at the time, this campaign significantly impacted the Shah’s domestic and international political choices, ultimately leading to his downfall. The conclusion summarizes the key findings and arguments presented. It discusses the broader implications of the research and suggests avenues for future exploration. The thesis is rounded out by a complete bibliography of primary and secondary sources used during writing.

## Chapter 1

### The Evolution of Neoconservative Foreign Policy

Every ten years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small crappy little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business.

Michael Ledeen<sup>33</sup>

The time has come to tell Americans that there is no escape from global responsibility that they have to think beyond the protection of the homeland. They need to understand that the purpose of NATO and other alliances is to defend not against direct threats to U.S. interests but against a breakdown of the order that best serves those interests.

Robert Kagan<sup>34</sup>

#### 1.1. Introduction

Neoconservatism as a political phenomenon has played an important role in shaping United States foreign policy since the Cold War era. Some theorists and political scientists questioned to what extent this role might have been exaggerated; after all, claiming that this small group of intellectuals and politicians were the architects of the US Global War on Terror might be an overstatement. Even the broadest interpretation of the neoconservative label would include no more than a hundred or so individuals. How is it that a relatively small group of individuals can wield such influence and be collectively castigated as the scapegoat for the unresolved American conflicts in the Middle East? Why is their reputation so tarnished, and why do they constantly face declarations of demise? Although these questions may not have definitive answers, they nonetheless warrant serious inquiry and examination. Influential writers and theorists with a well put together agenda can be one of the key factors in foreign policy decision making, but certainly not the only one. The first subchapter provides an in-depth introduction to this political phenomenon by offering a definition that tackles all aspects that distinguish it from other political outlooks; by introducing its major figures and platforms

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<sup>33</sup> Conor Friedersdorf, "The Real Radicals of the Iraq War: Its Proponents" *The Atlantic*, March 6, 2013, accessed April 6, 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/03/the-real-radicals-of-the-iraq-war-its-proponents/273751/>.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Kagan, "A Superpower, Like It or Not, Why Americans Must Accept their Global Role," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2021, accessed April 6, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-02-16/superpower-it-or-not>.

as well as the circumstances that helped in shaping their views and the clarification of these views.

The second subchapter explores neoconservative ideology and its defining characteristics. It situates neoconservatism within the context of US political traditions (specifically liberalism and conservatism), and provides a comprehensive analysis of the core principles of neoconservative foreign policy since the 1970s. It argues that neoconservatives shared a set of tenets that connected the Cold War era neoconservatives with the neocons of Bush administration. The third subchapter discusses the historical context, economic impact, and geopolitical significance of the 1973 war and the consequent oil embargo in the 1970s, particularly its influence on American interests in the Middle East and its implications for global politics. It also analyzes the oil crisis that followed the 1973 war and lasted to 1976, and its far-reaching implications beyond the economic realm. It led to shifts in alliances, a reevaluation of US leadership, and altered dynamics between the United States and its European allies. Additionally, the section analyses the neoconservative view of the Arab-Israeli conflict as more than a regional dispute: it provides a critique of the neoconservative analysis by pointing out that it tends to overlook the intrinsic significance of the Arab-Israeli conflict and portrays oil-producing countries as lacking the ability to pursue their interests systematically.

The fourth subchapter argues that the neoconservatives perceived the events of 1973 as an opportunity to uphold the perception of American power. Their argument was rooted in an ideological premise that viewed Israel's survival as not only essential for Jewish history and the future but also as a symbol of Western Civilization's endurance. Their adeptness at effectively articulating their anti-détente views enabled them to establish alliances with militarists, ideological cold warriors, including liberal hawks and hardline conservatives. While their staunch pro-Israel stance strengthened their ties to the Israeli lobby and the emerging Religious Right. This section demonstrates how the opposition to the détente policy became the cornerstone of neoconservative foreign policy and how maintaining American dominance in the Middle East became central to neoconservative ideology.

## **1.2. Neoconservatism Unmasked: A Complex Political Movement**

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the wider world was introduced to the term "Neoconservative" as it became associated with the thinkers and operators behind the Bush Doctrine and the US Global War on Terror. However, it is important to note that

Neoconservatism, as a political outlook or school of thought, did not originate at that moment. Its roots can be traced back to the 1930s, and by the 1970s, it had become an important political force in the United States. Throughout their history, the neoconservatives have been described as Straussians, Trotskyists, globalist Wilsonians, and the embodiment of the intelligent conservatism America lacked.

However, the term itself was first coined by the socialist Michael Harrington and the editors of *Dissent* magazine as a slur to insult former liberals who changed their affiliation from the Democratic Party, opposed the counterculture, supported the war in Vietnam, and rejected what they considered as the appeasement policy towards the Soviet Union.<sup>35</sup> Harrington provided the following definition of those whom he considered as neoconservatives “those who came to their position from a liberal or socialist background after being disillusioned with their Great Society dreams.”<sup>36</sup> Among those shunned as neoconservatives, Irving Kristol was the first to accept the label and later on became described as the “godfather of all the neocons.”<sup>37</sup> In his book, *The Neoconservatives Persuasion*, he defined neoconservatism as a “current of thoughts emerging out of the academic intellectual world and provoked by disillusionment with contemporary liberalism.”<sup>38</sup> Kristol further explained that neoconservatism does not have “distinctive qualities” that would qualify it to be understood as a political movement; rather, it is a “persuasion,” he argued “that manifests itself over time, but erratically, and one whose meaning we clearly glimpse only in retrospect.”<sup>39</sup> In what follows I explain why I consider this definition as the most accurate in explaining neoconservatism. Nevertheless, it is important to shed some light on the way the term was defined by others. According to Michael Novak, one of the most influential neoconservative theorists, “a neoconservative is a person brought up as a person of the left, who grew dissatisfied with the ideas and the spirit of the left, typically, this dissatisfaction arose because the way of life of the left seemed to demand so many forms of false consciousness and, about all loathing for American system.”<sup>40</sup> Norman Podhoretz, the longtime editor of *Commentary* magazine, argued that neoconservatism is a “repudiation of the anti-Americanism that by the late 60s had virtually become the religion of the radical movement in which we ourselves had

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<sup>35</sup> I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 343.

<sup>36</sup> Dorrien, *The Neoconservative* 1,7; Lipset, “Neoconservatism,” 5.

<sup>37</sup> I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 190.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Dorrien, *The Neoconservative*, 7.

actively participated in the earlier years of the decade.”<sup>41</sup> Garry Dorrien in his comprehensive book, *The Neoconservative Mind*, defined neoconservatism as “an intellectual movement originated by former leftists that promotes militant anticommunism, capitalist economics, a minimal welfare state, the rule of traditional elites, and a return to traditional cultural values.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, what gave neoconservatives their distinct character was their ideological transition from liberalism to conservatism, or as Nathan Glazer summarized it, a neoconservative is “someone who was not a conservative.”<sup>43</sup>

These definitions characterized neoconservatives of the 1960s and early 1970s; however, many later neoconservatives “have never gone through the leftist phase” nor crossed party lines.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, several prominent neoconservatives were not Jewish. (e.g., James Q. Wilson, Michael Novak, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan). For these reasons I tend to agree with Kristol that neoconservatism is best described as a “tendency.” A neoconservative is someone whose commitment to this “tendency” exceed his commitment to any party or institution. The core of this tendency is the preservation of Western Civilization and the Western-led world order. Its method of achievement involves censuring hypothetical enemies, turning them into real enemies, and engaging in preemptive fights against them. The neoconservatives utilize their intellectual capabilities, proximity to decision making circles, and personal and professional connection to justify, promote, and fulfil this tendency. However, it is uncommon to use the term “tendency” to explain ideological phenomena. Therefore, I will follow the approach of other historians in considering neoconservatism as a political movement. I justify the use of the term “movement” based on the following reasons:

- 1- The diversity among the adherents of neoconservatism and the constant change of their political affiliation makes it hard to define them as a political party, organization, or an ideology and of course not a political cult or cabal for the connotation such terms may imply. However, the use of the term “movement” helps to acknowledge the presence of a set of themes and premises the neoconservatives favored or opposed and helps to draw boundaries and give neoconservatism “inner coherence and energy.”<sup>45</sup>
- 2- More than once throughout its history neoconservatism was declared dead, or incapable of further development. Yet, over the years, it proved to be an integral part of

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 6-8.

<sup>44</sup> Max Boot. “Myths about Neoconservatism,” in: Irwin Steltzer. *The Neocon Reader* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 47.

<sup>45</sup> Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives*, x.

American political debates. Thus, many historians, scholars, media specialists, and politicians came to use the term “movement” when referring to political views and tendencies that share the core elements of what is called neoconservatism.

3- Despite not being commonly recognized as part of the 1960s movements, neoconservatism might be “the most enduring legacy of the sixties,” Peter Steinfels asserts.<sup>46</sup> It was born in reaction to many of the 1960s movements (students’ movements, women’s and gay liberation, the counterculture, and the anti-Vietnam war movement); therefore, describing it as a “movement,” in turn, helps explain that integral part its history.

4- By their very nature political and social movements deal with two main questions: how society should be organized and what the best way is to bring about such a reorganization, if necessary. Throughout their history, the neoconservatives approached these questions and attempted to answer them. *The Neoconservative Continuum: Exploring Three Generations of Thought*

Drawing on the work of most historians, neoconservatism is best understood within the historical contexts of its adherents. These historians (Vaisse, Velasco, Dorrien, among others) commonly divide neoconservatism into three generations: the New York Jewish intellectuals of the 1930s, the liberals who were “mugged by reality” in the 1960s, and the neoconservatives of the post-Cold War era (the 1990s onward). Henceforth, I will follow the classical approach used by these historians to provide a brief account of the three generations of neoconservatives, examining each group’s ideas and principles highlighting the main figures, the main platforms and publications and the differences between them if they existed.

### **1.2.1. The Founding Fathers of Neoconservatism: The Birth of a Political Movement:**

The use of the word “generation” is most relevant to describe neoconservative forefathers, the “first generation,” as they were all born between the 1920s and 1930s, and the majority of them studied at City College in New York.<sup>47</sup> Like many Americans of the Depression era, they saw in socialism an answer to the stumbling economy and joined the socialist camp mainly as Trotskyists.<sup>48</sup> In general, their interest concentrated on domestic issues: they supported the New

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, xiv.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>48</sup> I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 8.

Deal, the welfare state, and the struggle for racial and social equality. The Holocaust and Socialism's failure to deter the rise of totalitarianism prompted these intellectuals to reevaluate their political beliefs. They reevaluated their beliefs upon realizing that Fascism and Nazism had roots in the socialist tradition. Contrary to being a utopia, the Soviet Union revealed itself as a socialist dystopia, as demonstrated by events like Stalin's concentration camps and the Soviet non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany.<sup>49</sup>

In the 1940s and early 1950s many intellectuals started moving more toward the center of the political spectrum, "rejecting both communism and fascism."<sup>50</sup> Those former Trotskyists along with the supporters of Harry Truman's hard line anticommunism in the Democratic Party were the nucleus of what came to be known as the neoconservatives.<sup>51</sup> The main event that gave the neoconservatives their label was the polarization of American society in the 1960s and early 1970s due to the Vietnam War and the emerging of various social movements. Liberal intellectuals of the Cold War era criticized the leftward trend in American liberalism, the perceived hedonistic, relativistic, and individualistic culture of the 1960s, the failure of the Great Society and War on Poverty programs, and the dominance of secularism in the Democratic Party, the educational establishment, and the media.<sup>52</sup> As Irving Howe famously said, "when intellectuals are moved to action, they create magazines."<sup>53</sup> This was profoundly true in the case of the neoconservatives. In 1965, Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell founded *The Public Interest* magazine, which became "the original core of neoconservatism."<sup>54</sup> Alongside *The Public Interest*, *Commentary* magazine, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *the Washington Post*, were also publishing articles by those Cold War era intellectuals who would later be labeled as "neoconservative" by Michel Harington and the editorial team of *Dissent* magazine for the conservative turn they took in their critiques.<sup>55</sup> The most famous figures among the first generation of neoconservatives include Irving Kristol, Seymour Martin Lipset, Irving Howe, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Sidney Hook, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and James Q. Wilson. The first generation is distinct from later generations for at least three reasons. They were predominantly New York intellectuals, academics, sociologists, political scientists, journalists, and they rarely combined their

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 7; Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives*, 27-28.

<sup>50</sup> Velasco, 25.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>52</sup> I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 27-41; 175-179.

<sup>53</sup> Friedman, *Jewish*, 116.

<sup>54</sup> I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 184.

<sup>55</sup> Väisse, *Neoconservatism*, 8.

academic aspirations with a political career. All of them were liberal democrats, and their focus was on domestic issues rather than foreign policy.<sup>56</sup> The following points can summarize their stance on domestic issues:

- With some reservation the neoconservatives supported the idea of the welfare state and social reform; they greeted open admissions at the college level, extending medical services, protecting the environment, and providing unemployment support. However, their support rested upon minimal government interference in individual affairs. They rejected the paternalistic state and supported a version of the welfare state that promoted the common good without leading to bankruptcy.<sup>57</sup>
- They respected the market as a tool to allocate resources efficiently while preserving individual freedom. Yet, in order to achieve social purposes, Neoconservatism accepts government interference in the market by either rigging it or creating new markets without directly controlling it.<sup>58</sup>
- Respecting traditional values and institutions: religion, the family, the “high culture” of Jodo-Christian Western Civilization. They saw in many of the movements of the 1960s a moral and cultural crisis and a threat to stability and democracy. However, the neoconservative approach to religion comes from their belief in “the importance of religion in the life of the political community” and not particularly for being religious themselves.<sup>59</sup> In *the Closing of the American Mind* (1987) Allan Bloom called out the “moral relativism” and openness of both academia and society, and blamed both for the absence of shared goals or vision of the public good.<sup>60</sup>
- Affirming the traditional notion of equality which they define as quality of natural rights and opportunities rather than “egalitarianism” or equality of condition and outcome.<sup>61</sup> They saw in granting equal opportunities by the government a more proper goal to pursue than the egalitarian dreams that can become a threat to liberty itself.

### 1.2.2. The “Scoop Jackson Democrats” From McGovern Critics to Reagan Supporters

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>57</sup> I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 149; Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives*, 54.

<sup>58</sup> Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives*, 54.

<sup>59</sup> I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 185.

<sup>60</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind, How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 26.

<sup>61</sup> Väisse, *Neoconservatism*, 78.

The second generation of neoconservatives was a combination of the first-generation New York intellectuals and Democratic political activists in Washington who were dissatisfied with the nomination of Senator George McGovern in the 1972 presidential election, considering him to be “defeatist, isolationist, and guilt-driven”.<sup>62</sup> They criticized his presidential campaign, “Come home America,” which called for cooperating with the Soviet Union, reducing the defense budget, and curtailing US commitments abroad.<sup>63</sup> These individuals were commonly referred to by historians as “Scoop Jackson Democrats” because they gathered around Senator Henry Jackson and supported him in the 1972 and the 1976 presidential election respectively. Many of them worked as his aides in Congress (e.g., Richard Pearle, Frank Gaffney, and Douglas Feith).<sup>64</sup> They supported his stance on social progress and civil liberties at home, and his militant anticommunism, fierce support of Israel, and criticism of the United Nations abroad.<sup>65</sup>

The formation of the Coalition for Democratic Majority (CDM) after the Republican nominee Richard Nixon won the presidential race marked the first integration of neoconservatives into politics, initially within the Democratic Party.<sup>66</sup> As its slogan, “Come home, Democrats,” indicates, the CDM’s main object was to regain control of the Democratic Party by promoting moderate liberals such as Senator Henry Jackson, and distancing themselves from the McGovernites, who they thought were New Leftists and socialists.<sup>67</sup> The CDM’s membership included impressive names, many of whom came to be considered as neoconservatives (e.g., Max Kampelman, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Bin Wattenberg, Norman Podhoretz, Eugene Rostow, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan).<sup>68</sup>

The Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) was another important political organization associated with the emergence of the second generation of neoconservatives as a significant political force. It was founded in 1976 by Eugene Rostow and other neoconservatives, including many CDM members.<sup>69</sup> Like the CDM, it aimed to promote a

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<sup>62</sup> Dorrien, *The Neoconservative*, 166.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Gordon Kaufman, *Henry M. Jackson: A life in Politics* (Seattle: Washington UP, 2000), 200-213, 407.

<sup>65</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 8.

<sup>66</sup> Dorrien, *The Neoconservative*, 166-167; Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution*, 142.

<sup>67</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 9.

<sup>68</sup> Dorrien, *The Neoconservative*, 166-167. These individuals were also members in the CPD.

<sup>69</sup> Eugene Rostow held significant positions, including Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs under President Johnson, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency under Presidents Carter and Reagan, and professor of law and public affairs at Yale Law School. Rostow was a staunch supporter of Israel and played a role in shaping US policy towards the Middle East. In addition to his involvement with the CPD, Rostow was

strong defense policy for the United States and “alert American policy makers and the public to what its founders perceived as the continuing, ominous Soviet threat.”<sup>70</sup> Due to what the neoconservatives perceived as “dovish foreign policy,” Carter’s administration became open game for neoconservative criticism in the publications of both the CDM and the CPD.<sup>71</sup> The near-complete exclusion of neoconservative nominees from positions in the administration, coupled with hiring several of the McGovernites, increased neoconservative discontent with President Carter. Additionally, his engagement with the Soviets in arms control negotiations, his weak response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Islamic revolution, and the hostage crisis in Iran further exacerbated their dissatisfaction.<sup>72</sup>

The disenchantment with the Carter administration and the foreign policies of the Democratic Party in general led to the mass migration of neoconservatives from the Democrats to the Republican Party and rustled in their support for Ronald Reagan in 1980 elections.<sup>73</sup> Among those who made the switch to the Republican Party were Jeanne Kirkpatrick, who served as the US ambassador to the United Nations under Reagan, Elliott Abrams, James Woolsey and Joshua Muravchik, among others.<sup>74</sup> Unlike Carter, Ronald Reagan embraced some neoconservative views, and by the end of his administration, the neoconservatives had fully assimilated into the Republican Party and neoconservatism came to be considered an offshoot of the broader conservative movement.<sup>75</sup> Reagan appointed several members of the CPD, in which he himself was a member.<sup>76</sup> According to Vaïsse, “over Reagan’s two terms, 65 of the group’s [CPD] directors received more than 100 appointments of one kind or another.”<sup>77</sup> It is important to note that this period did not just mark the incorporation of neoconservatism into the ideology of the Republican Party. It also saw a shift of focus from

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associated with other important neoconservative think tanks, including the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Brookings Institution.

<sup>70</sup> Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution*, 142.

<sup>71</sup> The CDM and the CPD presented Carter with a list of sixty prominent neoconservatives seeking appointments in his administration. The list included Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Max Kampelman, Nathan Glazer, and Richard Perle. However, only Peter Rosenblatt was appointed to a minor position in the administration. Dorrien, *The Neoconservative*, 167.

<sup>72</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 130-133; Dorrien, *The Neoconservative*, 168.

<sup>73</sup> I. Kristol, *Reflections*, 111-113.

<sup>74</sup> Some of these individuals rejoined the Democratic Party during the Clinton administration. Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 11.

<sup>75</sup> Jacob Heilbrunn, *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons* (New York: Anchor Books, a division of Random House, 2009), 116.

<sup>76</sup> Reagan joined the CPD in 1976 and appointed many of its members to his administration, including George Shultz as Secretary of State, Richard Allen as National Security Adviser, Jeanne Kirkpatrick as UN Ambassador, William Casey as Director of the CIA, along with Richard Schifter, Elliott Abrams, Ben Wattenberg, Paul Nitze, Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Perle, among others. Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 186

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 187.

domestic issues to foreign policy among key neoconservatives, as well as their integration into politics.<sup>78</sup> The second part will further elaborate on the CDM and CPD's involvement in foreign policy, their fixation on the Middle East, and provide an insight into the connections between neoconservatives, the Christian right and the Israeli lobby. This exploration sheds light on the evolution of neoconservative foreign policy approaches and how they impacted US policy toward the region.

### 1.2.3. The Third-Generation Neoconservatives of the Post-Cold War Era

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, neoconservatism as a distinct political movement lost its defining purpose and was consequently declared dead, not just by its opponents but even by many of its adherents.<sup>79</sup> For instance, Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary*, noted that neoconservatism “no longer exists as a distinctive phenomenon requiring a special name of its own.”<sup>80</sup> Lipset noted that “the concept of neoconservatism is irrelevant to further developments within American politics.”<sup>81</sup> Irving Kristol postulated that what was once described as the neoconservative impulse or persuasion “was a generational phenomenon, and has now been pretty much absorbed into a larger, more comprehensive conservatism.”<sup>82</sup> These comments reflected the integration of neoconservatives into the Republican Party during the Reagan administration, where they emerged as the most influential intellectuals on the American Right.<sup>83</sup>

Despite their shared conservative ideology, the neoconservatives maintained some notable differences from paleoconservatives. Unlike the latter, neoconservatives supported the Civil Rights movements, the labor unions, the welfare state, and various social engineering programs. Yet the focus of their attention was on foreign policy rather than social issues—sexual deviance, pornography, abortion, and school prayer—that preoccupied paleoconservatives. Additionally, joining the Republican Party and embracing its conservatism did not mean that neoconservatives were welcomed or accepted by other conservative factions;

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<sup>78</sup> Lipset, “Neoconservatism,” 34.

<sup>79</sup> Velasco, *Neoconservatives*, 220.

<sup>80</sup> Norman Podhoretz, “Neoconservatism: A Eulogy”. *Commentary*, March 1996, accessed April 28, 2021. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/norman-podhoretz/neoconservatism-a-eulogy/>

<sup>81</sup> Lipset, “Neoconservatism,” 37.

<sup>82</sup> I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 349.

<sup>83</sup> George H Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*. (Delaware: ISI books, 2006), 556-557; Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, 173.

they remained subject to the criticism, resentment, and suspicion of conservatives, to say the least.<sup>84</sup>

This younger generation, maintained focus on the rule and responsibility of the United States to sustain its military superiority, prevent the re-emergence of any new global threat, and promote and defend democracy around the globe by all possible means. Their views were best reflected in the *Defense Policy Guidance (DPG) FY 1994-1999* (1992), a defense policy report that was drafted by prominent neoconservatives under the administration of George H. W. Bush. After getting leaked to the press, the DPG received a lot of criticism, so the administration issued a revised, less provocative version of it.<sup>85</sup> The original DPG draft called for the US to protect the strategic position it had achieved by defeating the Soviet Union through 1) preventing the emergence of new rivals, 2) maintaining global stability by precluding any hostile power from dominating a region critical to the United States' interests and reducing the sources of regional instability, 3) cooperating with and assisting democratic powers most notably in Europe and Israel, 4) expanding the democratic "peace zone" by establishing a new democratic form of government and open economic systems, 5) maintaining a highly capable military power, 6) preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them.<sup>86</sup> In addition, it asserted that the United States had the right to act "independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated," and it was accompanied by scenarios of potential wars against states that sought to acquire nuclear, chemical or biological weapons; in fact, a second Gulf war against Iraq was among these hypothetical scenarios.<sup>87</sup> Hence, they strongly supported the US intervention in the Gulf in 1991 and called for expanding the *Desert Storm* operation to include the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. However, neoconservatives were displeased by the war's outcome and campaigned for the US to use force to remove Hussein from power. Some went as far as to vote for Clinton during the 1992 presidential race as an expression of their resentment towards George W.H. Bush' *realpolitik* approach to foreign policy and his reluctance to take the war to Baghdad.<sup>88</sup> During the Clinton administration, the

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<sup>84</sup> Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 273. For more on the paleoconservatives rhetoric about neoconservatives, see Patrick Buchanan "Have the Neocons Thought this through," in *The Gulf War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf, eds. (New York: Random House Inc., 2003), 213-215.

<sup>85</sup> Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 145.

<sup>86</sup> "Defence Planning Guidance FY 1994-1999." 16. 4 (1992). *US National Archives and Records Administration*. (1-46), accessed January 14, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/files/declassification/iscap/pdf/2008-003-docs1-12.pdf> .

<sup>87</sup> Keller, "The Sunshine".

<sup>88</sup> Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs, Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana*. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 39.

neoconservatives maintained their support for more robust and aggressive military approaches to address conflicts in the Balkans and Rwanda. Hence, their support for Clinton did not withstand, as they grew critical of his lack of assertiveness toward these conflicts and what they considered as tolerance toward such Middle Eastern dictators as Hussein of Iraq and Qaddafi of Libya.<sup>89</sup>

The 9/11 attacks gave the neoconservatives the worthy “ideological and threatening enemy” they were seeking.<sup>90</sup> Shortly after the attacks, neoconservatives such as William Kristol, Eliot Cohen, Midge Decter, Francis Fukuyama, Donald Kagan, Robert Kagan, Charles Krauthammer, Richard Perle, and Norman Podhoretz, advocated for expanding the response to the attack, ensuring that it met three important criteria: (1) the goal of the war should not be limited to killing Bin Laden and destroying his network of associates but rather taking military action against Taliban’s rule in Afghanistan with the aid of their opponents, (2) removing Saddam Hussein from power is a necessity even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attacks, (3) the war on terror should target not only actual terrorists but also countries that harbor and protect them, namely Syria, Iran, and the Palestinian Authority.<sup>91</sup> In the period that followed neoconservative think tanks and outlets became platforms for advocating for these goals and by infiltrating the Bush administration, the neoconservatives played an influential role in shaping the policies of his administration.

Neoconservatism under the third generation reached its utmost power with such neoconservative think tanks as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), the Project for New American Century (PNAC), The Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and the Center for Security Policy, of which so many members took prominent positions in Bush administration.<sup>92</sup> Publications like William Kristol’s magazine the *Weekly Standard* that was described by the *New York Times* as “the most influential publications in America,” and other publications that

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 43-68; Joseph Cirinocione, “Origins of Regime Change in Iraq,” *Carnegie*, March 19, 2003, accessed March 14, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2003/03/19/origins-of-regime-change-in-iraq-pub-1214>. Clinton imposed economic sanctions that depleted the Iraqi economy, resulting in a severe humanitarian crisis, increased poverty, and social unrest, while reinforcing anti-American sentiments. His administration also ordered strikes against Iraq in 1993, 1996, and 1998, leading to long-lasting consequences for the country’s infrastructure and economy.

<sup>90</sup> Irving Kristol, “A Post-Wilsonian Foreign Policy,” *The American Enterprise Institute*. August 02, 1996, accessed, May 23, 2021, <https://www.aei.org/articles/a-post-wilsonian-foreign-policy/>.

<sup>91</sup> “Open Letter to the President,” *Washington Examiner*, October 15, 2001, accessed February 12, 2021 <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/weekly-standard/open-letter-to-the-president-1401>.

<sup>92</sup> Notably, Wolfowitz, Elliott Abrams, Kenneth Adelman, John Bolton, Stephen A. Cambone, Paula Dobriansky, Stephen J. Hadley, Douglas Feith, Zalmay Khalilzad, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, William Luti, Richard Perle, Peter W. Rodman, and David Wurmser, along with the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney.

took a neoconservative turn in the 1990s, notably *The National Review* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and *the New Republic*.<sup>93</sup> Also, some key think tanks developed strong ties with neoconservatives like Freedom House, the Georgetown Center for Strategic Studies, the Hudson Institute, and the Heritage Foundation, to name but a few.<sup>94</sup> The responsibility for the US Global War on Terror was almost entirely offloaded on the neoconservatives. Particularly, the regime change project in Iraq, with its fake threats and justification and its implications overshadowing its proclaimed goals, discredited the neoconservatives, leading to the derogatory term “neocons” commonly being used to further insult and tarnish them.<sup>95</sup> Some of the neoconservatives retreated from supporting the war and publicly terminated their affiliation with neoconservatism (e.g., Francis Fukuyama, David Frum, and Max Boot).<sup>96</sup> Others defended their stance and claimed that the Bush and later Obama administrations failed in implementing their views correctly.<sup>97</sup>

During the Obama administration, neoconservatism was pronounced dead once more.<sup>98</sup> Obama pursued policies that contradicted the neoconservative preferences. Domestically, he increased the role of the federal government in addressing issues like social welfare, healthcare, and income inequality.<sup>99</sup> In foreign policy, he focused on diplomacy, nonintervention, and building bridges with the Muslim world: this was his rhetoric for most of his first term. However, it was during Obama’s second term that the “Arab Spring,” gave the

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<sup>93</sup> To understand the influence of *The Weekly Standard* during the Bush administration, see David Carr, “White House Listens When Weekly Speaks,” *The New York Times*, March 11, 2003, accessed June 9, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/11/arts/white-house-listens-when-weekly-speaks.html>.

<sup>94</sup> Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 158-181; Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 47-48, 103-108.

<sup>95</sup> The invasion of Iraq in 2003 had far-reaching implications: it destabilized the Middle East, exacerbated sectarian tensions leading to violence, and created a power vacuum exploited by extremist groups like ISIS. The invasion’s justification and aftermath eroded trust in Western governments and their foreign policies, and fueled anti-American sentiments globally.

<sup>96</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “After Neoconservatism,” *The New York Times*, February 19, 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/19/magazine/after-neoconservatism.html>; David Frum, “The Iraq War Reconsidered,” *The Atlantic*, March 13, 2023, accessed July 8, 2023, <https://archive.is/jbxol#selection-547.0-547.25>; Max Boot, “What the Neocons Got Wrong,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 10, 2023, accessed July 8, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/iraq/what-neocons-got-wrong>

<sup>97</sup> Velasco, *Neoconservatives*, 221.

<sup>98</sup> Peter Beinart, “9/11’s 10th Anniversary: The Death of Neoconservatism,” *The Daily Beast*, July 14, 2017, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/911s-10th-anniversary-the-death-of-neoconservatism>; Stewart M. Patrick, “Obama’s State of the Union: Epitaph for Neoconservatism,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 29, 2014, accessed July 8, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/obamas-state-union-epitaph-neoconservatism>

<sup>99</sup> On the neoconservatives’ criticism of Obama’s domestic policies, see Jonah Goldberg, “What Kind of Socialist is Barack Obama?” *Commentary* May 2010, accessed April 3, 2020, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/jonah-goldberg/what-kind-of-socialist-is-barack-obama/>.

neoconservatives a new lease of life.<sup>100</sup> At the beginning, they supported what they considered a manifestation of their democracy promotion project, but when Islamist parties started winning elections, they adopted, and advocated, the Israeli view of the incompatibility between the Arab world and democracy.<sup>101</sup>

The neoconservatives supported the uprisings in Syria and Libya and backed the regimes in Egypt, Tunisia, and Bahrain. In other words, they supported pro-American governments and called for intervention against regimes that did not align with US interests. During the Trump administration, neoconservatives displayed their divergent opinions by taking different stands. Some resented his nomination in the Republican Party from the beginning, created the “never Trump” camp, and criticized his administration all along, while others became part of the Trump force and influenced some of his decisions.<sup>102</sup> It is important to note that the main goal of the neoconservatives during the Trump administration was to initiate an American attack against Iran’s nuclear facilities and support the protesters against the Iranian regime. New think tanks and publications were founded by neoconservatives in support of these goals, like *The Bulwark*, *The City Journal*, *Stop the Bomb*, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Freedom Works, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Center for Security Policy, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and the Center for a New American Security, among others.

It is important to note that the three generations of neoconservatives are intertwined for several reasons: many neoconservatives share family connections; they work/ worked in the same circles, be it media outlets, think tanks, and academic institutions; or for the government and the Congress; many of them studied or taught at the same academic institutions. In other words, the connections among neoconservatives exceed those of the generation line. To summarize, during the 1990s, neoconservatism fully matured as a distinct political movement.

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<sup>100</sup> The Arab Spring refers to a series of pro-democracy uprisings and protests that swept across several countries in the Middle East and North Africa, starting in late 2010. See “What is the Arab Spring, and how did it start?” *Al Jazeera*, December 2020, accessed February 5, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/17/what-is-the-arab-spring-and-how-did-it-start>.

<sup>101</sup> For instance, *Commentary* magazine issues from 2011 onward are consistent in adopting this narrative. See among others, Joshua Muravchik, “Neoconservatives and the Arab Spring” Jonathan S. Tobin, “The Arab Spring Has Gone Straight to winter,” “Arab Spring Illusion are Dead, Good”. Similar views were advocated by neoconservatives in other publications e.g., Edward Luttwak, “Revenge of the Sunnis” in *Foreign Policy* and Robert Kagan, *The World America Made* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012),

<sup>102</sup> “Open Letter on Donald Trump from GOP National Security Leaders” War on the Rocks, March 2, 2016, accessed December 12, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2016/03/open-letter-on-donald-trump-from-gop-national-security-leaders/>. Brian D’Haeseleer, “How the neocons captured Donald Trump,” *The Washington Post*, February 5, 2019, accessed May 3, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/02/05/how-neocons-captured-donald-trump/>; Peter Beinart, “9/11’s 10th Anniversary: The Death of Neoconservatism,” *The Daily Beast* <https://www.thedailybeast.com/911s-10th-anniversary-the-death-of-neoconservatism>.

It was no longer associated with a specific external threat, such as the Soviet Union. Instead, its main premise was that achieving global peace and stability is only possible by creating and preserving a liberal world order. This entailed active work to reshape the world in accordance with American interests and democratic values. This thesis demonstrates that neoconservative foreign policy during the Ford and Nixon administrations is not distinct from neoconservative foreign policy under the Bush administration.

### 1.3. Neoconservative Foreign Policy: Ideology and Key Principles

At the beginning of this chapter, I outlined the challenges historians face in defining neoconservatism and determining who should be considered as neoconservative. While I acknowledge that neoconservatives are not a homogeneous group in terms of their political affiliation, religious beliefs, or educational background, I disagree with the views of neoconservative apologists like Douglas Murray and Francis Fukuyama. The former claimed that neoconservatism has “no manifesto or set of principles” and that it is “almost impossible to find two neoconservatives who would agree on the same issues.”<sup>103</sup> The latter’s main argument to justify distancing himself from neoconservatism was the stark contrast between the version of neoconservatism he embraced during the Cold War and that of the Bush administration.<sup>104</sup> In this thesis I argue, and intend to demonstrate, that to the contrary to these claims the neoconservatives of the Cold War era and those who initiated the Global War on Terror were coherent in their pursuit of American hegemony, and they shared a set of tenets that can be traced to many neoconservative figures from the first and second generation.<sup>105</sup> Before identifying these tenets, it is essential to first situate neoconservatism within the political traditions of the US.

Defining neoconservative ideology necessitates an understanding of American conservatism and liberalism, as these traditions differ from their European counterparts. The prevailing notion is that the United States lacks the medieval institutional past, specifically the convergence of monarchy, the church, religious institutions, and aristocracy, which in Europe laid the foundation for the conservative tradition. This absence in the US makes liberalism the source of contemporary political values for both the Left and the Right.<sup>106</sup> Louis Hartz asserted this notion in his distinguished book: *Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of*

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<sup>103</sup> Douglas Murray, *Neoconservatism: Why we Need It?* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006), 44.

<sup>104</sup> This was Fukuyama’s main argument in his book *America at the Crossroads*.

<sup>105</sup> See subchapters 2.2.1, 2.3. 2.3.3., 3.2.2. 3.2.3, see also point 1 in the conclusion.

<sup>106</sup> Lipset, “Neoconservatism,” 29

*American Political Thought since the Revolution* (1955). Hartz's main argument was that liberalism is not only the dominant but also the sole intellectual tradition in the US and that by lacking feudal traditions, the US also lacked a socialist tradition.<sup>107</sup> His book, considered a significant work in the field of political theory and American political thought, summarized the traits of American liberalism as being anti-state, in favor of individual liberty, economic and political freedoms, *laissez-faire*, civil liberties, as well as equality of opportunity. The conservative tradition in the US was comprehensively explained and summarized in Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* (1953). Kirk identified the following as the key tenets of conservatism in the United States: 1) a belief in a transcendent order, or body of natural law, which rules society as well as conscience; 2) an affection for the "variety and mystery" of human existence; 3) a conviction that society requires orders and classes that emphasize "natural" distinctions; 4) persuasion that freedom and property are closely linked; 5) faith in customs and conventions, opposition to "sophisters, calculators, and economists" who would reconstruct society upon abstract designs; and 6) a recognition that innovation must be tied to existing traditions and customs, which entails a respect for the political value of prudence.<sup>108</sup>

Throughout the history of neoconservatism, neoconservatives have shared certain aspects of liberalism and conservatism, which, in a sense, gave them the flexibility to transition from one side of the political realm to the other and build nonpartisan alliances. Nevertheless, Neoconservatism is characterized by a distinct set of tenets that differentiate it from both liberalism and traditional conservatism. These core principles guide its unique approach to domestic and foreign policy, setting it apart from other political ideologies, the most notable of these tenants:

1- A Manichean view of the world as confrontation between good and evil. The United States is the power of good; therefore, it needs to play an active role to maintain "a decent and hospitable international order" against "the more extreme manifestation of human evil," an almost *verbatim* invocation of the Wilsonian principle of "making the world safe for democracy."<sup>109</sup> This view defined their stand in the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union this view was replaced by William Kristol and Robert Kagan's

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<sup>107</sup> Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, 1991), 12.

<sup>108</sup> Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* (Washington: Gateway Editions, 2019).

<sup>109</sup> Lawrence F. Kaplan and William Kristol, *The War over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny and America's Mission* (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2003) 233.

concept of “benevolent hegemony,” which suggested that “[h]aving defeated the ‘evil empire,’ the United States enjoys strategic and ideological predominance. The first objective of US foreign policy should be to preserve and enhance that predominance by strengthening America’s security, supporting its friends, advancing its interests, and standing up for its principles around the world.”<sup>110</sup>

2- Defending democracy was a constant element of the liberal tradition in US politics, as implemented by the administrations of Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman and Kennedy.<sup>111</sup> However, it is even more relevant as a neoconservative theme for several reasons: 1) It has remained constant in their rhetoric over the years, especially after Vietnam, when the calls for defending and spreading democracy were seen as representing a chauvinistic and imperialistic worldview among liberals, unrealistic among realist conservatives, and were abhorred by isolationist conservatives; for instance, the founding manifesto of the CDM asserted “America’s share of responsibility for establishment of more secure international community” and “a knowledge that without democratic order there can be no justice and without justice there can be no democratic order.”<sup>112</sup> 2) The extent to which the neoconservatives were willing to go in their calls for defending democracy – which in their case was more like actively calling to promote and export it – by all possible means, even by military force.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, presenting the neoconservatives as defenders of democracy would be an overstatement as their calls for the promotion of democracy is only present when it serves US strategic interests. Otherwise, as will be pointed out later repeatedly, their preoccupation with moral ideals and especially “exporting democracy” was almost entirely abstract and rhetorical, if present at all.<sup>114</sup>

3- Unilateralism describes the tendency of a state to work alone in reaction to regional or global challenge. The neoconservatives believe that the US should build and exercise the military power necessary to defeat any and all challenges anywhere even if it required acting unilaterally or in a preemptive manner. The Project for a New American Century report: *Rebuilding America Defence: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century* became a key source of the Bush Doctrine, and is the most comprehensive example of

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<sup>110</sup> Kristol, and Kagan, “Toward,” 18–32.

<sup>111</sup> Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 136-138.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 97.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 223.

<sup>114</sup> Maria Ryan, *Neoconservatism and the New American Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015),

the way in which the neoconservatives were able to combine theory with practice during the (George W.) Bush administration.

4- Distrust in the United Nations and international organizations, the escalating totalitarian threat during the Cold War, and the Soviet Union's increasing influence in the Middle East reinforced the neoconservative conviction that the United States should uphold military supremacy and retain the capability to act unilaterally if necessary. This ensures the prevalence of American democracy and values, thereby thwarting any emerging threats. Neoconservatives believed that the United Nations proved to be not just ineffective and weak in the face of emerging threats, but also illegitimate because it is profoundly undemocratic,<sup>115</sup> and that the United States should not be restrained in its capacity to act unilaterally to defend peace and democracy.<sup>116</sup> They also criticized other multilateral institutions such as the International Criminal Court as well as human rights organizations and international conventions on the basis that these organizations operate on double standards by signaling out key United States allies and emphasizing the human rights violations committed by them while ignoring or not paying the same attention to human rights violations that are committed by authoritarian anti-American governments or by Soviet-sponsored regimes.<sup>117</sup>

5- Supporting Israel: the state of Israel has a special place in neoconservative thinking not just for the fact that many of them are of Jewish descent and were legitimately enraged by the Holocaust, but also for the valuable strategic importance of Israel in consolidating American power in the Middle East. The importance of Israel for American national security was advanced by the neoconservatives of all three generations, both Jewish and non-Jewish.<sup>118</sup> Israel remained crucial to them, particularly because it has consistently faced hostility from its neighboring countries, starting with the Arab League's rejection of its creation in 1948, through Nasser's antagonistic rhetoric in the 1960s, Iran's adversarial stance following the Shah's fall, and its ongoing conflicts with Hezbollah and Hamas. Due to the importance of Israel in neoconservative thinking and how it affected their policies to transform the Middle East in general and Iran in particular I will approach this part more extensively throughout the thesis.

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<sup>115</sup> For advocating equal rights in the UN General Assembly irrespective of the actual power of its permanent members, and for attributing the veto power to China and Russia.

<sup>116</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 5.

<sup>117</sup> Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution*, 173-174.

<sup>118</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 62.

#### 1.4. The 1973 War and the Emergence of a Neoconservative Foreign policy

Historically, two driving forces were behind American interests in the Middle East: its oil and its cultural and religious significance. These two forces became entangled in the 1970s as the lifeblood of the industrialized modern Western world was being controlled by a contrasting force that posed a threat Israel's expansion interests. Although the Arab oil as a weapon or political instrument was implemented twice before in history—during the Suez crisis in 1956-1957 and October war of 1967—in both cases, the US and, to a lesser extent, Iran and Venezuela compensated for the oil shortage by increasing their domestic production and supplying Europe. As a result, the burden of withholding oil fell on the producing countries, who thus sacrificed substantial revenue.<sup>119</sup> Due to rapid industrialization, urbanization, and a shift in dependence from coal to oil and gas as the dominant fuel for the industrialized world, replacing the Middle East was no longer feasible by 1973. Although the United States was the world's largest oil producer at the time, 20 percent of its energy requirements had been met by import. Therefore, in 1973 the US was no longer able to provide Europe and Japan with their energy needs, neither at the oil price before or after the embargo.<sup>120</sup>

The economic impact of the embargo itself on the US was limited. Of all the American imported oil, less than 8 percent came from the Middle East, and the majority of that oil came from Iran, not the Arab countries. American oil companies operating in the Middle East benefited enormously from the oil price increase. Additionally, the embargo was not highly effective in preventing oil from reaching the markets in the US and Europe as many oil companies were able to redirect the destinations of their oil sales. Moreover, the embargo's effectiveness in terms of cutbacks was questionable, as Iran increased its oil production during the cutback to compensate for the loss of Arab oil. Furthermore, certain OPEC countries, such as Libya and Iraq, began leaking oil to the market for higher prices.<sup>121</sup> A study by the American Enterprise Institute, one of the neoconservative think tanks, concluded in 1977 “the embargo on the whole was ineffective.”<sup>122</sup> Besides, the economic competition among major oil-

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<sup>119</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1984), 85-9.

<sup>120</sup> For instance, in 1955, coal made up 75 percent of Europe's energy consumption, while oil accounted for 23 percent. In 1972, the ratio shifted to 60 percent for oil and 22 percent for coal. Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2010) 77; David A. Stockman, “The Wrong War? The Case against a National Energy Policy” *The Public Interest*, Fall (1978) 5-9.

<sup>121</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*, 174-176; Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 81-82.

<sup>122</sup> Guy de Carmoy, *Energy for Europe, Economic and Political Implications* (Washington: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1977), 104.

consuming countries also meant that deliberately restraining the growth of other industrial powers through high oil prices aligned with American interests.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, the primary impact of the war and the subsequent oil embargo was the challenge it posed to the American-led world order, at least as perceived by the neoconservatives. The subchapter provides an analysis of this critical period and how it served as a driving force in shaping what would later become known as neoconservative foreign policy. Additionally, it explores how this period garnered support for neoconservative views in political and intellectual circles. In retrospect, this support laid the foundations for the neoconservative influence on US policy toward the Middle East in general and the Gulf countries in particular.

#### **1.4.1. The Impact of the Oil Crisis on American Hegemony**

The US' military readiness and its North Atlantic relations were the areas where the embargo's impact was actually felt. American forces stationed in the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf—including the American Sixth and Seventh Fleets, as well as its B2 Stratofortress—relied heavily on Middle Eastern, mainly Arab, oil for their operations. The fuel cutoff consequently paralyzed US troops, exposed the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf to the Soviets influence, and posed a threat to American forces in Southeast Asia.<sup>124</sup> Given that military superiority is vital for attaining global hegemony, the paralysis of US forces had implications for how the United States was viewed and its standing in the region, both among her allies and adversaries. In his renowned book, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (1984), Keohane argued that American influence over the world's political economy following World War II rested on the US capacity to provide three benefits to its allies: 1) a stable international monetary system designed to facilitate global trade and payments within a liberal framework; 2) an open market for goods, entailing reduced tariffs and the elimination of discriminatory restrictions; 3) access to oil at stable prices.<sup>125</sup> During the post-World War II period, trade, finance, and economic aid constituted the bedrock of the American-led western bloc, and the US effectively delivered these benefits to its allies. However, by the mid-1970s,

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<sup>123</sup> Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 5-8.

<sup>124</sup> An investigation launched by the Congress concluded that American oil companies, namely Aramco, Texaco, and Mobil, provided Saudi Arabia with information that enabled Arab oil-producing countries to “effectively cut off supplies of refined oil products to US defense and military installations abroad during the crisis. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, The Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Current Energy Shortages Oversight Series, Cutoff of Petroleum Products to U.S. Military Forces* 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., April 22, 1974. Part 8. 881-882; Cooper, *Oil Kings*, chapter 4.

<sup>125</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*, 139.

the oil price increase—preceded by the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 and the stock market crash of 1973-1974—transformed post-war prosperity into a phase of instability and stagnation, thereby jeopardizing the American-led world order. Even though Japan and most European countries—except for the Netherlands—were exempt from the oil embargo, their economy was hit hard by the oil price increase.<sup>126</sup> All over Europe, inflation driven by high oil prices created a high deficit, almost doubled the cost of living, increased foreign debt, and raised the unemployment rate to the highest since World War II.<sup>127</sup> The severe economic challenges described above not only impacted various nations across Europe but also contributed to the emergence of political unrest and social discontent. It led to the rise of Eurocommunism in Western Europe and the collapse of the right-wing dictatorships in Spain, Portugal, and Greece.<sup>128</sup>

#### **1.4.2. Navigating Transatlantic Relations during the Oil Crisis**

In the US, and despite not being dependent on Middle Eastern oil, the American economy “experienced its steepest decline since the 1930s.”<sup>129</sup> Already struggling due to conditions largely unrelated to the oil price—such as the drain of federal budget due to Vietnam War, the lower growth rate, and increasing competition with Japan, Germany and other industrial countries—the American economy was hit hard by the global inflation, unemployment reached 9.2 percent, the mismanagement and panic over the availability of oil translated into a long lines at gas stations and disruption of the American oil market.<sup>130</sup> In 1974, the American economy entered a recession which culminated in 1975-1976.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, the post-World War II alliance underwent a significant shift in dynamics due to the crisis.

For instance, the US established the International Energy Agency (IEA), which aimed to create a robust consumer bloc to counter OPEC. This was achieved by developing an emergency sharing system that would assist major oil-consuming countries in reducing their dependence on OPEC oil.<sup>132</sup> However, the IEA effort to develop a sharing system fell short and failed to influence oil trade patterns, as many of its members sought bilateral agreements

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<sup>126</sup> The oil embargo targeted countries that excessively supported Israel, including the Netherlands and Rhodesia—the current South Africa—along with the US.

<sup>127</sup> Cooper, *Oil Kings*, chapter 6; Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 125-29.

<sup>128</sup> Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 125-29.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-17.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* The global increase of oil prices led to an increase in the prices of other businesses and goods.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*, 191-193.

with major oil-producing countries.<sup>133</sup> France, for example, signed bilateral agreements with Iraq and Saudi Arabia, which included constructing an enriched uranium reactor in Iraq and a huge arms deal with Saudi Arabia.<sup>134</sup> West Germany and Great Britain also signed bilateral agreements with Saudi Arabia in exchange for arms deals. Likewise, Japan renounced its support of Israel, offered technical and economic assistance to Arab countries, and signed bilateral agreements with Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Qatar.<sup>135</sup> This economic competition turned industrial powers into economic rivals rather than allies.<sup>136</sup> US unwillingness to reduce tariffs, remove discriminatory restrictions, accept unfavorable exchange rates, or economic discrimination against its goods was met with policies that prioritized the allies' economic interests over security needs. They were less inclined to sacrifice these interests for American protection, particularly since the perceived threat of communism had diminished due to détente and US arms control and trade agreements with the Soviet Union.

For the first time since the end of World War II, the US allies were seeking to distance themselves from American policy.<sup>137</sup> The official response of the European community toward the oil crisis reflected this divergence from the US. This is exemplified by the “European Community Declaration on the Middle East,” which urged Israel to “end the territorial occupation which it has maintained since the conflict of 1967” and adhere to Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.<sup>138</sup> The Declaration considered this course of action to be the only way to achieve “a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.”<sup>139</sup> In addition, many European countries viewed the war as a regional conflict that should be approached evenhandedly.<sup>140</sup> On the other hand, the US approached the war within the Cold War framework, considering it a Soviet attempt to change the strategic balance in the Middle East. As a result, the US firmly supported Israel and advocated for a step-by-step approach in reaching a peace settlement.

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<sup>133</sup> Fiona Venn. *The Oil Crisis* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2002) 122-125.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Some even argued that the oil crisis was orchestrated to slow the growth of Japan, Germany and other industrial countries that had become less dependent on the US, see F. William Engdahl, *Myths, Lies, Oil Wars* (Wiesbaden: Gertrud Engdahl, 2012), chapter 4.

<sup>137</sup> For more on the US economic relations with the rest of the industrial countries see, Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, chapter 1.

<sup>138</sup> “European Community Declaration on the Middle East” November 6, 1973, in *Hearing Before the Subcommittees on Europe and on the Near East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, November 1, 1973 and February 19, 1974*, accessed February 4, 2022, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951p00790226m&view=1up&seq=3&skin=2021>

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> European efforts to achieve a peace settlement in accordance with the 242 and 338 resolutions predated the oil crisis.

The rift between Europe and the US was explained in *The New York Times* as being a result of “[m]isunderstandings, lack of information and a basic divergence in perceptions of the nature of the Middle East crisis.”<sup>141</sup>

The need for energy supplies, recycling the Arab petrodollars, and the desire to maintain access to the Arab consumer markets led to increasing European involvement in the region. This was evident in the initiation of the European-Arab dialogue in December 1973. Ensuring European support for a just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and guaranteeing a secure oil supply were among the objectives of the dialogue.<sup>142</sup> Just five days after launching the Euro-Arab dialogue, the French President rejected Kissinger’s suggestion to create a “consortium of consumers.”<sup>143</sup> He argued that engaging in dialogue with the Arab nations might lead to a solution, whereas joining a consumer consortium could expose France to the risk of an oil cutoff.<sup>144</sup> The President’s perspective on the matter was revealed through a conversation with Kissinger, where he remarked:

If we are talking about a dialogue between consumers and producers, we can discuss the modalities of such a dialogue without any problem. I could not concur, however, in establishing a consortium of consumers that would seek to impose a solution on the producers. You only rely on the Arabs for about a tenth of your consumption. We are entirely dependent upon them. We can’t afford the luxury of three or four years of worry and misery waiting for the Arabs to understand the problem. I won’t be able to accept, no matter what conditions are established, a situation which requires us to forgo Arab oil, for even a year.<sup>145</sup>

The same fear motivated Germans to refuse to resupply Israel from her military bases, ban American flights over her territory, and declare her neutrality in the conflict. Nixon responded to German concerns by stating:

We recognize that the Europeans are more dependent upon Arab oil than we, but we disagree that your vulnerability is decreased by disassociating yourselves from us on a matter of this importance. Such disassociation will not help the Europeans in the Arab world. The Arabs know that only the US can provide the help to get a political settlement. Not only will European capitulation to the Arabs not result in their insuring their oil supply, but it can have disastrous consequences vis-à-vis the Soviet Union who, if allowed to succeed in the Near East, can be expected to mount ever more aggressive

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<sup>141</sup> Flora Lewis, “Tracing American-Allied Clash: Events Outpaced the Attitudes” *The New York Times* November 13, 1973, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/11/13/archives/tracing-americanallied-clash-events-outpaced-the-attitudes-a-matter.html>.

<sup>142</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 957; Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy During the Cold War, Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Short Dream of Political Unity*. (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 281-82.

<sup>143</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 896-897.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, 897.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, 957.

policies elsewhere. To the degree Soviet influence can be reduced, we will gain a long-term advantage even if we pay a short-term price.<sup>146</sup>

Moreover, the question of whether to involve NATO in the crisis sparked a dispute between the US and its allies. Donald Rumsfeld, the US ambassador to NATO at the time, requested the declaration of a joint policy in which the security of the Middle East would be linked with that of Europe. However, this request was rejected on the basis that the responsibilities of alliance did not extend to the Middle East.<sup>147</sup> These incidents highlight the changing dynamics between the US and her major European allies, illustrating how the oil crisis reflected the challenge of interdependence on American leadership within the Western bloc.<sup>148</sup>

### 1.4.3. Neoconservative Solutions to the Crisis in Atlantic Relations

The neoconservatives' concerns over what they considered as a "crisis in Atlantic relations," are best illustrated in Eugene V. Rostow's 1974 speech at the Atlantic Treaty Association. Rostow criticized "Europe's passivity" and the "separate bargains with the Arab oil states."<sup>149</sup> He advocated for Western Europe, North America and Japan to "concert their policies [in relation to oil, military, and political problem] in regard to all the Arab states, moderate and not-so-moderate alike," asserting that this was "the only conceivable policy in everyone's interest."<sup>150</sup> However, while "everyone" in Rostow's account is understood to refer to the US and its allies, the speech does not explain how it would be in the interest of Europe and Japan to potentially antagonize the Arabs—moderate and less moderate—especially considering that, as part of the oil embargo resolution itself, Arab countries were prepared to increase their production to meet the requirements of major consumer industrial nations, acting against their own immediate economic interest. This deal rested on the condition that these nations support the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied Arab territories in accordance with UN Resolutions 242 and 338 already accepted.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 715. Möckli, *European Foreign*, 227.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> The term "interdependence," as defined by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, refers to a state of "mutual dependence," where countries or actors across different countries experience reciprocal effects. These effects often arise from international transactions, encompassing the flow of money, goods, people, and communication across international borders. For example, while the US was not heavily reliant on oil imports, it still felt the impact of the economic crisis that affected industrial nations highly dependent on oil imports. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Longman, 2012), 7, 10.

<sup>149</sup> Rostow, "The Middle East," 2-7.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 7-12.

<sup>151</sup> "Resolution, Conference of Oil Ministers" October 17, 1973 in Jordan J. Paust, Albert P. Blaustein, and Adele Higgins eds, *The Arab Oil Weapon*. (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1977), 44-5.

In Rostow's perspective, which will be further explored as a recurring theme in neoconservative rhetoric in the following chapter, the Arab-Israeli conflict ceased to be seen solely as a regional dispute. Instead, it was deemed "a major tool in the Soviet Union's effort to outflank NATO, divide Europe from America, and neutralize Western Europe."<sup>152</sup> In addition, the oil embargo with its underlying issues related to wealth transfer, was perceived as a component of international "economic warfare" aimed at undermining the American-led global economy.<sup>153</sup> The problem with the neoconservative analysis lies in its treatment of the conflict. They seem to overlook the Arab-Israeli conflict as if it lacks its intrinsic significance, and they also portray oil-producing countries as if they lack the ability to comprehend a systematic approach aimed at reversing the decades-long exploitation of their primary wealth source by the West prior to the war. The perception appears to be that the concepts of sovereignty and the right to pursue political and economic strategies for advancing one's interests are reserved exclusively for the US and its allies. Should other countries attempt to exercise these rights, they are perceived as posing threats to "the political independence of sovereign nations."<sup>154</sup> Neoconservatives have often labeled such actions as detrimental to liberalism and Western Civilization. Furthermore, implying that the Arab-Israeli conflict solely revolved around the survival of Israel, as perpetuated by neoconservatives since the 1967 War, is a myth. For there is a distinction between a conflict aimed at reclaiming occupied territories and one seeking the total annihilation of Israel.<sup>155</sup> It is even more absurd to claim that the Soviets align themselves with such a goal for several reasons.

The Soviet Union was, in fact, the first country to recognize Israel in 1948 and provided assistance through arms and oil during the 1948 war.<sup>156</sup> Throughout all the Arab-Israeli conflicts in the region, the Soviet Union consistently emphasized the importance of acknowledging Israel's right to sovereign existence as a prerequisite for any peace settlement. The Soviet Union gained significant advantages from the prolonged continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This allowed them to establish a strong presence in the Middle East and develop economic and military relationships, primarily with various Arab nations such as Syria, Iraq,

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<sup>152</sup> Eugene V. Rostow, "The Middle East Crisis in the Perspective of World Politics" *International Affairs*, 2, April, 1971, accessed April 5, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2613928>. Similar views were expressed by Rostow in "America, Europe, and the Middle East," *Commentary*, February, 1974, accessed April 5, 2022, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/eugene-rostow-2/america-europe-and-the-middle-east/>.

<sup>153</sup> Rostow, "the Middle East Crisis and The Future," 7.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> As evidenced by the fact that none of the Arab attacks targeted any unoccupied territories.

<sup>156</sup> Arthur Jay Klinghoffer and Judith Apter Klinghoffer, *Israel and the Soviet Union: Alienation or Reconciliation?* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 2, 15-19.

and Egypt, during the Cold War era. The Soviet Union leveraged US support for Israel's occupation and its human rights violations to portray the US as an imperialist power and to gather support from Third World nations against it. The Soviet Union exploited the topic of Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel as a bargaining chip in economic and military negotiations. Along with these facts, the Soviet Union maintained its own successful bilateral relationship with Israel during and after the 1967 and 1973 wars.<sup>157</sup>

### **1.5. The 1973 War: Neoconservatives Forging Alliances**

As stated previously, the formation of CDM, which aimed to regain control of the Democratic Party from the "McGovernites," marked the emergence of neoconservatism as a political force and its initial involvement in foreign policy discussions within the Democratic Party. However, the decisive military event that solidified the position of neoconservatives on foreign policy was the 1973 war.<sup>158</sup> Kissinger famously asserted the 1973 Yom Kippur War completed the conversion of neoconservative ideas to geopolitical realities. Kissinger explained that the neoconservatives "interpreted the war as a Soviet-Arab conspiracy against Israel and the industrial democracies and concluded that the challenge was best resisted in the name of opposition to détente."<sup>159</sup>

Although the Arabs' early advances in the 1973 war were reversed when the US initiated an airlift to support Israel and threatened to use nuclear weapons in case of Soviet intervention, the war exposed Israel's fragility in enduring two battlefronts for an extended period (following a surprise attack on her most sacred holiday). The war also posed a threat to the US oil supply line in the Gulf. Neoconservatives considered the 1973 war as proof that the fear of a new wave of communist expansionism was justified and that the Soviets were using détente to build up their military power and expand their sphere of influence. J. C. Hurwitz articulated this belief during a Congressional hearing that took place a few days after the war:

The Soviet Union does not need Middle East oil; at the moment, they have ample supplies of their own. We won't talk about who started the war. But the Soviet Union benefited from the war which united emotionally the Arab States of the gulf with the Arab States immediately around Israel, which cut back on production, threatened even more drastic action in the future.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid, chapter 7.

<sup>158</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 8-11; Dorrien, *The Neoconservative*, 166-68; Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 44-4; Ehrman, *The Rise*, 34.

<sup>159</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*. (New York: Rockefeller Center, 1999), 106.

<sup>160</sup> Hurwitz expressed views that are closely aligned with those of the neoconservatives. He shared a similar background and worked within the same circles. However, he did not identify himself as a

The neoconservatives argued that the Middle East's vitality to American interests and its role in the preservation of the Western alliance transformed the region into a crucial front where the US "could lose not merely a battle as it did in Vietnam, but the war itself."<sup>161</sup> This was reflected in the first statement issued by the CDM's Foreign Affairs and Defense Task Force, which was formed in response to the war:

It has been painfully obvious since October 1973, that hegemonial control of the oil, the space, and the mass of the region [Middle East] by the Soviet Union would carry with it dominion over Western Europe as well. NATO would be dismantled. The United States would have to leave Europe and the Mediterranean. Europe would be reduced to the status of Finland, at best—a major supplier of technology and consumer goods to the Soviet Union, and a political eunuch.<sup>162</sup>

Neoconservatives believed that had it not been for the American nuclear global alert, the Soviets might have taken advantage of the political and military strife in America—due to Watergate and the Vietnam War—to secure an Arab victory and land their troops in the Middle East, which would have allowed them to control “the broad arc from Morocco to Iran.”<sup>163</sup> They did not view the war as a response from Arab countries to retrieve their occupied territories—the Golan Heights and Sinai. Nor did they acknowledge the publicly declared Arab goal of using the oil as a political instrument to force an opening of the deadlocked peace negotiations and to push the US to adopt a more balanced foreign policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>164</sup> Rather, in a series of publications – including “America, Europe, and the Middle East,” and “The Soviet Threat to Europe through the Middle East,” by Eugen Rostow; “America, Russia, and Europe in the Light of the Nixon Doctrine” by Richard Pipes; “Making the World Safe for

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neoconservative, nor was he referred to as such in any of the neoconservatives' historiography books. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Europe and the Near East and South Asia, *United States-Europe Relations and the 1973 Middle East War*. 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., November 1, 1973 and February 19, 1974.13. See also: Richard Pipes “America, Russia, and Europe in the Light of the Nixon Doctrine” *Strategy for The West: American-Allied Relations in Transition*. (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1974), 109-122.

<sup>161</sup> Eugene Rostow, “The Safety of the Republic: Can the Tied be Turned.” *Strategic Review* IV, No. 2 spring (1976), 17. See also John Rosenberg. “The Quest against Détente: Eugene Rostow, the October War, and the Origins of the Anti-Détente Movement, 1969–1976.” *Diplomatic History* 39, no. 4 (2015), 720–44, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26376700>.

<sup>162</sup> Coalition for Democratic Majority, “For an Adequate Defense: The Second Statement by foreign Policy Task Force of The Coalition of Democratic Majority”. April 2, 1975 accessed September 29, 2021, *Ford Library Museum* (1976) 5. <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0067/1562863.pdf>. The Coalition statement echoed Eugene Rostow speech to during the Atlantic Committee annual dinner 1974, see, Eugene Rostow “The Middle East Crisis and the Future of Atlantic Relations.” *Atlantische Tijdingen*, no. 193 (1974): 1–14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45343448> .

<sup>163</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 102.

<sup>164</sup> See, “Letter to the American People,” published in *The Washington Post*, November 14, 1973, in Paust, Blaustein, and Higgins eds, *The Arab*, 47-9.

Communism,” by Norman Podhoretz; “The Gathering Storm,” “The West in Retreat,” and *Confrontation; the Middle-East War and World Politics* book by Walter Laqueur; *Oil, the Arab-Israel dispute, and the Industrial World: Horizons of Crisis*, edited by J.C. Hurewitz – the neoconservatives charged that the war was orchestrated by the Soviet Union as part of its Middle East “*Pax Sovietica*” strategy.<sup>165</sup>

They contended that the Soviet objective was to strategically create a rift between Europe and the United States, disrupt the Western economic structure, and incite a clash between the US and the Arab nations to protect Israel. This, in retrospect, would place the US in conflict with the Muslim world and radicalize the moderate Arab regimes, thereby providing the Soviets with a foothold in the oil-rich Gulf region. In other words, the Arab-Israeli war itself was deemed “secondary” in comparison to the primary issue of the Soviet desire to take over the Middle East oil fields. Walter Laqueur for example, stated this in “The Gathering Storm” in *Commentary*:

The Soviet Union has no interest in the restoration of peace so long as it is not the dominant force in the area. To strengthen its position it will support the Iraqis and the South Yemenis against Saudi Arabia, the Palestinians and the Syrians against Israel. The great prize is of course not Suez or the Golan, but the Persian Gulf.<sup>166</sup>

Additionally, the neoconservatives exaggerated the threat posed by the Arab countries to generate support for their views. Rostow, for instance, compared the 1973 October War (the Yom Kippur War) to Pearl Harbor:

Will [the allies] accept the October war as an unequivocal Pearl Harbor—a warning requiring their massive, energetic, and effective response—or dismiss it as a minor episode, as Britain dismissed the occupation of the Rhineland nearly forty years ago?<sup>167</sup>

Meanwhile, Podhoretz, Luttwak, Kristol, and Laqueur invoked the memory of the Holocaust and warned against the “fetal policy of appeasement” toward the Arabs.<sup>168</sup> In short, the Middle East again became the arena for the East-West confrontation, and keeping the Arab countries at bay became a declared American goal.

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<sup>165</sup> The mention of *Pax Sovietica* in the context of the Middle East was a recurring element in the anti-détente narrative of the neoconservatives during the 1970s. See for instance, Laqueur, “The Gathering”

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> Rostow, “America Europe”.

<sup>168</sup> Irving Kristol “The Politics of Appeasement” and “Notes on Yom Kippur War” in Kristol. *The Neoconservative Persuasion*.

### **1.5.1. Challenging Détente and Reclaiming American Power: Neoconservative Alliance with Cold Warrior and Liberal Hawks**

Viewing the Arab-Israeli conflict through the Cold War lens was not exclusively of a neoconservative character, of course. The significant contribution of the neoconservatives to this discourse was their ability to articulate sophisticated arguments that became the intellectual backbone of the anti-détente narratives. The way Defense Secretary James Schlesinger described the atmosphere in Washington following the 1973 war helps explain why neoconservative views resonated with, and why their rhetoric was recycled by, a growing number of officials—liberals and conservatives alike—in the Congress, the State Department, and the Pentagon:

We had the outbreak of war in the Middle East. ... Suddenly the doves have developed talons. And that defense budget of 1974, that one found those who had previously been described as doves, who had been competing one with another for cutting the defense budget, going to the conference committee, throwing money back into the defense budget. That was a reaction I think to a recognition that the world was not a particularly safe place.<sup>169</sup>

The incorporation of neoconservative ideology in the decision-making process marked the emergence of a conflict between two major forces. The realist camp, represented by the State Department under Kissinger, prioritized deemphasizing conflict with the Soviet through a commitment to détente. This camp sought a political solution between Israel and front-line Arab states—after guaranteeing that Israel had the upper hand in the post-war negotiations—while dealing with the oil embargo and the increase in oil prices as separate issues from the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>170</sup>

The other camp combined, in the US Congress, the anti-war and the neo-isolationist forces (led by Senator McGovern) and the liberal hawks and interventionist (led by the Senators Henry Jackson and Ronald Reagan) with the hardline Cold Warriors in the administration (such

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<sup>169</sup> An interview with James Schlesinger, former US Secretary of Defense (1973-1975), Secretary of Energy (1977-1979), Director of Central Intelligence (1973), and a founding member of the CPD. “An interview with James Schlesinger”, interview by Ole R. Holsti, February 23, 198, video, 44.40-46.30, <https://livinghistory.sanforduke.edu/interviews/james-schlesinger/>.

<sup>170</sup> The list American officials who embraced neoconservative viewpoints include James Schlesinger, who served as the Director of the CIA and Defense Secretary during the Nixon administration; Donald Rumsfeld, who was President Ford’s White House Chief of Staff and US Ambassador to NATO; Dick Cheney, Ford’s Assistant and later Rumsfeld’s successor as Chief of Staff; William E. Simon, Director of the Federal Energy Office and US Secretary of Treasury under Nixon and Ford; and George W. H. Bush, who was the US Ambassador to the UN under Nixon and later became the Director of the CIA under Ford. Additionally, a new wave of neoconservatives transitioned from roles in Congress, journalism, and academia to positions in the State Department and Pentagon. This group included individuals such as Richard Perle, Elliot Abrams, Richard Armitage, Richard Pipes, and Paul Wolfowitz.

as James Schlesinger, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and William Simon). In other words, this camp included the neoconservatives and their proponents. The Defense Intelligence Agency report, “Détente in Soviet Strategy (U),” is a demonstration of the criticism launched by neoconservatives and like-minded individuals from within the Nixon administration against Kissinger’s foreign policy. The report concluded that the détente policy was being used by the Soviet Union as a tool to serve its long-term goals of “dominance over the West” and that the US endorsement of détente was perceived by the Soviets as a sign of weakness of the Atlantic alliance:

[I]n the USSR [détente] is seen as a strategy for achieving broader Soviet strategic objectives as well as tactical aims without fueling the sorts of concern that might galvanize the West into serious counteraction. According to the Soviets, détente—or peaceful coexistence—has become possible because the West has been forced to recognize the changing correlation of forces and therefore accommodating to rising Soviet power.<sup>171</sup>

The fact that the report was leaked to *The New York Times* amid accusations that the Defense Department had leaked it to fuel the public opinion against détente and arms control negotiations shows the extent of the conflict between the anti—and pro—détente forces within the Ford administration. This is significant, given that these accusations come from Secretary of State Kissinger and President Ford, who himself described the report as “amateurish” and stated that “it shouldn’t have been released.”<sup>172</sup> This conflict manifested as each party’s attempt to influence American foreign policy in their desired direction. It’s important to note that, during this time, the president’s position was weakened by Watergate and the US defeat in Vietnam. These factors contributed to the fluctuation of foreign policy decisions between these two powers, as demonstrated in the fifth chapter.

Before concluding this section, it is important to clarify that this thesis does not focus extensively on Presidents Nixon and Ford, as they were not deeply involved in the day-to-day formulation of foreign policy. President Nixon was initially influential in shaping US foreign policy, but he increasingly became distracted by domestic issues, particularly the Watergate

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<sup>171</sup> David C. Geyer and Edward C. Keefer eds, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVI, Soviet Union, August 1974–December 1976*. September 2, 1975, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2012), Document 184, accessed May 23, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v16/d184>.

<sup>172</sup> The report was leaked to *The New York Times*, with indication that it was written by Wynfred Joshua and believed to represent the views of Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger. David Binder, “Pentagon Voicing Doubt on Détente,” *The New York Times*, October 9, 1975, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/10/09/archives/pentagon-voicing-doubt-on-detente-study-concludes-russians-exploit.html>. Paul J. Hibbeln and Adam M. Howard, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XXXV, National Security Policy, 1973–1976*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2014), Document 59, accessed March 26, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v35/d59>.

scandal, which consumed his attention and eventually led to his resignation. As a result, much of the foreign policy decision-making during his presidency was handled by his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Likewise, when Ford assumed the presidency after Nixon, he primarily focused on restoring trust and stability to the US government following the Watergate scandal.

Nevertheless, I will provide a brief overview of the way both presidents related to the neoconservatives. President Nixon, despite his *realpolitik* strategy, which emphasized pragmatic, interest-based diplomacy over ideological commitments, shared the neoconservatives' mainchain view of the world being a struggle between good and evil, with the US being force of good, seeking to bring freedom and democracy to the world and the Soviet Union being the force of evil. He laid the groundwork for the rise of neoconservatism by creating a political environment where their ideas thrived. Even before assuming the presidency, Nixon shared the neoconservative's hardline anti-communist views and was impressed by their rhetoric and their take on the threat of the New Left, the counterculture and the anti-war movement. This was reinforced in speeches he delivered in support of the Vietnam War, his articulating of the domino theory and by appointing several neoconservatives in his administration.<sup>173</sup> Nixon also regarded Israel as an important ally and it was due to the military aid he funneled to Israel during the 1973 war that Israel was able to retain its control over the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan heights. That granted him larger support form neoconservatives at the time of the war. Nevertheless, Nixon grew contemptuous of the pressure exerted on him by Israel's supporters and the Jewish lobby, which he referred to as the "Jewish cabal" in his infamous tapes.<sup>174</sup> He particularly resented their efforts to push the US into a war with Arab countries and to block any pressure on Israel to relinquish the occupied territories. Nixon accused American Jews of being disloyal and of prioritizing Israel's interests over those of the US—leading to accusations of being anti-Semite. However, despite these views, Nixon worked closely with Jewish advisors, appointing Jewish figures to key positions—such as Henry Kissinger as National Security Advisor, Herb Stein as Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and Arthur Burns as Chairman of the Federal Reserve—and took significant actions to support Israel.

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<sup>173</sup> Nixon invited Irving Kristol to White House dinner in the 1970s and consider hiring him as a domestic policy expert. Sidney Blumenthal, *The Rise of Counter-Establishment: The Conservatives Ascent to Political Power*. (New York: Union Square Press, 2008) Chapter 1.

<sup>174</sup> George Lardner Jr. and Michael Dobbs, "New Tapes Reveal Depth of Nixon's Anti-Semitism," *Washington Post*, October 6, 1999; Page A31; Douglas Brinkley and Luke Nichter ed. *The Nixon Tapes: 1971-1972*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.) 359.

President Ford's connections with the neoconservatives were deeper and more extensive than those of Nixon. His long service in Congress as a Representative and later as the House Minority Leader kept him in constant contact with the powerful Israeli lobby, allowing him to cultivate relationships with various Jewish leaders and organizations. These connections influenced his understanding of American-Israeli relations.<sup>175</sup> However, when Ford assumed the presidency, he inherited Nixon's team and continued along the same foreign policy course, guided by Kissinger and other advisors. Ford's brief presidency was marked by significant domestic challenges, particularly a struggling economy, which limited his involvement in foreign policy and made economic stabilization his primary focus. This focus on economic recovery explains why Ford prioritized it over strategic goals, such as maintaining unwavering support for the Shah of Iran, who, despite being a crucial ally, was pursuing oil price increases that were detrimental to the American economy. This stance further solidified Ford's connections with the neoconservatives, who, as discussed in the fifth chapter, shared this perspective.

In addition, a significant alliance was forged between neoconservative intellectuals and Republican politicians during Ford's brief time in the White House. Ford's advisor and a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute Robert Goldwin, played a key role in facilitating this alliance.<sup>176</sup> Goldwin introduced Irving Kristol to President Ford and Chief of Staff Donald Rumsfeld, who then entrusted Kristol with the task of suggesting staff members for the administration.<sup>177</sup> Goldwin also began organizing seminars at AEI for top administration officials, including Rumsfeld, who became Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, who became the White House Chief of Staff and William Simon Secretary of the Treasury. These seminars featured discussions that reflected neoconservative ideas, particularly in relation to foreign policy and the Cold War.<sup>178</sup> The creation of Team B was another demonstration of the Ford administration's alliance with the neoconservatives. Team B was a group of experts authorized by President Ford and established by CIA Director George H. W. Bush, and housed in the offices of the CDM, with the aim of assessing the Soviet Union's strategic capabilities. Neoconservatives such as Wolfowitz, Wohlstetter, Richard Perle,

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<sup>175</sup> Arlene Lazarowitz, "American Jewish Leaders and President Gerald R. Ford: Disagreements Over the Middle East Reassessment Plan." *American Jewish History* 98, no. 3 (2014): 178-182. Accessed May 11, 2022 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26414374>.

<sup>176</sup> Blumenthal, *The Rise of Counter-Establishment*, Chapter 1.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> The AEI Seminars on the oil crisis are examples of these seminars and they were attended by top officials, See subchapter 2.2.2.

Richard Pipes, Henry Jackson, and Paul Nitze were among its members. The significance of Team B lies in its role in integrating neoconservatives into the Republican Party and establishing their presence as a core influence on the party's foreign policy.<sup>179</sup> As a way of conclusion, it suffices to say that although the neoconservatives' ties with Presidents Nixon and Ford were not as strong as those with President Reagan and Bush, yet it was during the time of Nixon and Ford that Neoconservatives first entered the political and high decision-making circles, marking the beginning of their influence on US foreign policy and establishing their foothold in Republican politics.

### 1.5.2. The Pro-Israel Coalition of Neoconservatives

The ideological aspect of the neoconservative support for Israel was another key component of their anti-détente rhetoric. First, neoconservatives feared that, in the name of détente, the US might reduce its military presence in the Middle East, cut its aid to Israel, and demand Israel's withdrawal from the territories she occupied in 1967. Eugene Rostow stated, "there is a strong impulse to treat Israel as Czechoslovakia was treated in 1938 —to push her into dangerous sacrifices so that the immediate pressures of the situation can be alleviated for us."<sup>180</sup> Second, the war exposed Israel's dependence on American military, political, and economic support. Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary*, asserted in his memoir:

What had saved Israel from being overrun by the Arab armies was an airlift of American arms; and what had prevented the Russians from intervening when they threatened to do so at a certain point was the American nuclear deterrent. Nothing could have more vividly demonstrated the inextricable connection between the survival of Israel and the military adequacy of the United States.<sup>181</sup>

That meant that any perceived change in the balance of power between the US and the USSR could potentially expose Israel to its "pro-Soviet" Arab neighbors, some of whom, especially Egypt under Sadat, questioned Israel's right to exist. Third, owing to the newly accumulated oil wealth and power by the Arab, the neoconservatives recognized that supporting Israel against the Arab nation was indeed costly for the US. They acknowledged that in order to stabilize the oil market and appease Arab oil producing countries, the US might compel Israel to accept unsatisfactory peace conditions. Which in effect meant for them that the war invoked not only concerns for Israel's security but for her very existence. This was expressed by Irving Kristol

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<sup>179</sup> Blumenthal, *The Rise of Counter-Establishment*, Chapter 1.

<sup>180</sup> Rostow, "The Middle East," 12.

<sup>181</sup> Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks*, 350-51.

in his “Notes on the Yom Kippur War” in the *Wall Street Journal*, a few days after the outbreak of the war:

[A]ny war in which the existence of Israel may be at stake becomes for me a special kind of war, not a conventional crisis in “international relations.” In such a war, not only is the whole of the Jewish past at stake, but also the whole of the Jewish future.<sup>182</sup>

It is important to note here that one of the Arab goals was to force the US and the international community to recognize the rights and presence of Palestinian Arabs in any future settlement. This posed what the neoconservatives viewed as an existential threat to Israel—the demographic threat of recognizing Palestinians as a political entity, including, among other things, granting the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland.<sup>183</sup> Linking Israel’s survival with that of Western civilization aligned the neoconservatives with the moral values of traditional conservatives and presented US strategic interests in line with those of Israel. Moreover, this established an ideological common ground between conservatives and the Israeli lobby in Washington.

The Israeli lobby, to which many neoconservatives already had strong ties, experienced substantial growth in influence and wealth following the 1967 war.<sup>184</sup> The lobby became more involved in making financial contributions and campaigning to support pro-Israeli candidates, and in promoting commentaries, reports, and news that convey pro-Israeli messages. For instance, the Israeli lobby was a strong supporter of Senator Jackson’s presidential nomination. In fact, Jewish contributions constituted 91% of the total donations to Jackson’s campaign in 1976.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 200-203.

<sup>183</sup> The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza after the 1967 war posed a demographic threat to Israel, which became responsible for more than a million Palestinian Arabs in addition to the 300,000 who were already living in Israel. The higher Arab birth rate, the number of Palestinian refugees who became stateless after the 1948 and 1967 wars and demanded to return to their homeland, and the absence of mass Jewish migration were factors that threatened to alter the character of Israel from a Jewish-majority state into an Arab-majority one, whether directly or potentially in the future. Also, the conflict between the Palestinian resistance and the Jordanian army in 1970, known as “Black September,” marked the recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as an independent political entity representing Palestinian Arabs in the occupied territories and in the diaspora. The PLO’s main goal was to establish a Palestinian state while its charter publicly denied Israel’s right to exist (until the 1993 Oslo accords). Thus, the request to include the PLO in the peace negotiations was perceived by neoconservatives and Zionists as potentially fatal for the future of Israel as a Jewish state. See for instance, Saul Friedlander and Edward Luttwak’s “War and Peace in the Middle East: An Israeli Perspective” in *World Politics and the Jewish Condition; Essays Prepared for A Task Force on The World of the 1970s of the American Jewish Committee*, ed. Phyllis Sherman (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972), 111-47. Podhoretz, “The Abandonment” and “Now, Instant Zionism” *The New York Times*, February 3, 1974. <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/99/02/21/specials/podhoretz-zion.html>.

<sup>184</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt. *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 51-57; Ahmad. *The Road to Iraq*, 60-65; Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives*, 68-69.

<sup>185</sup> Ahmad. *The Road*, 182.

Additionally, the Israeli lobby worked to cultivate the support of the newly politicized Christian Right, which backed the state of Israel primarily for theological rather than political reasons.<sup>186</sup> A seminar arranged by the Israeli government and the World Zionist Organization in Jerusalem to assess the impact of the 1973 war on global Jewish-Christian relations and Israel's support among Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals, asserted in its analysis of the data coming from the US that:

Strong support for Israel came from Fundamentalist Christians. Much of it was probably unsolicited, indicating once again that Christian belief is far more important a determinant in shaping Christian response than Jewish contacts. The Fundamentalists, who continue to believe in the validity of Biblical prophecy, see in Israel a fulfillment, or a step toward the fulfillment, of that prophecy.<sup>187</sup>

The seminar's findings were collected in *The Yom Kippur War, Israel and the Jewish People*. It emphasized the active work of pro-Israel organizations, including the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the American Zionist Federation, the World Zionist Organization-American Section, and the Labor Zionist Alliance.<sup>188</sup> These organizations were active in raising funds and mobilizing public opinion and politicians in favor of Israel. They also worked on building alliances and obtaining statements of support for Israel from other political powers such as church councils, labor unions, and ethnic organizations.<sup>189</sup> The popular and accessible style of the neoconservatives became a part of the discourse of pro-Israel religious and conservative leaders. The Jerusalem seminar, for instance, highlighted the writings of several key neoconservatives (Norman Podhoretz, Irving Kristol, Irving Howe, and Lionel Trilling, among others) and praised their ability to articulate and effectively convey the Jewish plight to the American people.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Many Evangelical Christians interpret the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, as containing prophecies related to the return of Jews to the land of Israel. They believe that the establishment and support of Israel is a fulfillment of these prophecies and a precursor to the second coming of Jesus. Irving Kristol asserted that the evangelical theoretical reasons for supporting the state of Israel should not restrain Jewish politicians from accepting this support, stating: "when Jesus returns to the world, only Christians will qualify for redemption; Jews and other infidels need not apply. As it happens, Jewish theological teachings do not recognize the doctrine of a second coming of Jesus (or a first), so it is hard to see why Jews should take such offense at these statements." I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 287.

<sup>187</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, "United States of America: Overview," in Moshe Davis, ed. *The Yom Kippur War, Israel and the Jewish People*, (New York: Arno Press, 1974), 6-10.

<sup>188</sup> Davis, ed, *The Yom Kippur*, 6-10.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 1-81; On the Christian Right and the 1973 war and neoconservatives, see Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution*, 205-222. Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 107-108, 182-200. Mearsheimer and Walt, *Israel Lobby*, 132-140.

## 1.6. Conclusion

The 1973 war had a profound impact on both the United States and Israel. For the US, the war intensified the rivalry between the US and the USSR. The US supported Israel, while the Soviet Union supported Arab nations, particularly Egypt and Syria. These dynamics fueled concerns about a potential escalation of superpower conflict, especially given that both superpowers were on high alert due to the possibility of the situation spiraling into a larger confrontation. For Israel, the war exposed vulnerabilities in its intelligence and early warning systems, as the surprise attack by Egypt and Syria caught Israeli intelligence off guard. This led to a reassessment of Israel's capabilities and a renewed focus on enhancing military preparedness with a reliance on the US.

This chapter provided an overview of the historical development of neoconservatism as a political movement and highlighted the significance of the 1973 war as the historical event that shaped its foreign policy outlook. For the neoconservatives, the war was evidence of the Soviet Union's expansionist intentions and their use of *détente* to strengthen their military power and influence. This perception fueled the belief that the Middle East was a critical battleground where the US could not afford to lose. The use of oil as a weapon, effectively employed for the first time in history, posed a threat to the very foundation of the post-World War II alliance, jeopardized the economies of industrial nations, and posed an existential threat to Israel. The neoconservatives presented sophisticated arguments against *détente* policies, recognizing the importance of maintaining a strong strategic alliance between the US and Israel. They utilized the crisis to forge common ground with opponents of *détente* and supporters of Israel among Cold Warriors, liberal hawks, and hardline conservatives. This mobilization of public opinion aimed to restore belief in American power. In the following chapter I argue that the neoconservatives articulated their response to the crisis by advocating for a war to seize the oil fields of the Arab countries. They presented this military action not only as a possibility but also as a moral necessity.

## Chapter 2

### Twisted Narratives:

#### The Neoconservative Pursuit of War for Oil in the 1970s

This is no “ordinary” crisis, that is, a crisis which the major powers—by their own joint actions short of the threat of force—could “resolve.” No amount of resource-pooling, no concerted activities to develop alternative sources of supply, no domestic wage-price policies can change the tempo of this chain of events. No appeals to the public for “belt-tightening” will alter the fact (by then a matter of common knowledge) that an oil cartel of historically unprecedented power threatens the vital interests of the advanced world. That this cartel is principally made up of non-Western nations, that its spokesmen will cry foul each time its actions are opposed, that it may appeal to Communist bloc countries and exert great influence over underdeveloped ones (themselves prime victims of the cartel’s piracy)—all this may be assumed.<sup>191</sup>

*The Great Détente Disaster*



Figure 1 the Arabian Peninsula Map<sup>192</sup>

<sup>191</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky. *The Great Détente*, 71.

<sup>192</sup> Figure 1, “Map of the Arabian Peninsula, Middle East” *Nations Online*, accessed July 15, 2022. <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/Arabia-Map.htm>.

## 2.1. Introduction

To commemorate the 60th anniversary of *Commentary* magazine in 2005, a symposium was organized under the title “Defending and Advancing Freedom,” in which the participants were asked to evaluate the Bush Doctrine and discuss the American position in the world. In his contribution to the symposium, Edward Luttwak reflected on the American invasion of Iraq. He stated that “almost all Iraqi—including Kurds” believed that “control of the oil fields” was the prime motive behind the war. This is, he claimed, because “they [Iraqi Arabs and Kurds] would never dream of invading another country except for loot, they exclude the possibility that Americans and British are expanding blood and treasure to establish a democratic and prosperous Iraq.”<sup>193</sup> Luttwak is usually presented as an American historian, strategist, and expert on the Middle East, but rarely as a former officer in the Israel Defense Force (IDF) and a long-term consultant for both the IDF and the Pentagon.<sup>194</sup> This chapter demonstrates how Luttwak and other like-minded neoconservatives, including among others Robert Tucker, Norman Podhoretz, Eugen Rostow, Walter Laqueur, and Jordan Paust, played the role of expert in the service of an ideological project. The analysis shows that their views on what is the best course of policy the US needs to adopt toward the Middle East since the 1970s were constantly presented as political and strategic; and it argues that a more thorough background check, would have proven their ideological motives and undisguised prejudice. In fact, Luttwak’s dismissal of Iraqis’ conviction that oil was the prime motive behind the American intervention is ironic given the fact that his article, “Seizing Arab Oil,” published in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1975, is, as this paper demonstrates, probably the most brutal and detailed account of oil looting in history.

Neoconservative prejudices against Arabs and Muslims as well as their link to and connection with the Israeli government and lobby is extensively discussed not just in this chapter but throughout this thesis and in numerous books and articles the thesis is citing.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Martin Peretz, “Defending and Advancing Freedom Symposium” *Commentary*, November 2005, accessed April 3, 2022. <http://www.commentary.org/articles/paul-berman-2/defending-and-advancing-freedom/>.

<sup>194</sup> For more on Edward N. Luttwak’s service and work with the IDF, see Edward N. Luttwak, and Daniel Horowitz, *The Israeli Army 1948-1973* (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books, 1983). On Luttwak’s role in neoconservatism see Ehrman, *The Rise*, 178, 204, Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 110,119, 161,197.

<sup>195</sup> The unwavering support of neoconservatives for Israel can be explained by a combination of factors. These include religious influence, especially among Zionist Jews and evangelical neoconservatives who view Israel as a key player in biblical prophecy. Additionally, geostrategic considerations play a role, as many neoconservatives perceive Israel as an embodiment of Western capitalism, democracy, and individual freedom in the crucial Middle East region. On a moral level, neoconservatives often see Israel as a symbol of liberalism’s triumph over Nazism and fascism and view any criticism to Israel as a manifestation of anti-Semitism. For more on Israel and the neoconservatives see Adam L. Fuller, *Israel and the Neoconservatives: Zionism and American*

However, the main focus of this chapter is analyzing the neoconservative warmongering campaign against Saudi Arabia and the Arab countries in the Gulf between 1974-1975. The chapter shows how the oil embargo and the subsequent oil crisis were seen by the neoconservatives as an opportunity to revive the post-World War II alliance and mobilize the public against an external enemy. They called for the US to attack and occupy the Arab oil fields in the Gulf as a way to prevent further increase in oil prices and prevent its use as a weapon in the hands of the Arabs. It suggests that the neoconservatives articulated their response to the oil crisis by advocating for a proactive foreign policy centered around military intervention to take over the Arab oil fields. Their logic rested on the following three cohesive assumptions: First, the ability of the US to control oil flow and prices is the glue that preserved the foundation of the Western alliance that is “the delicate network of monetary and commercial relations linking the advanced Western societies to one another.”<sup>196</sup> Second, the Arab-Israeli conflict is secondary to the prime issue of the Soviet takeover of the oil fields; hence, to reach a peace settlement that is not in favor of Israel is to send a message that the US surrendered to Arab oil blackmail. Third, the Middle East is an unstable area, its inhabitants are irrational, inherently anti-Western, and only understand the language of force.<sup>197</sup>

The previous chapter explained how the anti-détente consensus emerged in the US in the aftermath of the 1973 war and how the neoconservatives and the Israeli lobbyist joined forces with the Christian right, and the anti-détente powers in the Democratic and Republican Parties. Their shared goals were to prevent a peace settlement that would force Israel to retreat from the territories it occupied after the 1967 war, to remobilize the public against the threat of communist expansion, and to restore the perception of American power by confronting the Soviet threat and by breaking the power of OPEC. This chapter demonstrates how the neoconservative attempt to mobilize for a possible invasion of the oil fields in the Gulf served to achieve these goals.

The chapter provides a close reading of some of the prominent neoconservative contributions to this war campaign. To name but a few of these accounts: Edward Luttwak’s “Seizing the Arab Oil,” Robert W. Tucker’s “The Issue of American Intervention” and “Further Reflections on Oil & Force” in *Commentary*, Walter Laqueur’s *Confrontation: The Middle-East War and World Politics*, Paul Seabury’s “Thinking About an Oil War” in *The New Leader*,

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*Interests* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020); Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution*; Stephen J. Sniegoski, *The Transparent Cabal: The Neoconservative Agenda, War in the Middle East, and the National Interest of Israel* (Virginia: Enigma editions, 2008); Ahmad, *The Road to Iraq*; Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*.

<sup>196</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and B Wildavsky, *The Great Détente*, 83.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

and *The Great Détente Disaster: Oil and the Decline of American Foreign Policy* by Edward Friedland, Paul Seabury, and Aaron B Wildavsky.<sup>198</sup> This chapter also examines statements from neoconservatives and like-minded politicians in Congress and in the Ford administration to demonstrate that a collective effort—comparable only to their campaigns to target Iraq in the 1990s and following 9/11, and currently against Iran—was initiated in the mid-1970s to justify the use of force against the Arab countries as part of a larger effort to advocate for a confrontational foreign policy approach as opposed to détente and interdependent relations. The oil crisis was significant for the neoconservatives ideologically, as it presented an opportunity to revive the post-World War II alliance and mobilize the public against an external enemy. A war in the Middle East was seen by neoconservatives as beneficial to prevent concessions of territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and a remedy for the economic, political, and cultural crises of the West in the 1970s. These crises manifested in the momentum gained by anti-war, women’s rights, gay rights, and environmental movements, along with the emergence of Euro-communism in Europe and neo-isolationism and anti-war sentiments in the US. Moreover, the war was perceived as a means to reestablish a formidable image for both the US and Israel after the former’s quagmire in Vietnam and the latter’s early setback during the 1973 war. Accordingly, the chapter’s main arguments are the following:

- 1- The neoconservatives were the ones who rationalized and attempted to normalize the concept of war for oil; they reemployed the old Orientalist tradition of presenting the Middle East and its “natives” as an irrational, unstable, and untrustworthy other; namely an opponent to democracy, modernity, and liberalism that can only be dealt with through the use of force.
- 2- The neoconservative response to the oil crisis of 1973 was not economic or political, but, rather ideological; this response spoke more of neoconservatives as intellectuals in the service of the American imperial project rather than objective experts.
- 3- The neoconservative rhetoric in response to the oil crisis advanced Israeli interests far more than it served American interests in the region.

## 2.2. Neoconservative “Gunboat Diplomacy”

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<sup>198</sup> For Tucker’s role in the neoconservative movement in the 1970s, see Halper and Clark, *America Alone*, 76, 77, 166, 168; Ehrman, *The Rise*, 23, 50-54, 56-57, 138, 140, 178, 206. For Luttwak’s role see Ehrman, 178, 204; Vaisse. *Neoconservatism*, 110, 119, 161,197. For Laqueur’s role, see Ehrman, 50, 5457, 108, 110, 138; Vaisse, 69, 278, 100, 110, 120; Dorrien, *Imperial Designs* 48; *Nathan Abrams, Norman Podhoretz and Commentary Magazine*, 98, 109, 147, 151, 152, 159, 173, 200, 222 For Seabury’s role, see Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 101-2,128,145; Abrams, Norman Podhoretz, 98,114. For Wildavsky’s role, see Steinfelds, *The Neoconservatives* 57-59, 62-63, 67; Vaisse, 54-55, 71, 218, 285; Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution*, 120.

The advocacy for taking a military action against oil producing countries was a matter of discussion in the American press long before the oil embargo. For instance, on May 21, 1973 Senator J. William Fulbright warned, amidst a fear of oil shortage, that US “policymakers and policy-influencers may come to the conclusion that military action is required to secure the oil resources of the Middle East, to secure our exposed jugular.”<sup>199</sup> The conservative commentator William F. Buckley discussed “The Case for the Use of Force to Get Arab Oil” in *The Los Angeles Times*, and his main argument was that if one country is dependent on another for a certain life-sustaining commodity, like oil, and the latter refuses to sell it to the first, the dependent country has the “Christian right” to seize the commodity by force, as long as it gives an adequate compensation to the host country.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* discussed news of US military training in what was presumed to be preparation for military action against Libya or Saudi Arabia—in response to the former’s nationalization of its oil industry and the latter’s threats to cut back its production.<sup>201</sup> It follows, therefore, that the neoconservatives were not the first nor the only ones to consider the threat of force against oil producing countries. However, preventing the outbreak of hostilities and dealing with the underlying cause of tension remained the cornerstone of US foreign policy toward the Gulf region. For stability was thought to be the prerequisite for the vital flow of oil to the West. To maintain regional stability, the US entrusted the Shah with the task of guarding the region, built strong ties with the reactionary sheikhdoms of the Gulf and lavished them with political and military support while it opposed and took every opportunity to weaken revolutionary regimes in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt.<sup>202</sup> The neoconservatives’ views toward the region were different; they believed that keeping oil, “the world’s greatest prize” in the hands of the Arab countries was an ill-informed strategy and the use force was the only way to alter the new realities imposed on the West by OPEC.<sup>203</sup> The oil embargo that followed the outbreak of the 1973 war provided an opportunity to mobilize the public in favor of military action. However, neoconservative advocacy for a militant response

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<sup>199</sup> “Proceedings of Congress and General Congressional Publications.” *United States Government Publishing Office* (GPO) Volume 119, Part 13 (May 16, 1973 to May 29, 1973) 16263.

<sup>200</sup> William F. Buckley. “The Case for the Use of Force to Get Arab Oil” *Los Angeles Times*. October 10, 1973, accessed May 4, 2021. <https://latimes.newspapers.com/image/381849087/?terms=Get%20Arab%20Oil&match=1>.

<sup>201</sup> Cooper, *Oil Kings*, Chapter 4.

<sup>202</sup> The US supported separatist movements among Iraq’s Kurdish and Egypt’s Nubian minorities.

<sup>203</sup> As described by the US’ Department of State, see E. Ralph Perkins, Ralph R. Goodwin, Laurence Evans, Francis C. Prescott, eds., *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, The Near East and Africa, Volume IV*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1964), Document 1006, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1943v04/d1006>.

to the use of oil as a weapon commenced before the oil embargo was imposed and persisted after. For instance, less than a month before the war, Irving Kristol, noted:

[I]nsignificant nations, like insignificant people, can quickly experience delusions of significance . . . smaller nations are not going to behave reasonably—with a decent respect for the interests of others, including the great powers—unless it is costly to them to behave unreasonably. . . What is not comprehensible is the apparent Arab belief that they have both the right and might to use their oil to destroy the economies of Western Europe, the U.S. and Japan, to ‘bring these countries to their knees,’ as the Arab press puts it. And what is least comprehensible of all is the apparent impotence of these same nations in the face of such extreme behavior . . . in truth, the days of ‘gunboat diplomacy’ are never over. . . Gunboats are as necessary for international order as police cars are for domestic order.<sup>204</sup>

Walter Laqueur, who like Luttwak was a former IDF officer, suggested in an article in *The New York Times* that the US and her allies should take “military action” against the Arab “oil blackmail”<sup>205</sup> If Kristol and Laqueur’s intentions were not clear, Daniel Pipes was more blunt in his request for the US to “Be Prepared to Seize Arab Oil,” in a letter under this title to the editor of the *Boston Herald*, and he called for the US “to employ some 20<sup>th</sup>-century gunboat diplomacy,” in order to “dispel the preposterous idea that this super-power will allow denial of a vital commodity at the whim of desert sheikhs.”<sup>206</sup> Eugen Rostow compared the crisis to Pearl Harbor, and called for the US and her allies to take a “massive, energetic, and effective response” against the perceived “Arab-Soviet military attack of October.”<sup>207</sup> The list of neoconservatives who used a similar narrative is endless. These articles demonstrate that the response that neoconservatives suggested to the oil crisis was almost exclusively militant. As has been explained, the embargo was not very successful in preventing oil from reaching the US; however, it demonstrated that the dependence of Europe and Japan on Arab oil was absolute, and that the power oil producing countries had over the market was massive, which in return impacted the domestic policy in the US and Europe—the rise of Euro-Communism is but one example.

The neoconservative campaign for invading the oil fields began long before the 1973 war and reached its peak long after the 1973 oil embargo was lifted. This fact proves that the

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<sup>204</sup> As quoted in “American Notes: Remember Gunboat Diplomacy? *The Times Magazine*, December 24, 1973, accessed, April 15, 2022. <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,943484,00.html>. See Noam Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East? Reflections on Justice and Nationhood* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 6.

<sup>205</sup> Laqueur, “Détente”

<sup>206</sup> Seth Castellani (Daniel Pipes) “Be Prepared to Seize Arab Oil” November 5, 1973, *Middle East Forum*, accessed, May 11, 2022. <https://www.danielpipes.org/19743/be-prepared-to-seize-arab-oil>.

<sup>207</sup> Rostow, “America Europe”

war campaign was hardly a spontaneous response to the Arab countries' declaration of halting oil sales to the US. The neoconservatives argued that the oil crisis exposed the weakness of the Western alliance and placed it "quite at the mercy of the Arabs and the Russians."<sup>208</sup> The urgency invoked by the neoconservative analogy was the foundation for the assertion that military force is central to keeping the world's oil supply in the Middle East going. The Middle East, thus, became a key means of restoring American power and prestige. "The Persian Gulf is a vital area of interest to the West; no amount of peace rhetoric can replace Middle Eastern oil," Laqueur observed. At the same time, Tucker expressed astonishment over the "apparent absence of force as an element in the crisis," and insisted that the US should take unilateral action in certain cases.<sup>209</sup> A military intervention by the US "to enforce nonintervention" by the Soviets, Sidney Hook observed, became "always rightful always moral, if not always prudent."<sup>210</sup>

Hence, between the period of February 1974 and March 1975, the possibility of the United States engaging in war in the Middle East for the purpose of acquiring or securing oil resources was widely circulated and discussed in the American media. A detailed account for a potential American war in the Middle East was offered in articles like Robert W. Tucker's "The Issue of American Intervention," and "Further Reflections on Oil & Force," in which the international relations professor, as has been pointed out above, expressed astonishment over the "apparent absence of force as an element in the crisis" and insisted that it is not just "excessive to insist that before using force one must exhaust all other remedies," but if it must, the US needs to act "unilaterally" and not wait for Western Europe's "attitude toward intervention" to be altered and for their "illusions" to be shed.<sup>211</sup> His articles offered a detailed plan to occupy the area from Kuwait to Qatar which, in "Oil: The Issue of American Intervention" he described as a barren, unpopulated part of the Arabian Peninsula containing more than 50 percent of proven OPEC reserves, which makes it an easy target for a military offensive:

The one area that would appear to satisfy [military intervention] requirements extend from Kuwait down along the coastal region of Saudi Arabia to Qatar. It is this mostly

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<sup>208</sup> Tucker, "Further Reflections"

<sup>209</sup> Ernest Holsendolph. "Chief 'Not Embarrassed'," *The New York Times*, January 24, 1974, accessed, August 12, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/01/24/archives/chief-not-embarrassed.html> . Robert Sherrill, "The Case against the Oil Companies" *The New York Times*. October 10, 1979, accessed December 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/10/14/archives/the-case-against-the-oil-companies-1920-a-taste-of-the-tu-oil.html> .

<sup>210</sup> William Barrett et al., "America Now: A Failure of Nerve?" *Commentary*, July, 1975, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/william-barrett-2/america-now-a-failure-of-nerve-2/> .

<sup>211</sup> Tucker. "Oil"

shallow coastal strip less than 400 miles in length that provides 40 percent of present OPEC production and that has by far the world's largest proven reserves (over 50 percent of total OPEC reserves and 40 percent of world reserves). Since it has no substantial centers of population and is without trees, its effective control does not bear even remote comparison with the experience of Vietnam."<sup>212</sup>

Following Tucker's lead, Luttwak anonymously published his detailed plan of "Seizing Arab Oil" in *Harper's Magazine*. This blunt article drew a lot of noise in Washington and Saudi Arabia due to the brutality of its language. Luttwak, who at the time was working as an advisor for the Department of Defense, admitted later that he had consulted with other Pentagon officials before writing the article. His article details a military "operation" to invade and occupy the oil fields of Saudi Arabia along with those of Qatar, UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait—with the help of Israel and possibly Iran.<sup>213</sup> The military operation suggested by Luttwak required a total force of 14,000 men to carry the invasion and a resupply of another 40,000 men to control and manage the oil reserves.<sup>214</sup> The entire operation, he explained, would be finished within 90 days, "if not sooner." And in the aftermath "OPEC members will be faced with US control of Saudi oil reserves, which, if worked to the full, could put all of them out of business for fifteen years."<sup>215</sup> To operate the oil facilities after the invasion, Luttwak suggested importing a labor force from Texas and Europe to replace uncooperative local workers. To manage mobility in the desert, he suggested confiscating "every available truck and Cadillac found on the ground."<sup>216</sup> Taking into consideration Iran's strong position in OPEC and its interest in maintaining the unity of OPEC, Iran, Luttwak argued, posed the only serious opposition to this military operation:

with a large army of 175,000 men, well-equipped and heavy in tanks even if poorly trained and worse led, with an air force that includes 100 Phantoms, with more coming, and with a navy already not insignificant, Iran could in theory do a great deal to oppose intervention.<sup>217</sup>

To overcome Iran's opposition to the war, Teheran must be turned into an associate:

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Luttwak, "Seizing," Luttwak is an American-Israeli war strategist. During the 1967 war, he volunteered in the Israeli army, in the US he taught in John Hopkins University and worked as a military advisor in the Defense Department in several conservative and neoconservatives' think tanks. Laura Rozen. "The Operator: The Double Life of a Military Strategist" *Forward*, June 05, 2008, accessed April 24, 2022. <https://forward.com/culture/13515/-operator-the-double-life-of-a-military-strate-01959/>; Salim Yaqub. *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.–Middle East Relations in the 1970s*. (New York: Cornell UP, 2016), 192–193.

<sup>214</sup> Luttwak, "Seizing".

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

Why not then discreetly ask whether the Iranians might be willing to “protect” Kuwait—and, incidentally, appropriate their oil. This oil would largely offset Iranians’ loss of revenue on their own output as prices decline.<sup>218</sup>

Luttwak proceeds to admit that by joining the invasion the Shah would risk a potential confrontation with Iraq or a Russian invasion of northern Iran.<sup>219</sup> However, Luttwak decided that the Shah “would most probably accept an American action he cannot prevent, for the alternative would be war with Iran’s only protector.”<sup>220</sup> What this indicates is that the scale of this “operation” (at best) or “limited war” (at worst) would have stretched to include occupying the oil fields in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and UAE, and entering a potential war with Iran—if Iran refused to join the military intervention and a war between Iraq and Iran if it did not. If that was not enough, Luttwak proceeded to suggest targeting the military forces of Israel’s rivals—mainly the air forces—of Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, as well as waging economic warfare against Libya, Algeria, and Iraq.<sup>221</sup> He was thus publicly calling for an open-ended war against almost every country in the region. In other words, he was refuting his own argument that the invasion of the Arab oil fields would be a small military operation. To fund this war, he suggested using the oil revenues to cover the cost:

[O]ne month’s production could pay for \$2.5 billion worth of skilled manpower and equipment enough to repair or replace every damaged wellhead, every interrupted feeder line, and every sabotaged gas separator, as well as to replace as much large-diameter pipe as could possibly be needed.<sup>222</sup>

To rely on oil revenues to fund wars was one of two traditions set by Luttwak and other neoconservatives in the 1970s war campaign and was used three decades later to argue that the cost of invading Iraq would be covered by its oil revenues. The second tradition set by neoconservatives was narrating a moral underpinning to legitimize immoral acts of aggression against sovereign states. According to this logic, the US is the only responsible power—what William Kristol and Robert Kagan described as “benevolent Hegemony” in the 1990s—that would guarantee the fair sharing the benefits of seizing control of the production and price of oil with all parties that were impacted by what Luttwak refers to as the “OPEC’s oil hijack.”<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid. In conversation with Kissinger on September 5, 1973, James Schlesinger suggested that Iran invade Kuwait. See Henry A. Kissinger, James Schlesinger, Brant Scowcroft Memorandum of Conversation, September 5, 1973. *Ford Library Museum documents*, accessed 28 August 2021, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1552607.pdf>.

<sup>219</sup> Luttwak, “Seizing.”

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky. *The Great*, 78.

He went on to suggest that, following the invasion, the US may create an “International Oil and Aid Organization” (IOAO) to handle the task of lifting the oil and allocating funds for investment, and most importantly to give money to the Saudis and poor countries. However, the only countries that would be “entitled to a share in the oil profits” are those who join the IOAO; in other words, those who “politically endorse[d] the *fait accompli*.”<sup>224</sup> The same idea was introduced by Walter Laqueur in “Détente: What’s Left of It?” put out in *The New York Times*. Laqueur suggested that the US should seize and internationalize the oil resources in the Gulf and create an “international consortium” to manage these resources for “the benefit of the rest of mankind.”<sup>225</sup> In his book *Confrontation: The Middle-East War and World Politics*, he made his argument clearer:

The internationalization of the Persian Gulf oil resources could be the major test for détente; in a bygone age Russia and Britain divided part of the Middle East into spheres of influence, and Churchill and Stalin did the same with regard to Europe. In the seventies, it is not the fate of large countries and peoples that is at stake, but of sparsely populated sheikhdoms. Such a policy would involve dangers, but the obstacles may not be impossible to overcome, provided, of course, there is the political will of which Europe has shown so little for so long.<sup>226</sup>

The writers set up a narrative in which a war for purely economic and hegemonic reasons is presented as a humanitarian war. The aim was not to steal Arab oil but to safeguard the “lifeblood” of modern societies and spare a share for poor and developing countries who sided with OPEC, only because they were delighted by the West’s “reversed fortunes.”<sup>227</sup> However, if Tucker, Luttwak, and Laqueur were not explicit in their accounts, the authors of *The Great Détente Disaster* left no room for misinterpretation:

Like other aggressors, the United States could claim that it is acting not only in its own interest, though that is sure, but for world welfare as well. It could set up an international consortium to sell oil at 6 dollar a barrel, with 4 \$ a barrel going to the exporters and \$2 a barrel set up as an immense development fund to be allocated in lump sums through the World Bank, the United Nation Development Fund or any other agency set up by recipient poor countries.<sup>228</sup>

In other words, what lay behind the call for war was a desire to maintain American postwar imperial roles and privileges. The neoconservatives constructed the moral ground for the

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<sup>224</sup> Luttwak, “Seizing.” Many neoconservatives suggested that international support can be gained for invading Iraq by implying that the Iraqi oil business will only be available for countries that supported the war. See Stephen J. Sniegoski. *The Transparent Cabal: The Neoconservative Agenda, War in the Middle East, and the National Interest of Israel*. (Virginia: Enigma editions, 2008), 335.

<sup>225</sup> Laqueur, “Détente”

<sup>226</sup> Laqueur, *Confrontation*, 221.

<sup>227</sup> Friedland, Seabury, Wildavsky. *The Great*, 171;161; 171-179; 208 and in Tucker, “Oil”

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*,189.

invasion for no other reason than to mobilize American public opinion and to get the support of allies as well as that of Third World countries. Having said that, the use of power as a tool to advance foreign policy goals is a justifiable means on its own. For instance, reflecting on the UN General assembly resolution 3314 that defined aggression as “the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, as set out in this Definition,” Irving Kristol considered it to be a “simple-minded”.<sup>229</sup> He explained:

It has always been realized that there are circumstances when a nation may justly initiate military action against another. Because we have decided to ignore such circumstantial considerations, American foreign policy constantly finds itself being tied into moralistic and legalistic knots.<sup>230</sup>

Similarly, Norman Podhoretz argued that oil producing countries were actually the aggressors by threatening the “nation’s sources of raw materials.” And even though the “aggressors” in this case were “infinitely weaker than their victims,” he complained “the United States neither used force nor even seriously threatened to use it.”<sup>231</sup> Secretary of Treasury Simon stated during a congressional hearing that if the crisis had happened any time before Vietnam, American gunboats would have been “steaming in the harbor.” Finally, Tucker asserted that the oil crisis “would never have arisen” if the Arab countries expected that their unilateral act would have been met with a military response.<sup>232</sup> These examples show that the call for war was not an undercurrent or a reactionary response; rather, it was a coherent and calculated effort. In addition, resorting to force was neither restricted to preventing another oil embargo nor limited to ensuring a stable flow of oil. As Tucker and Laqueur explain respectively:

[T]here are those who nevertheless are now prepared to draw a line here and to insist that an embargo would be a just cause for force. But if the price for oil promises the same effects ultimately as an embargo, it is not easy to see the legal or moral basis for the distinction thereby drawn.<sup>233</sup>

Middle East stability, Israel quite apart, is deceptive; economic strength does not necessarily translate into political and military power. What power the Middle East oil producers have acquired is basically destructive: they are certainly in a position to cause

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<sup>229</sup> The resolution was adopted without voting on December 14, 1974. Kristol was mainly contesting the article 5 of the resolution See, “Definition of Aggression, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3314 (XXIX)” *United Nation Documents*, accessed May 3, 2022. <https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/739/16/img/nr073916.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>230</sup> Kristol, “America Now”.

<sup>231</sup> Podhoretz, *Breaking*, 357.

<sup>232</sup> Secretary Simon’s statement can be found in US Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asia, *The Persian Gulf, 1974: Money, Politics, Arms, and Power*. 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., July 30, August 5, 7, and 12, 1974. 121. See also: Tucker, “Oil”

<sup>233</sup> Tucker, “Oil.”

a great deal of harm to the industrialized nations and the undeveloped countries that lack oil (i.e., the majority of mankind).<sup>234</sup>

As such, the neoconservative call to invade the oil fields of the Arab countries was a preemptive measure to protect and control the supply of the West. In other words, the rhetoric used by neoconservatives in response to the oil crisis was not so different from the rhetoric of “total war” and “creative destruction,” or the open-ended “war on terror” they advocated for three decades later. To give only one example, Michael Ledeen, a well-known neoconservative, who held the Freedom Scholar Chair at the American Enterprise Institute and worked as a consultant for the US National Security Council, the State Department, and the Pentagon under different administrations, wrote an article for *The National Review*. In it, he criticized Brent Scowcroft, the former National Security Advisor, for speaking up against what Ledeen back then described as the “desperately-needed and long overdue war against Saddam Hussein.” Ledeen ridiculed Scowcroft’s fears that attacking Iraq might turn the Middle East into “a cauldron and destroy the War on Terror”:

One can only hope that we turn the region into a cauldron, and faster, please. If ever there were a region that richly deserved being cauldronized, it is the Middle East today. If we wage the war effectively, we will bring down the terror regimes in Iraq, Iran, and Syria, and either bring down the Saudi monarchy or force it to abandon its global assembly line to indoctrinate young terrorists. That’s our mission in the war against terror.<sup>235</sup>

Ledeen’s remark is important to quote at length. Like Luttwak, Tucker, and Laqueur, he is an expert with an impressive academic background and credentials that gave him access to high official positions, allowed him to publish his views in highly prestigious journals and magazines (including *The National Review*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Republic*, and *The New York Times* among others) and to present his expert testimony before the US Congress in critical matters. This indicates the extent to which the neoconservatives were effective, well connected, and influential. This sense of legitimacy normalized their pro-war stance in the Middle East and contributed to its recycling over the years.

### **2.2.1. Building a Legal Framework to Justify the Use of Military Force**

The vitality of Middle East oil, thus, transformed the oil embargo from a threat into an opportunity. It provided a legal framework to justify military action against the oil producing countries. This argument was the basis for another important neoconservative contribution to

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<sup>234</sup> Laqueur, “The West”.

<sup>235</sup> Michael Ledeen “Scowcroft Strikes Out,” *The National Review*, August 6, 2002.

the 1970s war campaign. “The Arab Oil Weapon,” published in *The American Journal of International Law* by Jordan J. Paust and Albert P. Blaustein, offered an in-depth analysis of the Arab embargo from a legal perspective. The article argued that the oil embargo was part of an “Arab strategy” that coordinated the use of force against Israel with the employment of “an economic instrument of coercion (The Oil “Weapon”) against other states and people in order to place intense pressure upon their freedom of choice.”<sup>236</sup> As such, the authors claimed that the Arab strategy amounted to a violation of the United Nations Charter, and article 4(2) in particular, which called on all members “to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political dependence of any state, or any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”<sup>237</sup> Moreover, the authors ascribed a list of effects that may result from the employment of the oil weapon; the inspected effects ranged from threatening the stability of the world economy through undermining UN authority to threatening the survival of the developing countries and causing the death of 20 million people.<sup>238</sup> The legal case built by Paust and Blaustein displays the way in which neoconservative academics work as agents for, if not architects of, the American empire. Building a legal case to justify the use of US military force thus became a key building block of neoconservative war advocacy. The analogy presented by Paust and Blaustein in the “The Arab Oil Weapon,” in 1977 was employed by Paust in 2002 to justify US military action against Afghanistan. In his article, “Use of Armed Force against Terrorists in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond,” Paust argued that:

[The US] can use military force in self-defense against ongoing processes of armed attack while executing the U.S. right to do so in accordance with the U.N. Charter, with or without congressional authorization, and whether or not there is any special Security Council authorization of enforcement action or NATO authorization of regional action.<sup>239</sup>

By the same token, in 2014, Paust published another article that addressed the rights of Israel and the US to take military action against Iran. Paust argued that Iran’s anti-Israel rhetoric, its support for Hamas and Hezbollah, and its intention to produce nuclear warheads provided the base for a legal preemptive act of self-defense:

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<sup>236</sup> Paust, and Blaustein. “The Arab Oil Weapon-A Threat to International Peace.” In Paust, Blaustein, and Higgins, eds. *The Arab*, 69.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*, 72. The authors indicated that they have consulted with Eugene Rostow throughout building their arguments.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, 90-95.

<sup>239</sup> Jordan J. Paust. “Use of Armed Force against Terrorists in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond,” *International Law Journal*: Vol. 35: No. 3 (Winter 2002): 439, accessed March 19, 2022. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1798582](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1798582).

It is evident that an attack would begin not merely when Iran has fired a missile with a nuclear warhead toward Israel, not merely when Iran has “drawn” a missile with a nuclear warhead and aimed it at Israel, and not merely when Iran has pulled a missile with a nuclear warhead out of its “holster.” In context, given the facts that (1) Iran has been publicly gunning for Israel, (2) Iran has been continuously complicit in ongoing armed attacks against Israel by Hezbollah and Hamas in violation of international law, and (3) Iran is bound by treaty law to not produce weapons grade nuclear material and nuclear weapons, one can recognize that a process of attack would be underway at least when Iran continues to violate international law, creates a nuclear warhead that it is bound to not produce or otherwise acquire, and starts to load the warhead onto a missile without backing down and making such clearly known.<sup>240</sup>

These statements display their ability and willingness to construct a legal case to support arguments in favor of war and how, after building such a legal case, neoconservatives and like-minded individuals who had interests in maintaining the US imperial project relied on such legal frameworks to justify otherwise unjustifiable acts of imperialism. The fact that in the case of invading the Arab oil producing countries, this legal argument did not authorize and lead to military action by the US does not negate the danger or the influence the neoconservatives had. For it is true that the US did not carry out a military action against oil producing countries in 1975. However, that was the result of multiple factors that had more to do with the political environment in the US and globally (Vietnam, Watergate, the anti-war movement, the reconciliation with China, the Soviet achievement of strategic parity, etc.) than it had with the weakness of the legal base offered by Paust and Blaustein.<sup>241</sup> Had the political environment been different –say as in the case of invading Afghanistan in 2001 or invading Iraq in 2003 –, the presence of a legal framework no matter how weak could have been the base for building a military case. In addition, the fact that this framework was considered and recycled by decision makers indicates the influence neoconservatives had despite their small number. For instance, Luttwak employed Paust and Blaustein’s arguments in testimony during the “Prospects for Peace in The Middle East” Congressional hearing. In this hearing, when asked by Senator McGovern whether international law would permit an act of aggression against the

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<sup>240</sup> Jordan J. Paust. “Armed Attacks and Imputation: Would a Nuclear Weaponized Iran Trigger Permissible Israeli and U.S. Measures of Self-Defense?” *Georgetown Journal of International Law* (February 27, 2014). 45, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2402414>.

<sup>241</sup> On the legality of the oil embargo under International Law, see Ibrahim F. I Shehata. “Destination Embargo of Arab Oil: Its Legality Under International Law” in *The Arab*, 97-133; “Oil Fields as Military Objectives: A Feasibility Study” US Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, Special Subcommittee on Investigations, 1975., 94<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1st sess., August 1975, accessed November 29, 2022. 8-10. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015078699306&view=1up&seq=11&skin=2021>.”

Arab countries, Luttwak argued that the embargo was itself an act of aggression, and, therefore, provided an opportunity for the US to use force as a legal response:

[T]here is no case for using force against someone who charges high prices. That is a case that cannot possibly be made. The use of force against someone who denies you a vital supply probably can be made.<sup>242</sup>

Never mind that the testimony was made more than two years after the embargo. During *The American Enterprise Institute Conference titled The Dialogue on World Oil* in 1974, Senator Henry Jackson also relied on Paust and Blaustein's arguments— especially the part related to the impact of the oil price increase on developing countries and the claim that the oil crisis would lead to the starvation of millions people.<sup>243</sup> The conference attendees list included several members of Congress as well as high-ranking officials from oil producing countries, including the Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Ahmed Yamani, and the Iranian Ambassador to the United States, Ardeshir Fazlollah Zahedi. Although the prospect of taking over the oil fields in the Middle East was not necessarily discussed in the conference or referred to in the conference documentation, a look at Yamani's or Zahedi's notes indicates that threats of confrontation were offered by US politicians. At one point, the Director of International Affairs in the National Iranian Oil Company, Reza Fallah, addressed the participants' threats of confrontation stating that:

If some of the politicians—I won't mention names—cannot remain within diplomatic language, they should observe the bounds of politeness, which they don't. That already is costing the consumer, because it certainly drives the producer into the corner.<sup>244</sup>

The "Prospects for Peace in The Middle East" congressional hearing and the American Enterprise Institute conference are but a few examples of the extent to which the neoconservative war rhetoric was circulated. Another example would be the conduct of *Oil Fields as Military Objectives: A Feasibility Study* (1975) by the Congress Special Subcommittee on Investigations. Following the publication of the neoconservative articles

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<sup>242</sup> "Prospects for Peace in the Middle East" US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Europe and the Near East and South Asian Affairs. 94<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., May 19, June 7, 21, 30 July 19 and 28, 1976.

<sup>243</sup> Senator Jackson does not refer to Paust and Blaustein's paper, however, the date and the arguments used by the senator match those used by Paust and Bluestein in their paper. Edward J. Mitchell ed. *Dialogue on World Oil*. (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1974), 82-83.

<sup>244</sup> Sheik Yemeni also noted that "talking about confrontation and headlines in the newspapers won't help anyone. It will hurt; it will create an atmosphere of hostility, and it will take us away from what we want. The problem that we are facing is not really a small one. Either we live or we don't live and I think we prefer the first choice." Ibid, 86, 102.

introduced above, this 111-page study was prepared for the Committee on International Relations. The introduction indicated that the study was prepared in response to

[a] series of articles and statements, some by high-ranking officials of the United States Government, which raised the possibility of military action to assure access to adequate oil supplies in the event of a crippling embargo against this country.<sup>245</sup>

This study might be considered the most important documentation of the active role neoconservatives played in constructing the subject of military action against oil producing countries and making it a major foreign policy concern. The study does not just reference Tucker and Luttwak articles in reasoning the preparation of the study, but it also cites materials from their articles along with other neoconservative contributions from *Commentary* and *The American Enterprise Institute* in its analysis with the aim of providing perspective on the matter, “so that the Congress if needed to, could participate most meaningfully in deliberations to determine the desirability and feasibility of any such [military] action.”<sup>246</sup> The study covered potential military actions to occupy the oil fields of all OPEC countries, from Venezuela and Nigeria through Saudi Arabia and the Gulf sheikhdoms, to Algeria, Libya, and Iran. It included strategies and tactics, the risks entailed and the benefits gained by carrying on such operations. However, while the suggested military options for the rest of OPEC countries were cursorily discussed, the only detailed plan for an active military invasion was offered in the case of Saudi Arabia. For the oil fields in Saudi Arabia alone, the study indicated, “comprises a simple, compact area in a single country” and because Saudi oil facilities were already managed by an American company “Aramco” which would make it easier to allocate and analyze data.<sup>247</sup> The plan to occupy the Saudi oil fields included an in-depth analysis of the forces and logistical support needed as well as maps for the military routes, the oil facilities and the potential war theater.<sup>248</sup> One of its main thesis was that sustained sanctions by the Arab states, even if assisted by Iran, would disrupt the US economy and degrade its security, but “not even a full-scale OPEC oil embargo would threaten US survival, our only vital interest.”<sup>249</sup> Hence, the study concludes:

[M]ilitary operations to rescue the United States (much less its key allies) from an air-tight OPEC embargo would combine high costs with high risks wherever we focused our efforts. This country would so deplete its strategic reserves that little would be left for contingencies elsewhere. Prospects would be poor, with plights of far-reaching political,

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<sup>245</sup> “Oil Fields,” v.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, xi

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid*, 42

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, 41-73.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

economic, social, psychological, and perhaps military consequence the penalty for failure.<sup>250</sup>

The Feasibility Study, however, left the door open for alternative conclusions had a companion study been discussed. The importance of this study lay in the fact that it gave the war rhetoric an official character that fortified the psychological warfare the neoconservatives had started in their articles, and it reflected the extent to which contingency plan threats were taken seriously by high-level officials. As it will be discussed in the following chapter, the study played a role in persuading Saudi Arabia to break the ranks with OPEC.

Having demonstrated that the call for invading the oil fields of the Arab countries was largely promoted and rationalized by neoconservatives, the following sections discuss additional aspects of neoconservative rhetoric toward the Middle East and its peoples. Analyzing the major themes in neoconservative accounts creates a better understanding of the ideological underpinning of what we may consider to be their foreign policy. It is crucial to keep in mind that at the time the neoconservative take on US foreign policy was formulated—in response to the 1973 war—they were quite influential. While they had been a marginal power in the administrations of Nixon, Ford, and Carter, during both the Reagan and George W. Bush administrations, the neoconservatives became the men in charge of American foreign policy. Therefore, to understand why American-Iranian relations went astray in the 1980s, it is worth revisiting neoconservative narratives about the Middle East and its peoples in the 1970s. Doing so helps clarify the mentality of the people who formulated the US foreign policy toward the region for decades to come.

### **2.2.2. The “Vital Interest” Rhetoric**

There is no question that the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of the Middle East makes it a region of vital interest for the US. The high concentration of oil fields at cheap extraction cost is normally highlighted in any discussion of the US foreign policy goals in the region. However, by calling for direct military action to seize and control the oil fields in the region, the neoconservative rhetoric transcended the common American goals of preventing communist expansion and securing the undisrupted flow of oil to West Europe and Japan at reasonable price. Both of these goals were achieved to a large extent, if not fully, under the Nixon Doctrine, the twin pillars policy, and the US political and military aid to Israel and the moderate Arab states.

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid, 76.

The claim that Gulf oil was of vital importance for the US amounted the risk of intriguing a war in the Middle East, and so was illusive and fraught with dangers. For the Middle East oil resources—in contrast to Canada and Mexico, and to a lesser extent Venezuela, Indonesia, and Nigeria—were the most distant from the US and the hardest to secure. For this reason, the US was reluctant to make Middle East oil a main source of energy. Nevertheless, the US was actually dependent on the Arab oil, and the only hostile act toward the US from the Arab oil producers was the oil embargo. Yet, the experience of 1973 proved the inability of Arab governments to control the distribution of oil or to prevent it from reaching the American market. Hence, its impact cannot in anyway justify a drastic action like war that could cause far greater damage. Similar logic can be applied to the Soviet Union and the exaggerated claim of its interest to take over the oil fields of the Gulf. The USSR was also entirely dependent on its own energy resources. Geographically, the Gulf countries were out of the Soviet’s direct reach, and, strategically, the region’s vitality to the Atlantic alliance did not justify a drastic Soviet engagement in the region. Moreover, historically the Soviet Union did not carry out the threats to intervene in the region (except in 1945-1946 in Iran): not during the Suez crisis, the 1967 war, the War of attrition, nor even at the peak of the 1973 war. Thus, there was no reason to assume that the Soviet Union was planning to take over the oil fields at a time when negotiations between the conflict’s main parties were undergoing, nor that the Soviet Union would risk a confrontation with the US over the Arab countries at the time of détente. In light of these considerations, the neoconservatives understood that it was almost impossible—especially at the time of the Vietnam war—to induce the public to accept yet another military adventure, let alone a military occupation. “Could the public be induced, in the shadow of Vietnam, to support a military intervention that bore no apparent or tangible relation to the containment of Communism, itself a factor of diminishing importance in determining the public’s disposition?”<sup>251</sup> Tucker asked before he suggested dedicating concrete effort “to persuade the public that the alternatives to intervention were laden with dangers to the nation’s well-being.”<sup>252</sup> In the same manner, the authors of *The Great Détente Disaster* concluded:

Armed force in defense of American national interests in maintaining oil supplies at affordable prices for the domestic economy to fight inflation and battle unemployment might well receive substantial popular support; a long-term occupation of alien land would not.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Tucker, “Oil.”

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky. *The Great*, 178.

Such effort required convincing the American public that Arab oil cannot be abandoned nor replaced. Tucker talked about the “impossible alternatives” to Arab oil, while Luttwak claimed, without providing evidence, that we had “no reason to expect major new [oil] discoveries.”<sup>254</sup> Moreover, with an army of experts, the *American Enterprise Institute* presented Middle East oil as the primary source of US energy in its publications, conferences, and round tables. Likewise, it asserted the unpracticality of seeking alternative sources to Middle East oil, citing the following reasons: low chances of finding new oil reservations; the high cost and the long lead time required to put any new sources to work; the environmental problems related to the use of nuclear and coal energy; the cost of developing renewable technologies; the projection of faster depletion of non-Middle Eastern oil sources.<sup>255</sup> The vitality of the oil for Western allies, therefore, justified military action. In “Making the World Safe for Communism,” the editor of *Commentary* stated: “Middle Eastern oil is a convenience to this country, but it is not a vital necessity... however, vital to Western Europe and Japan, a matter quite literally of economic life or death.”<sup>256</sup> The perceived instability of the region was highlighted by the neoconservatives as a way to assert the need for it to be under the domain of the US. They argued that by openly challenging the US, these states risked domestic upheavals and aggression from other states. “The survival of the Saudi regime is thus highly problematical; it may last for another decade, it could be overthrown next week”; in Iran “[p]rognostications of the future of Iran usually ignore the fact that the survival of the present regime rests on the life of one man who has many enemies;” while in the Gulf sheikdoms “the ministers could easily be seized by a handful of determined gangsters.”<sup>257</sup> The instability of the political systems in the Middle East in general and the Gulf in particular, thus became the ground to claim that the region of such vital importance cannot be left under the control of regimes that are unfriendly to the US.

### 2.2.3. Prioritizing Israel’s Interests over American Interests

In “The Neoconservative Persuasion” (2003), Irving Kristol explained US’ support for Israel as an expression of America’s “ideological identity.” He stated that the US feels that it is

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid; Luttwak. Similar arguments were made by Laqueur in *Confrontation*, 199 and Tucker’s Oil.

<sup>255</sup> See, Anthony, ed, *The Middle*; McCracken, et al. *The Energy Crisis*; Laird et al. *Energy Policy*; Bradley et al. *Offshore Oil*.

<sup>256</sup> Podhoretz, “Making”.

<sup>257</sup> Laqueur, “The West”; “The Gathering Storm.” See also, Richard Pipes, “America, Russia, and Europe in the Light of the Nixon Doctrine” in *Strategy for the West: American-Allied Relations in Transition*, Richard B. Foster, Andre Beaufre, and Winfred Joshua, eds (London: Macdonald and Jane’s, 1974), 109-122; Laqueur, *Confrontation*, 218.

“necessary to defend Israel today, when its survival is threatened.”<sup>258</sup> When Kristol wrote his article, Israel was already a nuclear power and its army was one of the strongest armies in the region, if not in the world. Although threats to Israel’s security exist, the usage of the term “survival” is exaggerating, as Israel’s strength and unlimited support granted to her by the US and other Western countries implies that while challenges may impact its security or interests, they do not necessarily pose an existential threat to its survival. Yet, we will see that neoconservatives frequently used such hyperboles when it comes to rhetoric regarding the state of Israel. Still, the exaggeration of the challenges Israel faces, whether external (Iran, Hamas, Syria, Hezbollah, Yemen, etc.) or internal (Jewish extremism, demographic and ethnic issues, terrorism,) was and is used to generate support, secure aid and armaments, and justify questionable policies and actions adopted by Israel. Contrary to the standard Western narrative, one may argue that the lack of accountability for Israel’s actions and the continuous supply weapons have failed to guarantee her stability and security. In fact, these actions have negatively impacted both Israel and the US. Achieving peace remains the sole avenue to ensure security and stability in the region. This necessitates ending occupation and holding Israel as well as terrorist groups and states harboring such terrorist groups accountable under international law.

This section shows how, following the 1973 war, neoconservatives argued that a peace settlement forcing Israel to give up its control over territories it occupied during the 1967 war is a suicidal prescription for Israel’s future. Also, we will see that the neoconservative narrative toward the Arab-Israeli conflict during the oil crisis is a clear example of the way in which neoconservatives prioritized Israel’s interests over those of the US. It argues that by proposing the war, they jeopardized the US’ main interest in the region: maintaining the stability and flow of oil and weakening Russian influence. By calling on the US to stand in opposition to UN resolutions, the neoconservatives isolated the US from her allies and from Third World countries. Furthermore, by threatening to invade Saudi Arabia, the heartland of Islam, neoconservatives fueled anti-American sentiments not just among 300 million Arabs but also more than a billion Muslims. Finally, by antagonizing the Gulf countries, they drove oil producing countries to invest their money in Europe and Japan, rather than in the American market. A close reading of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the neoconservative war narrative and in relation to the oil crisis reveals a counterproductive contradiction. On the one hand, they argued that the Arab-Israeli conflict was not a factor behind raising the oil prices:

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<sup>258</sup> I. Kristol. *The Neoconservative*, 193.

Certainly, the Shah of Iran has had no need of an Israel to justify his intransigence. Nor do the Arabs. The prospect of becoming economic superpowers, with all that this entails, is quite enough.<sup>259</sup>

On the other hand, they considered the price increase as part of the oil embargo. To put it in different terms, they considered the price increase as a political rather than economic matter. For instance, in *The Great Détente Disaster* the authors argued that the price increase was part of the October war, stating:

Whatever may be said for the oil producers, they certainly are not engaged in an ordinary commercial transaction. Nor did they get into the big money in peace-time. They raised their prices in the midst of the October war as part of an embargo deliberately designed to bring pressure against Israel. One can talk forever about what OPEC might have been able to do, leaving out the war, but the historical fact is that they acted as part of war.<sup>260</sup>

As has been emphasized above, it was still the fear from a future embargo rather than the price increase that provided a justification for neoconservatives to consider military action. Here, for instance, the authors argue that by taking “military measures,” a future embargo would be “unavailable” as the oil resources would no longer be in the Arabs’ hands.<sup>261</sup> Nevertheless, if the oil price increase was indeed “part of [the 1973] war,” and therefore, a political matter, the logical course of action would have been to pursue a political solution to the very issue that had caused the war rather than taking a military measure or initiating another war that, in all likelihood, would further fluctuate the oil prices. The neoconservatives refused even to consider dealing with the matter as a political issue. They did not acknowledge that the main objective of the 1973 war, as declared by the Arab countries, was, or could possibly be, the resumption of the peace process. Israel’s occupation and settlements expansion in the territories of three Arab countries, its violations of the basic human rights of Palestinians, and its attacks against Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria including those against civilians, seemed legitimate causes for the war.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Tucker, “Oil.”

<sup>260</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky. *The Great*, 185.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid*, 186.

<sup>262</sup> Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Israel were technically in a state of war, the War of Attrition. As a result, the Arabs and the Israelis attacked each other’s borders. During this period, Israel retaliated for attacks against its army, united in the occupied territories by attacking targets inside the Arab territories including nonmilitary targets, which fueled worldwide condemnation. For instance, the Israeli bombing of *Bahr Albaqar* School in 1970 resulted in the killing of 46 –less than 11-year-old– children in Delta Egypt. Israel’s 1970 attack on the *Abu Zaabal* steel factory resulted in the killing of 88 Egyptian workers. For documentation of Israel’s violation of the human rights of Arabs and Palestinians in the period between the 1967 war and the 1973 war, see, Uri Davis, Norton Mezvinsky eds. *Documents from Israel, 1967-1973: Readings for a Critique of Zionism*. (Ithaca Press London 1975). The book includes reports from the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights (ILHCR), Knesset

Those who view the Arab-Israeli conflict as the principal cause of, and accordingly the key to, the oil crisis betray *naiveté* and disregard—or ignorance—of contemporary history that can only be wondered at.<sup>263</sup>

What Tucker referred to as “contemporary history” indicates the use of oil politically by the Arab countries during the 1967 war and by Saudi Arabia during the Suez crisis of 1956. Ironically enough, the Arab-Israeli conflict was a key factor in these crises. Thus, it seems unreasonable for Tucker and other neoconservatives to build an entire argument in which the increase in the oil prices was presented purely as a political matter and to go full board with a military response as the only possible way to deal with this matter without addressing the core of the conflict that caused it. To understand neoconservative logic, it is important to understand that by ignoring Israel’s occupation of Syrian, Egyptian, and Palestinians territories as a factor behind the oil embargo, they could describe the Arab-Israeli conflict not a local conflict over borders but a key stage of Cold War conflict; for controlling the Middle East oil by the Soviets fundamentally threatens the security of Europe and the United States. As such, the Arab countries’ request for activating the peace dialogue as a precondition for lifting the oil embargo was deemed by neoconservatives as “political blackmail”:

Many of those who took the United States into the jungles of Vietnam to look for the national interest are now saying that we need not do it, since we can comply with political blackmail (by blackmailing Israel in turn), and since we can afford to pay the economic extortion. True, we can do both. But the price—moral, political, and social—would be far too high. We would no longer be able to look each other in the face.<sup>264</sup>

Accordingly, neoconservatives presented the conflict as a conflict over Israel’s “right to exist” and “survival,” arguing that the US is obliged to support Israel as part of its mission to preserve the Western democratic tradition. The neoconservative calls for invasion marked the beginning of an attack on what was perceived as the allies’ “appeasement” policy, their “passivity,” and yielding to the “Arab’s blackmail” as well as the US peace efforts. Laqueur, for instance, described Kissinger’s peace mission as being suicidal, stating, “A nation does not have the duty to commit suicide in pursuit of an abstract ideal, but it does have a duty to strike a balance between its commitments and its power.”<sup>265</sup> Neoconservatives thus attacked the calls for peace

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Legislations, and articles from major Israeli Newspapers. See also, Ilan Pappé’s *History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 207-212.

<sup>263</sup> Tucker, “Further Reflection.”

<sup>264</sup> Luttwak, “Seizing.”

<sup>265</sup> Laqueur, “The West.” For more on the neoconservative criticism of the Kissinger peace mission, see Norman Podhoretz’s “The Abandonment” *Commentary* 1976; Robert C. Tucker’s “Israel and the United States: From Dependence to Nuclear Weapons?” *Commentary*, November, 1975, accessed April 18, 2021,

on the basis that the Arabs had no goals short of the ultimate destruction of Israel. They used the following expressions to describe what they perceived to be the Arabs' goals: "elimination of Israel," "extinction of Israel," "Israel's Annihilation," "destroying Israel as a state, and occupy[ing] the land where Israelis live," etc.<sup>266</sup> Neoconservatives went as far as to argue that the Arabs were anti-Semitic to the core and their minds were not fit for peace. The following quote from *Commentary's* "Rhetoric and the Arab Mind" provides us with a clear example of what could and should be regarded as an expression of anti-Arab and Islamophobic sentiments:

The problem, as the non-Arab sees it, is how to establish peace between the Arabs and Israel; it is felt that time is of the essence. Westerners consider peace to be high on the scale of values, and conflict is deprecated. We also have a highly developed consciousness of the value of time. But on the Arab scale the relative position of the elements is quite different. Overriding is the emotional need for vengeance to eliminate the ego-destroying feeling of shame. Peace is secondary to this need, which is why one often gets the impression that in the Arab context peace is merely the temporary absence of conflict. In fact, in Arab tribal society (where Arab values originated), strife, not peace, was the normal state of affairs because raiding was one of the two main supports of the economy. Even in Islam itself, the ideal of permanent peace was restricted to the community of Islam and to those non-Muslims who accepted the position of protected persons and paid tribute to Islam. . . . As for the element of time, the Arabs consider it to be of little account in the quest for vengeance, which to them is an integral part of what they conceive of as "justice."<sup>267</sup>

One way to read neoconservatives' rejection of the peace talks, beside the proclaimed incompatibility of the Arab mind to peace, is to understand their ideological motives.<sup>268</sup> Israeli occupation and the unilateral annexation of Arab territories was considered illegal by the majority of the international community and even among a good portion of Israeli citizens. This rejection of Israeli expansionist policies along with the activities of the PLO –drew attention to the Palestinian grievances and sought to validate their presence on the land that was historically theirs–made it clear that any peace negotiations would force Israel to make

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<https://www.commentary.org/articles/robert-tucker/israel-and-the-united-states-from-dependence-to-nuclear-weapons/>.

<sup>266</sup> Such statements were made in all of the accounts mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Shemesh "argued that the statement that Arab leaders wanted to "throw the Jews into the sea," was most likely made the founder of the PLO Ahmad Al-Shuqayri, however, it was met with denunciation by Arab leaders and the public alike, eventually leading to his resignation. See Moshe Shemesh, "Did Shuqayri Call for 'Throwing the Jews into the Sea'?" *Israel Studies* 8, no. 2 (2003): 70–81. Accessed May 11, 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30247797>.

<sup>267</sup> Gil Carl AlRoy, "Do the Arabs Want Peace?" *Commentary*, February 1974. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/gil-alroy/do-the-arabs-want-peace/> . see also Robert Alter "Rhetoric and the Arab Mind" *Commentary*, October 1968, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/robert-alter-2/rhetoric-and-the-arab-mind/> ; Daniel Pipes "Egyptian Attitudes toward Peace" *Genesis*, 2, February 1974. <https://www.danielpipes.org/7956/egyptian-attitudes-toward-peace-with-israel>.

<sup>268</sup> On the incompatibility between the Arab mind and peace, see Edward Said's *Orientalism*, chapter 4 "Orientalism Now," and note that many of the authors quoted in the chapter are neoconservatives or people who are associated with neoconservatives think tanks, for instance, RAND and AEI.

political and territorial concessions that would include recognizing the Palestinian issue and withdrawing from the occupied territories.<sup>269</sup> Neoconservative narratives, hence, reflected an ideological rather than a political stand. is the belief in Israel's right to the entire land of Palestine. The following paragraph from Laqueur provides an example of the ideological underpinnings of his rhetoric.

All Jerusalem had been liberated, never again was it to be divided by machine-gun posts and barbed wire entanglements. The Jordan River was to be the natural frontier of Israel, never again were the links between the Jewish people and its historic country to be cut. Bethlehem was the home of King David's family, Hebron had historical associations with Abraham, and it had been King David's residence before the conquest of Jerusalem. In Sichem [Nablus] Joseph was buried and Gaza was the southern-most outpost of King Solomon's state. There could be found solid historical claims even for the Golan, for Jephtha had once been judge there. Clearly it had been the divine will to fulfil the promise to his people.<sup>270</sup>

In this paragraph, Laqueur describes the topography of historical Palestine within the context of the Old Testament and asserts that the biblical narrative constitutes a "solid historical claim," justifying the settlement of predominantly twentieth-century European Jews in a land that had been inhabited for centuries by other people, including many former Jews who had converted to Islam and Christianity over the years, prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948. Arab control over their oil resources and their use of oil as a political tool, hence, jeopardized the Jewish claim to the land. It provided the Arabs with leverage at the negotiating table and compelled the US to push for a political settlement. This was contrary to Israel's interest, which was best served by a policy of no peace and no war, allowing Israel to expand through settlement building and altering the reality on the ground.<sup>271</sup> However, theology was not always the basis for the neoconservatives' affinity toward Israel. Instead, they justified and continue to justify their support for Israel by emphasizing its status as a self-proclaimed Western-style democracy, as Friedland and his co-writer have asserted in the *Great Détente Disaster*: "the United States was joined to Israel by ties of affection, by the affinity of two democratic governments, and by the desire to maintain a dependable ally in the Middle East."<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Recognizing the Palestinian issue has posed a demographic threat to the state of Israel; it also alters the claim that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East as the Palestinian populations in West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza are technically under the military control of the Israeli government. They do not have the same human or civil rights as the Jewish population of the same area, including the right to participate in elections.

<sup>270</sup> Laqueur. *Confrontation*, 34.

<sup>271</sup> Israel's policy was to maintain the status quo while producing irreversible facts on the ground by creating settlements in the occupied territories.

<sup>272</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky. *The Great*, 17. Israel's democracy is a matter of debate as its Arab citizens do not enjoy the same rights as its Jewish citizens.

Additionally, they used the oil crisis to equate the US with Israel, portraying both as innocent victims existentially threatened by the malevolent forces of Arabs and Muslims. Ironically, however, such narratives did not benefit Israel in the long run, as they further alienated Israel from its neighboring countries, major industrial nations, and Third World countries that had a more immediate and compelling interest in lowering oil prices than the US and they strongly condemned the scenarios involving military intervention.

For instance, Seabury and his colleagues dismissed any perspective that did not view military intervention as the primary option. They questioned, “Should the United States be worried when the nations in the Third World, which suffer the most, and Japan and West Europe, which suffer next, say OPEC is treating them well?” To this rhetorical question, they answered, “Of course, they have to say that. When they are held for victims quite often say their kidnapers are treating them well.”<sup>273</sup> As such, the position and views of these powers did not matter. The authors concluded that the US needed to act, even if unilaterally, for “temporizing with the oil crisis is like living with a time bomb. Were it to explode, the blame would rest not only on those who detonated it but also on those who primed it.”<sup>274</sup> In other words, the US needed to take preemptive military action against sovereign states in defense of other sovereign states—of which some have nuclear arsenals. With the exception of Japan, each of these states had a military power that was more developed than the targeted countries’ collective military capabilities. In addition, many of the industrial nations were rushing to cut bilateral and commercial deals with the Arab countries, and not just in the energy area.

This can also be taken as a way to show how neoconservative calls for war did not serve the US interests as it reduced the US share of Arab investments at a time that Japan and Western Europe were taking advantage of the new wealth of the oil producing countries. It is important to note here that the oil embargo and the oil price increase were not the only reasons for the European countries’ support for reaching a political settlement that would force Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories as evidenced by the fact that European calls for Israel to return to its 1967 borders, preceded the 1973 war and the 1973-1974 oil crisis. It is also important to bear in mind that at the time Israel was subject to worldwide criticism due to its policies in the occupied territories that amounted to the annexation of these territories. *Ha’aretz*, the leading newspaper in Israel, criticized Israeli government policies in the occupied territories stating that:

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<sup>273</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky. *The Great*, 208.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*

[T]he government gave its approval to demand to set up settlements and towns within Judea and Samaria [the occupied West Bank] without annexation and without changing its status as an occupied area. . . . [accordingly] it will be possible to take over territories without annexing them and without granting their inhabitants, the Arabs, the rights of citizens in Israel.<sup>275</sup>

The same policies criticized by *Ha'aretz* in the West Bank were also implemented in the Syrian and Egyptian territories—Golan Heights, Rafah, and Gaza.<sup>276</sup> According to the Israel Information Center: “Between the Six Day War and the end of 1974 over 50 settlements were established in territories beyond the ‘Green Line’ from the Golan Heights in the North to Sinai Peninsula in the South.”<sup>277</sup> Which meant that Israel had never considered the occupation of Arab territories as temporary, and the fact that 60% of Israel’s needs for energy were covered by oil from the occupied Sinai area meant that Israel was not planning to give it up unless she was forced to do so.<sup>278</sup> A month before the 1973 war, an Israeli official told *The New York Times*, “The world is getting annoyed with us, I could sense the impatience in conversations I had with other delegates, they see us—wrongly, I think—as truculent, unbending, and unwilling to compromise.”<sup>279</sup> This demonstrates that the allies’ decision to distance themselves from US policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict was not motivated by a desire to appease the Arabs or capitulate to their demands. Instead, it was driven by their own interests and a reluctance to jeopardize their economies in support of Israeli policies with which they consistently disagreed.

To finish this section, it is worth repeating here that the neoconservative call for taking over the oil fields of the Gulf were not restricted to the embargo nor the threats of embargo. But even if we assume that the neoconservative calls for war were attached to their fears of the embargo’s effects, it was proven over and over again that not only was the 1973 embargo ineffective, but even a full-scale OPEC oil embargo would not have threatened the US, as concluded by the Congressional Feasibility Study.<sup>280</sup> This being the case, admittedly with hindsight, bilateral negotiations, international arbitration by the UN, or even counter embargoes or sanctions would have prevented Arab countries from using the oil as a political

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<sup>275</sup> As quoted in Chomsky, *Peace* 16.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> See, Davis, Mezvinsky ed. *Documents from Israel*, 75-77.

<sup>278</sup> Howard and Keefer, *Foreign Relations*, document 183, accessed, June 9, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v26/d183>.

<sup>279</sup> Terence Smith, “Kissinger Drive Seen”, *The New York Times*, September 21, 1973. Accessed May 28, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/09/21/archives/kissinger-drive-seen-move-by-kissinger-anticipated-withdrawal.html>.

<sup>280</sup> “Oil Fields,” 5

weapon and preserved the US interests in the region. Months before the outbreak of the 1973 war, Senator Fulbright, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in Congress spoke volumes in his address to the congress: “All of the US interests could be served by a policy of bringing about political settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute, if necessary, by providing strong incentive for settlement.” Yet, the Senator concluded:

Neither a voluntary nor an imposed solution is likely to come about in the foreseeable future, owing primarily to the refusal of the U.S. administration backed by heavy congressional majorities to modify its commitment to the present policy of Israel. The likelihood, therefore, is for a continuation for the time being of the status quo, which I am fairly certain all parties will come in time to regret. The Arab States, including those which are now conservative, are likely to be radicalized as their grievances fester.<sup>281</sup>

Senator Fulbright—himself a staunch supporter of Israel—rightfully viewed Israel policies prior to the 1973 war as a threat to the peace and stability of the Middle East, and, thus, a threat to the US and even to Israel, and his view proved to be rightful by the very fact that the war took place only months after as a result to the deadlock in peace process. The Senator’s comments prompted a response from none other than Senator Henry Jackson—the political leader of neoconservatives at the time, who stated:

[W]e begin to hear the argument advanced that the solution to our energy problems—and they are many and complex—lies in imposing on the Arab-Israeli dispute a “settlement” that would make more precarious the situation of our friend in order to court and appease those Arab nations for whom blackmail and sanctuary for terrorists serve as foreign policy.<sup>282</sup>

The interaction between the two Senators reflects the ideological ground in which the US policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict was constructed and provides yet another example on the integration of neoconservatives’ rhetoric in the realm of decision-making process.

Prioritizing Israeli interests by favoring war over pressuring Israel to make the concessions needed to reach peace is important, for it gave the impression that the calls for war were meant to serve Israeli rather than the American interests. The Israeli lobby was perceived by Arab leaders and the Shah as being the force behind the President and the Congress reluctance to balance the American position toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. For instance, the American ambassador to Saudi Arabia at the time reported to the State Department, that during a conversation with Omar Shams, Saudi Director of Intelligence the later informed him that:

Saudi Government is convinced that the various invasion articles, culminating in the March *Harper’s* article by “Ignotus,” [Luttwak’s] is part of [the United States

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<sup>281</sup> Senator Fulbright speech on Oil and the Middle East Senate hearing, May 21, 1973, *Congressional Record (Bound Edition)*. Volume, 119 119, Part 13 (May 16, 1973 to May 29, 1973) 16262-63, accessed May 26, 202, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1973-pt13/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1973-pt13-3-1.pdf>

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid*, 16264.

Government] plan to soften up the American people for attempted occupation of the Arabian Peninsula... [and that] from now on the Arabs must consider the United States as an extension of Israel; as Israel's tool in the Middle East.<sup>283</sup>

These perceptions were fortified when a few days after the publication of Luttwak's "Seizing the Arab Oil" article Saudi Arabia complained to the American Ambassador of Israeli sorties over its Northwest city of Tabuk, and by the circulation of news about Israel's intentions to occupy Saudi Arabia's northwestern border.<sup>284</sup> Similarly, the Shah perceived the war campaign as an indication that the Jewish lobby had the upper hand over the American Congress and media and that whatever opposition Iran is receiving from the US it was the result of Jewish lobby efforts, he expressed these views in his correspondence and to the media repeatedly.<sup>285</sup>

### 2.3. The Neoconservative Orientalist Discourse

In his acclaimed book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said describes Orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."<sup>286</sup> By limiting the Orient within the realm of Orientalist discourse, the Orient, according to Said's thesis, was managed and produced "politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively" in a way that would serve the West's political and cultural needs and interests—these include justifying colonialism and affirming Christianity—without providing a nuanced characterization of the Orient.<sup>287</sup> Said argues that the "Orient," just like the "Occident," does not exist in itself as a united or coherent subject that can be studied, analyzed, or characterized.<sup>288</sup> With that in mind, it can be said that any knowledge produced about the Orient as a coherent unit is neither sufficient nor accurate. In the last chapter of his book, titled "Orientalism Now," Said posits that the post-enlightenment Orientalism, which provided the moral ground for the 18th and 19th century European colonialism and imperialism, disbursed itself in what is now known as Area studies. The "traditional European Orientalism," according to Said, was "if not taken over, then accommodated, normalized, domesticated, and

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<sup>283</sup> Hibbeln and Howard, *Foreign Relations*, document 130, accessed, May 12, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve09p2/d130>.

<sup>284</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Volume E–9, Part 2, Documents on the Middle East Region, 1973–1976. June 24, 1975. Document 150. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve09p2/d150>.

<sup>285</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 323, 443-446.

<sup>286</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> In the sense that numerous cultures and nations existed, exist, and will exist in what is considered to be the geographical location of the Orient, whose histories, costumes, and languages are greater than any knowledge that was produced or can be produced about them in and through the discipline of Orientalism.

popularized and fed into the postwar efflorescence of Near Eastern studies in the United States.”<sup>289</sup>

Many who present themselves as experts in the field recycled orientalist narratives about Islam and about the Arab/Muslim “native” being the villain on a perpetual quest to subdue and destroy the Western non-Muslim non-Arab Other. These new orientalists constructed narratives that would become the framework for the study of the Middle East, their views providing a perpetual justification for what would otherwise be considered a blunt display of power and hegemony. The call for military action to seize the Arab oil fields in the 1970s is like the call for war against Iraq, Iran, and Syria following the 9/11 attacks. In this section, I argue that following the 1973 war, neoconservative politicians, academics, policy planners, and journalists represented the new American orientalist; they were the main power to pin the Arabs as unequivocally responsible for the worldwide economic crisis and, indirectly, the rise of Communist parties in Europe. In the oil crisis, the neoconservatives found an opportunity to discredit the *Détente* policy, turn the Arab-Israeli conflict into ideological warfare, and unite the American domestic alliance as well as fragment Western alliance against what they constructed to be Western civilization’s “cultural other.” By analyzing neoconservative accounts, we can see how what Said considered Orientalist dogmas were on display. These dogmas 1) represent the Middle Eastern “native” as the West’s irrational, undeveloped, inhumane, and inferior opposite; 2) recycle and reproduce static and abstract classical orientalists’ views and narratives about “Arabs and Muslims” to explain economic and political issues, instead of examining the geopolitical realities of the region and their social and political impact on the people and on decision-makers; 3) present biased ideological Western views as “scientifically objective,” while ignoring what the “natives” produce and offer as explanations for their acts. Finally, perhaps the most important dogma of them all is that the only way to deal with the natives of the Middle East is to subdue and control them.<sup>290</sup> In what follows, I enumerate the key themes neoconservatives employed systematically in their war campaign discourse to justify invading oil producing countries following the 1973 war.

### **2.3.1. The “Immoral Right” of Oil Producing Countries to Their Oil**

Now that we have established that the neoconservative stand toward the oil crisis was constructed within an ideological, rather than an economic or political framework, this section

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<sup>289</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 285, 295-296.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid*, 300-302.

explains how neoconservatives rationalized their call for war. The oil producing countries in their accounts were presented as countries that have no “skills, culture or work of their own.” Pipes commented that the mere geographic coincidence of having oil in their otherwise “empty” deserts was what provided them with the power, wealth, influence, and prestige that allowed them to blackmail Western countries — if it was not for Western technology, these countries would have been a barren desert.<sup>291</sup> What neoconservatives were saying in effect was that the central role of the Western companies in finding oil and developing the technology that allowed to extract and refine it granted the West a rightful share in oil producing countries’ wealth. Moreover, only the West was capable of finding and developing Arab oil. In *The Great Détente Disaster*, we read:

Oil-producing states are essentially mislabeled. They do not produce oil; rather, they remove it from the ground. Western industry provides all the technology, the refineries, the shipping facilities, to see that the product moves properly to its ultimate destinations.<sup>292</sup>

In a similar manner, Luttwak states:

Men whose only claim to importance was that they had successfully cartelized a natural resource found and developed by Western money and Western talent were thus taught the personal lesson that the way to fame and power was more extortion.<sup>293</sup>

What this rhetoric ignores is that the only reason Western companies were able to find and develop Middle Eastern oil was because the region was colonized by Western powers. It omits the fact that talent alone was not what allowed the West to extract and develop the oil in the region, rather, it was the region’s weakness that allowed its resources to be exploited and taken advantage of. The agreements and contracts which allowed Western companies to find and develop oil resources prior to the oil crisis were not consensual for these countries had no authority to reject, modify or implement their own conditions when signing these agreements. In addition, Western companies and governments have not only benefitted—for decades—

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<sup>291</sup>Quotes from Daniel Pipes’s “Iran’s Good Fortune” *Washington Post*, July 10, 1980 <https://www.danielpipes.org/1026/irans-good-fortune>. The same narrative was repeated in most of the articles and books written by neoconservatives on the oil crisis, the 1973 war, and the second oil crisis in 1979. To give but one recent example, David Frum, President Bush’s speech writer, stated “The oil companies that found the oil, the oil companies that invented the technology that brought the oil to the surface, oil companies that preserved and extended the useful lives of the fields, the oil companies that built the pipelines, refineries, and docks that brought the oil to market. The only contribution of the locals was to have had the good luck to have parked their tents atop a raw material that Western ingenuity had found uses for.” *How We Got Here: The 70s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life, For Better or Worse* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 165.

<sup>292</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky. *The Great*, 78-79.

<sup>293</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, “Review of *The Great Detente Disaster*, by Edward Friedland, Paul Seabury, Aaron Wildavsky.” *Commentary*, August 1975, accessed August 3, 2022, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/edward-luttwak-2/the-great-detente-disaster-by-edward-friedland-paul-seabury-aaron-wildavsky/> .

from cheap Middle Eastern oil but even as the oil crisis unfolded they also benefitted from the oil money—as the prices paid by the consumers for oil included the profits of oil companies as well as the taxes imposed by governments.<sup>294</sup> Moreover, the claim of the exclusivity of Western talent and technology is absurd for science and technology is an accumulated process and what we now consider to be Western technology cannot be stripped of the scientific contributions of non-Westerners.

### 2.3.2. The “Undemocratic” and “Medieval” Middle East

Neoconservative accounts also argued that the West has a right to the Gulf countries’ oil, based on the fact that oil-producing countries only survived due to Western protection and support. In all of their accounts, oil producing countries were described as “reactionary,” “feudal regimes,” “military dictatorships,” and “royal despotisms,” and the like.<sup>295</sup> To give an example, in *The Great Détente Disaster* we read:

[T]hese feudal regimes—out of pace with modern political developments, either Communist or Western—rest on a precarious base. They have no tradition of democratic civility, and are not based upon the consent of the governed. They are the remnants of a late-blooming feudalism which, elsewhere in the Middle East, has been overthrown in favor of revolutionary movements and parties. Ironically, in the recent past the survival of these feudal remnants has been due in great measure to Western aid, particularly that of the United States.<sup>296</sup>

Such rhetoric imposed originally Western notions (democracy and modernity) on non-Western communities without basic understanding or acknowledgment of these communities’ traditions, history, and culture. For instance, feudalism as a medieval European concept did not exist in the Arab tribes of the Gulf which were not agricultural communities.<sup>297</sup> Similarly, “consent,” known as the *Al-baiaa* (allegiance) system included democratic elements in its decision making and choosing and approving the ruler but the neoconservatives ignored it. Additionally, when the British Empire subdued the locals, it chose to sign the so-called “friendship agreements” with representatives whose credentials were the allegiances they had

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<sup>294</sup> As the previous chapter indicated, oil companies were complicit in the oil embargo because they preferred a higher oil price and did not want to risk antagonizing oil producing governments. See US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, The Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Current Energy Shortages Oversight Series, Cutoff of Petroleum Products to U.S. Military Forces* 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., April 22, 1974. Part 8. 885-889.

<sup>295</sup> Tucker, “Oil” Luttwak, “Seizing”; Laqueur, “The Gathering”; *Confrontation*, 47.

<sup>296</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky. *The Great*, 80. See also 22, 43, 73, and 77.

<sup>297</sup> Al-Mosffer, *Gulf to Gulf*, 23.

with other tribes that enabled them to be accepted as representative of their people.<sup>298</sup> The fact that the political units that existed in the Gulf did not fall under the banner of democracy as understood in the West—itsself quite a complex concept—was used by neoconservatives to question the legitimacy of their political systems and the moral qualification that permitted the Arabs to be in charge of such a vital commodity, and as a consequence, allowed them to threaten the civilized, free, democratic and morally superior West. However, by questioning the legitimacy of the political systems in the Gulf, the neoconservatives set standards for democracy that were not even met by many Western countries.

Additionally, if we take the above quote at face value, the “feudal regimes” in the Gulf survived revolutionary movements and parties due “in a great measure to Western aid, particularly that of the United States.” The right question then is not whether these countries are undeserving of their oil due to their undemocratic nature. Rather: would these “feudal remnants” have a better chance to turn into democracies if it was not for Western aid that granted them survival? And, what are the chances for countries to turn into democracies without revolutionary movements and parties—which in the case of these countries, with the authors’ admission, were hindered by Western aid? If anything, this argument proves that the US was complicit in the historical development of these repressive regimes. Be that as it may, ascribing features like backwardness, feudalism, authoritarianism, or totalitarianism to countries in the Middle East at the time was impetuous and flat; not even the slightest attempt was made to acknowledge that the entire region was undergoing massive political change and consequently it was in the process of developing its own political culture, evidenced by various political movements and trends that marked the development of a political consensus beyond what was established by colonialism (Pan-Arabism, the Gulf solidarity movements, anti-imperialist movements, Arab Renaissance, Pan-Islamism, etc.).<sup>299</sup>

The Western moral superiority rhetoric aimed to disguise the ideological background of the neoconservative war campaign which had more interest in achieving hegemony and

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<sup>298</sup> It is important to note here that oil companies and colonial powers were not interested, and therefore did not invest, in developing the oil producing countries or enhancing the living standards of the locals. For instance, up until 1969, there was only one hospital in Qatar, very few schools and not a single university in the entire Gulf region. See Jerry Sampson. *History of Persian Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, And United Arab Emirates: Government, Politics, Economy, Defense, Resources, and People* (Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire: Sonit Education Academy, 2016). For the Arab Gulf countries’ resistance to European colonialism, see [*The Arabic Resistance in the Arabian Gulf*], Chapters 3-5. ١٩٨٢. (بغداد: دار الرشيد، العربي). (سليم طه التكريتي. المقاومة العربية في الخليج العربي).

<sup>299</sup> To name a few of these movements: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, which was established in 1974; Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf, established in 1969 in Oman, the National Unity Front established in 1963 in Qatar; People’s Democratic Party and Arab Socialist Action, established in 1970 and 1972 in Saudi Arabia respectively; etc. Sampson, *History of Persian Gulf*.

dominance, and in controlling these countries resources than it had in bringing them democracy and enlightenment. In other words, neoconservatives in the 1970s subscribed to the 18th and 19th century Orientalism that justified colonialism under the banner of a civilizing mission and used such rhetoric to argue that Middle Eastern oil rightfully belonged to the West.<sup>300</sup>

Despite the criticism of the political regimes in the region, none of the neoconservative accounts provided any insight as to the form of government would be imposed on the countries after the presumed invasion. This was not only because there was no way that a free and fair election would have brought a pro-occupation government to power anywhere in the world, but also because neoconservatives had no issue with supporting and advocating aid to authoritarian regimes so long as those regimes allied themselves with the US. It remains to say that none of the neoconservative account of the oil crisis offered any acknowledgement of the inhabitants of the Middle East countries beyond their leaders, except to refer to their numbers. Luttwak talked about the “very few men,” and “the population in the main zone of operations.”<sup>301</sup> Tucker, Laqueur, and the authors of *The Great Détente Disaster* respectively described the oil producing countries in the Gulf and Libya as being “vast desert areas,” “sparsely populated areas,” “mini-mini-states,” “nice little oligarchies,” and areas that lacked “substantial centers of population.” In contrast, neoconservative exposes about Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Iran always included a reference to their “large” populations or armies, as if the only way the people of these countries counted was numerically. The only threat posed by the inhabitants was related to their numbers: in the case of Palestinian Arabs this threat was translated into a demographic threat to the presumed character of Israel as a “Jewish state,” in the case of Syria and Egypt, the threat was posed by their ability to bear a greater loss of lives and wage more prolonged wars, and, in the case of populous Iran, the threat due to its large population and its inability to endure the loss of oil revenues.<sup>302</sup> When neoconservatives addressed the vulnerability of Saudi, Iranian, and Gulf monarchs, their analysis was restricted to the fear of a “Qaddafi-type colonel,” who would come to power by a military coup. Not a single account considered the possibility of a revolution. That is, that the people ruled by these oppressive monarchs aspire for freedom and democracy like any other people.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Sebastian Herbstreuth, *Oil and American Identity, a Culture of Dependency and the Impact on US Foreign Policy*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 137.

<sup>301</sup> Luttwak, “Seizing”, Tucker “Oil”, Laqueur, *Confrontation*, 43.

<sup>302</sup> Laqueur, *Confrontation*. 33-39.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid*, 218; Laqueur, “Détente.”

To have considered the possibility of a revolution would have given the inhabitants of these countries an agency and a will. It would have also recognized that public opinion—as it will be further emphasized in the subsequent section—played a major role in influencing the Gulf countries’ political and, more specifically, oil-related decisions. To admit that seemingly excessive US support for Israel antagonized Arab public opinion to the extent of creating pressure on their governments and leading these governments to impose the oil embargo would mean confirming that US bias for Israel jeopardized its interests in the region. Furthermore, as neoconservatives conceded in their accounts, the Gulf regimes depended on US support for their survival. While these regimes were keen on maintaining good relations with the US, they also realized that their survival relied on the contentment of their own people; the oil embargo was a way for them to reduce public tension and deter the radicalization of their people. The undemocratic nature of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries was repeatedly used as a reason to delegitimize these countries’ capacity to protect vital oil resources. However, democracy, the obvious counterforce for the lack of democracy, was entirely dropped out from these particular neoconservative accounts. This brings up another question, namely: would the US tolerate democratic governments in the Middle East in general and the Gulf region in particular, with their proclaimed vitality? As we know, the democratization of the region would mean forcing the leaders of these countries to consider their citizens’ opinions and needs, and to submit those leaders to accountability and transparency checks by their citizens whenever they take economic or political decisions. Taking the effects of democratization into account, democracy in the region might lead to a fair chance that anti-Israeli, and consequently anti-American, governments would come to power. The rise of such governments would alter the policies of saving and investing oil revenues in the West for policies of domestic and regional development, or at the very least interrupt the stability of the oil and arms markets, and reduce the transfer of oil wealth to Western economies.<sup>304</sup> In conclusion, the neoconservative rhetoric concerning the undemocratic nature of the Arabs and the use of this trope in support of their support for war is baseless. Guided by neoconservative policy, the US supported authoritarian regimes so long as they allied themselves with the US. This is evidence that democracy has not been a factor in conducting the US policy toward the Middle East.

### **2.3.3. The “Arab” oil**

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<sup>304</sup> See, Fatema Mernissi. “Palace Fundamentalism and Liberal Democracy” in Emran Qureshi, Michael A. Sells, ed. *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*. (New York: CUP, 2003).

As has been stated repeatedly, almost all of the invasion scenarios were written by neoconservatives after —and not before — the oil embargo was lifted. These scenarios were evoked not just by the deterioration of the economic situation in Europe and the fear of another price increase, but as this section demonstrates, by the fear of the power and wealth brought by oil to the Middle East, the “other” of the West. The rhetoric used—mainly but not exclusively—by neoconservatives reflected a tendency to equate the price increase with the use of oil as a political tool even though the price increase was a pure economic matter and was sustained by Western oil companies. This rhetoric reflected an insistence on using expressions like “Arab oil prices,” “Arab oil extortion,” “Arab oil policies,” “Arab oil regime,” “Arab curtail,” regardless of the fact that non-OPEC oil producers also increased the price of their oil—Canada was charging the US a price slightly higher than the OPEC price at the time.<sup>305</sup> The leading voices for price increase in OPEC were mainly non-Arab members (Iran and Venezuela); the key to lowering oil prices were Iran and Saudi Arabia. While Iran held the leadership of OPEC and constantly called for a price increase, Saudi Arabia along with the small Gulf countries (with the exception of Kuwait) repeatedly pronounced support for lowering the prices. Moreover, oil revenues benefited Western oil companies and a fraction of the Arab elite, whereas the majority of Arab countries imported their energy needs and were strongly affected by the economic crisis and the inflation coincided with the oil, food, and other commodity price increase in the 1970s.<sup>306</sup>

The use of the term “Arab oil” reflected a calculated effort to pin Arabs as solely and unequivocally responsible for the worldwide economic crisis.<sup>307</sup> Neoconservatives, as I argue, understood the “Arab oil” policies within the framework of the clash of civilizations. Arab oil policies were not motivated by economic calculation, rather, they were ideologically motivated by the desire to defeat the Western other. Daniel Pipes in his “Oil Wealth Confers New Dignity on Islam” in the *Chicago Tribune* provides an example of this understanding:

The many defeats and humiliations that Muslims have endured since the 18th century have been severely trying. European technology, political ideals, military organization, economic structures, and cultural forms have overturned their traditional ways ... Then

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<sup>305</sup> Comment by Senator Walter F. Mondale in the American Enterprise Institute Round Table. McCracken, et al. *The Energy Crisis*, 39.

<sup>306</sup> The bread riots in Egypt in 1977 and the working-class upheavals in Tunisia (1976-1978) are but an example of the impact of the economic crisis on the non-oil producers’ Arab countries.

<sup>307</sup> OPEC was often used as a synonym for the Arab. On Iran and Venezuela’s role in OPEC price increase, see among others, Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky. *The Great*, 183; Feith. “The Oil Weapon,” 24.

in the 1970s came the oil boom. Suddenly, Muslims could stand up to their Christian nemesis.<sup>308</sup>

The oil policies, hence, became entangled with the Persian/Arab/ Muslim identity. Oil, the neoconservatives argued, cannot be extensively controlled by “them,” nor can it be negotiated outside the realm of confrontation between two cultures, the civilized, rational, democratic West versus the irrational, greedy, uncivilized non-Western Middle East. What became at stake then was not just the few extra dollars the West had to add to its energy bill, but the “fate of civilization.”<sup>309</sup> According to this narrative, the native is not to be trusted with the oil wealth (or any other source of wealth for that matter) for its grave danger makes him a threat in the future, and he as well as humanity will be better off so long as he is kept at bay.

The epigraph to the piece presents the story of the scorpion who asked a frog for help to cross a river and end up stinging him and both of them die. The authors of the book version of the story ended with the scorpion stating “you evidently did not know that this is the Middle East,” as opposed to “this is my nature” in the original story.<sup>310</sup> The portrayal of the Middle East as a place in which irrationality is not an undercurrent but rather the normal state of mind delegitimizes the choices made by its people. It predicts events and actions, draws conclusions in advance, and presents them as facts that fit an already made-up strategy. In this case, for instance, Arabs’ desire to destroy Israel and not Israeli occupation was the reason for the war; Arab “irrationality” and not the US airlift to Israel is what led to the oil embargo; Arab hatred towards the West was what instigated the increase in the oil prices and not economic necessities. Irrationality combined with the lack of democracy and modernity ruled out the ability to reach a political solution, a peace settlement, or an economic agreement, with these irrational Arab/Muslim-majority countries, leaving the military option as the only way to deal with them. Neoconservative military experts, strategists, and political scientists provided not one but several potential scenarios for the war and rationalized it. “Why should men be ‘reasonable,’ according to Western lights, when they have come so far and so fast by being unreasonable?” asked Tucker. Laqueur described the Arabs as people who live in an “unreal world” and are willing to sacrifice millions of their people in their desire to destroy Israel:

[A]t the most the Arabs could destroy Israel at the price of their own suicide. In the unreal world in which they live, it seems not to have occurred to them that, if faced with the destruction of their state and the annihilation of their people, the Israelis, like Samson,

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<sup>308</sup> Daniel Pipes. “Oil Wealth Confers New Dignity on Islam,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 1980. Accessed January 9, 2023, <https://www.danielpipes.org/17046/oil-wealth-confers-new-dignity-on-islam>.

<sup>309</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky, *The Great*, 71.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

would probably prefer to die with the Philistines, bringing down with them more than the “ten millions” which some of the Arab Maoists are willing to sacrifice. Today these are apocalyptic visions, fairly soon they may be reality.<sup>311</sup>

Kristol elaborated on this idea of irrationality in his “Notes on the Yom Kippur War,” published in the *Wall Street Journal*, on October 18, 1973:

[I]t is wishful thinking to expect, in our lifetime, that the Arabs are going to be “reasonable” *vis-à-vis* Israel, or foreign oil companies, or anything else which they regard as an infringement of their historic rights over the areas settled by the Arab people (or assimilated, by conquest or conversion, into the Arab world). Their idea of “reasonableness” is utterly different from ours. They are less interested in making money or in the world’s good opinion than in reviving a lost grandeur.<sup>312</sup>

This narrative takes up a binary logic, for the irrational Middle East is in opposition to the rational West. Irrationality then is any act that is in opposition to Western interests (for instance, Israel, foreign oil companies). Such an act is thought to be irrational because it stems from a deep-rooted historic rage carried by the Middle Eastern “native” against the West. In the meantime, the West —as represented here by “Israel,” “foreign oil companies,” and “oil consuming nations” — is supposed to be rational in retrospect, for its actions are in alignment with their political and economic interests rather than with their ancient history or ideology. According to this logic, the hatred persists regardless of the Western exploitation of oil resources, Israeli occupation, American military intervention, or anything else because it is deeply rooted in the non-Western consciousness. In *The Great Détente Disaster*, the authors explained:

In the oil game, no Israel, no America, because without Israel America has no cards to play with the Arab members of OPEC. The elimination of Israel, in fact, could easily confirm the Arab OPEC nations’ confidence in their capacities to persist in their enrichment, and would display to a watching world an enfeebled West the more vulnerable to further contrived depredations originating elsewhere.<sup>313</sup>

Whether or not the Middle East is ruled by US allies, its oil cannot be secured so long as the oil is not fully under the dominance of the West. Constructing a narrative in which the Middle Eastern person is an “enemy by default” justifies policies that would be unjustifiable anywhere else because they are imperial in their nature. Hence, in service of the imperial project, neoconservatives played the role of the experts, in other words, the same role previously played by their Orientalist successors. For instance, during the 1976 Senate Committee on Foreign

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<sup>311</sup> Laqueur, *Confrontation*, 233.

<sup>312</sup> I. Kristol, *Neoconservatives*, 202.

<sup>313</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky, *The Great*, 183.

Relations Hearing *Prospects for Peace in the Middle East*, Luttwak, upon delivering his testimony, was introduced to congress members as a Professor in the John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. There was no mention of his—then current—work as advisor for the Pentagon, nor of his previous work as a military strategist for the Israeli army. He provided what was perceived to be an “expert” opinion, where he stated, among other things, the following:

It is absolutely preposterous to suggest that in the long term the entire energy basis of the Western economy can be predicated upon developing a relationship with Saudi Arabia. It is preposterous because of the *nature* of Saudi Arabia as a country, the *nature* of its society, the *nature* of its politics and the fact that it exists in the Middle East.<sup>314</sup> [emphasis added]

The references to “the nature of Saudi Arabia,” as a country, its society, and its politics, cannot be overemphasized, it is that which supposedly opposes the “nature” of Western countries, societies, and politics. The prospect of maintaining good relations with the region’s people even if by treating them as guarantors of Western interests becomes “preposterous,” for it is simply impossible due to the very “nature” of the “natives.” In other words, Luttwak pretends that the direction of US foreign policy toward the region does not influence the reaction of its inhabitants to the US, as if their hatred toward Western values, culture, and people were “natural” and deeply seated in their consciousness. What purportedly holds true for Saudi Arabia can be applied to any and all of the other countries in the Middle East — with the obvious exception of Israel.

Let us now compare the previous quote from Luttwak with a quote from *Commentary*’s “Getting Serious about Iran: For Regime Change” by Amir Taheri in November 2006. Taheri advised the Bush administration to remain guided in its policy toward Iran “by the recognition that the Islamic Republic is toxic because its nature is to be toxic— because of its ideological DNA—and that, although its behavior can intermittently be influenced, ultimately the regime itself must be defeated and replaced.”<sup>315</sup> The similarity between these two narratives is striking; they both reiterate the understanding of the region as an area inhabited by people whose danger is “implacable, irremediable and unending,” for the ultimate goal of Arabs/Muslims is neither

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<sup>314</sup> For the full statement see, “Prospects for Peace in the Middle East.” US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. 94th Cong., 2nd sess., May 19, June 7, 21, 30 July 19 and 28, 1976. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1976. 204-24, accessed April 2, 2021. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pur1.32754076954977&seq=1>.

<sup>315</sup> Amir Taheri, “Getting Serious about Iran: For Regime Change,” *Commentary*, November 2006, accessed April 7, 2021 <https://www.commentary.org/articles/amir-taheri-2/getting-serious-about-iran-for-regime-change/>

economic nor political, but ideological.<sup>316</sup> The threat posed by the Middle East is neither just its geostrategic location nor its control of high oil reserves. The fundamental threat is its “nature,” namely, core values fundamentally antipathetic to Western values. As we can see, for neoconservatives, the rivalry between the Western and non-Western culture is inevitable; this rivalry is not guided by actual US policies or Israeli occupation affecting the region, but by the Muslim/Arab need for vengeance that overrides their desire for peace.<sup>317</sup>

Not surprisingly, this neoconservative narrative of the “native” thirst for vengeance already existed and circulated well before the oil embargo. More than a year before the oil embargo and the oil price increase, Eugen Rostow argued that:

[The US allies in the Middle East] realize that the idea of revenge against Israel is sterile and self-destructive and that its true purpose is not the destruction of Israel but the radicalization of Arab politics in Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and the Persian Gulf area. But few can publicly oppose the dream of a holy war when opinion is inflamed by the call to battle.<sup>318</sup>

According to Rostow, the desire for a “holy war,” is so prevalent among the native subjects that only a “few” of them have the power to publicly oppose it. The theme of the holy war/Jihad was also used by Laqueur when he referred to the embargo as being used by oil producing countries to heed to the outcry of Jihad: “Had war not broken out, the Arab oil producers might not have made such effective use of the oil weapon; in the general climate engendered by the Jihad they could do no less.”<sup>319</sup> The use of terms such as “the holy war” and “Jihad” present the conflict as religious, not political, which makes it an unsolvable one. It evokes an old fear of Muslims taking over the world, possessing the oil power, and thus posing a deadly danger to the West. As such, in the hands of the Middle Eastern “natives,” the wealth brought by oil is a threat because their desire to prevail over the West overrides their desire for peace, which makes them incompetent to handle wealth brought by oil or other resources. If these resources and the wealth were in Western hands, they would be better off. Once this analogy is constructed, the conflict turns into one in which only one side can prevail and the two sides cannot coexist peacefully. The alternative to seizing Arab oil would be to live in a world in which the West would be at “mercy of the Arabs.”<sup>320</sup> In “Notes on Yom Kippur War” (1973),

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<sup>316</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, xii.

<sup>317</sup> This was the main argument in AlRoy’s “Do the Arabs Want Peace?”

<sup>318</sup> Eugen Rostow, *Peace in the Balance: The Future of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 252.

<sup>319</sup> Laqueur, *Confrontation*, 106, 25-226.

<sup>320</sup> Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky, *The Great*, 72-73; Luttwak, “Seizing”; Tucker, “Oil.”

I. Kristol indicated the “profound conviction” among Arabs that their newly found power would soon revive the glory of their past and defeat the West:

The Arabs, in contrast [to Jewish people] believe that it is *unnatural* for them to be politically or militarily inferior to any other people. Centuries of subordination, even of foreign occupation, have made only a small impression on this profound conviction. For Arabs, the glories of medieval empire are like yesterday; the intervening centuries are a lamentable hiatus, of no intrinsic significance or even of much interest, and “soon” to be annulled by foredestined triumph.<sup>321</sup> [Emphasis added]

Kristol’s foredestined triumph is the newly found power of their oil or what Pipes referred to as the “oil boom” that would allow Muslims “to stand up to their Christian nemesis.”<sup>322</sup> If evoking the threat of Jihad was not enough, in “Seizing the Arab Oil,” Luttwak drew a gloomy picture of a world in which the oil remains in the hands of the Arabs and Muslims:

For if we do not do it [take control of oil fields], Project Independence will in fact be Project Isolation, with a somewhat impoverished America surrounded by a world turned into a slum. Almost everywhere, this would be an authoritarian slum, the product of utter hopelessness among the poor and mass unemployment among the former rich, all of us being forced to finance the executive jets of the sheiks and the fighter bombers of the dictators.<sup>323</sup>

Luttwak’s reference to the Shah’s armament is clear; it is a reminder that the neoconservative rhetoric did not really distinguish between Iran and the Arab countries. Being a non-Western and a predominantly Muslim country, Iran was not exempt from neoconservative narratives about presumed Arab/Muslim irrationality, albeit, to a lesser degree. Like the Arab leaders, the Shah was seeking to redress ancient wrongs. However, the Shah, an outwardly secular man, who did not hide his desire to westernize Iran, did not fit in with the image of the angry Muslim drawn by neoconservatives. Nevertheless, irrationality remained entangled with his identity. Rather than Islamic ideology, the Shah’s desire for wealth and power justified his fanatic nationalism; he wanted to revive the glory of Cyrus the Great, the Persian emperor. In “Oil and the Decline of Western Power” and in the “Oil: Issue of American intervention,” respectively, we read:

One should never discount dreams, especially dreams of glory. The Shah of Iran dreams of restoring the glories of Persia. The King of Saudi Arabia foresees a Moslem

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<sup>321</sup> I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative*, 202. Kristol uses the word Arab, however, he is clearly talking about Muslims, for there is no such thing as an Arab medieval empire. The Islamic Empire, on the other hand, controlled the Middle East, North Africa, parts of Asia into India and parts of Europe into Spain.

<sup>322</sup> Daniel Pipes, “Oil Wealth.”

<sup>323</sup> Luttwak, “Seizing.”

renaissance. Visions of redressing ancient wrongs and modern misdeeds abound. Risks, then, may be worth running for the dreamer.<sup>324</sup>

[T]he major producer governments are not moved simply by economic calculation. The Shah of Iran now dreams the dreams of his ancestors, and the Western world, by its actions, encourages him to do so. The Arabs now dream of righting a humiliation that for centuries has lain deeply embedded in their consciousness.<sup>325</sup>

The Shah here is just like the Arabs. Both are stuck in the past, unable foresee the future, their action is driven by irrationality and hegemonic desire. The fact that Iran, at the time, was on good terms with Israel and the Shah allied himself with the US were taken into consideration, for instance, by making Iran complaisant in the intervention plans, however, a complaisant that is not to be trusted, we read in Luttwak, for example:

Even though a sharp cut in oil prices would seriously damage the Shah's dreams of grandeur, Iran and the Shah would nevertheless remain dependent on the United States. ... Reluctantly and privately, the Shah would most probably accept an American action he cannot prevent, for the alternative would be war with Iran's only protector.<sup>326</sup>

The conscious use of statements like the Shah's "dreams of grandeur" references the fact his "untrustworthiness" and "irrationality" were consistent attributes in the native identity, and they were to be tolerated only when the political goals of maintaining the alliance between Iran and Israel superseded the economic goals of lowering oil prices. When the political goals were not met, Iran subscribed to the same logic. The following quote, for instance, is taken from Douglas Feith's lengthy article "The Oil Weapon Demystified," where he argued that the use of the oil as a weapon by the Arab countries following 1973 war was "ineffective." However, in the hands of the Islamic Republic, he argued, oil is "an actual weapon," he stated:

Oil in the hands of the Iranian Islamic Republic is an actual weapon, albeit one that cuts the wielder more deeply than the targets. That the irrationality of the Khomeini regime has led to the use of Iranian oil as a political weapon does not, however, militate in favor of maximizing U. S. political cooperation with the Ayatollah. Not to put too fine a point on it, political deals with such people are likely to prove disappointing and wasteful. If a regime is really capable of self-destructive fits of oil weaponeering, Americans must either live without it or act against it, but they should hardly put faith in political bargains with it.<sup>327</sup>

As a Middle East specialist, Feith forsakes the political option as a way to deal with the new Iranian regime in favor of either living without Iran, which is technically impossible

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<sup>324</sup> Edward Friedland, Paul Seabury, and Aaron Wildavsky. "Oil and the Decline of Western Power." *Political Science Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (1975): 437–50. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2148295>.

<sup>325</sup> Tucker, "Oil."

<sup>326</sup> Luttwak "Seizing."

<sup>327</sup> Feith. "The Oil Weapon," 24.

considering Iran's geopolitical and geostrategic importance, or acting against it. In other words, the only rational option to deal with irrational Iran was to act against it. When Feith wrote his article in 1981 Iran was undergoing a revolutionary change and the US in fact was able to successfully cut its first political deal with the new regime (the American hostages in the embassy in Tehran were released without meeting any of the original requests made by the Iranians).<sup>328</sup> Within a year of writing this article, Feith was appointed as counsel for the Pentagon in the Reagan administration and, by 1984, ironically, he was promoted to be the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Negotiations Policy.<sup>329</sup>

When political tensions rise between countries, a serious engagement in discussion and an honest attempt to understand the political position of the other party, hypothetically, would be employed to achieve peace and stability, or at the very least reduce tension. For the neoconservatives, any manifestation of opposition to what Glant aptly labeled “the rise of the US as the new European colonizer” is not viewed as a response to US hegemony, nor as a result of political and economic circumstances that are subject to development and transformation.<sup>330</sup> Instead, it is perceived as a reflection of the monolithic, regressive, irrational, and unstable nature of Muslims. Consequently, the clash between Muslims and non-Muslims (the clash of civilizations) is inevitable and the use of force is the only way for the West to prevail. Accepting and recycling narratives such as Feith's prevented a genuine understanding of what was happening in Iran. For instance, when educated, middle-class Iranian students embraced Khomeini, the seventy-year-old medieval cleric, as the leader of their revolution, their support was understood to be a proof of Iranian irrationality, not a sign of their desperation with the Shah's oppression and tyranny. The attack on the embassy was also explained on the basis of Iranians'/Muslims' long-standing hatred of the West — not as a demonstration of Iranians' fear of American intervention to rescue the Shah. By considering these views (Muslim/Arab irrationality and their deeply-rooted hatred toward the West) to be indisputable truth and a never-changing reality had consequences: it prevented reviewing the US policies and actions

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<sup>328</sup> For more on the American hostage crisis, see Edward W. Said's *Covering Islam, How the Media and Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

<sup>329</sup> Feith was appointed as counsel for Richard Pipes, the Assistant Secretary of Defense, in 1982 before getting promoted to be the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Negotiations Policy. Even after he left the administration, he remained active in preparing public policy projects in issues related to the Middle East and defense policy; he also provided consultation to conservatives in the Congress. In 2001, in the Bush administration, he was appointed Undersecretary of Defense for Policy. See Douglas Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism*. (New York: Harper, 2008), 37-42.

<sup>330</sup> Tibor Glant, “Terrorism and Anti-Americanism: 9/11 Ten Years After.” *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)* 18, no. 1/2 (2012): 507, accessed Jan 24, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43488489> .

in supporting the authoritarian regime of the Shah, disregarded the underlying grievances and conditions that led the Iranian people to revolution, and downplayed the American mistakes that allowed viewing the US as complicit with the Shah's regime. Hence, the assumption that any change in US policy does not necessarily constitute a change in the reality of "such people" prevents alternative—more logical—explanations from emerging to describe the deterioration of US relations with Iran—or any other Muslim / Arab country— as well as the construction of new methods to communicate, rectify, and enhance these relations.

The neoconservatives aligned the US policy in the region with that of Israel; they shared a mentality that saw the regimes in the Middle East— aside from Israel— and by implication their nations, as inherently evil, untrustworthy, destructive, and unpredictable. Their foreign policy doctrine was guided by a firm belief that the only way to deal with—what they perceived as—evil regimes was a policy of confrontation and intimidation. These hypotheses about the Arab/Muslim hatred of the West were presented by neoconservatives as an objective reality. Their rhetoric transformed an entire region with its mixture of cultures and traditions into a potential enemy that has nothing in mind but to seek the destruction of Western civilization. There are several problems with this rhetorical framework, the least of which is that it is quite simplistic; for neither the Middle East nor the West is monolithic, mono-ethnic, or mono-ideological, and such massive generalizations about the Muslim East versus the Judeo-Christian West are unrealistic. They cannot but lead to persistent conflict and antipathy toward one another. Moreover, if we speak of the West as a "Judeo-Christian" civilization, then we should also speak of a Judeo-Christian-Islamic and "otherwise" Middle East, as all these religious and cultural traditions play an integral part in the region's history.<sup>331</sup> Another problem is that this framework does not provide any distinction between Islamic fundamentalism as a political ideology and Islam as a culture and religion. While the former might be incompatible with "Western values," the latter has largely embraced Western values. The assertion of Muslim hatred toward the West is, however, a grave call and immense danger, for close to two billion believers follow Islam, including many Westerners, practicing its teachings and rituals in almost every corner of the World. Additionally, the fact that in pre-colonial times the region enjoyed long extended periods of peace—and even when conflicts appeared, they never reached the extent of full-blown wars similar to those between European countries. Various ethnic, cultural and religious minorities have coexisted in harmony for centuries, thus, refuting

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<sup>331</sup> It is worth noting here that Christian Arabs played an integral part in the Pan-Arab movements and the struggle against imperialism in the region, especially in Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon. For instance, all the major communist parties in the region were established by Christian Arabs.

the claim that Islam is in a constant state of conflict or that peace is incongruent with the mentality of the region's "native."

Ironically, fundamentalists and fanatics shared these views. They used such narratives to justify their resort to violence against Muslims. Claiming that Islam is in a state of war with the West and those who do not share the radicals' views are not Muslim enough; and this narrative is precisely what makes great number of terrorist acts tend to occur in Muslim-majority countries and are often perpetrated against Muslim communities. The neoconservative war machine targeted the Arab oil-producing countries in the 1970s; in the 1980s it went after Iran; in the 1990s, against Iraq and Iran; in the aftermath of 9/11, the list grew to include Syria along with Iraq, and Iran. Currently (in 2024), Iran remains the primary target, at least until another country declines to consent to the will of America. These countries should not be absolved from criticism, for their misdeeds and the ongoing brutalization of their citizens are in no way to be excused, but the criticism should also include those of other countries that enjoy American aid and protection like Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and many more.

#### **2.4. Conclusion**

For the neoconservatives and politicians who opposed détente, the 1973 war and the consequent oil crisis provided an opportunity to "achieve new consensus among American opinion leaders" and unite them in a collective intellectual and political effort to reverse the direction of American foreign policy abroad and to counter neo-isolationist/anti-war trends at home. Through publications and statements, neoconservatives rationalized the idea that the Arab countries supported by the Soviets were using militaristic and economic means to destroy the basis of Western civilization. That is, capitalism and liberal democracy as represented by Israel and the liberal economic order. They constructed their views within the ideological framework of Muslims' inherited hatred toward non-Muslims and their desire to destroy Western civilization. They argued that coexistence and political solutions are ineffective with such evil powers and their tactics of intimidation. A serious threat of using force, if not actually pursuing it, is the way for the West to prevail. The morality and legality of invading sovereign nations on economic bases were dismissed for being misguided and the fear of public opposition was discounted, for the need for oil, neoconservatives argued in their publications, is something the public can relate to and understand. However, contrary to their perceptions,

an overwhelming majority of the American people rejected the idea of fighting a war for oil.<sup>332</sup> A bipartisan consensus for war was not achieved, as both the Democrats and the Republicans were more involved in domestic issues—Watergate and the anti-Vietnam war movement—than on foreign policy debate. The allies and oil companies opposed the idea of war on the basis that it could only worsen the economic situation and increase the fluctuation of the oil market.

Nevertheless, neoconservative publications precipitated several statements by President Ford, his Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense, in which the use of force was considered as a possibility only in the event of the “economic strangulation of the West.”<sup>333</sup> These statements were fortified by a press release from the Pentagon that indicated the alteration of the US’ Seventh Fleet and by leaks about the US Marines’ preparation for a potential invasion of desert countries.<sup>334</sup> In *The New York Review of Books*, I. F. Stone in his “War for Oil?” suggested that the leaks and articles that considered war in the Middle East seemed to be “part of a deliberate strategy to frighten the Arabs.”<sup>335</sup> The timing of these articles and the manner in which they were propagated points to cooperation between hawkish officials in the Ford administration and neoconservative commentators in their efforts to prepare the American public for war as a moral and necessary measure.

This chapter analyzed several neoconservative texts; it demonstrated that along with militaristic and hardline anti-communist stances—which give neoconservatism its distinct character during the Cold War years—unilateralism, preemptiveness, and anti-Arab/-Muslim discourses were also an integral part of neoconservative narratives in the 1970s. This expansion in defining the characteristics of neoconservatism proves that contrary to the existing literature about neoconservatism, there are no ideological differences between foreign policy of the first generation of neoconservatives and that of the second and third generations.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> The calls for war in 1974-1975 provoked the first “national conversation about blood and oil in the United States,” and polls at the time indicated that the overwhelming majority—to be precise, more than 80% percent—of American people rejected the idea of using military force for oil. See Herbstreuth, *Oil and American Identity*, 169.

<sup>333</sup> “Oil Fields,” 79.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-82; I. F. Stone, “War for Oil,” *The New York Review of Books*. February 6, 1975, accessed March 8, 2022, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1975/02/06/war-for-oil/>.

<sup>335</sup> Stone, “War for Oil.”

<sup>336</sup> In particular, Fukuyama’s *America at the Crossroads*, in which Fukuyama disowned his neoconservative title and claimed that neoconservatism under the Bush administration had evolved into something he could no longer support or identify with. Richard Perle, who claimed that, “there is no such thing as a Neocon attitude in the questions of foreign and defense policy,” as quoted on Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 257.

Neoconservatism as a political power remained scattered between the two parties in the 1970s. It would not be until the election of Ronald Reagan that the neoconservatives would become a united force under the Republican banner and gain control of the conduct and ideologies of American foreign policy. However, the neoconservative war campaign, as the following chapter demonstrates, evidently had a political and psychological impact on the attitudes and decisions of both the Arab countries and Iran. It drove the regional powers to increase their arms spending and expand their military buildup, which on the one hand impacted the power dynamics between these countries, and on the other hand, affected the development of these countries as well as their economic plans—especially those of Iraq and Iran. Additionally, this war campaign created a state of ambivalence, cynicism, and suspicion among these countries as well as in their attitudes toward the US. Finally, it prolonged the Arab-Israeli conflict, fueled anti-Americanism, and empowered repressive regimes and radical movements in the Middle East and beyond.

## Chapter 3

### The New International Economic Order: Neoconservative Discourse, Iranian Influence, and Human Rights Dynamics

#### 3.1. Introduction

At the opening ceremony of the First International Conference on Human Rights, held in Tehran in 1968, the Shah of Iran addressed the conference attendants and put emphasis on the right to development as a prerequisite to ensure an actual application of human rights and freedom:

The gap which is constantly widening between the developing nations and the more privileged ones is one of the most powerful brakes hampering the full realization of human rights. For as long as the conditions have not been fulfilled for giving to all human beings access to the benefits of scientific and technical progress, the rights laid down in the Universal Declaration may well remain a dead letter in many parts of the world. We should urgently take stock of this situation and we ought to abandon the obsolete structures of the past.<sup>337</sup>

The remarks made by the Shah were also emphasized in the final declaration of the conference, formally known as the “Declaration of Tehran,” in which the participants asserted the collective responsibility of the international community to narrow the gap between the standards of living of developed and developing countries. Adjusting the rules and practices of the worlds’ economic institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund was one of the ways the Shah and many other representatives of Third World countries suggested to do so.<sup>338</sup> They claimed that these institutions only worked to advance the interests of developing nations while reinforcing practices and conditions that hindered Third World countries’ ability to improve their economic situations and catch up with First World nations. For the majority of developing countries, the only way to bridge the gap with industrialized nations and correct global economic injustices was by increasing the price of raw materials. Oil, by far, was the most important of these. Hence, newly independent countries in the Third World considered the General Assembly as an arena in which to demand a structural change in the international economic order by whose formal institutions they were constantly marginalized and

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<sup>337</sup> “Final Act of the International Conference on Human Rights, 22 April – 13 May, Tehran, 1968”. Address Delivered by His Imperial Majesty the Shahin Shah Aryameh. *United Nation Organization, Office of Legal Affairs*. 34, accessed March 2, 2022. [https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/fatchr/Final\\_Act\\_of\\_TehranConf.pdf](https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/fatchr/Final_Act_of_TehranConf.pdf).

<sup>338</sup> Daniel J. Whelan, ““Under the Aegis of Man”: The Right to Development and the Origins of the New International Economic Order.” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 6, no. 1 (2015): 93-108. [doi:10.1353/hum.2015.0007](https://doi.org/10.1353/hum.2015.0007).

systematically deprived of the benefits of development and progress.<sup>339</sup> However, in a world marked by polarization, where developing nations were dependent on either one of the super powers for protection and support, developing countries were unable to challenge the existing economic and political order. Détente and the relaxation of tension between the US and the USSR provided an atmosphere in which cultural, economic, technical, and even military cooperation took the place of hostility and ideological confrontation between the Eastern and the Western bloc. Simultaneously, the evolution of Third World countries as an organized voting force in the UN, the recognition of the People's Republic of China as a permanent member of the Security Council, and the emergence of new economic, cultural, and geographical alliances—such as the European Communities, the Arab League, The Organization for the African States, and The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Group of 77, etc.—, as well as the formation of new international raw material-based cartels proved that the global dynamic in the mid-1970s started shifting toward multipolarity. Thus, the concerns related to the East-West confrontation, the balance of power, and the great powers' spheres of influence that previously dominated world politics have been replaced by the North-South dialogue, energy security, and economic cooperation.<sup>340</sup> These developments allowed small countries to disentangle themselves from the East-West ideological commitment and political polarization that did not serve their best interests and made them less dependent on stronger allies for aid and protection. As it was discussed in more detail in the second chapter, the world's new realities impacted oil producing countries in several ways. Most notably, oil-producing countries were finally cartelized in one united and organized body—OPEC—that was immune to the countervailing maneuvers of oil companies and strong consumer countries. As a result, the producers gradually came to control the level of exports and the pricing; they challenged the existing price and more than doubled it and at the same time forced the largest and most powerful consumer countries (the US, France, Germany, and Britain) to drop the threat of confrontation and to accept direct dialogue and bilateral agreements. The emergence of OPEC and its ability to empower oil producing countries over the Western oil companies provided the Third World countries with a new source of power and hope that a more just economic order might be attainable. This chapter analyzes the alliance between oil producing countries and Third World countries and why it was perceived to be necessary for oil producing

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<sup>339</sup> The voting power in international institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund was based on financial contributions which resulted in the domination of poor countries by rich countries. The voting power in the General Assembly was based on membership, and the majority of UN members were developing countries. Sargent, *A Superpower*, 176.

<sup>340</sup> Sargent, *A Superpower*, chapter 6. Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 99.

countries to counter the threat of military action against their nations and pose a grave threat to Western countries. The alliance also weaponized raw materials against the West. The chapter considers the neoconservatives' rhetoric against NIEO and the way in which it reflects the same logic neoconservatives applied toward OPEC's economic decision of increasing the oil prices in 1973. The chapter showcases how the language of human rights was applied by neoconservatives as a counteroffensive against NIEO and sovereign rights. Lastly, the chapter aims to situate Iran within the context of NIEO and Third World struggles for economic rights and argues that every policy the neoconservatives advocated for in order to respond to anti-Americanism has only helped to expand anti-Americanism. Namely, the neoconservative call for the US to stand in opposition to the aspiration for freedom and equality of Third World countries alienated the US and legitimized equating liberalism with imperialism; in addition, their unconditional support for Israel fueled anti-Americanism, initiated the oil embargo, and empowered the opponents of American allies.

### 3.2. Neoconservative Rhetoric against NIEO

Following the oil crisis, American public opinion and the opinion of many in the political establishment was shifting away from the responsibilities that had defined US foreign policy objectives since the early years of the Cold War—protecting allies and preventing the spread of communism—in favor of interdependence-related concerns: restoring international monetary order, ensuring energy security after the oil crisis, and fostering North-South cooperation.<sup>341</sup> A demonstration of this shift can be grasped by the establishment of the Trilateral Commission by David Rockefeller and his advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, in 1973.<sup>342</sup> The Trilateral Commission was an elite, nongovernmental international think tank of experts from industrial countries (in North America, Far East, and Western Europe) who acknowledged, sought to address, and accommodate the challenges posed by the world's new interdependent realities.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>341</sup>Robert O. Koehane and Joseph S. Nay explained the term interdependence as a form of “mutual dependence; situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries. These effects often result from international transactions—flows of money, goods, people, and messages across international boundaries.” For instance, the US did not rely on oil imports but was impacted by the economic crisis that hit industrial countries that relied on oil imports. Koehane and Nay, *Power and Interdependence*, 7, 10. A poll in 1974-1975 showed that only 35 percent of Americans supported defending US allies and thought that protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression should be a national priority, compared with 70 percent who agreed that “fostering international coordination [was] to solve common problems such as food, inflation, and energy” is an important foreign policy goal. Sargent, *A Superpower*, 165-167.

<sup>342</sup> The commission sought the membership of key political leaders. At some point Jimmy Carter and George W. H. Bush were both associated with the Trilateral Commission.

<sup>343</sup> “About the Trilateral Commission,” *Trilateral Commission*, accessed March 24, 2022, <https://www.trilateral.org/about/>.

The commission aimed to increase political and economic cooperation among the three regions as a way to “preserve the existing structure of Western power and predominance.”<sup>344</sup> This optimism was not shared by neoconservatives who did not perceive the economic cooperation between industrial nations as a way to combat the mounting threat of communism and Third World ideology. Neoconservatives believed that communism remained the main threat to American liberalism, and that 1970s communism was far stronger than the communism of the 1950s and 1960s, for the Soviet Union had achieved strategic parity, found a foothold in Western Europe, and —through empowering radical Arabs and inciting the Arab nations to take a more active role in fighting Israel—constructed a path to take over the oil supplies of the Middle East. To make matters more dangerous, the new world realities allied communist regimes with Third World countries and transformed Third World countries and the UN into “agencies of anti-Americanism”.

The adaptation of the Declaration of the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in 1974, was the outset of the power the Third World countries developed as a result of the success of OPEC, even more so since NIEO was followed by other resolutions that hoped to rationalize it: the Program of Action on the Establishment of a NIEO and the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States. NIEO was the fruit of decades of activism to achieve economic equality; it meant to allow developed countries to control their natural resources, nationalize foreign multinational property, and to bring international institutions to support the price of commodities and accommodate the needs of developed countries.<sup>345</sup> The alliance between Third World countries and OPEC empowered both parties and united them in what neoconservatives considered as an anti-American and anti-liberal democratic ideology.

An economic order that is in accordance with NIEO principles of economic justice and sovereignty over natural resources meant the alteration of the Western-led economic order. As such, NIEO presented a novel and potentially revolutionary threat that, according to Irving Kristol, mounted a “New Cold War.”<sup>346</sup> *Commentary* launched a relentless attack against the UN and NIEO, in articles whose titles could not be more revealing; to name but a few: Peter Bauer and Basil Yamey’s “Against the New International Economic Order”; Bauer’s “Western

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<sup>344</sup> Sargent, *A Superpower*, 172.

<sup>345</sup> Sargent, *A Superpower*, 177.

<sup>346</sup> Quoted in Michael Franczak, “Losing the Battle, Winning the War: Neoconservatives versus the New International Economic Order,” 1974–82, *Diplomatic History*, Volume 43, Issue 5, November 2019, 867–89, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhz043>.

Guilt and Third World Poverty”; Walter Laqueur’s “Third World Fantasies,” “America and the World: The Next Four Years: Confronting the Problems,” “The West in Retreat,” and “Fascism: The Second Coming”; Robert W. Tucker’s “A New International Order?” and “Egalitarianism and International Politics; Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s “The United States in Opposition.”

### **3.2.1. Third World Countries are Demagogues, Suppressive, and Harbor a Nuanced Animosity toward the West.**

The neoconservative argument against NIEO recycled their rhetoric against oil producing countries; they too were presented as undemocratic totalitarian regimes with no regard for human rights and democratic values. Consequently, a new economic order in which these countries have more power would be a world order that is unequivocally harmful for world stability and prosperity. For instance, in their “Against the New Economic Order” article in *Commentary*, the authors criticized the surrender of Western nations to Third World demands and argued that NIEO was an embodiment of a radical “egalitarian ideology,” which, if unchallenged, would not lead to “an alleviation of the miseries of poverty, but the spread of totalitarian government and a further erosion of the position of the West.”<sup>347</sup> Kristol asserted that the “The very definition of “the Third World” entails hostility toward liberal capitalism.”<sup>348</sup> Similarly, Laqueur argued that “[t]he minute analysis of Third World ideologies is in general an unrewarding enterprise” for “the actions of the dictators are a surer guide to future developments than their announced ideas,” meaning that the undemocratic nature of Third World countries makes their request for a more equitable economic system unsound.<sup>349</sup> Third World countries, as he characterize them, were but “fascist dictatorships,” led by “semi-intellectuals” who “seized power through guerrilla movements or, more often, by transforming themselves into a military elite,” and whose legitimacy “is based on an aggressive stance” against the West. The West, in retrospect, Laqueur asserted, needed to “muster the courage to stop talking to demagogues with no genuine interest in economic and social improvement, for whom the nonaligned conferences, UNCTAD, the Paris ‘North-South Dialogue,’ and the

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<sup>347</sup> Peter Bauer and Basil Yamey, “Against the New Economic Order” *Commentary*, April, 1977, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/peter-bauer/against-the-new-economic-order/> Barrett et al., “America Now”; Sargent, *A superpower*, 181.

<sup>348</sup> Quoted in Moynihan and Weaver, *A Dangerous*, 95.

<sup>349</sup> Walter Laqueur, “Third World Fantasies.” *Commentary*, February 1977, accessed April 12, 2022, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/walter-laqueur/third-world-fantasies/>.

Group of 77 and other such bodies are merely a platform for their own destructive political ends.”<sup>350</sup> Needless to say, this rhetoric can only be understood in light of Laqueur’s previous calls for a military action against oil producing countries. For, the neoconservatives did not just recycle the same narrative that delegitimize the request of petrostates for higher oil prices based on their lack of democracies –as argued in the previous chapter– to delegitimize the request of Third World countries for a fair economic order, but also recycled the call for a confrontational foreign policy.

Neoconservatives collectively contested the notion of Western responsibility for Third World poverty and claimed that these countries’ requests for a more even-handed economic order were baseless. Moynihan concluded in his *Commentary*’s “The United States in Opposition” that the inequalities between nations were “not so much a matter of condition as of performance.”<sup>351</sup> Moynihan’s view was not different from those of other neoconservatives whose main argument at the time was that the underdevelopment and poverty of Third World countries were self-inflicted; they were the consequences of these countries’ rejection of liberal capitalist principles, corruption, misguided economic policies, large populations, and the sudden increase of oil prices; or, as Bauer and Yamey put it, “whatever one thinks of colonialism it can’t be held responsible for Third World poverty.”<sup>352</sup> By attacking capitalism, Third World countries were aiming to deprecate “the economic achievements of capitalism,” simply because “none of their own managed economies was doing well.”<sup>353</sup> A fair share of neoconservative criticism of NIEO was directed at the liberal political establishment that, out of guilt, was reluctant to defend capitalism and liberalism. Neoconservatives argued that by accepting the demands of developing nations, the liberal elite legitimized the narrative of Western countries’ responsibility for the deterioration of developing countries’ economic and social situation. And by doing so, they shifted the responsibility from these nations’ totalitarian governments and enabled the agenda of their bloodiest regimes. For instance, in the preface of his book, *The Inequality of Nations*, which incorporates three articles previously published in *Commentary*, Tucker stated that it was written “largely out of protest against the intellectual

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<sup>350</sup> Laqueur. “Third World”; “Fascism: The Second Coming” *Commentary*, February, 1976, accessed May 1, 2022, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/walterlaqueur/fascism-the-second-coming/>; “America and the World: The Next Four Years: Confronting the Problems” *Commentary*, March 1977, accessed May 1, 2022. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/walter-laqueur/america-and-the-world-the-next-four-years-confronting-the-problems/>

<sup>351</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “The United States in Opposition,” *Commentary*, March, 1975, accessed May 3, 2022. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/daniel-moynihan/the-united-states-in-opposition/>

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

confusion that has attended current discussions of equality in relation to international society.”<sup>354</sup> He criticized what he described as the “new political sensibility” of Western elites and their failure to foresee the true nature of the “new egalitarianism,” that “directly threatens the stability of the international system” and “pose[s a] grave peril” to the developed world.<sup>355</sup> Bauer’s stand was similar: in “Western Guilt and Third World Poverty” he argued that accepting the “allegation of the West’s responsibility” for the “so-called” Third World poverty has “paralyzed Western diplomacy, both toward the Soviet bloc and toward the Third World, where the West has abased itself before groups of countries which have negligible resources and no real power.”<sup>356</sup> This narrative unified neoconservatives with the neoliberals who opposed the anti-liberal character of NIEO and Kissinger’s tendency to prioritize geopolitical issues over economic issues; hence, both neoconservatives and neoliberals made the foreign aid to developing countries central to their counter narrative.<sup>357</sup> Kristol called for halting this aid “when [the] poor start “mau-mauing” their actual or potential benefactors, when they begin vilifying them, insulting them, demanding as of right what it is not their right to demand—then one’s sense of self-respect may properly take precedence over one’s self-imposed humanitarian intentions.”<sup>358</sup>

### **3.2.2. The New Economic Order Would Increase Inequality and Destabilizes the World**

Neoconservatives argued that altering the existing economic order, even if it led to the redistribution of wealth and power, would not improve the quality of the lives of the citizens of Third World countries; instead, it would deepen the existing inequality and further harm the individual rights of such citizens. Their arguments against NIEO relied on recycling the same narratives they used in their campaign for military action against oil producing countries. A new economic order, according to neoconservative rhetoric, would lead to the destruction of liberal based Western civilization. In Bauer and Yamey’s words, the attempts to implement NIEO would lead to “a Hobbesian war of all against all.” The new economic order’s promises of transferring wealth “would harm, rather than benefit economic growth and the quality of

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<sup>354</sup> Robert W. Tucker. *The Inequality of Nations* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 10.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid, 80-86.

<sup>356</sup> Peter Bauer, “Western Guilt & Third World Poverty,” *Commentary*, January 1976, accessed May 4, 2022, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/peter-bauer/western-guilt-third-world-poverty/>

<sup>357</sup> Jessica Whyte, “Powerless Companions or Fellow Travelers: Human Rights and the Neoliberal Assault on Post-colonial Economic Justice” *Radical Philosophy* 202, June 2018, accessed April 2022, <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/powerless-companions-or-fellow-travellers>.

<sup>358</sup> As quoted in Moynihan and Weaver, *A Dangerous Place*, 106.

living of everyone.”<sup>359</sup> As stated in the previous chapter, Tucker argued that the OPEC decision to increase oil prices was not a manifestation of interdependence but rather a promise of chaos and “an international system far harsher than today’s, or even yesterday’s, system.”<sup>360</sup> In his analysis of NIEO, he argued that post-colonial worldwide inequalities were in fact less harsh than the inequalities that existed in previous periods of history and claimed that a new economic order would facilitate the prospect of a return to anarchy and deepen existing inequalities rather than resolve them.<sup>361</sup> This analysis is unrealistic simply because in earlier periods of time the world was governed by rules and norms that permitted certain practices (i.e. slavery, colonialism, territorial wars, etc.) A new economic order by no means necessitated altering the rules, norms, or morals developed out of the past. In fact, if such an order was permitted to evolve, one might argue, it might have been but another stage in the world’s development.

This discussion about an alternative to the Western-led economic system, which neoconservatives considered to be the basis of Western civilization, cannot be viewed without reference to another important article that was published in *Commentary*. Bernard Lewis’s “The Return of Islam” (January 1976), which cannot be read apart from the general line *Commentary* was taking at the time; that is, its war against NIEO and its attacks against Third World apologists in the West. Using the word “return,” in Lewis’s article rather than the word “revival,” makes it clear that Lewis sees Islam as a political force and not as a faith:

Islam is a very powerful but still an undirected force in politics. As a possible factor in international politics, the present prognosis is not very favorable. There have been many attempts at a pan-Islamic policy, none of which has made much progress. One reason for their lack of success is that those who have made the attempt have been so unconvincing. This still leaves the possibility of a more convincing leadership, and there is ample evidence in virtually all Muslim countries of the deep yearning for such a leadership and a readiness to respond to it. *The lack of an educated modern leadership has so far restricted the scope of Islam and inhibited religious movements from being serious contenders for power.* But it is already very effective as a limiting factor and may yet become a powerful domestic political force if the right kind of leadership emerges.<sup>362</sup>

As we can see, Lewis insists that Islam is still “an undirected force in politics,” and goes on to argue that all political movements in the Arab world have an Islamic underpinning and a fixation with overtaking the non-Muslims. Of course, he fails to point out that the common feature of all the political movements in the so-called Muslim world was their opposition to

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<sup>359</sup> Bauer and Yamey. “Against”.

<sup>360</sup> Tucker, “Oil”

<sup>361</sup> Tucker. *The Inequality*, 62-64.

<sup>362</sup> Bernard Lewis. “The Return of Islam” *Commentary*, January 1976, accessed May 4, 2022.

<https://www.commentary.org/articles/bernard-lewis/the-return-of-islam/>.

imperialism and colonialism rather than their opposition to non-Muslims.<sup>363</sup> It needs mentioning that Lewis's arguments overlap with neoconservative narratives in several ways. To begin with, Lewis misquotes medieval Muslim jurists of the 7th century to explain the political movements in the Middle East in the 20th century.<sup>364</sup> As if the Islam that had fought the Persian and the Roman empires out of the Levant and Arab peninsula was returning to fight and humiliate non-Muslim-Israel and its allies; for him, Muslims did not just share the same mentality and desire but they were also eager to take part in such a fight. This obsession with killing "the Saturday people and the Sunday people" (Christian and Jews) is supposedly a reaction to "the traumatic era when Muslim governments and empires were overthrown and Muslim peoples forcibly subjected to alien, infidel rule." Arguably, the reference to religion would not have been made had the text not referred to Muslims' political formations, but rather it would have been understood within the discourse of colonialism and anti-colonialism. In other words, Lewis equates the natural human inclination to reject forceful "subject[ion] to alien rule" with a religious zeal to triumph over an opponent. The gloomy picture Lewis's prediction paints of medieval religious wars, ready to be incited by the future "educated modern leadership" of the Muslim world, fits with the image drawn by Tucker to represent the post-NIEO era.<sup>365</sup> This narrative also overlaps with the neoconservative reading of NIEO as the Third World's means to get retribution for centuries of colonial humiliation. As such, empowered by the Arab nations' new wealth and their control over a vital source of energy, the NIEO posed a serious threat of toppling the established Western economic system. Moreover, Lewis's posture overlaps with that of the neoconservatives in another aspect, specifically, their claim that Third World ideological notions, i.e. colonialism exploitation, discrimination, and economic sovereignty, are "learned ideas," imported by a new Western educated intelligentsia, who, in Lewis's logic, provide the "educated modern leadership"

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<sup>363</sup> For instance, Lewis gives examples of the "holy wars for Islam against non-Muslims," by citing three historical battles: "Qadisiyya against the Zoroastrian Persians, Hattin against the Crusaders, Ayn Jalut against the Mongols," without any indication to the fact that all of the three battles were against foreign invaders (Persians, Romans, and Mongols) in other words defensive wars.

<sup>364</sup> Lewis's claim that the statement "*Al-Kufru millatun wahida*"—"unbelief is one nation," is attributed to Prophet Mohammad utterly false. The statement was made by Muslim scholars in relation to inheritance rules in Islam; that is, Muslims do not inherit from their non-Muslim relatives and vice versa. Moreover, his understanding of the statement contradicts "the Quran" which clearly states in reference to "people of the book," who are the Jews and the Christians: "Yet they are not all alike: there are some among the People of the Book who are upright, who recite Allah's revelations throughout the night, prostrating 'in prayer'(113) They believe in Allah and the Last Day, encourage good and forbid evil, and race with one another in doing good. They are 'truly' among the righteous (114) They will never be denied the reward for any good they have done. And Allah has 'perfect' knowledge of those mindful 'of Him'. (115) Holly Qur'an, 2:113-115.

<sup>365</sup> See also, Luttwak's quote on pages 119-120 in the subchapter 2.3.3.

needed for Islam to become a “serious contender for power.”<sup>366</sup> Lewis’s article reinterprets the economic conflict delineated by NEIO, portraying it as a religious, cultural, and political clash. If proven true, such a perspective would diminish the significance of cooperation and interdependence, rendering them hollow concepts.

In order to emphasize how Lewis’s narrative about the purported cultural conflict remains static in his understanding of the region, a 2006 quote from his article “Does Iran Have Something in Store?” is worth noting. Lewis argued that “there is a radical difference between the Islamic Republic of Iran and other governments with nuclear weapons. This difference is expressed in what can only be described as the *apocalyptic worldview* of Iran’s present rulers.”<sup>367</sup> According to this logic, the threat of self-destruction or even world annihilation is not something that would deter Iranian leaders from using nuclear weapons to achieve the “apocalyptic ending of Israel and if necessary, of the world.” For these leaders such a process would advance the return of Shiite Muslims’ Hidden Imam, hence the triumph of Islam over its enemy. Lewis offers the following quote by Imam Khomeini to support his claim:

I am decisively announcing to the whole world that if the world-devourers [i.e., the infidel powers] wish to stand against our religion, we will stand against their whole world and will not cease until the annihilation of all them. Either we all become free, or we will go to the greater freedom which is martyrdom. Either we shake one another’s hands in joy at the victory of Islam in the world, or all of us will turn to eternal life and martyrdom. In both cases, victory and success are ours.<sup>368</sup>

Presented as such, the mere thought of Iranians having any kind of weapon is horrifying, let alone any nuclear weapon. In his article, published in the *Wall Street Journal* and republished in the *National Review*, Lewis was not satisfied with Khomeini’s use of the phrase “world-devourers,” so he explained it by adding “the infidel powers” in square brackets to the original text to make it clear that the sentence was directed toward non-Muslims.<sup>369</sup> However, if we go back to the original quote, we discover the following facts were absent from Lewis’s analysis. First, Khomeini’s statement was made in 1987 when Iran was in an active war with Iraq, a war that Iran did not initiate and a war in which the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, who enjoyed

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<sup>366</sup> Moynihan, “The United States.”

<sup>367</sup> Bernard Lewis. “Does Iran Have Something in Store?” *The Wall Street Journal*. August 8, 2006, accessed May 9, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB115500154638829470>.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> The main themes of Lewis’s article were also emphasized in Michael Ledeen’s *The Iranian Time Bomb: The Mullah Zealots’ Quest for Destruction*. (New York: Truman Talley Books, St. Martin’s Press); Norman Podhoretz, “The Case for Bombing Iran,” *Commentary*, June 2007, accessed April 4, 2022, <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-case-for-bombing-iran/> and John Bolton, “On Iran, Sanctions are Not the Answer,” *USA Today*, January 17, 2012, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/story/2012-01-17/John-Bolton-Iranmilitary-action/52623920/1>.

Us support, used chemical weapons not just against Iranian troops but also against his own people without being subjected to international sanctions. Second, Lewis jumps to the section in which Khomeini talks about eternal life and martyrdom while omitting the previous part, which states the following:

In the same way, that we brought our revolution to victory without the assistance and consent of even a single country, organization or world forum, as we fought the war assistance, we will traverse the remaining path with all its ups and downs, with trust in God Almighty, single-handedly and were able to defeat the aggressors without help from any foreign country carry out our duty.<sup>370</sup>

This clearly shows that Khomeini was providing a motivational talk to Iranians who were fighting a war with another country (one that happens to be a Muslim majority country), meaning that the speech was not directed toward the so-called “infidels,” but against an aggressor whose faith was irrelevant. And if that was not clear, Khomeini was more explicit in the following section, where he addressed the Muslim nations, in more or less an apologetic statement that presents fighting the war not as a choice but as a necessity:

Now, in the light of this explanation, it is up to the Muslims make a judgment about the war, and they should consider for what objective we have been subjected to assault and aggression and for what purpose we have offered martyrs to the realm of divinity. It is up to them to discover the evil intentions which made Saddam launch his aggression and the kind of motives that lie behind the world’s overt and covert support for him.<sup>371</sup>

It is important to note the fact that Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against Iranian cities more than once. In fact, it was the use of biological and chemical weapons that gave Iraq leverage and ultimately victory over Iranians; in retrospect, Iran refrained from using chemical weapons—even though they had the capacity to develop them as acknowledged by the State Department—on the ground that they were forbidden in Islam.<sup>372</sup> Similar views about the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction in Islam were expressed on numerous occasions by Khomeini, Khamenei, and others in the Iranian power circles. To give but an example: in a speech before President Mohammad Khatami and his cabinet members in August 2003, the supreme leader made the following statement:

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<sup>370</sup> Ruhollah Khomeini, *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Imām: an Anthology of Imam Khomeinī’s Speeches, Messages, Interviews, Decrees, Religious Permissions and Letters*. Vol. 20. (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, 2008), 307-308.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> The Iraqi use of chemical weapons and Iranian restraint from using them is well documented in Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: the Iran-Iraq Military Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 201–2; Gareth Porter, *Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*. (Charlottesville: Just World Books, 2014), 59-75. See also Youssef M. Ibrahim. “Iran Reports New Iraqi Gas Raids; And Says Cities May be Hit Next” April 2, 1988. <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/04/02/world/iran-reports-new-iraqi-gas-raids-and-says-cities-may-be-hit-next.html>.

By principle and fundamentals, we are against weapons of mass destruction, just like we have considered biological and chemical weapons as prohibited weapons even at the time of the Imposed War.<sup>373</sup>

Of course, if we take Lewis's analogy that relied on the quote from Khomeini, it is only fair if we consider Khamenei and other Iranian leaders' comments against nuclear weapons with the same courtesy — especially as seventeen years have passed since Lewis made his comment: Iran did not develop a nuclear weapon and Iranian “fanatics” did not blow up the world to hasten the return of their hidden Messiah. The neoconservative accusation regarding Iran's desire to develop a nuclear weapon, as will be demonstrated in the next section, did not start with the Mullah's regime; rather, the neoconservatives first started to attack the Iranian nuclear program under the Shah.

### 3.2.3. NIEO Will Lead to Nuclear Proliferation

The oil shortage of 1973 strongly enforced the desires for energy independence, and many countries sought nuclear energy as a means to that end. Accordingly, Third World countries demanded a share in the application of civilian nuclear energy, the most important of which was nuclear electric power. Article four of NIEO's Program of Action identified measures to ensure “the transfer of technology” and asserted the rights of the developing countries to access and transfer modern science and technologies and to “promote international cooperation in research and development in exploration and exploitation, conservation and the legitimate utilization of natural resources and all sources of energy.”<sup>374</sup> This article was used by the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, to justify her country's nuclear program. Following India's first nuclear explosion in May 1974, Gandhi responded to the criticism her country received by asserting her country's right to peruse nuclear technology to “overcome poverty and economic backwardness,” and questioned the moral stand of her critics: “is it the contention that [it] is all right for the rich to use nuclear energy for destructive purposes but not right for poor [] to find out whether it can be used for construction?”<sup>375</sup>

Despite the fact that Iran under the Shah was among the first countries to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968, Iran was also vocal in calling for Third World countries' rights to

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<sup>373</sup> Porter, *Manufactured Crisis*, 70.

<sup>374</sup> “3202 (s-vi) of the Program of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order.” *United Nation Documents*, accessed May 23, 2022. <http://www.un-documents.net/s6r3202.htm> .

<sup>375</sup> Bernard Weinraub, “India is Angered by A-Test Critics” *The New York Times*, May 26, 1974, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/05/26/archives/india-is-angered-by-atest-critics-the-rawest-nerve-comments-are.html> .

share nuclear technologies.<sup>376</sup> In 1974, the *Atomic Energy organization of Iran (AEOI)* was established by a special imperial decree, and the Shah announced plans to expand Iran's nuclear energy program:

[W]e shall, as fast as we can, enter the age of using the atom and other sources of energy in order to save oil for production of chemical and petrochemical products. We shall not use oil, this noble substance, as common fuel.<sup>377</sup>

The reasoning behind the Shah's interest in nuclear energy was the fact that—at the time—Iran's oil reserves were estimated by American experts to be depleted within 20-30 years. Relying on alternative sources of energy was thus important to prolong the reserves of its oil and to meet the energy needs of its rapidly growing economy. It is important to note here that the neoconservative think tank, the *American Enterprise Institute*, was an important point of reference to highlight and compare Iran oil reserves with those of Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf countries.<sup>378</sup> Furthermore, the fear of depleting oil resources can also explain the Shah's desire to diversify Iran's sources of energy. Especially since the Shah's leadership of OPEC depended on other oil producing countries' willingness to cooperate with Iran's pricing policies; having other sources of energy would help to assure his oil producing neighbors that the Shah had no desire to seize their oil fields. Notably, the campaign against the Shah launched by the American media and politicians played to his neighbors' fears, repeatedly bringing a scenario in which Iran runs out of its oil and takes over the oil fields of neighboring countries. For instance, in an article titled "Iran Might be Spending Beyond its Means" in the *Washington Post*, Jack Anderson and Les Whitten stated:

According to the latest confidential estimates, however, the Shah's oil reserves will last, at best, for another two decades. This will leave the unpredictable, ambitious, recklessly greedy Shah with little more than a down payment on his dream of glory. Rather than abandon his dream, they fear privately, he may march his American-made army into neighboring Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and annex their oil fields.<sup>379</sup>

It is important to know that Jack Anderson was known to receive briefings and to publish leaks from officials in the Nixon and Ford administrations. The timing of the anti-Shah articles, at the very least, indicates that a serious attempt to widen the gap between Saudi Arabia and Iran was taking place. Creating a conflict between these two countries aimed to persuade Saudi

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<sup>376</sup> In 1970, the Iranian Majlis ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968, which legally obliged signatories to peaceful programs with a possibility of Security Council censorship to prevent violations. Alvandi, *Nixon*, 130-131.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid, 132.

<sup>378</sup> See Anthony ed, *The Middle East*, 104-106; Mitchell ed., 45-62.

<sup>379</sup> Quoted in Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 273.

Arabia to break OPEC's unity and further push toward decreasing the oil prices in order to slow down the economic and political plans of Iran. This claim is supported by the fact that the same narrative about Iran's plans to take over the Saudi oil fields was introduced by American officials to the Saudis. For instance, in his book, Anderson Cooper documents an incident when Treasury Secretary William Simon told the Saudi ministers during their visit to Washington that "Saudi Arabia has probably 150 years of production left, whereas Iran has only 15 years. Maybe Iran will build its industry and when the oil runs out, they can take you and get the oil back."<sup>380</sup> Of course, as we now know, these predictions about Iran's insufficient oil reserves were proven wrong, for Iran—with the exception of the early years following the Islamic revolution—maintained and even exceeded the levels of production it had in the 1970s without depleting its oil reserves which (according to the latest estimation by US Energy Information) is expected to last for another 200 years, if not more.<sup>381</sup> Nevertheless, in those years Iran acted a strong advocate for Third World countries' right to nuclear energy. This advocacy was copied by other Third World countries including Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Another important indicator on Iran's involvement in supporting Third World countries' right to nuclear technology was the *Iran Conference on Transfer of Nuclear Technology* (1977), which initiated a declaration in favor of activating article IV of the Non-Proliferation Treaty of Nuclear Weapons, referring to participant countries' right to "exchange equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy."<sup>382</sup> Albert Wohlstetter, a key nuclear strategist among neoconservatives, described Iran's initiative as "a rebellion of the Third World countries" against American restriction on plutonium commerce.<sup>383</sup>

As stated earlier, the Shah was convinced that nuclear energy could replace oil. Therefore, in 1974, he announced the project to build a full-scale civilian nuclear energy program.<sup>384</sup> He planned to train 10,000 Iranian students on nuclear technology at US universities, signed agreements with German and French Companies to build two 1,200 MW

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid, 179.

<sup>381</sup> See, "Country Analysis Executive Summary: Iran" *U.S. Energy Administration Information*, November 17, 2022, accessed December 2, 2022, [https://www.eia.gov/international/content/analysis/countries\\_long/Iran/pdf/iran\\_exe.pdf](https://www.eia.gov/international/content/analysis/countries_long/Iran/pdf/iran_exe.pdf).

<sup>382</sup> Albert Wohlstetter, "Must We Decide Now for Worldwide Commerce in Plutonium Fuel" in Albert Wohlstetter, ed. *Nuclear Policies: Fuel Without the Bomb: A Policy Study of the California Seminar on Arms Control and Foreign Policy*. (Cambridge, Mass: Ballinger Pub. Co, 1978), 41.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid. Albert Wohlstetter, one of the neoconservative founding fathers, graduated from City College of New York and became a nuclear theorist. He was the director of RAND Corporation, and later as a professor at the University of Chicago, where he taught many future neoconservatives: Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Zalmay Khalilzad, Fukuyama, and William Kristol. See Fukuyama. *America at the Crossroads*, 31, Dorrien. *Imperial Designs*, 40-42. Vaïsse. *Neoconservatism*, 119.

<sup>384</sup> Alvandi, *Nixon*, 130-131.

nuclear reactors and two 900 MW reactors respectively, and to import enriched uranium from France and South Africa. To top it off, he signed a large agreement with the US to construct eight large nuclear power plants, which were supposed to provide Iran with around eight thousand megawatts of electricity.<sup>385</sup> The intentions of Iran's nuclear program was not a source of concern for the Nixon administration, mainly because Iran had signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), placed its nuclear facilities and material under the safeguard of IAEA, and guaranteed that its nuclear program would not "be used for atomic weapons or for research on or development of atomic weapons, or for any other military purposes."<sup>386</sup> However, the Shah announced his nuclear plans the same year that India conducted its first "peaceful nuclear explosion," and he previously stated that the only case in which Iran would be willing to develop a nuclear weapon was if other countries in the region did so.<sup>387</sup> This statement came as a response to a question about the possibility of turning Iran into a nuclear power, to which he responded:

Honestly, I am not really thinking of nuclear arms, but if 20 or 30 ridiculous little countries are going to develop nuclear weapons, then I may have to revise my policies. Even Libya is talking about trying to manufacture atomic weapons—God knows for what purpose.<sup>388</sup>

However, these statements did not prevent the Nixon administration from supplying Iran with nuclear power plants and fuel so long as the US had "full control over the nuclear fuel cycle."<sup>389</sup> Neoconservatives did not support the administration's policy. They considered the surge in oil prices as the perfect cover for Third World's dictators' pursuit of nuclear weapons under the guise of seeking alternative and more affordable energy sources. The right of transferring technology and nuclear cooperation in NIEO, thus, neoconservatives argued, would lead to the spread of nuclear weapons and arms race. Moynihan noted, "the price of oil went to twelve dollars in one afternoon. Two dozen nations that were thinking of atomic power in the next century suddenly needed it the next day."<sup>390</sup> Laqueur suggested that Third World countries seeking nuclear technology may develop nuclear weapons and resort to "nuclear blackmail," to force the West for further distribution of wealth and goods, then asked: "why should

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<sup>385</sup> Ibid, 131-133. David Patrikarakos, *Nuclear Iran: The Birth of an Atomic State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), Chapter 4. Bill, *The Eagle*, 204.

<sup>386</sup> Alvandi, *Nixon*, 130; Patrikarakos, *Nuclear*, 60.

<sup>387</sup> Alvandi, *Nixon*, 131-135.

<sup>388</sup> John B. Oakes "The Shah is offering New Plan to Aid Developing Nation" *The New York Times*, September 24, 1975, accessed May 24, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/09/24/archives/Shah-is-offering-new-plan-to-aid-developing-nations-Shah-offers-a.html> .

<sup>389</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 210.

<sup>390</sup> For instance, see Moynihan and Weaver, *A Dangerous*, 95.

blackmail stop at a one-time transfer of resources?”<sup>391</sup> Tucker repeated the same dystopian scenario he and fellow neoconservatives predicted if oil-producing countries were to maintain control over their oil resources.<sup>392</sup> This time, he envisioned an apocalyptic world where impoverished nations possess nuclear weapons:

There is the scenario of a world in which the governments of poor states, at once increasingly revolutionary in outlook yet unable to raise the living standards of their ever-burgeoning populations, will threaten desperate measures against the rich nations in order to compel the latter [to] undertake a massive transfer of wealth to the world’s poor. What is seen to give apparent plausibility to an otherwise fanciful projection of a future in which the poor may threaten the rich in the prospect that nuclear weapons will become increasingly available, even to states whose economies otherwise remain at an undeveloped stage. The possession of a very modest number of nuclear weapons, together with some means—however simple and improvised—of delivering them, might then be used by the poor as means to coerce the rich into undertaking such transfers of wealth that experience indicates would not otherwise be seriously considered.<sup>393</sup>

This gloomy picture was explained by Tucker on the basis that International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) which is the main body to safeguard, regulate, and supervise world’s atomic reactor agreements is part of the existing Western led world order.<sup>394</sup> Nonetheless, the efficiency of IAEA and its correspondent nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in preventing the spread of nuclear technology itself was questioned by neoconservatives who favored a western monopoly over nuclear technology. For instance, one of the main arguments in Wohlstetter’s articles “Spreading the Bomb Without Quit Breaking the Rules,” “Racing Forward? Or Ambling Back?” and “Must We Decide Now for Worldwide Commerce in Plutonium Fuel?” was questioning the nonproliferation benefits of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and its efficiency in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

Iran became the target of neoconservative anti-nuclear proliferation rhetoric. They argued that being the world’s third largest producer of oil, Iran was not in need of nuclear energy and allowing Iran to develop a nuclear program would repeat the experience of the Indian peninsula – when Pakistan followed the lead of India in developing nuclear weapons. They were also concerned that other countries in the Middle East might follow the Iranian example, most notably, the radicals among them, i.e., Iraq and Egypt. At the conference on *The Transfer of Nuclear Technology* Iran led a coalition of nuclear suppliers, industry and recipients to articulate a strong case against the US policy on nuclear fuel non-proliferation and forcefully

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<sup>391</sup> Laqueur, “Third World.”

<sup>392</sup> See subchapter 2.3.3. and 3.2.2

<sup>393</sup> Tucker, *The Inequality*, 85. Moynihan shared similar views in “The United States.”

<sup>394</sup> Tucker, “Israel and the United States” and Moynihan, “The United States.”

called for the activation of the article IV that referred to participant countries' right to "exchange equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy."<sup>395</sup> Wohlstetter, described as "the godfather of the anti-detente school," argued against nuclear cooperation and exportation of materials, equipment, and information required for making nuclear explosives, i.e., nuclear fuels and nuclear fuel-making plants.<sup>396</sup> He argued that if the US was to assist Iran in building "dispersed well-equipped and well-staffed nuclear laboratories, ... many of these laboratories would be quite capable of designing and constructing an implosion device and of studying its behavior by nonnuclear firing, ... [eventually] they could build a device which, even at its lowest yield level, would produce a very formidable explosion," that is, one comparable to the Nagasaki plutonium bomb in its characteristics.<sup>397</sup> Paul Wolfowitz, Wohlstetter's devoted student, was also vocal on the issue of nuclear proliferation. Later, Wolfowitz became the head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in the Ford administration and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Regional Programs where he was responsible for establishing the Persian Gulf office in the Pentagon in the early years of the Carter administration. His doctoral dissertation, titled "Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East: The Politics and Economics of Proposals for Nuclear Desalting," argued against aiding any country—particularly those in the Middle East—in enhancing their technological and scientific capacity in the nuclear sciences, on the ground that the risk of nuclear proliferation was enormous and the benefits of nuclear-powered desalting stations were exaggerated.<sup>398</sup> Although Wolfowitz's dissertation was published prior to the announcement of the Shah's massive nuclear program, his arguments align with Wohlstetter's views on the danger of secret nuclear material transfers, and the challenges of carrying out

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<sup>395</sup> Patrikarakos, *Nuclear*, 57.

<sup>396</sup> Robert Zarate and Henry Sokolski eds., *Nuclear Heuristics: Selected Writings of Albert and Roberta Wohlstetter*. (Washington: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009); Albert and Roberta Wohlstetter, Victor Gilinsky, and Robert Gillette, *Nuclear policies: Fuel Without the Bomb: A Policy Study of the California Seminar on Arms Control and Foreign Policy*. (Cambridge, Mass: Ballinger Pub. Co, 1978), 21-57. Lewis D. Solomon, *Paul D. Wolfowitz: Visionary Intellectual, Policymaker, and Strategist* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007), 13.

<sup>397</sup> Zarate and Sokolski eds., *Nuclear Heuristics*, 319.

<sup>398</sup> Paul D. Wolfowitz, "Nuclear Desalting in the Middle East," in Richard L. Merritt, ed. *Communication in International Politics*, (Urbana: Illinois UP, 1972), 339-60; Under Reagan, Wolfowitz served as US ambassador to Indonesia, under George W.H. Bush as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, and Deputy Secretary of Defense and President of the World Bank under George W. Bush. When Wolfowitz was still working for ACDA in 1978, he was accused by the FBI of "handing highly classified U.S. military information to the government of Israel." James Risen "F.B.I. Said to Reach Official Suspected of Passing Secrets," *The New York Times*. August 29, 2004, accessed May 21, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/29/us/fbi-said-to-reach-official-suspected-of-passing-secrets.html>.

efficient international nuclear inspections.<sup>399</sup> Moreover, Wolfowitz and Wohlstetter, along with other neoconservatives like Richard Perle and Richard Pipes and political allies like Henry Jackson and Paul Nitze, joined what became known as Team B.<sup>400</sup> Team B assessment of the Soviet Union's strategic capabilities concluded that the CIA's regular National Intelligence Estimates (NIE) has substantially underestimated Soviet capabilities and threats, and that "the Soviets were engaged in rapid increase of their military forces [conventional and nuclear] at a pace comparable with the militarization of Germany in the 1930s."<sup>401</sup> According to historians such as Gary Dorrien and Justin Vaïsse, the neoconservatives' main thesis at the time was that the American and Soviet nuclear doctrines were different; the Soviet were "building a superior counterforce arsenal because they believed that they could fight and win a protracted nuclear war," and were seeking worldwide hegemony; their nuclear arsenal aimed not for "deterrence but victory, not sufficiency in weapons but superiority, not retaliation but offensive action."<sup>402</sup> As such, by engaging in the arms control negotiation and détente, decision makers in the US were "depriving the US of its essential advantages and technological superiority," and at the same time giving the Soviets the upper hand.<sup>403</sup> Kissinger condemned the conclusions of Team B as an "effort to sabotage SALT II," stating that the talk about Soviet military superiority was misleading, claiming that, "in the atomic age neither side would be able to have a genuine superiority in the nuclear field."<sup>404</sup> Neoconservatives and their supporters in the administration like Bill Simon, James Schlesinger, and Donald Rumsfeld continued to promote the Team B thesis.<sup>405</sup> Due to their effort to halt the transportation of nuclear technology and at the same

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid. In his dissertation, Wolfowitz also opposed Israeli possession of a nuclear weapon. However, at the time its publication (1972), Israel had already developed its Dimona Reactor and possessed a nuclear weapon. Unlike the rest of the countries in the region—principally Iran's pressurized-water reactor in Bushehr—, Israel's nuclear program did not require desalting sea water, for its reactor was designed with the only purpose of producing weapons-grade plutonium. See Dean Andromidas, "How Wolfowitz and the Neo-Cons Sabotaged First 'Oasis Plan'" *Executive Intelligence Review*, April 5, 2005, accessed June 12, 2022, [https://larouchepub.com/other/2005/3215wolfie\\_v\\_nuke.html](https://larouchepub.com/other/2005/3215wolfie_v_nuke.html).

<sup>400</sup> The creation of Team B and its connection with the neoconservatives was discussed in subchapter 1.5.1.

<sup>401</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 153-157.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid, Dorrien, *The Neoconservative*, 182-183.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid. Raymond Garthoff, specialist in Russian-Soviet history observed that "with Team B report records now largely declassified, it is possible to see that virtually all of Team B's criticism of the NIEO proved to be wrong." Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 156.

<sup>404</sup> Bernard Gwertzman. "Kissinger Says Idea of Supremacy Makes No Sense in a Nuclear Age." *The New York Times*, January 11, 1977, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/01/11/archives/kissinger-says-idea-of-supremacy-makes-no-sense-in-a-nuclear-age.html>. Richard Pipes. "Team B: The Reality Behind the Myth" *Commentary*, October 1986, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/richard-pipes-2/team-b-the-reality-behind-the-myth/>. Jerry Wayne Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment*. (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983), 197-203.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

time promote the need for the US to maintain its nuclear superiority by developing its weapons' system and expanding its defense budget, Justin Vaïsse described this period of neoconservative history as “nuclear and strategic neoconservatism.”<sup>406</sup> The upshot of neoconservative activism was the revival of the CPD, eventually leading to the implementation of neoconservative ideas and preferences under the presidency of Ronald Reagan, himself a CPD member.

Team B and later the CPD were not specifically concerned with Iran's nuclear program but rather with nuclear proliferation in general, and with the Middle East being crucial for the defense of Europe and Japan, the Iranian nuclear program as well as its armament—especially in light of the changing in the Shah policies toward the US and Israel—became the focus of neoconservative criticism. For instance, a memorandum for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reflected the fear shared by officials in Pentagon about the Shah's nuclear ambitions:

If Iran were to seek a weapons capability, it is noted that the annual plutonium production from the planned . . . Iranian nuclear power program will be equivalent to 600–700 warheads, . . . although Iran is currently stable, that stability is heavily dependent on the Shah's remaining in power. In a situation of instability, domestic dissidents or foreign terrorists might easily be able to seize any “special nuclear materials stored in Iran for use in bombs. . . . An aggressive successor to the Shah might consider nuclear weapons the final item needed to establish Iran's complete military dominance of the region.”<sup>407</sup>

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, these fears were also expressed by the neoconservatives in their anti-OPEC rhetoric.<sup>408</sup> Ironically, neoconservatives like Wohlstetter, Nitze, and other Team B and CPD members believed that nuclear war with the Soviet Union should be considered a rational option by decision-makers in the US and that the US could win a nuclear war with minimal loss of American life and industry if she maintained nuclear superiority. At times, they went as far as to advocate for a preemptive attack on the USSR.<sup>409</sup>

It remains to be said that at the time it was believed that Iran's oil reserves were going to run out within two decades, which sparked concerns about the country's ability to maintain its prosperity— with oil being a finite commodity and at the same time the primary source of Iran's national income. Developing a nuclear energy program in a country with such circumstances might not be a far-fetched solution, especially in light of Iran's increased

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<sup>406</sup> Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind*, 182-183; Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 149-157; Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*, 197-203.

<sup>407</sup> Cooper, *Oil King*, 211.

<sup>408</sup> See subchapter 2.3.3.

<sup>409</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 152-160.

population and electricity consumption. The Shah expressed his vision as early as 1960, when he stated:

The oil we call the noble product will be depleted one day. It is a shame to burn the noble product for the production of energy to run factories and lighthouses. About 70,000 products can be derived from oil. We plan to get as soon as possible 23,000 MWs from nuclear power stations. Added to the electricity generated by our dams, this will give us one of the highest per capita supplies in the world.<sup>410</sup>

Indeed, developing nuclear technology was largely considered one of the few economical energy alternatives and many of the industrialized countries sought it as a way to reduce their dependence on oil and fasten their development programs. Nuclear energy would have made it possible for Iran to diversify its economy away from oil through the reinvestment of export proceeds in brand-new sectors, improved education, increased security, among other areas, and to use its oil for new industries like petrochemicals, fertilizers, etc.<sup>411</sup> It must be added that the Shah had regional ambitions and had made contradictory statements about his intentions to develop a nuclear weapon. However, in its assessment of Iran's nuclear program, the CIA indicated that Iran was "not expected to meet the plan to have its first nuclear power station in operation by 1980," it was completely "dependent upon foreign assistance in all areas of its nuclear program," and it did not have the "capability to unilaterally develop nuclear weapons," neither at the time, nor in the future.<sup>412</sup> Additionally, no amount of nuclear weaponry would have been sufficient to deter the Soviet Union, which at the time the Shah viewed as the biggest threat to his country. The Shah was keenly aware that his alliance with the US was essential for Iran's regional supremacy and seeking a nuclear weapon would jeopardize this alliance far beyond what oil did. In a conversation between the Shah and Dr. Akbar Etemad the president of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization (IAEO) Dr. Etemad asked the Shah whether or not developing a nuclear weapon should be on the list of IAEO tasks. The Shah said no and explained to him that building a nuclear bomb would certainly "destroy the relations he had worked so hard to build [with the Americans] and that had come at such a domestic political cost."<sup>413</sup> In addition, Iran did not need a nuclear weapon, its conventional military power was, according to the CIA's estimation, "the largest in the Middle East, and by far the largest and most capable in the Persian Gulf area. Its military budget far exceeds that of other states in the

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<sup>410</sup> Patrikarakos, *Nuclear*, 23.

<sup>411</sup> Pahlavi, *Answers*, 142.

<sup>412</sup> "Iran's Foreign Policy: Briefing Papers for Visit of General Nematollah Nasiri." April 28, 1976. *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00353R000100270011-5.pdf> 16-17.

<sup>413</sup> Patrikarakos, *Nuclear*, 66.

area. ... has a clear numerical superiority in manpower and operational combatant units.”<sup>414</sup> In an interview with *The Washington Post*, The Shah responded when questioned about ensuring that his nuclear program was not a disguise for developing a nuclear weapon stating: “The best guarantee that I do not want nuclear weapons is the program I have launched in conventional weapons. I want to be able to take care of anything by non-nuclear means.”<sup>415</sup> The CIA report “Prospects for The Proliferation of Nuclear Capabilities” also indicated that at the time of announcing its nuclear program, and in all of its weapons’ deals Iran did not seek “obtaining a nuclear-capable missile delivery system,” nor was there any evidence of interest in developing or purchasing such systems from countries other than the US.<sup>416</sup>

The assumption that the Shah started Iran’s civil nuclear program as a pretext for a clandestine nuclear weapon program cannot be substantiated by any factual evidence of weaponization. The claim that the Shah wanted to obtain a nuclear bomb usually relies on the few statements he made about developing a nuclear weapon, if other countries in the region were to do so. Thus, his statements can also be understood as a warning issued for other countries against nuclear proliferation. Another rationale to support the notion that Iran’s nuclear program was not civilian is that obtaining a nuclear bomb was a matter of prestige for the Shah whose inflated ego desired dominance and hegemony. As one account states, “The practice of promoting and undertaking civilian nuclear activities which may confer prestige but have no strict economic justification has increased the noise background which serves as a potential cover for military activities.”<sup>417</sup> Wolfowitz offers a similar proposition:

Consideration of the long-term effects of nuclear technology is especially important in weighing the desirability of building the first large plant or plants in the Middle East, ... since decisions on power investment are usually made by governments or government corporations, considerations of prestige may override considerations of economics.<sup>418</sup>

In neoconservative accounts in the 1970s, just like in the current rhetoric against the Iranian nuclear program, we find the issue of “prestige” present as the rationale behind Iran’s nuclear policy. For instance, in his book *Nuclear Iran: Birth of an Atomic State* about the history of Iran’s nuclear program under the rule of the Shah and the Islamic Republic, the Israeli journalist David Patrikarakos fails to provide any evidence for Iran’s active engagement in a nuclear

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<sup>414</sup> CIA “Iran ‘s Foreign Policy,” 5-7.

<sup>415</sup> Patrikarakos, *Nuclear*, 65.

<sup>416</sup> “Prospects for The Proliferation of Nuclear Capabilities,” *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, July 11, 1974, accessed May 12, 2022, [https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0001247371.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001247371.pdf) .

<sup>417</sup> Zarate, Sokolski eds., *Nuclear Heuristics*, 367. Similar views were expressed in pages 194, 306-307.

<sup>418</sup> Wolfowitz, “Nuclear Desalting in the Middle East,” 351.

military program. Rather, he admits that “no actual work on a nuclear bomb took place” in Iran at any point. Yet, he maintained the argument that security and economy cannot be the motives for developing nuclear power, an ongoing project he believed was “necessary to maintain Iranian prestige,”

Nuclear power, in and of itself, strikes a significant register for Iran. It illustrates a developing country’s need for all of nuclear power’s associated benefits to plug the deficit of prestige it feels in relation to its Western contemporaries. The Persian psyche is cleaved, scarred by past humiliations. It is also bloated with a sense of its own importance... Both the Shah and the Islamic Republic associated nuclear power with ideas of national intellect and advancement — it was and remains a viable shortcut to a desired modernity.<sup>419</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, this argument falls in line with the perception advocated by neoconservatives about the irrational nature of the Middle Eastern native. Once again, we see that the desire for nuclear technology is explained through irrationality and power-hunger, rather than legitimate economic or political concerns. Such economic and political concerns are only considered to be legitimate in relation to Israel, the one country in the region that actually obtained a nuclear weapon. To give an example, in “Israel and the United States: From Dependence to Nuclear Weapons?” Tucker justified not only Israel’s need to possess a nuclear weapon, but also its need to overtly announce its possession of such a weapon.<sup>420</sup> Tucker makes the case for Israel’s declaration of its possession of such a “nuclear *deterrent* weapon,” asserting that its physical survival and security is “stronger, than for most of the present nuclear powers.”<sup>421</sup> The prospect of Israel using such a weapon “for expansionist purposes” is portrayed as one of the irrational Arab fears, simply because according to Tucker, if Israel were to use its nuclear deterrent for expansion, it might risk rupture in its relations with the US, which would result in her further isolation. However, just because this theory sounds convincing for Tucker it does not eliminate Arab countries’ fear of Israeli expansion, nor acknowledge that Israel has actually used the deterrent logic to expand its territory through military conquest in 1967, and that it was actively using its conventional military superiority to expand its settlements in the occupied territories.<sup>422</sup> Moreover, Tucker supports Israel’s possession of a nuclear weapon even if it would lead to the spread of the nuclear race in the

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<sup>419</sup> Patrikarakos, *Nuclear*, 288. See also: 30,60, 68, 120, 286.

<sup>420</sup> Tucker. “Israel.”

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>422</sup> For instance, one of the major parties in Israel at the time the *Tnuat Herut* adopted a map that combined Israel’s 1967 border with the entire borders of Jordan and parts of Lebanon, and Syria as a logo for their party. The Party was absorbed by the Likud party and his chair back then, Menachem Begin, became Israel’s prime minister in 1977.

region. Although he made sure to reference the so-called “distinctive Arab psychology [which] finds *alien the rational calculation a balance of terror requires*,” Tucker, in support of Israel’s nuclear weapon, went entirely against his own logic presented in his articles discussed in the previous chapter. He underestimated the threat of nuclear proliferation in the region, and he argued that if Israel was to announce its nuclear power capabilities, there is:

no persuasive reason for believing that, in a nuclear environment, the major Arab countries would behave irrationally. We do have reason for believing they will have every inducement to behave with marked circumspection, just as they will have every inducement to bend their efforts to insure that others in the region do so.<sup>423</sup>

His main issue with the accumulated wealth of OPEC countries was that they might use it to build a nuclear weapon. In retrospect, the main argument against Iran’s nuclear program is that it might ignite a nuclear arms race in the region or that Iran might be tempted to share its nuclear technology with unfriendly neighbors to Israel in exchange for their support regarding oil policies. Such an argument, however, fails to answer a series of obvious questions, such as: 1) Why did the presence of an Israeli nuclear arsenal not prompt a nuclear arms race in the Middle East? 2) Would the Shah seek nuclear power only to share it with the other states in the region and weaken his own position when he allegedly plans to attack neighboring countries and take their oil fields?

To summarize, Iran had sufficient conventional power, and her neighbors respected and feared it; and—in case of any severe security threat—Teheran could defend its interests in the area without jeopardizing its relations with the US and other developed countries. Nevertheless, neoconservatives exaggerated the threat of the Iranian nuclear program as part of their campaign against NIEO. They did so in order to force the Shah to change his oil and regional policies and at the same time to mobilize the public against the Soviet Union whom they perceived as the main threat for world peace and stability.

#### **3.2.4. A New Economic Order Would Lead to Israel’s Annihilation**

On November 13, 1974 the UN General Assembly opened the platform for Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Commander-in-Chief of the Palestine Revolution. Arafat, who was speaking for the first time in the organization, used the platform to call for the recognition of a “democratic Palestinian state for Muslims, Christians and Jews,” criticized the US military support to Israel, and called

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<sup>423</sup> Tucker, “Israel.”

on the American people to stand with the Palestinian cause.<sup>424</sup> Arafat dedicated a good portion of his speech to defending oil-producing countries against claims that they were solely to blame for worldwide inflation and the economic crisis, and called on the UN to support the effort to establish a new economic order:

The United Nations should therefore bend every effort to achieve a radical alteration of the world economic system, making it possible for developing countries to advance rapidly. The United Nations must resolutely oppose forces that are trying to lay the responsibility for inflation on the shoulders of the developing countries, especially the oil-producing countries. The United Nations must firmly condemn any threats made against these countries simply because they demand their just rights.<sup>425</sup>

Arafat's endorsement of NIEO was not a coincidence, for the declaration marked the peak of a massively influential economic and political discourse that challenged the structure of the international economy for being the facilitator—if not the network responsible—for the exploitative history of colonialism and neocolonialism and sought what Christopher Dietrich referred to as the “economic equivalent for decolonization.”<sup>426</sup> Supporting NIEO was in the interest of PLO since the declaration explicitly proclaimed the “right of all States, territories and peoples under foreign occupation, alien and colonial domination or apartheid to restitution and full compensation for the exploitation and depletion of their natural resources by colonial powers,” as well as their right to “liberation and to regain effective control over [...] natural resources and economic activities.”<sup>427</sup> These rights echoed two of the General Assembly's resolutions related to Palestinians (242 and 194): the former called for Israel's withdrawal from Arab territories it occupied following the 1967 war, and the latter guaranteed the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their occupied land and granted their right to “compensation that should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property.” As such, supporting NIEO was obviously essential for Palestinians who were—and still are—under an active occupation, and whose resources have been depleted by the Israeli occupation force. Simultaneously, the declaration was a grave threat to Israel whose economy was dependent on oil, water, and natural resources from the occupied territories.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> “Palestine at the United Nations.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4, no. 2 (1975).182, accessed January 2023, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2535860>.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Christopher R. W. Dietrich. *Oil Revolution: Elites, Sovereign Rights, and the Economic Culture of Decolonization*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017), 267.

<sup>427</sup> “3201 (S-VI) Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order.” *UN Documents: Gathering a Body of Global Agreements* 1 May 1974, accessed May 4, 2022, <http://www.undocuments.net/s6r3201.htm>.

<sup>428</sup> Israel was declared as an apartheid state by the *UN Human Right Council*, *Human Rights Watch* organization and *Amnesty International*. This politicized language ignores the clear differences between the two

Accordingly, the neoconservatives feared that a new economic order would create a world in which Israel would be held accountable for its ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories and violation of Palestinian rights, and a world in which her Arab opponents have the political leverage—voting power in the UN—to isolate Israel from the international community and perhaps to shift American public opinion, and hence, US foreign policy away from Israeli and closer to the Arab interests. Additionally, obtaining full sovereignty over their resources, neoconservatives feared, would finance the Arab military buildup and enable the Arabs to buy more sophisticated—if not nuclear—weaponry. Norman Podhoretz, *Commentary*'s editor-in-chief, warned that “an American foreign policy dedicated to the construction of ‘a new international order’ would lead at the very least to a tilt toward the Arabs and at the worst to an abandonment of Israel as the price of a secure and affordable supply of oil.”<sup>429</sup> The connection between Israel and NIEO will be further investigated in the section that deals with the development of the neoconservatives’ human rights framework.

### **3.3. Iran’s Role in “The Unholy Alliance” Between OPEC and Third World Countries**

On November 16, 1975 the G7 (convening the leaders of the largest industrial economies: the US, the UK, France, Germany, Japan, and Italy) held its first summit with the aim of discussing the way in which liberal democracies can restore their unity and find solutions to the ravaging economic situation and to assert the legitimacy of their democratic systems against the mounting threats of Euro-communism.<sup>430</sup> In the third session that dealt with the issues of “Energy, Raw materials, and Development,” the participants agreed that for OPEC to lose “its unilateral power to control oil prices,” oil consuming countries need to break what the West-German Chancellor described as the “unholy alliance” between OPEC and Third World countries.<sup>431</sup> This alliance between developing countries and OPEC was best manifested in the two parties’ support of NIEO. During the General Assembly session in which NIEO was adapted, more than 30 African, Latin American, and Asian leaders gave speeches supporting OPEC.<sup>432</sup> The success of OPEC in shifting the power over oil prices and production from the

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countries. See for example this VOX article on the subject: <https://www.vox.com/23924319/israel-palestine-apartheid-meaning-history-debate>, accessed March 25, 2024.

<sup>429</sup> Podhoretz, *Breaking*, 341.

<sup>430</sup> Sargent, *A Superpower* 190-193.

<sup>431</sup> Steven G. Galpern and Edward C. Keefer, *Foreign Relations of The United States, 1969–1976, Volume XXXVII, Energy Crisis, 1974–1980*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2012), document 88, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d88>.

<sup>432</sup> Dietrich, *Oil Revolution*, 276.

industrialized countries and international companies to producing governments was cited as an example of the economic benefits to be derived from common action through commodity producers' associations. Following the example of OPEC, other countries sought to establish cartels for other commodities in order to increase their political and economic power.

In retrospect, OPEC countries supported NIEO for it provided an opportunity to protect them against the retaliation of the industrialized nations, find new markets, and build new partnerships with developing countries. NIEO also helped them enhance their deteriorated public image, by presenting the price increase as part of the struggle against colonialism and neocolonialism. Taking full control over their oil production and prices when discussed within the context of Third World countries' struggle against imperialism presented a case in which local populations asserted their sovereignty and took hold of their natural resources, correcting long-standing inequity and exploitation by foreign companies. The Gulf countries had additional motives to support NIEO. First, by allying themselves with Third World countries they aimed to moderate and neutralize—if not radicalize—the revolutionary powers in the region in order to secure the oil flow and to reduce Soviet influence. Just like the rest of the developing countries, the Arab non-oil producing countries—principally Egypt and Syria—were impacted by the increase in oil prices. The worldwide economic crisis threatened to make these countries more dependent on the Soviet aid, so the petrostates decided to provide them with an alternative source of support, i.e., Iran's and Saudi Arabia's economic aid to Egypt and Syria. Second, the Gulf countries were already attacked by their opponents (internally and externally) for their perceived affiliation with imperial powers and for their misuse of the oil wealth, so by supporting NIEO they distanced themselves from the US and Israel. Third, OPEC support for NIEO—largely driven by Iranian interests—was motivated by the fifth section of NIEO's program of action, which asserted developing countries' right of “transfer of technology,” and the responsibility of developed countries to assist them in “research and development in exploration and exploitation, conservation and the legitimate utilization of natural resources and all sources of energy.”<sup>433</sup>

In what follows, I explain why the neoconservatives perceived NIEO as a consequence of OPEC's success in achieving a steady increase in the producers' share of oil profits and, that without this success, NIEO could not have been able to move so swiftly to the forefront of world affairs and gain the support of the majority of developing nations. Exploring the role

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<sup>433</sup> This demand was made by the Shah during the Tehran Conference for Human Rights “3202 (s-vi) of the Program of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order.” *United Nation Documents*, accessed May 23, 2022, <http://www.un-documents.net/s6r3202.htm>.

played by Iran in leading OPEC and constructing its alliance with Third World countries is important to justify my main argument that the neoconservative attack on the Shah was part of their attack on OPEC.

### 3.3.1. Iran's Oil Coup

Days after the declaration of the oil embargo, in an interview with *The New York Times*, the Shah addressed the Arab countries stating that “the oil weapon is extremely dangerous.” When criticizing what he justifiably considered turning oil into an economic weapon, he asked: “What’s the use of all that money in the bank if the whole system crumbles? What good does it do if the monetary system collapses? I hope they realize the impact over the long run of certain actions.”<sup>434</sup> Still, the Shah’s stance toward oil prices did not match that toward the embargo. He viewed increasing the prices of raw materials as a rightful means for underdeveloped countries to achieve economic emancipation, catch up with developing nations, and to put an end to Western countries exploitation and overconsumption of their natural resources.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, although Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries were constantly blamed for the increase in the oil prices, Iran, Iraq, and Venezuela were actually the high price hawks in OPEC. Among these so-called hawks, Iran was by far the most aggressive and outspoken, as it favored doubling the prices set at the beginning of the 1973 war. Iran assumed the leadership of OPEC in 1971, when the Shah led the oil producing countries’ delegation against the delegation of international oil companies led by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. The result of Iran’s leadership was the first success of OPEC in increasing the share of profit for oil producing countries in what became known as the Tehran Agreement of 1971, according to which oil prices increased by 35 cents per barrel. The Tehran Agreement entailed increasing the oil prices by 5 cents annually—to keep up with the price increase of manufactured goods—and eliminated the ability of oil companies to increase production unilaterally. This success became the economic underpinning for OPEC’s negotiation with the oil companies and enabled its oil coup of 1973, which took place prior to the oil embargo, when OPEC extracted control over oil production and price level.<sup>435</sup> This achievement, however, did not lead to increasing the oil prices to the level desired by the Shah

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<sup>434</sup> Bernard Weinraub, “Shah of Iran Urges Arabs to End Their Oil Embargo” *The New York Times* December 22, 1973, accessed May 8, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/12/22/archives/Shah-of-iran-urges-arabs-to-end-theirol-embargo-Shah-of-iran-urges.html>.

<sup>435</sup> See Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, Chapter 2; Garavini, *The Rise*, chapter 4.

and other price hawks in OPEC. The increase in demand and the panic caused by the 1973 war provided an opportunity for Iran to take the oil matter once again into her hands. In his memoir, the Shah reflected on the atmosphere that led to the price increase:

[E]arlier that year during the Arab oil embargo, we had sold oil on the spot market for \$35 a barrel. That told us something: demand for oil was so strong that price was no object. Oil had been underpriced for far too long. It was time to move firmly and with dispatch. I was also convinced that in the long run the world economy would be healthier when oil sold at a price which would foster exploration of other forms of energy.<sup>436</sup>

The Shah's realization of how much the world was willing to pay for oil materialized during the meeting of OPEC oil ministers in Tehran on December 25, 1973, when he persuaded the rest of the OPEC countries to more than double the already hiked oil prices from \$5.11 to \$11.65 per barrel.<sup>437</sup> After the increase in the posted price in 1973, OPEC countries rapidly took full control of their oil production and by the end of the decade almost all of them had nationalized their hydrocarbon industries.<sup>438</sup> By 1975, the Shah planned a further 35 percent increase in oil prices to meet Iran's development plans. The Ford administration rejected the Shah's plans. Ford's economic advisors warned that if the Shah's plans were to materialize, they would have "catastrophic effects in both developed and developing countries" and requested that the President firmly ask OPEC's leaders to halt any increase of oil prices.<sup>439</sup> President Ford publicly and privately urged the Shah to restrain oil prices and in September 1975 he sent an official letter to the Shah. The letter is worth quoting at length for it reflects the way the administration perceived the Shah's influence in OPEC and the impact of another oil price increase, if the Shah was to peruse his plans of hiking the prices:

As you can appreciate, the support of the American public for the new US position must be based on an awareness of the concerns of the oil producers and other developing countries and the need to seek cooperative solutions to our common economic problems. I am concerned, however, that this necessary support will be jeopardized should the member countries of OPEC increase the price of oil this fall. I am also concerned that such action could raise serious questions among the American public regarding the close cooperation we seek and are actively developing with your country in several fields of our bilateral relationship. I value this relationship greatly and sincerely wish to continue to broaden and deepen it. Another oil price increase by OPEC would also have a significant negative impact on the economies of all the oil importing nations—both developed and developing—at the very time that signs of progress in the fight against recession and inflation are appearing. Such a price increase would impose shocks on the U.S. economy, on the more vulnerable economies of Europe and Japan, and finally on

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<sup>436</sup> Pahlavi, *Answers to History*, 97.

<sup>437</sup> Yergin. *The Prize*, 607; Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 146.

<sup>438</sup> Garavini. *The Rise*, 202.

<sup>439</sup> Galpern and Keefer, eds, *Foreign Relations*, document 106. accessed May 6, 2023, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d106>.

the highly fragile economies of the developing world. It would at the very least reduce the progress toward economic recovery and could, in fact, plunge a number of countries into extremely serious difficulties [...] It is my hope that you will use your considerable influence among the producing countries to urge restraint on oil prices and to argue that our long-term mutual interest in a more rational global economic structure should prevail over short-term economic advantage.<sup>440</sup>

As stated earlier, the President sent similar letters to leaders of Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. In relations to the Saudis, the President did not send a letter but he met with Prince Saud Bin Faisal Al-Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, who assured him that the kingdom is in favor of posing a freeze on oil prices, and that the key to lowering the prices is in the hands of Iran and Venezuela.<sup>441</sup> At the same time, State Department records show that unlike the letter to the Shah, Ford's letter to the Venezuelan President neither evoked the same urgency, nor did it include a threat of reconsidering the cooperation and friendship between the two countries; in fact, this letter was sent two months after the one to the Shah.<sup>442</sup>

This correspondence shows that the Ford administration regarded Iran as the leading figure in OPEC. The Shah was seen, if not as the foremost advocate for high prices, at least as the influential force maintaining OPEC's stance and deterring other nations from opposing the organization's pricing policy. The letter exchange also shows that, contrary to popular belief, American-Iranian relations under the Ford administration were—due to Iran's oil policies—at a low ebb compared with American-Saudi relations that were heading toward what would become an unbreakable alliance. In his response to president Ford's request, the Shah made it clear that he was not going to back down in face of these threats or to accommodate the economic needs of Western countries:

As you will no doubt agree, Mr. President, Iran has always followed a policy of restraint and moderation, but the incredible economic situation of some Western countries is such that history will not forgive us should we deplete our finite and most precious wealth just to allow these countries to continue their politicizing and indecision.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> Galpern and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 80, accessed March 12, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d80>.

<sup>441</sup> In his response to President Ford, Prince Saud stated: "His Majesty is just as determined as last summer not to have an increase. But it will be difficult, and it will depend heavily on what you can do with Iran and Venezuela. His Majesty has said at least he will refuse more than a modest increase and will categorically refuse anything beyond 5 percent. If we can get support from Iran and Venezuela, we can hold to no increase, but without that, it will be extremely difficult." Galpern and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 103, accessed April 9, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d103>.

<sup>442</sup> Galpern and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, Document 106; document 110, accessed June 8, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d110>.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

At the time of this correspondence the Shah was under severe attack in Congress and in the US media. A series of articles critical of the Shah and Kissinger appeared in *The Washington Post*. Jack Anderson, who is known for his close ties with many neoconservatives in the State Department, the CIA, and Congress, reported the administration's frustration with the Shah:

Behind the scenes some administration officials are eager to challenge the Shah, but the President has instructed them to keep their comments to themselves. In their private papers, however, they have demolished the Shah's economic arguments.<sup>444</sup>

In another article, Anderson claimed that the Central Intelligence Agency (under George H. W. Bush), "has compiled a disturbing psychological profile of the Shah of Iran," in which, Anderson reported, the Shah was presented as being "an uncertain ally" and a "dangerous megalomaniac, who is likely to pursue his own aims in disregard of American interests."<sup>445</sup> The CIA study also estimated that the Shah's oil revenues would run out in two decades, and hypothesized that when that happens "he might use his new military power to seize some neighboring oil fields," thus confirming the messages Simon and Schlesinger were deliberately delivering to the Saudis.<sup>446</sup> In return, the Shah publicly voiced his belief that Iran was under a systematic attack from circles within the administration and Congress, motivated by the Pro-Israel and the Jewish lobby. On one occasion the Shah told his court minister Alam, "I blame US reaction to OPEC and oil negotiations for our declining popularity abroad; this too relates to Jewish opinion," and, on another occasion he instructed Alam to tell a group of American Jews visiting Iran that he was "aware that the Jewish lobby has been opposed to [Iran's] arms purchases." In the letter to President Ford, he said:

You are no doubt fully aware, Mr. President, of my deep concern for the need to maintain close cooperation between our two countries. However, if there is any opposition in the Congress and in other circles to see Iran prosperous and militarily strong, there are many other sources of supply to which we can turn for our life is not in their hands. If these circles are irresponsible then it is hopeless, but should they be responsible, they will certainly regret their attitude to my country. Nothing could provoke more reaction in us than this threatening tone from certain circles and their paternalistic attitude.<sup>447</sup>

The circles he mentioned were the neoconservatives who, as it will be demonstrated, had multiple reasons to put an end to the Shah's ambition and to sway American foreign policy

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<sup>444</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 270.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid, Ben Offiler, *US Foreign Policy*, 152.

<sup>446</sup> "The Shah on Israel, Corruption Torture and." *The New York Times*, October 22, 1976, accessed October 1, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/10/22/archives/the-Shah-on-israel-corruption-torture-and.html>.

<sup>447</sup> Monica Belmonte and Edward C. Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XXVII, Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2012.) Document 192, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d192>.

from interdependence to confrontation and hegemony. It is worth noting that emphasizing the role played by the Shah in leading OPEC does not by any means ignore the intellectual and political role played by other OPEC members in driving the organization's policies. These members were: Algeria, the first OPEC country to nationalize its oil industry; Venezuela, the most vocal one about sovereignty rights; Libya and Iraq, the most radical members; and Saudi Arabia, the largest oil producer and the leading force that called for lowering the prices. However, what gave Iran a stronger position and greater efficacy was the fact that at the time—when Watergate and Vietnam have already crippled the US' ability to back up its demands of lowering the price of oil with the threat of force—maintaining good relations with Iran was by far more politically important for the US than the economic interest of lowering oil prices. Iran's geopolitical weight and domination over the other powers in the region and its ability to ignore the oil embargo allowed Teheran to refuel the American six fleet while also supplying Israel with oil. Iran actually increased its oil production to offset the impact of oil cutoff, so the US was not willing to challenge the Shah on oil matters.<sup>448</sup> In addition, the Shah had a charismatic personality that attracted the public in the US and Europe and granted him frequent appearances on American television and global media, which gave his statements larger publicity than that given to other oil personalities. That being the case, it is reasonable to argue that the neoconservatives were fixated on swaying OPEC leadership away from the Shah—for no other power in the region was able pursue economic, political, and military plans that openly challenged the US without fearing consequences.

### 3.3.2. Iran's "Intellectual Leadership" of OPEC

Linking OPEC to the Third World struggle for political and economic independence was established from the moment the Shah declared the price increase on December 24, 1973. The Shah's statement situated OPEC's policies within the context of anticolonial resistance and nations' right to development; most notably, it evaded the mere mention of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a factor behind OPEC's policies. From the *Niavaran* palace in northern Tehran, the Shah introduced the new oil prices as a model for anticolonial opposition. "It is only equitable and just that the oil-producing countries" had ended the era in which the industrial powers were "able to buy oil at ridiculously low prices," he proclaimed, and proceeded to lecture the industrialized world:

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<sup>448</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 149, 174.

They will have to realize that the era of their terrific progress and even more terrific income and wealth based on cheap oil is finished. They will have to find new sources of energy. Eventually they will have to tighten their belts; eventually all those children of well-to-do families who have plenty to eat at every meal, who have their cars, and who act almost as terrorists and throw bombs here and there, they will have to rethink all these aspects of the advanced industrial world. And they will have to work harder.... Your young boys and young girls who receive so much money from their fathers will also have to think that they must earn their living somehow.<sup>449</sup>

Similarly, in various public statements and interviews, the Shah did not just set himself as the new moral authority over oil but under his leadership Iran set what became the standard justification of OPEC's pricing policies: the rationale to defend the economic achievements of petrostates and the framework that linked OPEC's success with NIEO principles. As such, in 1974 alone, the Shah was featured on the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Harper's* magazines with these captions, "Emperor of Oil," "Iran's Push for Power," and "Giving the Shah Everything he Wants" respectively.<sup>450</sup> I present four arguments in support of the claim that under the Shah, Iran provided what Kissinger referred to as "the intellectual leadership of OPEC," which I argue, led to the antagonization of the Shah by neoconservatives and their allies in the Ford administration. First, Iran provided the motive to exempt the oil producing countries from the blame for the worldwide inflation. This principle was best articulated by the Iranian Finance Minister and Iran's delegate to OPEC, Jamshid Amuzegar, who, in his 1974 speech at the UN General Assembly Special Session on "Raw materials and development," charged that the contribution of oil prices to inflation in the industrial world did not exceed 1 percent and that these economies were already at a 12 percent inflation rate due to reasons that were not related to oil such as the Vietnam war, the collapse of Bretton Woods, and the Eurodollar market, etc. Thus, Amuzegar argued:

Rather than lower the price of oil by \$1 or \$2 per barrel, with the result that 85 percent of the benefits would go to the most industrialized nations, the OPEC member states should create a fund of \$2–\$3 billion for the most impoverished countries, and let the industrialized world simmer in its own juices, given that it had been responsible for every

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<sup>449</sup> Elisabetta Bini, Giuliano Garavini, Federico Romero, eds., *Oil Shock: The 1973 Crisis and Its Economic Legacy*. (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2016), 45; Yergin, *The Prize*, 607; Bernard Weinraub, "Oil Price Doubled by Big Producers on Persian Gulf," *The New York Times*, December 24, 1973, accessed 3 March, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/12/24/archives/oil-price-doubled-by-big-producers-on-persian-gulf-6-states-that.html>.

<sup>450</sup> See among others, "Iran: Oil, Grandeur and a Challenge to the West," *Time*, November, 1974, accessed October 10, 2022, <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,945047,00.html>; David Holden "Shah of Shahs, Shah of Dreams: A Napoleonic vision of Iran as a New Japan," *The New York Times*, May 26, 1974, accessed October 19, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/05/26/archives/a-napoleonic-vision-of-iran-as-a-new-japan-Shah-of-Shahs-Shah-of.html>; "The Master Builder of Iran," *Newsweek*, 14 October 1974.

decision to date on the international economic system, beginning with the devaluation of the dollar, decisions made out of complete and utter self-interest.<sup>451</sup>

Amuzegar argued that the economic crisis of 1973, which by the 1980s became a well-known fact, was the outcome of economic policies pursued by the industrialized nations and not the result of the increase of oil prices. This became the oil producing rationalization of the price increase to counter the attack against OPEC. Second, Iran presented an example of why OPEC's new oil regime was more beneficial for developing nations than the previous one that, as the Shah constantly argued, was only favorable to industrialized nations and Western oil companies. Immediately after the announcement of the new price increase in 1973, the Shah proposed that petrostates and industrialized countries share the benefits of their wealth with poor and vulnerable developing countries. He suggested establishing an International Fund for Aid, with the aim of providing economic assistance and helping developing countries achieve economic independence. The Shah also became a loaner for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, gave \$700 million to the IMF, and granted bilateral loans to countries threatened by economic crash to bail them out—including Great Britain, France, and Italy as well as poor countries like Egypt and India and countries in Eastern Europe and Africa.<sup>452</sup> In an interview with *Time* magazine, the Shah described his country donation to the World Bank and the IMF as “a new Marshall plan” that has “a much bigger scope because it concerns the whole world.” His comments on Iran's developmental role are worth quoting at length for they reflect the way he was presenting the worldwide benefits of the new oil regime under his leadership:

Ten years ago, UNCTAD [United Nations Conference on Trade and Development] started to speak about the gap between the haves and the have nots. During all these ten years, not a single resolution was adopted to go to the help of the poor countries. Never. Even the U.S., this country with your fantastic humanitarian action, even you slowed your aid to the developing countries. So, the gap between the haves and the have-nots widened. At the same time, I realize that \$40 billion or \$50 billion were coming to the oil-producing countries. So, I came up with this idea of volunteering not less than \$1 billion this year in loans to the International Monetary Fund and to the International Bank to take care of the balance of payments deficit in the advanced countries of the world and also in the developing countries, and to create a new institution to make soft-term loans of 2.5% over 15 years, something like that, for projects in the developing countries.<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> Quoted in Garavini, *The Rise*, 245.

<sup>452</sup> Pahlavi, *Answers*, 139-140. Galpern and Keefer, document 80, accessed March 12, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d80>

<sup>453</sup> Medley Donovan and Murray Gart, “The World: A Talk with the Shah of Iran” *Time*, April 1, 1974, accessed May 23, 2021, <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,904049-2,00.html>.

The third reason to support the claim that Iran rationalized the increase of the oil prices and provided the intellectual leadership of OPEC is related to the notion that raw materials prices should be linked to the prices of manufactured goods. The Shah constantly connected the price of oil to the price of imported goods from the industrialized countries and presented the price increase as a justifiable means to correct the long-standing inequity between producing and consuming nations. For instance, in an interview with famous Italian journalist, Oriana Fallaci, the Shah compared the rise of the oil prices with that of other finished goods from the West:

You've increased the price of the wheat you sell us by 300 percent, and the same for sugar and cement . . . You've sent petrochemical prices rocketing. You buy our crude oil and sell it back to us, refined as petrochemicals, at a hundred times the price you've paid us. You make us pay more, scandalously more, for everything, and it is only fair that, from now on, you should pay more for oil. Let's say . . . 10 times more.<sup>454</sup>

Fourth, the Shah held Western governments responsible for the economic crisis. He argued that the industrialized nations could provide a solution to the economic crisis without forcing oil producing countries to decrease their oil prices. He called them out on adding taxes to oil prices and charged that the prices paid by the consumer would not be so high if Western governments cancel their added taxes instead of exploiting nations that are entirely dependent on oil for their development plans. Moreover, the Shah provided the economic *raison d'être* for the oil price increase, as opposed to the political why for—largely advertised by neoconservatives—that pinned oil producers as solely responsible for economic stagnation and inflation in the US and Western Europe. For instance, during an interview CBS's *Sixty Minutes*, the Shah emphasized once again that the oil embargo had no effect on the oil prices and that in fact the United States was importing “more oil than at any time in the past,” adding that the Nixon administration was generating a baseless energy crisis to serve political purposes.<sup>455</sup> The impact of the Shah's comments are depicted in *The New York Times* report on the Shah's interview, which stated that the Shah's comments on *Sixty Minutes* have “created tremors in Washington and added fuel to the fire of controversy over the validity of the energy crisis.”<sup>456</sup> Additionally, the Shah's comments provoked Treasury Secretary William Simon to describe the Shah as a “nut,” in a remark in the *American Banker*. In his memoir, Simon noted that the

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<sup>454</sup> Oriana Fallaci “The Shah of Iran: An Interview with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi” *The New Republic* December 1, 1973, accessed April 4, 2023, <https://newrepublic.com/article/92745/Shah-iran-mohammad-reza-pahlavi-oriana-fallaci>.

<sup>455</sup> William D. Smith, “Oil Watchers Focus on Shah of Iran” *The New York Times*, March 7, 1974, accessed March 4, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/03/07/archives/oil-watchers-focus-on-Shah-of-iran-few-see-an-end-of-opec-in-the.html>.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

Shah's comments were "utterly false absurdity that sparked a reaction of demagogic ignorance on Capitol Hill."<sup>457</sup> In his book *The Prize, the Epic Quest for Oil Money and Power*, Daniel Yergin linked Simon's comments to those of other American officials, namely, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, who constantly criticized the Shah's oil rhetoric and armaments.<sup>458</sup> This indicates that the same powers that opposed détente saw the oil crisis as an opportunity to construct a new confrontational foreign policy approach that would reorient the Western alliance against the Soviet Union and restore the perception of American power. Dealing with the oil crisis as a political rather than economic matter was necessary to justify this confrontational approach. The Shah being—with the exception of Israel—the US' most important ally in the region presented a serious challenge to this neoconservative narrative. He ruled out the threat of total embargo and provided an alternative narrative that did not just deal with the oil ordeal as a burly economic matter but as the ground for attaching the Third World struggle to the right of oil producing countries to peaceful development.<sup>459</sup>

### 3.3.3. OPEC's Weapons

As stated earlier, the issue of states' right to development and sovereignty over their natural resources did not start with NIEO, nor did the call for structural change in the world economic order. In fact, these aspirations can be traced back to the first non-alignment conference in Bandung (1955) and were further emphasized when the UN officially designated the 1960s as the first developmental decade and expanded it to become part of the international human rights discourse in 1968, the first International Human rights Conference in Tehran.<sup>460</sup> Nevertheless, what prompted neoconservatives and like-minded individuals to be galvanized against NIEO was the power it garnered by OPEC's success. The petrostates were examples of states that achieved instant wealth and vast economic improvement without going through the slow process of transforming their political or economic structure; moreover, these countries achieved wealth without the assistance or protection of superpowers. OPEC's bargaining leverage was a manifestation of the world's new interdependent reality that forced cooperation over coercion. In other words, the failure of gunboat diplomacy in lowering the oil prices

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<sup>457</sup> In his memoir, Simon described the Shah as "not only an uninformed, misinformed, irrational megalomaniac given to hallucinating, he was also duplicitous." See, William E. Simon. John M. Caher. *A Time for Reflection: An Autobiography*. (Washington, DC: Regnery Pub, 2004), 88-89.

<sup>458</sup> Yergin. *The Prize*, 625-626.

<sup>459</sup> "Total Oil Embargo Ruled Out by Shah," *The New York Times*, February 2, 1975, accessed August 3, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/02/02/archives/total-oil-embargo-ruled-out-by-Shah.html> .

<sup>460</sup> For more on the history of NIEO, see, Whelan, "Under," 93-108.

demonstrated that by creating powerful and unified cartels, the demands of developing countries finally received serious consideration from industrialized nations, without whose cooperation the calls to alter the existing economic system remained empty. The previous chapter demonstrated how the neoconservatives perceived the oil embargo and the subsequent OPEC success as a threat to the very foundation of the Western liberal order.

Along with providing the justification for the oil price increase and joining OPEC to NIEO, Iran played a significant role in empowering OPEC politically. For instance, the Chief of the Iranian Economic Mission in Washington and the brother of Iran's Economic Minister and later Prime minister, Jahangir Amuzegar, in his article, "OPEC in the Context of the Global Power Equation," summarized what he referred to as the "weapons in OPEC's hands," a comprehensive tactics to unify the oil policies of OPEC members in a way that would serve their collective interest and allow them to resist the threats from consuming nations.<sup>461</sup> The list of OPEC weapons, according to Amuzegar, included: 1) withholding oil supply fully or partly from all or selected customers by imposing embargoes on exports, nationalizing oil or other resources, and taking over foreign investments, 2) increasing the oil prices further, 3) regulating the work of oil companies by increasing local participation in production, distribution, and marketing, 4) replacing the earnings made from huge exports from certain currencies and countries to others according to their attitude and cooperation, 5) making discriminatory price concessions in favor of or against certain countries, 6) rescheduling foreign debts, 7) shifting alliances and coalitions in investments, military, and trade, 8) withdrawing from agreements and pacts, and closing military bases.<sup>462</sup> In his article, Amuzegar further argued that the use of these "weapons" provides the raw material cartels—oil and otherwise—by means to balance the power gap between producers and consumers, and provide developing countries with a way to counter the pressure from developed countries. Creating cartels for raw materials, he further argued it is "not only in the interest of the Third World, but also to the advantage of the whole international community" for it would "ensure greater economic justice among the rich and the poor; reduce inferiority complexes of the developing nations (particularly the previous colonies) when dealing with the industrial countries; enhance their self-reliance and self-confidence; narrow existing political, psychological and economic gaps between the large and the small countries; and pave the way for a better world."<sup>463</sup> Such arguments served as the

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<sup>461</sup> Jahangir Amuzegar, "OPEC in the Context of the Global Power Equation." in Paust, Blaustein, and Higgins, eds. *The Arab*. 181-191.

<sup>462</sup> Paust, Blaustein, and Higgins eds. *The Arab*, 181-187.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

foundation for making economic rights an integral part of global human rights rhetoric. Needless to say, most of OPEC's weapon as suggested by Amuzegar were argued against in the neoconservative responses to the oil embargo and the price increase, as discussed in the previous chapter; however, the following section further highlights the neoconservatives' intellectual response to OPEC and Third World ideology to prove that in the aftermath of the 1973 war US foreign policy toward the region was consistent with neoconservative foreign policy dogmas. OPEC's "weapons" were referenced in the official statement of the first Conference of Sovereigns and Heads of State of OPEC Member Countries,<sup>464</sup> which was held in response to the war threats against OPEC countries. At the conference, OPEC members declared their readiness "to take immediate and effective measures in order to counteract such threats [of war] with a united response whenever the need arises, notably in the case of aggression."<sup>465</sup>

### **3.4. The Neoconservative Human Rights Framework**

The emphasis on human rights in American politics is as old as the Republic. After all, the Declaration of Independence called for universal equality and the "unalienable rights" of individuals to—among other things—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Nevertheless, the embrace of human rights by Congress as a tool in determining the direction of foreign policy was one of the features of the new interdependent world order of the mid-1970s.<sup>466</sup> As a result of the exposure of Watergate as well as other controversies and unethical activities involving the State Department, the CIA and the FBI, Congress sought ways to limit the executive branch's abuse of power. The issue of human rights became one of the ways to achieve this goal. The issue of human rights was used by the anti-War and leftist factions in the Democratic Party to attack US military interventions abroad as well as US aid and arm sales to repressive regimes. In the Congress a new Congressional agenda was set by the anti-War powers: it advocated global cooperation, strengthening the United Nation, emphasizing

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<sup>464</sup> This will be further discussed in the "The Repercussions of the War Threat" section below.

<sup>465</sup> "OPEC Solemn Declarations," *Conference of Sovereigns and Heads of State of OPEC Member Countries*, March 4-6, 1975. *Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries*, accessed August, 4, 2022, [https://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/static\\_files\\_project/media/downloads/publications/Solemn\\_Declaration\\_I-III.pdf](https://www.opec.org/opec_web/static_files_project/media/downloads/publications/Solemn_Declaration_I-III.pdf). Particularly, points 4, 10, 11.

<sup>466</sup> As stated in the previous chapter, human rights were advocated by the internationalists in the US Congress.

cultural exchange, and human rights.<sup>467</sup> Some of these powers formed the “Members of Congress for Peace through Law” (MCPL), which aimed for a greater limitation to arms, the development of a global economy, abolition of war, and cut in the defense budget.<sup>468</sup> The MCPL also pressed for legislation in support of arms control and giving Congress greater oversight over arms sales abroad, as well as engaging America (the public) with “the size and nature of [the US’] military spending”<sup>469</sup>

Human rights are one of the areas in which Congress can practice some authority over the executive branch, regain respect abroad by distancing Americans’ moral values from the administration’s conduct, and restore nationalism among Americans at home. Between August and December of 1973, the subcommittee on International Organization and Movements—with 15 of its members also being MCPL—headed by the democratic senator Donald Fraser held a total of 15 congressional hearings with more than 40 witnesses—former US government officials, Congress members, lawyers, scholars, and representatives of nongovernmental organizations—with the aim of publicizing human rights violations and reconsidering “human rights factors” as part of US foreign policy decision-making.<sup>470</sup> The subcommittee’s final report, *Human Rights in the World Community: A Call for U.S. Leadership*, offered harsh criticism of the Nixon administration’s conduct on human rights; mainly focusing on the administration’s reliance on “quiet diplomacy” in relations with countries that severely abused human rights, its policy of ignoring friendly governments’ human rights violations as well as the violations committed by the Soviet Union to maintain détente policy.<sup>471</sup> The report’s recommendation included requesting the State Department to treat human rights factors as a “regular part of the US foreign policy,” discouraging governments of gross violations of human rights through measures such as: private consultation with the government concerned; public interventions in UN organs and agencies; withdrawal of military assistance and sales; and

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<sup>467</sup> Sargent, *A Superpower*, 201. “Members of Congress for Peace through Law the Heritage Foundation Staff.” The Heritage Foundation, April 1977. <https://www.heritage.org/report/members-congress-peace-through-law-the-heritage-foundation-staff> .

<sup>468</sup> Ibid. By 1976, MCPL grew to include almost one third of US Congress members—35 Senators and 140 Representatives. As one observer noted, their work was “the prototype of a foreign policy for an interdependent world.” Sargent, *A Superpower*, 201.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, *Human Rights in The World Community: A Call for U.S. Leadership*. 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., March 27, 1974. xi.

<sup>471</sup> See, US Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, *International Protection of Human Rights: The Work of International Organizations and the Role of U.S. Foreign Policy*. 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 1st sess., August 1; September 13,19,20,27, October 3,4,10, 11,16, 18, 24, 25 November 1; December 7, 1973. 9-11, 210-212.

revocation of certain economic assistance programs.<sup>472</sup> Additionally, the subcommittee required the Department to establish an Office for Human Rights with the responsibility “for making policy recommendations and comments based on observation and analysis of human rights practices in the countries of the region and their significance in US foreign policy relations with these countries.”<sup>473</sup> The report’s recommendation was eventually formalized by The Foreign Assistance Act of 1973 and by establishing the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in 1975.

Section 32 of the Report requested the president to “reduce or terminate security assistance to any government which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations or internationally recognized human rights.”<sup>474</sup> Shortly afterwards, section 502B—that requested the president to reduce or terminate security assistance to human rights abusers—was added to The Foreign Assistance Act and the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs was established in 1975, with the main task of dealing with congressional legislation tying aid to human rights criteria mainly those related to the Section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act.

Neoconservatives were clearly in opposition to MCPL, they mistrusted the United Nations, and were strong advocates of increasing the military budget and confrontational foreign policy. The fall of right-wing dictatorships in Europe, the inability of the strategic arms control and SALT I treaties to constrain the capabilities of the growing Soviet counterforce, the defeat of South Vietnam and other American-backed regimes in Southeast Asia were, according to neoconservatives and hawks in the Ford and Nixon administrations, signs of the decline of American power — rather than what liberals thought of as a turn toward a new interdependent world order. A show of force was needed to restore the perception of American power and prevent the disintegration of the Western alliance.<sup>475</sup> Henceforth, the issue of human rights and democracy became central to the ideological struggle against communism. The neoconservatives used the Soviet’s human rights record to assail the policy of détente for accommodating totalitarianism. Human rights, they argued, should be integrated into mainstream US foreign policy. Political, economic, and military affairs between the US and the Soviet Union or any other political regime should be linked to these countries’ human rights records. Human rights should be used by opinion leaders to restore public faith in American exceptionalism, democracy, and values, and it should be utilized to assault anti-liberal power,

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Fukuyama. *America*, 33-34.

the culture of appeasement, and Third World apologists in the US and Europe. Additionally, the neoconservatives saw human rights as a method to propagate public support for an interventionist foreign policy at home and to regain world respect abroad.<sup>476</sup> The reconciliation with the Soviet Union, they argued, was nothing but a repetition of Britain's appeasement of Hitler. Their human rights philosophy is perhaps best expressed by Norman Podhoretz:

In resisting the advance of Soviet power, then, we are fighting for freedom and against Communism, for democracy and against totalitarianism . . . In sum: the conflict between the US and the Soviet Union is a clash between two civilizations. More accurately, it is a clash between civilization and barbarism . . . since the defeat of fascism in World War II, Communism has emerged as the single greatest threat to liberty on the face of the earth . . . To oppose Communism in the world of ideas and ideologies is therefore in itself a necessary condition of fighting for human rights; anyone who fails to oppose Communism forfeits the intellectual and moral right to speak in the name of human rights.<sup>477</sup>

According to this logic, communism was the main threat to global peace and the US should ally itself with anti-communist regimes even if their human rights conduct is subpar. Distinguishing totalitarian from authoritarian regimes was another one of distinctive characteristics of neoconservative human rights narratives. Distinguishing between injustices occurring sporadically and unsystematically and states whose entire principle of rule was founded on the denial of human rights was an important, and legitimate, component of the neoconservative human rights rhetoric. Drawing on the example of such allies as Spain and Portugal, neoconservatives argued, human rights violations in authoritarian regimes did not prevent these regimes from turning into democracies in the long run, for these violations were neither systematic nor consistent. The same could not be said about totalitarian regimes in which the denial of individual rights was a founding principle.<sup>478</sup> This narrative became popular within the political community and widely shared within US Congress; it was the center of dispute within the democratic party between neoconservatives led by Senator Henry Jackson who supported "vital center" liberalism and the internationalists who combined the anti-war liberals and leftists (the like of MCPL, the McGovernites, the social democrats).<sup>479</sup> It was in this atmosphere that the neoconservatives constructed their human rights framework through such organizations as the CDM and CPD. The neoconservative support for the Jackson-Vanik amendment of the 1974 Trade Act presents a case study of how they utilized the issue

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid, 86-97; Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 117-125.

<sup>477</sup> Norman Podhoretz, "The Future Danger," *Commentary* April, 1981, accessed March 23, 2021, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/norman-podhoretz/the-future-danger/>.

<sup>478</sup> Velasco, *Neoconservatives*, 90-93; Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 117-125.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid, 8-10.

of human rights in their war against détente. They opened up the opportunity for Russian Jews to immigrate to Israel and they used this specific issue to demonstrate to the American public the inability of détente to change the “evil” nature of the Soviet Union or to contain the threat it posed; a threat they believed would prevail unless the Soviet Union is turned into a democratic nation.<sup>480</sup> The amendment was introduced by Senator Jackson in 1972, approved by Congress in 1974, and signed by President Ford in 1975. It tied US trade to liberal emigration policy, and specifically, granted the Soviet Union “most favored nation” (MFN) trading status (MFN) on condition that Moscow relaxes rules pertaining to Jewish emigration to Israel.<sup>481</sup> The Jackson-Vanik amendment was by far the major foreign policy issue the neoconservatives led by Jackson were directly and actively involved in at the time; their success in implementing the amendment despite the opposition of Kissinger reflected the power they had come to accumulate not just in Congress but in manipulating the press by leaking sensitive information in favor of certain policies.<sup>482</sup> The achievement of implementing the Jackson-Vanik amendment led to an increased involvement of neoconservatives in human rights issues. Influential members of the CDM, including Walter Laqueur, Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, Max Kampelman, Michael Ledeen, Richard Perle, Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., and Penn Kemble, tasked Kemble, who was then the Executive Director of the CDM, with preparing a proposal “on how the human rights issues would be incorporated as the principal focus of [The CDM] activity.”<sup>483</sup> Kemble argued in favor of formulating a “conceptual framework like containment or détente” to be the foundation of the work of CDM. He suggested integrating Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s argument of recasting human rights as a “political component to American foreign policy” rather than “a humanitarian program.”<sup>484</sup> The offshoot of the neoconservative contribution to Carter’s human rights policy was the Democratic Party platform of 1976, written partly by democratic neoconservatives such as Moynihan and Eugen Rostow. Moynihan described how the neoconservatives emphasized the Democratic Party human rights platform by insisting on targeting the Soviet Union and socialist regimes, and not just US allies: “We’ll be against the dictators you don’t like the most,

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<sup>480</sup> Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution*, 141.

<sup>481</sup> Senator Jackson’s staff included neoconservatives like Perle, Wolfowitz, Frank Gaffney, Charles Horner, Douglas Feith, and Elliott Abrams, among others. Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 114-115.

<sup>482</sup> Velasco, *Neoconservatives*, 86-93; Vaisse, *Neoconservatism* 118-120.

<sup>483</sup> Velasco, *Neoconservatives*, 86-93.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*

if you'll be against the dictators, we don't like the most."<sup>485</sup> To summarize, the neoconservatives' human rights approach evolved around criticizing the Soviet Union, left-wing dictatorships, and socialist regimes; defending and legitimizing human rights violations of pro-Western countries like South Africa and Israel; ignoring the human rights conduct of military dictatorship and authoritarian regimes when it's suitable and attacking them when it's not, as in the case of Nicaragua, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>486</sup> Neoconservatives argued against directly linking aid with countries' commitments to human rights. Most of the worst violators of human rights did not receive aid from the US anyway, so cutting off aid harmed US allies and did not impact countries that did not receive aid from the US—i.e. totalitarian regimes—and gave them leverage, for they continued to receive aid from the Soviet Union. In other words, the neoconservative human rights approach was firmly situated within the context of the Cold War fixed on the Soviet Union and leftist regimes, overlooked violations by Israel and rightwing dictatorships, and entangled with hegemonic desire to maintain a world order dominated by the US. In what follows, I introduce and analyze neoconservative human rights policy under the Nixon and Ford administrations, and explain why I consider it responsible for US policy toward the Shah's human rights record under the Carter administration.

### **3.4.1. NIEO and the Issue of Human Rights**

When debating universal human rights, the lion's share of the discussion usually focuses on individual rights such as civil, political, cultural, economic rights of individuals (e.g., right to life, health, education, free speech, assembly, work, and political association etc.) However, in the postcolonial era, Third World countries were aware that the fixation on discussing individual rights apart from nations' rights (economic justice, the right to development and sovereignty, mainly) shifts focus away from the structural and economic underlying causes of poverty, underdevelopment, and state violence. For instance, at the opening ceremony of the first international conference on human rights (Tehran, 1968) the Shah of Iran addressed the attendants and emphasized the right to development as a prerequisite to ensure an actual application of human rights and freedoms:

The gap which is constantly widening between the developing nations and the more privileged ones is one of the most powerful brakes hampering the full realization of human rights. For as long as the conditions have not been fulfilled for giving to all human beings access to the benefits of scientific and technical progress, the rights laid down in

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<sup>485</sup> Daniel P. Moynihan, "The Politics of Human Rights," *Commentary*, August 1977, accessed February 8, 2023, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/daniel-moynihan/the-politics-of-human-rights/>.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid*; Velasco. *Neoconservatives*, 86- 97.

the Universal Declaration may well remain a dead letter in many parts of the world. We should urgently take stock of this situation and we ought to abandon the obsolete structures of the past.<sup>487</sup>

The remarks made by the Shah were also emphasized in the conference's final declaration, formally known as the "Declaration of Tehran," in which the participants asserted the collective responsibility of the international community to narrow the gap between the standard of living between developed and developing countries. The structure of international economics was fundamentally founded on a set of colonial alliances that created an unequal partnership between the wealthy and the poor, so the participants suggested that adjusting the rules and practices of the world's major economic institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund was one way in which the gap between the haves and have nots could be bridged.<sup>488</sup> These institutions, they argued, historically worked on advancing the interests of developing nations and reinforced practices and conditions that hindered the ability of Third World countries to improve their economic situation and catch up with the advanced nations.<sup>489</sup> This rhetoric was only translated into policies following the oil crisis. As stated earlier, the success of OPEC in shifting the power over oil prices and production from industrialized countries and international companies to producing governments was a source of hope for Third World nations. Following the example of OPEC, other countries sought to establish cartels for other commodities in order to increase their political and economic power. NIEO presented the transformation of the economic rights rhetoric into structural demands; it set out a series of actions for the redistribution of wealth and a methodology to enforce such redistribution. The new economic order was supposed to allow developed countries to control their natural resources and nationalize the foreign multinational properties, and to bring international institutions to support increasing commodity prices to accommodate the development needs of poor countries.<sup>490</sup>

For the neoconservatives, economic rights meant the transfer of wealth to totalitarian governments and dictators who would spend it on armament. Therefore, they insisted that

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<sup>487</sup> Please note that I used this exact quote to introduce the present chapter of my dissertation: see footnote 336 above.

<sup>488</sup> Whelan, "Under," 93-108.

<sup>489</sup> An example of the World Bank's politically motivated policies would be the Bank's decision to rescind a 70-million-dollar loan to Egypt to fund building the Aswan Dam. The decision was motivated by Egypt's refusal to join the pro-American Baghdad Pact as well as Cairo's decisions to finalize arms deal with communist Czechoslovakia and recognize the Communist Peoples' Republic of China. This is generally viewed as the triggering event of the Suez Crisis of 1956.

<sup>490</sup> Sargent, *A Superpower*, 177.

individual rights rather than the right of states should remain the focus of human rights rhetoric. The following quote from Moynihan's speech represents the way neoconservatives approached the matter of human rights in NIEO:

We have no wish, therefore, to participate in any new economic arrangements whose beneficiaries will be the state rather than the individual, leaders rather than individual, politicians and bureaucrats rather than individual. If there is to be an increased flow of wealth to the countries of the South, the United States will insist that it be channeled into the pockets of individuals and not into Swiss bank accounts, and we will insist that necessary precautions be taken to that effect... if there is to be a new international order, the United States will insist that the right to minimum standard of political and civil liberty is no less fundamental than the right to a minimum standard of material welfare.<sup>491</sup>

NIEO's condemnation of "the remaining vestiges of alien and colonial domination, foreign occupation, racial discrimination, apartheid, and neocolonialism," was another aspect in which the neoconservatives viewed NIEO's human rights rhetoric as threat. The 1970s was a decade declared by the General Assembly as a Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and many Third World representatives in the General Assembly wanted to take actions that would enforce NIEO and make it legally binding; one such example is the Charter of the Economic Rights and Duties of States, an anti-liberal manifesto that upheld governments' complete control over all economic activity, including private property, within their boundaries.<sup>492</sup> Additionally, countries like Israel, South Africa, and Rhodesia came under attack due to their discriminatory policies and their control over territories and resources of the native population that was denied political representation. For the neoconservatives, this was not the case. Rather, they viewed NIEO as part of the larger coherent assault by the undemocratic powers of the Third World and Soviet Union against the US and its democratic allies. In his "The New Cold War," Irving Kristol argued that the new economic order reflected the attitude toward "liberal political and economic systems, and toward liberal civilization in general," more than it reflected the attitude toward economic justice.<sup>493</sup> In the neoconservative view, Israel, South Africa, and Rhodesia were being attacked not due to their discriminatory policies but rather because they were liberal democracies. Tucker charged that "the threat to employ the oil weapon," has raised the Arab states' influence in the international arena and subsequently centered the Palestinian issue. Laqueur claimed that the West is being isolated in the United Nations, because the international organization has been taken over by dictatorships

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<sup>491</sup> Moynihan and Weaver, *A Dangerous Place*, 177.

<sup>492</sup> Sargent, *A Superpower*, 177.

<sup>493</sup> Irving Kristol as quoted in Franczak. "Losing the Battle," 868.

and called for Western countries to “face up to the new realities” and “rid itself of the dictators.”<sup>494</sup>

The best manifestation of neoconservative logic toward human rights and how they politicized it to become the counteroffensive of the US against NIEO is presented in Moynihan’s “The United States in Opposition.” In his article, Moynihan suggested that “the tyranny of the UN’s new majority” shared what he described as a “distinctive ideology” in which “three central issues commend themselves as points of systematic attack: first, the condition of international liberalism; second, the world economy; third, the state of political and civil liberties and of the general welfare.”<sup>495</sup> He argued that these “neo-totalitarian,” “anti-American,” “anti-capitalist” postures are shared by developed countries and communist countries alike, for these countries “had an easy common interest in portraying their own progress, justifying the effective suppression of dissent, and in the process deprecating and indicting the seeming progress of Western societies.”<sup>496</sup> Moynihan asserted that the American delegation in the UN needed to realize that it was facing a distinctive coherent ideology and a sustained attack from the Third World and communist countries. He argued that the “outvoted minority” status of the US and her allies was a reason not to appease but to stand in opposition and embrace being the “liberty party.”<sup>497</sup> Moynihan and other neoconservatives offered an adversarial posture to Third World pleas for equality. They rejected the efforts to reorient US foreign policy toward interdependence and advocated for a foreign policy that puts the US in ideological confrontation with the majority of Third World countries who suffered underdevelopment and exploitation as a result of colonialism and neocolonialism—a claim even neoconservatives like Moynihan considered to be “justified.” Despite Moynihan’s criticism of Kissinger’s foreign policy and its “massive failure” in dealing with the Third World’s anti-American ideology, his article granted him a post as US Ambassador to the United Nations.<sup>498</sup> From his new position Moynihan proposed that US foreign policy should consider “breaking up” the Third World alliance as one of its main goals and punish countries that oppose American interests in the UN. Achieving these goals would require the US policy to alter its posture in the UN, from defense to offense, or as Moynihan put it “to respond to attack by

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<sup>494</sup> Tucker, “Israel”; Laqueur, “Fascism”.

<sup>495</sup> Moynihan, “The United States.”

<sup>496</sup> Ibid.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

<sup>498</sup> Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, 83-85.

counterattack.”<sup>499</sup> The US needed to counter the claim that economic equality and the right to development were essential to preserve human rights by attacking Third World countries’ human rights records as being responsible for what it perceived as their backwardness. The aim was to discredit raw material cartels as well as Third World anti-liberal discourse on the basis that Western and pro-Western countries are being singled out and attacked by countries that violated the basic human rights of their own citizens and advocated a socialist agenda. Moynihan’s approach is best understood in his letter to Secretary of State Kissinger, in which he insisted on making human rights the focus of Kissinger’s address to the General Assembly following the NIEO declaration:

We will insist on broadening the definition of welfare to include not only the economic condition of the individual but his political condition as well. If there is to be a new international order, the United States will insist that the right to a minimum standard of political and civil liberty is no less fundamental than the right to a minimum standard of material welfare.<sup>500</sup>

Other neoconservatives outside the administration also placed high pressure on taking human rights concerns into consideration in the formation of US foreign policy. The issue of human rights became a tool to attack détente and any kind of reconciliation with the Soviet Union while offering a tool to counter the attacks of Third World countries and their liberal apologists in the US.<sup>501</sup> This pressure led to creating the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs under the Ford administration in 1975. The Bureau’s major task was to tie aid to human rights on the basis of the criteria set in the Foreign Assistance Act that called for cutting security assistance from countries that engage in violations of human rights, including torture, political imprisonment, denial of the right to life, liberty, and freedom of speech.<sup>502</sup>

From his position in the UN, Moynihan actively engaged in countering the attacks against the US, Israel, South Africa, Spain or any other right-wing government by attacking

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<sup>499</sup> Daniel P. Moynihan, “Text of Cablegram Sent by Moynihan to Kissinger and All-American Embassies,” *The New York Times*, January 28, 1976, accessed August 18, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/01/28/archives/text-of-cablegram-sent-by-moynihan-to-kissinger-and-all-american.html>.

<sup>500</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Daniel Patrick Moynihan: A Portrait in Letters of an American Visionary*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2010), 379.

<sup>501</sup> The pressure came mostly from senators Edward Kennedy, Alan Cranston, James Abourezk, Henry “Scoop” Jackson, Hubert Humphrey, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Jackson and Moynihan were well known neoconservatives while Humphrey’s team included well-known neoconservatives including Ben Wattenberg and Max Kampelman.

<sup>502</sup> Barbara Keys, “Congress, Kissinger, and the Origins of Human Rights Diplomacy.” *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 5 (2010): 824, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24916461> . Please note that 1975 Helsinki conference on European security and cooperation, despite its emphasis on human rights, is not being discussed here because it focused specifically on Europe.

the human rights records of Third World countries and their lack of democracy. Moynihan's response to the General Assembly Resolution 3379 which equated Zionism with racism and racial discrimination provides an illuminating example of the way the neoconservatives constructed the counterattack against NIEO and Third World activism in the UN. In what follows, I provide the context for one of the most controversial UN resolutions. While neoconservatives justified their harsh stance in the UN on what they considered to be the UN's anti-American, anti-liberal discourse, Resolution 3379 presented a case in which such rhetoric clearly backfired. What Moynihan described as the "infamous resolution," I argue, was in fact of his own making, and it was utilized to serve the neoconservative goal of moving US foreign policy from interdependence toward confrontation.<sup>503</sup>

### 3.4.2. The Infamous Resolution

In a General Assembly speech, Ugandan dictator Idi Amin first conveyed the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) support for NIEO, praised the US and Congress for their cooperative posture and change in "American attitude and policy towards the third world." Amin then switched his narrative to attack Israel:

Israel, like South Africa, has absolutely ignored the United Nations resolutions commanding it to withdraw from the Occupied Territories of Egypt, Palestine, Jordan and Syria. It is disappointing to note that some major Powers, notably the United States of America, which are founder members of this organization which was established to bring about a world order based upon law, justice and peace, have not only continually supported Israeli flouting United Nation resolutions, but have also equipped it with powerful armaments to make it strong enough to defy, grab and plunder its neighbors' territory. Today, without the United States of America, there would be no Israel.<sup>504</sup>

Amin's long rant against Israel and Zionism concluded by calling for the "expulsion of Israel from the United Nations and the extinction of Israel as a State, so that the territorial integrity of Palestine may be ensured and upheld."<sup>505</sup> Moynihan condemned Amin's remarks and

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<sup>503</sup> This was the view of the British ambassador to the UN, Ivor Richard and other Western European delegates. Gil Tory, *Moynihan's Moment: America's Fight against Zionism as Racism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 234, 248.

<sup>504</sup> Quoted in Moynihan and Weaver, *A Dangerous Place*, 168-169.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-178. Amin's remarks against Israel were inspired by the Organization of African Unity's Resolution on the Middle East and Occupied Arab Territories, which called for "complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories and the exercise by the Palestinians of their full national rights to sovereignty, national independence and self-determination." The organization also adopted the Resolution on the Question of Palestine, which recognized the "common imperialist origin" that the Zionist regime in Israel shares with the racist regimes in Zimbabwe and South Africa." Both resolutions recommended intensifying the work for the suspension of Israel from the UN and other international organizations. See "Organization of African Unity

described him as a “racist murderer,” who accurately represents OAU, which Amin headed at the time.<sup>506</sup> Due to his approach in the UN, many observers accused Moynihan of being needlessly provocative, and some of the American delegates who were working on combating anti-Americanism claimed that Moynihan’s aggressive responses “made things worse.”<sup>507</sup> The State Department distanced itself from Moynihan’s remarks and released a statement that “Moynihan’s words were his own.”<sup>508</sup> The criticism leveled against Moynihan was deployed not because anyone of consequence in the US foreign policy establishment disagreed with him but because he chose confrontation in the wrong place (the UN General Assembly has no major decision making power or the political might to enforce its resolutions) and at the wrong time. Following this confrontation, some African countries introduced an amendment that considered combating Zionism as part of the program of United Nations’ Decade of Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. As a conciliatory act, not to undermine the international support for the UN Decade, the amendment was introduced as a separate resolution.<sup>509</sup> The vote for the “Zionism is racism” resolution followed this confrontation; the General Assembly approved the resolution by a majority of 72 votes to 35, with 32 abstentions. In his response to the resolution, like other neoconservatives, Moynihan did not even entertain the idea that for the native inhabitants of Palestine, for many of the formerly colonized from Third World countries, and for many others, including many Jewish intellectuals, Zionism was not a national liberation movement.<sup>510</sup> Zionism entailed a different meaning for the local population than the meaning assigned to it by Western countries. For the local population of Palestine, Zionism was not a national liberation movement, at least not their liberation movement. Zionism was rather understood as an expression of the Jewish people’s escape from suffering and persecution, most notably the Holocaust. Though Palestinians did not cause this suffering, they felt they became its victims. The local population viewed Zionism in the same

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Assembly of Heads of State and Government” *African Union*, July 28-1 August 1975, [https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/9522-assembly\\_en\\_july\\_28\\_01\\_august\\_1975\\_assembly\\_heads\\_state\\_government\\_thirteenth\\_ordinary\\_session.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/9522-assembly_en_july_28_01_august_1975_assembly_heads_state_government_thirteenth_ordinary_session.pdf). Accessed June 3, 2022.

<sup>506</sup> Ironically enough Israel’s relations with Idi Amin go back to the sixties and many historians believe that Israel’s political and military support helped Amin rise to power, equipped him with weapons to persecute his opponents, and to support the South Sudanese rebellion against the central government of Sudan. Israel was in fact the first foreign country to be visited by Amin when he took office after the 1971 military coup. Relations between the two countries deteriorated when Israel refused to provide the African dictator with the Phantom fighter jets he requested. For details see: Oded, Arye, “Israeli-Ugandan Relations in the Time of Idi Amin.” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 18, no. 3/4 (2006): 65–79. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25834697>.

<sup>507</sup> Tory, *Moynihan’s Moment*, 149-154.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid*, 102-103,153-154; Moynihan and Weaver, *A Dangerous Place*, 180-182.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid*, 200.

<sup>510</sup> Among the most famous anti-Zionist Jewish intellectuals are: Hannah Arendt, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, I.F. Stone, Noam Chomsky, Isaac Asimov, Primo Levi, Erich Fromm, and Daniel Barenboim.

way Native Americans viewed manifest destiny, or African people viewed France's *Mission civilisatrice*. For the local population, Zionism was a European settler colonial movement that facilitated the migration of thousands European Jews to Palestine. Zionism was the guiding principle for the Haganah, Argon, and Stern terrorists who carried out attacks against the local population and the mandatory authority before and during the first Arab-Israeli War (1948).<sup>511</sup> Zionism's ideology, when put into practice, was population transfer, actively calling for "transferring" the Arab population out of Israel. It amounted to a form of ethnic cleansing of more than 500 Palestinian villages and towns and forced more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs to live as third-class citizens in what remained of their homeland or to flee Palestine and live as refugees in surrounding countries.<sup>512</sup> For Arab countries who voted in favor of the resolution, the plight of Palestinian refugees was an everyday tragedy. Zionism gave Jewish people from anywhere on the planet the right to immigrate to Israel and automatically become a citizen of the state while it denied Palestinian Arabs (Muslims and Christians) the right to return to their houses, and denied Arabs and Muslims the right to visit their holy places in the occupied territories.<sup>513</sup> Palestinians, Syrians, Egyptians under the Israeli occupation as well as Israel's Arab citizens were denied the civil and political rights enjoyed by Israel's Jewish citizens, which, in turn led to accusation that Israel functions as an "apartheid state."<sup>514</sup> African and Latin American countries, who voted in favor of the resolution, some of which were strong allies of the US like Turkey, Chile, and Iran, acknowledged the link between Zionism and

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<sup>511</sup> Relying on documents from Israeli archives, several Israeli historians have documented the atrocities committed by Zionist gangs against the native Palestinian population. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), the account cited is from p. 208; Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

<sup>512</sup> The second-class citizens would be Israelis of Asian ancestry and Black Jewish people. See Davis and Mezvinsky ed. *Documents from Israel*, 115-133. On the Zionist population transfer ideology, see Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of 'Transfer' in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1984*. (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).

<sup>513</sup> Up until 1975, the Jewish right to return excluded black Israelites. See Davis and Mezvinsky ed. *Documents from Israel*, 2-3, 114-118.

<sup>514</sup> According to a report published in 1998, Israel denied Arab Palestinians in the occupied territories the right of self-determination, imposed military laws on them, and systematically violated a wide range of civil, political, economic, and cultural rights of its Arab population. The report says Israel refuses to recognize any non-Jewish holiday—with the exception of independence day; does not allow interfaith marriages or civil marriages; does not recognize or provide any form of protection for any non-Jewish religious site; denies the right to stand as a political candidate for anyone who does not recognize Israel as a Jewish state or question its democracy and for anyone who visits a state considered to be an enemy of the state of Israel, which means that Arab Israeli were not allowed to visit their extended families in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, etc. For details see The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel's *Legal Violations of Arab Minorities in Israel: A Report on Israel's Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*. (Haifa: Adalah, 1998). <https://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/eng/publications/violations.htm>. See also their 2011 report "The Inequality Report: The Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel" (Haifa: Adalah, 2011) [https://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/upfiles/2011/Adalah\\_The\\_Inequality\\_Report\\_March\\_2011.pdf](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/upfiles/2011/Adalah_The_Inequality_Report_March_2011.pdf).

colonialism. Palestine, after all, was not the only location Zionists had proposed for the state they aspired for. Africa and Argentina had been the other suggested locations.<sup>515</sup> The Palestinian struggle as represented by the PLO was present and active and many considered it as a liberation movement with a just cause, although the PLO's official position from 1964 to 1988 was to consider armed struggle as the only way to liberate the entire territory of what was known as Mandate Palestine from the Zionist occupation.<sup>516</sup> To summarize, in most cases the charges against Zionism as presented in the UN by the Palestinians and the supporters of the resolution were related to the contemporary plight of the Palestinian people, their right to self-determination, sovereignty, and return to their territories; they were not charges against Judaism, Israel's right to exist, or its legitimacy. Following the resolution, Moynihan announced that "the United Nations is a place where lies are told," and described the resolution as an obscene and reckless act. Later in a TV interview, he threatened that the countries that "pushed through this Zionism resolution would suffer for it."<sup>517</sup> A condemnation of the Zionist resolution followed from several members of Congress who called for the US to withdraw its membership from the UN if Israel was to be suspended or expelled from the international organization. Moynihan and other neoconservatives like Bernard Lewis in "The Anti-Zionist Resolution," and Norman Podhoretz in "The Abandonment of Israel," to name but a few, went into a historic rant about the origin of Zionism, the persecution of Jews throughout history, and considered the attack against Zionism to be an Arab-Soviet co-sponsored attack against liberal democracy and against the legitimacy of Israel. They accused the critics of Zionism of being anti-Semitic and undemocratic.<sup>518</sup> At the same time they did not address any of the charges against Zionism's military doctrine, its claim of Jewish racial superiority, its "population transfer" ideology, and its explicit objective of creating an exclusively Jewish state on the

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<sup>515</sup> The link between colonialism and Zionism is also acknowledged in Zionist literature and conferences, it is also important to note that the project to colonize Palestine preceded the holocaust. Theodor Herzl, *A Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question* (New York: The Maccabean Publishing, 1904), xi, vi, 28.

<sup>516</sup> The destruction of Israel did not entail the destruction of the Jewish presence in Palestine, as the Palestinian National Charter (the PLO's official position) explicitly stated that Jews of Palestinian origin (those living in Palestine before 1947) would be considered Palestinian citizens. "Palestine National Charter," ETH Zurich Collection, 28 May 1964, accessed May 12 2024, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125413/2123\\_Palestinian\\_National\\_Charter.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125413/2123_Palestinian_National_Charter.pdf). See "The Palestinian National Charter Resolutions of the Palestine National Council July 1-17, 1968," Palestinian in Arabic Document, accessed May 12, 2024, [http://www.palestineinarabic.com/Docs/other\\_doc/other\\_doc\\_E/Palestinian\\_National\\_Charter\\_1968\\_E.pdf](http://www.palestineinarabic.com/Docs/other_doc/other_doc_E/Palestinian_National_Charter_1968_E.pdf). The PLO Declaration of Independence, announced on November 15, 1988, recognized the partitioning of Palestine, ended the armed struggle, and recognized the State of Israel. Pappé, *A History*, 241

<sup>517</sup> Moynihan and Weaver, *A Dangerous Place*, 202, 209, 228.

<sup>518</sup> It is worth noting that some argue that Zionism itself is a form of anti-Semitism for it poses a solution according to which Western countries can get rid of their Jews.

promised land—which besides Israel’s 1967 boundaries includes territories from Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.<sup>519</sup>

The manner in which Moynihan dealt with the Zionist resolution is but one example of the confrontational approach advocated by the neoconservatives against the UN and Third World nations. The same method was applied to put down criticism directed toward other US allies (South Africa, Spain, South Vietnam, etc.). It is true that many Third World countries were, to say the least, neither democratic nor liberal in the sense the US or European states were. Explicitly because these countries have been colonized for a long period in history, their political institutions have not been fully developed, and their priorities were different than those of developing nations, e.g., developed countries held democracy and freedom in high regard, developing countries in retrospect highly regarded self-determination, sovereignty, and independence, the former valued individual rights, the latter valued states’ right, and so on. However, not being democratic in the liberal sense does not necessarily devalue or delegitimize these countries’ plights and aspirations, especially not when the US and its liberal allies were providing political, military, and economic support for equally undemocratic right-wing governments including the ones they were criticizing in the Middle East.

It is true that at the time the General Assembly was condemning countries like South Africa and Israel for racial discrimination other countries like Uganda and Ethiopia were exempt from criticism despite their horrendous crimes against humanity that amounted to genocide and massacre. While this disparity shows that the UN was indeed biased, it does not invalidate Palestinian grievances; at the same time, supporting and defending Israeli policies without open criticism undermined US claims of moral superiority. The US also initiated a rhetorical war against Third World countries and aimed to delegitimize their historic grievances and then current concerns. Moynihan convinced the White House to withdraw its support from the activities to be undertaken in the context of the Decade including the financial support to the First World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. By doing so, Moynihan was setting the US in opposition to the majority of Third World countries because he unapologetically dismissed and invalidated the sentiments and views shared by many of the Third World countries which had long suffered under the evils of colonialism and racial discrimination. His open stance was neither in the interest of the US nor in the interest of Israel for it stoked the levels of anti-Americanism and hostility toward the US and Israel, and

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<sup>519</sup> On Israel’s boundaries, according to Zionism see, Gideon Biger. “The Boundaries of Israel—Palestine Past, Present, and Future: A Critical Geographical View.” *Israel Studies* 13, no. 1 (2008): 68–93, accessed April 6, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30245820>.

increased their isolation.<sup>520</sup> In fact, many observers at the time argued that the resolution would not have had passed if it was not for Moynihan's provocative manner and his confrontational approach toward Third World countries; many African and Latin American countries did not necessarily support the charges against Zionism but voted in favor of the resolution just because they were galvanized by Moynihan's remarks against their nations.<sup>521</sup> Shortly after the confrontation in the UN, Moynihan resigned from his position due to his disagreement with the conduct of the US foreign policy.<sup>522</sup> Other officials in the administration shared Moynihan's views and accused the State Department of "compromising" long-term US commitment to liberalism and free market capitalism for a "new international economic order based on socialist principles."<sup>523</sup> While there is every reason to compare the human rights conduct in Third World countries with those in advanced democracies, the neoconservative claim that the UN was deploying the language of human rights exclusively against democracies while ignoring the violations of dictatorships is exaggerated. It must be noted that the General Assembly has no real powers of enforcement nor decisive power that can force countries to alter their policies. Therefore, the fact that Third World countries made up the majority in the General Assembly did not give them any political advantage over Western countries who continued to control the most effective bodies in the international organization, including the Security Council.

### 3.5. Conclusion

The chapter explained the logic behind the neoconservatives' antagonism toward Iran, supporting the thesis argument that they sought to break the power of OPEC. Initially, they called for war to seize the oil fields in the Gulf, and when that did not materialize, they aimed to remove Iran from its leadership role in OPEC. This chapter elaborated on three aspects in support of this argument. The first part analyzed the alliance between oil-producing countries and Third World nations, focusing on the emergence of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) and how neoconservatives perceived it as a threat to the American-led world order and

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<sup>520</sup> Tory, *Moynihan's Moment*, 101-108, 253-254.

<sup>521</sup> For instance, Marquis Childs in *The Washington Post* stated that Moynihan's "critics among Western Europeans and some Americans say that if it had not been for his intemperate language, trumpeting though the calls of the UN like an avenging and self-anointed angel, a vote to put off the inflammatory resolution on Zionism and racism could have passed." Moynihan and Weaver, *A Dangerous Place*, 233-237.

<sup>522</sup> Moynihan publicly attacked Kissinger in his resignation. See "Text of Cablegram Sent by Moynihan to Kissinger and All-American Embassies" *The New York Times*, January 28, 1976, accessed June 4, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/01/28/archives/text-of-cablegram-sent-by-moynihan-to-kissinger-and-all-american.html>.

<sup>523</sup> Sargent, *A Superpower*, 181.

Western civilization. The second part explained Iran's role in leading and defending OPEC's oil policies and in forming OPEC's alliance with Third World countries. It also discussed the reasons why neoconservatives believed that breaking OPEC's power required empowering Saudi Arabia to take over its leadership. The third part focused on the issue of human rights, showing how neoconservatives used human rights language as a counteroffensive against NIEO. It also highlighted how neoconservatives contributed to developing the human rights framework later adopted by President Carter. This was necessary in order to provide the context within which the neoconservatives developed their foreign policy views. This new foreign policy framework was best explained in 1975, when *Commentary* sponsored the symposium "America Now: A Failure of Nerve?" In the editorial introduction to the symposium, Norman Podhoretz observed: "Fifteen years ago, the United States would almost certainly have reacted with either the threat or the use of force to any action such as the OPEC cartel has taken in raising the price of oil. Today, the American reaction to what might legitimately be seen as a fundamental challenge to the security and economic well-being of the country has been relatively mild."<sup>524</sup> Podhoretz prompted the question of whether the American answer—or lack thereof—to the developments in the 1970s, in particular, the oil crisis, was an "adjustment to hopeful new international realities like détente and interdependence" or the resurgence of the "spirit of Munich." He questioned whether the United States is "exhibiting a new maturity in its international behavior; or is the country suffering from a failure of nerve and a loss of political will."<sup>525</sup> Neoconservative writers such as Hook, Decker, Kemble, Lipset, Tucker, Novak, Eugene V. Rostow, and Diana Trilling, among others, argued in favor of rejecting the "new maturity" claim and the optimistic views brought about by expanding the sphere of interdependence to include developing nations and economies. They viewed the arguments about interdependence and internationalism as nothing but calls for a "new form of isolationism" rooted in the moral crisis of Americans: "there has been an erosion in the belief of freedom and decline in the willingness to defend it in our press, our public media, and our educational institutions," noted Sidney Hook. This moral crisis was, neoconservatives claimed, the making of the new intelligentsia—represented by the "New Class" and "New Politics"—that was hostile to the managerial component of society. This intelligentsia "tend[ed] to be on the Left in Western countries", "expressed a lack of confidence in the country's major social and political institutions," and embraced an "anti-system politics and countercultural styles of

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<sup>524</sup>Barrett et al., "America Now."

<sup>525</sup> Referring to the appeasement policy with Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

life.”<sup>526</sup> Furthermore, neoconservatives argued that the most threatening aspect of this new intelligentsia was that it “no longer view[ed] the protection of American and/or Western interests as legitimate” and, consequently, impeded the ability of decision-makers to take measures—most notably those requiring the use of military power—to protect vital American interests. It put “the material bases of Western civilization,” into question and threatened not just the triumph of capitalism over communism but the very survival of Western civilization. Michael Novak noted,

The nation needs to face directly the problems of national survival. It is not plain that forty years from now there will exist a free, independent, and democratic United States of America, or that there will exist upon this planet free, independent, and democratic allies.”<sup>527</sup>

The fundamental flaw in the neoconservative logic outlined above is that it ignores the fact that Third World countries were driven by their own national interests rather than by those of major powers; their motive to peruse a socialist/communist—or any other—ideology was what Hans Morgenthau refers to as “indigenous nationalism,” rather than a belief in imported Marxism, Soviet or Chinese communism. An obvious example of indigenous nationalism is the case of Iran where socialist discourse was integrated with an Islamist discourse.<sup>528</sup> In addition, equating the West-East confrontation with the North-South divide is inadequate. The US and the Soviet Union were relative equals in power, if a country displayed a communist posture that does not necessarily amount to a pro-Soviet stance, and if a country displayed an anti-communist posture that does not mean a pro-American stance. As for the conflict between the Global North and the Global South, the US and its industrial allies were not confronting a unified region but nation states—some among them mini-states—that were fragmented,

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<sup>526</sup> Barrett et al., “America Now”. The “New Politics” was a reform movement in the Democratic Party that aimed to make the party more inclusive to women, African Americans, young people, and minorities, and to implement a party program of full employment and government action for equal opportunities. On foreign policy, the New Politics movement opposed US involvement in Vietnam, South East Asia, and Latin America, called for the US to retreat from its worldwide “counterrevolutionary” role, and supported the nomination of the anti-war activist George McGovern. Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 91-92, and Podhoretz, *Breaking*, 283-95. New politics was advocated by a new class of “educated, prosperous people, members of the professional and technical intelligentsia, making a serious bid to dislodge and replace the business and commercial class which had on the whole dominated the country for nearly a century now.” Podhoretz, *Breaking*, 283-95. This “New Class” was described by Irving Kristol as “scientists, teachers and educational administrators, journalists and others in the communication industries, psychologists, social workers, lawyers and doctors who make their careers in the expanding public sector, city planners, the staffs of the larger foundations, the upper levels of the government bureaucracy, and so on. . . [who] use[d] their strategic positions to launch an assault on [American] traditions and institutions.” I. Kristol. *Neoconservatism*, 207.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> The term was used by Hans Morgenthau to describe the surge of communism/socialism in Third World countries. Hans J. Morgenthau, “The Pathology of American Power.” *International Security* 1, no. 3 (1977): 16. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2626652> .

diverse, unequal in size, power, and wealth. Hence, the so-called Third World countries did not have the capacity nor the interest to entertain the possibility of confrontation with the US or the USSR. And when the US confronted Third World countries, it actually confronted Soviet influence in those countries: it sought to dominate the advantages these countries offered—whether geopolitical or natural—and to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining access to the same resources. Thus, the North-South confrontation in itself was an expansion of the West-East confrontation to dominate the Global South. The emergence of raw material cartels and the calls for a new world order aimed to expand the sphere of world interdependence and to provide developed countries with means to secure their own independence not just from the US but from the USSR as well.

## Chapter 4

### Geopolitical Realities: The Middle East, Beyond Neoconservative Ideology



Figure 2 Iran, political borders<sup>529</sup>

#### 4.1. Introduction

Aristotle defined rationality as the ability to reason, which sets humans apart from other species. The second chapter of this thesis demonstrated how the neoconservatives explained the oil embargo and the subsequent oil price increase within a strict ideological framework that emphasized Arab/Muslim hatred towards the West and their desire to annihilate Israel. One of the neoconservatives' main premises to justify military action to seize the Arab oil fields was the assumption of Arab/Muslim "native" irrationality, entailing their inability to reason and understand the importance of preserving a Western-led world order. This chapter provides the missing context from the neoconservative analysis when they theorized about the region. It argues that the neoconservative analysis failed to grasp the dynamics within and among the region's countries. This failure in understanding the complexity of the region and the circumstances that impacted the decisions and actions of Middle Eastern countries resulted in policies that were harmful to US interests at the time and in the long run.

The chapter opens with an introduction to the geopolitical reality of Iran, highlighting its strategic importance to the United States, and providing an overview of its political system.

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<sup>529</sup> Figure 2, "Iran's location and bordering countries," Google Maps.

It then offers a historical analysis of US involvement in Iran, focusing on key events that marked significant milestones in American-Iranian relations. Additionally, the chapter outlines the factors that contributed to the Shah's domestic challenges, primarily: 1) the Shah's modernization efforts and the management of oil wealth, 2) the influence of Third World activism, economic sovereignty, and decolonization discourse, and 3) the Shah's pro-Israel/pro-American stance. The second section discusses the main events that galvanized the neoconservatives against the Arab oil-producing countries, specifically the 1973 war and its consequential oil price increase. The section's main argument is that the 1973 war, and the Arab oil-producing countries' decision to side with the frontline states, had specific and rational military and political objectives. It posits that the political decisions of oil-producing countries during that period were primarily driven by geopolitical and strategic interests rather than ideology, as the neoconservatives constantly claimed. This argument, as demonstrated in the chapter, was reached by examining the conflict from the Arab countries' perspective, analyzing the relations between the Gulf countries and the Palestinian issue, and assessing the Gulf countries' relations with Iran at the time.

#### **4.2. Understanding Iranian Politics**

To understand how the American-Iranian alliance unraveled and was replaced by an American-Saudi alliance at the end of 1976, it is important to provide a historical background that drew the US and Iran into alliance and how they, in retrospect, impacted Iran's domestic affairs. The geopolitical position of Iran has made it strategically important to the United States, especially after World War II. Currently, Iran is the world's eighteenth largest country and the second largest in the Middle East.<sup>530</sup> With a population of more than 82 million, Iran is the nineteenth most populous country in the world and the second most populated country in the Middle East.<sup>531</sup> The discovery of oil in Iran in 1908 marked the beginning of the country's modern history and increased its importance as it became the world's sixth largest producer of oil and the third largest producer of dry natural gas.<sup>532</sup> As figure 2 shows, Iran almost entirely dominates the eastern shore of the Persian Gulf and controls the Straits of Hormuz, the world's

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<sup>530</sup> Miklos Mattyasovszky, "The Largest Countries in the World" *Worldatlas*, accessed August 24, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y6mh2fm4>

<sup>531</sup> Jason Shvili, "The Most Populated Countries in the World," *Worldatlas*, accessed April 14, 2020, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-most-populated-countries-in-the-world.html>

<sup>532</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Iran's Key Energy Statistics," accessed September 29, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y9f9cblb>.

most important oil checkpoint.<sup>533</sup> Iran also has 400 miles of coastline on the Caspian Sea that links Europe to Asia; it is the gate to the Far East and a direct path to India. The majority of Iranian people—some 90%—belong to the Shia sect of Islam, which is the second largest Muslim sect.<sup>534</sup>

Iran has a unique political system that combines theocracy with some elements of presidential democracy; it can best be characterized by “a multitude of loosely connected and generally fiercely competitive power centers, both formal and informal.”<sup>535</sup> The formal political structure (see Infographic 1) is grounded in the constitution and governmental regulations and includes: (1) the Supreme Leader, Iran’s highest political and religious position, (2) the President, (3) the Parliament, (3) the Assembly of Experts, (4) the Guardian Council, (5) the Cabinet, and (6) the Expediency Council. Informal power centers have evolved around influential clerics and religious institutions that influence and sometimes even control the political sphere.<sup>536</sup> The complexity of the Iranian political system explains how the hostility toward the United States and Israel was used in Iranian domestic politics to mobilize and gain leverage by the formal and informal power centers alike.<sup>537</sup> Prior to the Islamic Revolution, Iran was ruled by the Shah Reza Pahlavi, who staged a *coup d’état* and ousted the ruling *Qajar* dynasty in 1925. However, in 1941, the British and the Russians forced Shah Reza to abdicate in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza, because the former attempted to side with Germany during World War II.<sup>538</sup>

The first American Presbyterian missionary settled in Iran in 1830 and the first commercial treaty between the two countries was signed in 1856.<sup>539</sup> However, the first

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<sup>533</sup> The Strait of Hormuz controls the flow of about 35% of all seaborne traded oil, and 21% of oil trade worldwide. However, the importance of the Hormuz Strait was even greater when it used to control the flow of over 50% of the world’s oil during the Cold War era. See Justine Barden, “The Strait of Hormuz is the world’s most important oil transit chokepoint,” *The U.S. Energy Information Administration*, accessed, June 20, 2019, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=39932>. See also: Mark A. Bruzonsky, ed. “Becoming A Middle East Superpower,” in *Congressional Quarterly*, third edition (September 1977): 11-17.

<sup>534</sup> Sunni is the main branch in Islam and makes up 85-90% of Muslims; Shia makes up to 10-15% and it is divided to several sects the largest of which is the twelfth sect, which is the predominant religion in Iran. For more on the nature of Shiite belief and Iran, see Algar, *The Roots*, 13-29.

<sup>535</sup> The term theocracy is used here as defined by David Robertson: “any political system run by clerics, or by and along the tenets of any organized religion.” David Robertson, *The Routledge Dictionary of Politics* (Routledge: Taylor and Francis, 2002), 474-75.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid.

<sup>537</sup> The Neoconservatives relied on this hostility to build and justify their rhetoric toward Iran in particular and the Middle East in general, especially after the 9/11 attacks.

<sup>538</sup> Bruzonsky, ed. “Becoming,” 11-17.

<sup>539</sup> Throughout the text, I substitute the word Persia with Iran even when referring to Iran in the period before 1935 when the name “Persia” was the name used by historians to refer to Iran; there is no attempt to force any systematic usage other than avoiding confusion.

considerable political contact between the two countries took place in 1941 when the United States deployed troops directly in Iran to help supply the Allies during World War II.<sup>540</sup> By the end of 1942 more than 350,000 tons of supplies and more than 20,000 combat vehicles had been delivered to the Soviet Union through the Persian Corridor, making it the most convenient route to Stalingrad—currently Volgograd.<sup>541</sup> The Roosevelt administration was keen to guarantee Iran’s independence and territorial integrity, which was solidified by signing the Tripartite Treaty of Alliance between the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and Iran in 1942 with the aim of assuring the United States that their occupation of Iran was compatible with the principles of the Atlantic Charter.<sup>542</sup> In 1943, during the Big Three conference, the United States, along with Great Britain, agreed to guarantee Iran’s sovereignty, unity, and independence in the Tehran Declaration.<sup>543</sup> The three countries also agreed to withdraw their troops from Iran’s soil within six months of the cessation of all hostilities. At the end of World War II, the Americans were the first to fulfil their promise and pulled out their troops in January 1946;<sup>544</sup> Britain followed suit a few months later. The Russians, on the other hand, declared their intention to remain in Iran, relying on the 1921 treaty between Iran and the Soviet Union in which the occupation of Iranian territory by Soviet troops was justified in case Iranian territory was used to carry out any attack against the Soviets interests.<sup>545</sup> Henceforth, Iran became the arena of the first post-war crisis and played a big part in initiating the Cold War. In response to the Soviet declaration, the United States cited the Tripartite Treaty stating that it would not remain indifferent if the Soviets did not withdraw their troops. However, the Soviet Union has had its own strategic and defensive calculations when it came to Iran, most notably the fear of a future confrontation with the United States and Britain, especially since Iran’s location is strategic for the Soviet Union’s south and west borders, its oil fields and petroleum facilities in Soviet Azerbaijan.<sup>546</sup> Therefore, the Soviets moved deeper into Iran and maintained

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<sup>540</sup> Pollack, *The Persian*, 40-41; Bruce Robellet Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1980), 140-144.

<sup>541</sup> Kuniholm, *The Origins*, 146.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>543</sup> The Big Three conference, also known as “Tehran Conference” (November 28–December 1, 1943) was attended by the United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Great Britain’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. Kuniholm, *The Origins*, 199-200.

<sup>544</sup> Along with sending supplies to the Soviet Union, the United States carried on three military missions in Iran that included activities such as training the Iranian army, coordinating the movement of material to Russia with the Iranian government, and assisting the Iranian police “Gendarme.” Kuniholm, *The Origins*, 199-200.

<sup>545</sup> Kuniholm, *The Origins*, 313-15.

<sup>546</sup> Azerbaijan—the country—was part of northwestern Iran until the 1813-1828 Russo-Persian war, when it became part of the Russian empire. In 1918, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was established and later incorporated into the Soviet Union. However, a large number of ethnic Azeris—currently 22-30 million—

their support for separatist movements in Northern Iran—Iranian Azerbaijan—and for the Tudeh Party [the Party of the Masses], which was closely aligned with the Soviets, to undermine the Shah’s regime.<sup>547</sup> Iran’s case was brought to the United Nations, and the United States insisted on the Soviet Union’s full and unconditional evacuation of the Iranian territories. President Truman alerted American military forces to be ready for deployment in Iran.<sup>548</sup> Eventually, the Soviets buckled under the pressure and withdrew their troops in May 1946.<sup>549</sup>

What made the 1946 Iran crisis critical to the Truman administration was not just Iran’s economic and geopolitical importance but also the fact that the crisis reinforced American concerns over Soviet ambitions in Turkey and Greece. In Turkey, the Soviets demanded an equal partnership in running the Dardanelles, which the United States considered as an attempt to dominate Turkey, threaten Greece, and intimidate the rest of the Middle East. The United States backed Turkey and sent its modern aircraft carrier through the Dardanelles; as a result, the Soviets backed down. In Greece, a civil war broke out between the communists and the right wing pro-western government supported by British troops. When Britain declared its inability to continue its military support, the United States stepped in to protect its interests. Besides the 1946 crisis in Iran, these two events were the key factors behind the post-World War II strategy of the US and the Truman Doctrine. While showing the importance of Iran as a buffer state between Soviet and American interests in the Persian Gulf, the crisis in Iran represented a test of “big power respect for the sovereignty of smaller nations,” and the shape of the post-war world.<sup>550</sup> Supporting Iranian aspirations for independence and sovereignty during the 1946 crisis strengthened US relations with Iran and earned the Shah’s gratitude and admiration.<sup>551</sup>

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remained in the area north of Iran and demanded separation. The Azerbaijan People’s Government was established in the Azerbaijani area of Iran in 1946-1947 and was headed by Jafar Pishevari. After the Soviet withdrawal from Iran, the Pishvari government was crushed by the Iranian central government. Anar M. Valiyev, “Azerbaijan-Iran Relations: Que Vadis, Baku?” *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*, no. 240 (September 2012): 1-2, accessed May 5, 2021, [http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/pepm\\_244\\_Valiyev\\_Sept2012.pdf](http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/pepm_244_Valiyev_Sept2012.pdf).

<sup>547</sup> Kuniholm, *The Origins*, 317-25.

<sup>548</sup> Pollack, *The Persian*, 45-46.

<sup>549</sup> Soviet withdrawal came after a deal with Iran’s Prime Minister, Ahmad Qavam, in which the Soviets removed their troops in exchange for an oil concession in northern Iran. Despite withdrawing from Iran, the Soviets maintained their support to the separatists and oppositionists in Azerbaijan and the Kurdistan province in north-western Iran. The Soviets also funded the Tudeh Party’s activities against the regime. Offiler, *US Foreign*, 19; Kuniholm, *The Origins*, 47.

<sup>550</sup> Fred H. Lawson, “The Iranian Crisis of 1945-1946 and the Spiral Model of International Conflict,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21.3 (August 1989): 307-326, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/163447>.

<sup>551</sup> The improved relations between the United States and Iran were signaled by increasing the size of the American embassy in Tehran—including the addition of a CIA station— and extending the US army, air force, and gendarmerie missions in Iran. Malcolm Byrne, “The Road to Intervention: Factors Influencing U.S. Policy

#### 4.2.1. Iran's 1953 *Coup D'état*

For many Iranians, the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iran did not mean actual independence. Iran's resources—mainly oil—were still controlled by foreign companies; in particular, by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), which fully dominated Iran's oil industry.<sup>552</sup> The Iranian government repeatedly protested the company's control over production rate and royalties; employees likewise resented the company's policies such as poor living and working conditions, low wages, limited promotions for Iranian employees, and imported foreign labor. This dissatisfaction manifested itself in a series of protests and strikes against the company between 1920 and 1950.<sup>553</sup> Oil was and still is Iran's main source of income, and at the time despite its geopolitical importance, Iran did not receive financial aid from the US even though the Shah made several requests for funds and weaponry.<sup>554</sup>

In 1949, Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq, one of the major political figures in Iran, founded and headed the National Front of Iran (*Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Irān*), an Iranian political coalition of nationalists, socialists, traditionalists, and other fractions of Iranian political society.<sup>555</sup> Their main goals included promoting political and civil rights (free elections and free press), resisting the unsatisfactory oil settlement with Britain, and pressuring the government to nationalize the oil industry.<sup>556</sup> Dr. Mosaddeq was appointed prime minister by the newly elected Iranian Parliament, *Majles*, which the Shah accepted under public pressure in April 1951 along with declaring the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry three days later.<sup>557</sup> The British government retaliated by shutting down the oil fields, firing more than 200,000 Iranian

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Toward Iran, 1945–1953” In Mark J. Gasiorowski Malcolm Byrne eds. *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*. (New York: Syracuse UP, 2004,) 215.

<sup>552</sup> AIOC was Britain's largest overseas investment, formerly known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. It dominated Iran's oil fields since 1908, when it took over the D'Arcy 1901 oil concession between William Knox D'Arcy Company and the Persian government. The agreement gave the company an “exclusive privilege to search for, obtain, exploit, develop, render suitable for trade, carry away and sell natural gas, petroleum, and asphalt.” In 1914, the British government bought 51 percent of AIOC, which transformed the company into one of the world's leading oil monopolies. See Katayoun Shafiee, *Machineries of Oil: An Infrastructural History of BP in Iran* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2018), 21-30.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-21, 130-156; Kuniholm, *The Origins*, 52-59.

<sup>554</sup> The United States limited its military and economic aid to Iran for two main reasons: First, the Americans were aware that, due to the long history of hostility between Iran and Russia, communism was not popular among Iranians and, second, US worries over Iran's stability eased after the Shah crushed the separatist movements in North Iran and tightened the screw on Tudeh Party activities in Tehran. Pollack, *The Persian*, 49-50; Byrne, “The Road,” 215.

<sup>555</sup> Kuniholm, *The Origins*, 53-73; Mark J. Gasiorowski “The 1953 Coup d'état against Mosaddeq,” in Gasiorowski and Byrne, *Mohammad Mosaddeq*, 229.

<sup>556</sup> Fakhreddin Azimi, “Unseating Mosaddeq: The Configuration and Role of Domestic Forces,” in Gasiorowski and Byrne, *Mohammad Mosaddeq*, 29-35.

<sup>557</sup> Gasiorowski and Byrne, *Mohammad Mosaddeq*, XIV.

employees, and declaring an embargo on Iranian oil.<sup>558</sup> London suggested toppling Mosaddeq's government, but President Truman rejected that idea and encouraged an oil settlement between the two governments instead.<sup>559</sup> He later signed a new policy statement toward Iran that authorized political and military measures in case of an actual or attempted seizure of power by the communists or in case the Soviets launched a direct attack on the country.<sup>560</sup>

When President Eisenhower took office, the United States, in cooperation with the British secret intelligence service, orchestrated a *coup d'état* under the code name Operation Ajax.<sup>561</sup> The goal of the operation was to destabilize Iran and topple Mosaddeq's government. The coup was carried out in cooperation with the Iranian military and Mosaddeq's opponents, most notably the religious coalition of Ayatollah Kashani.<sup>562</sup> Operation Ajax included forming and supporting a military coup by pro-Shah military general Fazlollah Zahedi, stirring up tribal and popular unrest, spreading anti-Mosaddeq propaganda, and denying Iran any economic assistance as long as Mosaddeq was in power. The coup succeeded in overthrowing the Mosaddeq government and restoring the Shah's rule.<sup>563</sup> After the 1953 coup, Mosaddeq was sentenced to three years in prison, followed by permanent house arrest in which he died in 1967.

Multiple factors influenced President Eisenhower's decision to approve the coup in Iran including:

1. One of President Eisenhower's campaign promises was to roll back communist expansion, and after the establishment of the communist People's Republic of China in 1949 Eisenhower prioritized maintaining the Shah's rule over risking having a new regime that may turn Iran into a new China.<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> AIOC was very important to the recovery of the British economy. The company paid around \$142 million in annual taxes and an annual profit of \$94 million. AIOC was successful in imposing an embargo on Iranian oil. Kuniholm, *The Origins*, 54-57.

<sup>559</sup> Mosaddeq rejected several oil settlement proposals and tried to get economic assistance from the United States to break the oil embargo: he threatened to turn to the Soviets if the Americans did not give him what he wanted. *Ibid.*, 64; Byrne, "The Road," 223-26.

<sup>560</sup> Byrne, "The Road," 217.

<sup>561</sup> Prior to Operation Ajax, the CIA carried out a series of covert actions to undermine the Soviet presence in Iran, including: planting articles and cartoons in local newspapers against the Tudeh Party, funding and recruiting allies from the local tribes, the right-wing national organizations and religious figures, provoking violence and blaming it on communists, and hiring thugs to break up Tudeh rallies. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>562</sup> Pollack, *The Persian*, 63-72.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>564</sup> The Anti-communist mood of "the Red Scare" in the United States was reflected in the 1952 election campaigns, many Republicans—including John Foster Dulles, who later served as President Eisenhower

2. The development of the first Soviet atomic bomb meant that losing Iran would put American interests at risk not just in case of a Soviet nuclear attack but also by giving the Soviets a base in proximity to numerous vital allied interests, military facilities, and bases in the Gulf, the Middle East, and Turkey.<sup>565</sup>
3. The United States did not want to risk losing Middle East oil fields as oil revenues were needed to maintain the economic recovery of the United States after World War II and provide the money needed for reconstructing Western Europe and implementing the Marshall Plan.<sup>566</sup>

The initial coup plan took effect in mid-August 1953 and consisted of several steps: conducting a large propaganda campaign to enhance public hostility, distrust, and fear of Mosaddeq and his government; funding and helping Fazlollah Zahedi to organize a network of army officers to carry out a military coup and forcibly seize power from Mosaddeq; purchasing the cooperation of enough Parliament members to vote Mosaddeq out of office; organizing thousands of demonstration to denounce Mosaddeq for being anti-religious and leading Iran toward collapse; and persuading the Shah to support the coup by naming Zahedi army chief of staff and ordering the army officers to support him and accept his orders.<sup>567</sup> The coup was successful. Mosaddeq was arrested and sentenced to prison, pro-Mosaddeq protests were crushed, and the Shah (who fled to Iraq at the beginning of the events) returned to Tehran. With Zahedi's help he was able to eliminate the opposition, rig the election, and create the foundation of a police state that remained in place until the 1978-1979 revolution.<sup>568</sup>

After the 1953 coup, not only did the United States grant Iran a satisfactory oil agreement with AIOC but also it provided the country with considerable economic and military aid.<sup>569</sup> Additionally, the US helped organize and train the Iranian intelligence service (SAVAK), and funded the largest American military aid mission on Iranian soil.<sup>570</sup> Iran also

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Secretary of State—have called for a “rollback of the Iron Curtain” and accused President Truman of losing Iran to communism. Byrne, “*The Road*,” 213-17; Gasiorowski, “*The 1953*,” 231.

<sup>565</sup> Byrne, “*The Road*,” 212.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>567</sup> Gasiorowski, “*The 1953*,” 236-249.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>569</sup> Between 1948 and 1949, Iran did not receive any direct economic aid from the US, and in 1950 it was only provided with a token of \$10 million military grant to Iran, compared to around \$1.11 billion economic and military aid between the fall of Mosaddeq and 1960. Pollack, *The Persian*, 74-77.

<sup>570</sup> The new agreement granted Iran control of its oil resources, a fifty-fifty profit split, ended AIOC's monopoly over Iranian oil, and gave Iran the right to explore and pump oil into new areas including offshore. Pollack, *Ibid.*

joined the Baghdad Pact and shortly after signed a bilateral defense agreement with the US in 1959.<sup>571</sup> The agreement guaranteed US military commitment to protect Iran:

[I]n case of aggression against Iran, the Government of the United States of America, in accordance with the constitution of the United States of America, will take such appropriate action, including the use of armed forces, as may be mutually agreed upon and as is envisaged in the Joint Resolution to Promote Peace and Stability in the Middle East, in order to assist the Government of Iran at its request.<sup>572</sup>

The US commitment to defend Iran as well as its financial and military aid to the Shah alienated the Soviet Union and placed Iran in the pro-Western camp.<sup>573</sup> This alliance between Iran and the US reflected the Shah's conviction that 1) building up and modernizing Iran's military and the intelligence service were the most important elements in protecting the throne and guaranteeing a strong and independent state, 2) US aid was essential to strengthening Iran; therefore, Iran must use its geopolitical position as a frontline state against the Soviet Union to become the key US ally in the region, 3) Protecting Iran's largest oil fields in Khuzestan requires acknowledging the threat of communism/ socialism on the one hand and the march of Pan-Arabism on the other (the fall of monarchies in Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, the upheavals in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan enhanced this fear), 4) Iran should seek partnership with Israel, the natural enemy of Arab radicals and a key United States ally in the region.<sup>574</sup> As noted below, these measures paved the way to make Iran a key player in regional politics, a major economic and military power, and the second most important US ally in the Middle East.

#### **4.2.2. Iran, the Regional Hegemon**

In the 1960s, oil prices began to rise, and Iran increased its production, especially in the new offshore oil fields. Consequently, the Iranian share of the global oil market increased, granting Iran significant control over global oil prices through production adjustments. This led to a surge in Iran's GDP and a shift in its economic focus toward manufacturing and

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<sup>571</sup> An alliance between Britain, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United States as an associate member, to prevent Soviet expansion and foster peace in the Middle East. It was renamed the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) when Iraq left the alliance in 1959. It was disbanded in 1979 when Iran left after the Islamic Revolution. Miglietta, *American Alliance*, 44-45.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Following the agreement between Iran and the US, the Soviet Union accused the US of turning Iran into a military base to dominate the Middle East. Bill, *The Eagle*, 119.

<sup>574</sup> Iran was the second Muslim country to recognize the state of Israel in 1950. Israel helped build and train the Iranian intelligence services (SAVAK), and in the 1960s and 1970s, Iran became an export market for Israeli arms. However, formal diplomatic exchange between the two countries only took place in the late 1970s. For more on Iranian-Israeli relations, see Mansour Farhang, "The Iran-Israel Connection," Vol. 11, No. 1 (Winter 1989): 85-98, accessed August 5, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41857878>.

industrialization. Most notably, Iran achieved self-sufficiency and no longer required US economic aid. On the political front, the Shah aimed to establish Iran as a regional hegemon by increasing its involvement in Middle Eastern and Indian Ocean politics. For instance, Iran provided aid and support to the Kurd separatist movement in Northern Iraq, assisted the royalists in Yemen, exerted its dominance over the Gulf by occupying three islands historically belonging to the United Arab Emirates, supported Pakistan in its war with India, and supplied Israel with its oil needs while enhancing Iran-Israeli security cooperation.<sup>575</sup>

When President Nixon took office in 1969, he was presented with five options regarding US policy in the Gulf region, prepared by Kissinger. These options were: (1) assuming the role in the Gulf abandoned by Britain, (2) backing either Iran or Saudi Arabia as a "chosen instrument," (3) promoting Saudi-Iranian cooperation, (4) establishing bilateral relations and a major US presence in the Lower Gulf, or (5) sponsoring a regional security pact. Both Nixon and Kissinger believed that the region was better policed by a regional sheriff capable of protecting the oil supplies and reserves. Furthermore, the wars in Vietnam and South East Asia were draining the American economy, and the United States needed a larger share in the newfound wealth of both Iran and Saudi Arabia.<sup>576</sup> Hence, the US adopted what became known as the "Twin Pillars strategy," as part of the larger Nixon Doctrine.<sup>577</sup> According to the Twin Pillars strategy, the US relied on Iran and to a lesser extent on Saudi Arabia to protect its interests in the Gulf. Choosing Iran over Saudi Arabia was driven by the fact that Iranian goals overlapped with those of the Americans and the Israelis in opposing pan-Arabism and communism, while Saudi Arabia, a country that derived its legitimacy from Islam, could not covertly ally itself with the US or Israel. Moreover, by signing the bilateral agreement with the US and joining the Baghdad Pact, the Shah established himself as "an unconditional ally."<sup>578</sup> Thus, to counter the Soviets and Arab radicals, the US and Great Britain took steps to build up Iran's military influence in the Gulf, allowed the Shah to take over the Arab islands to prevent any power from interrupting the flow of the Gulf oil, and gave Iran undisputed control over the

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<sup>575</sup> Pollack, *The Persian*, 95-105.

<sup>576</sup> In an attempt to avoid resentment from Arab countries, the United States adopted the "Twin Pillar" policy in the Middle East by pairing the support to Iran with similar support to Saudi Arabia. For details see: Alvandi, *Nixon*, 29.

<sup>577</sup> The Nixon Doctrine refers to President Richard Nixon's post-Vietnam foreign policy, in which the United States pledged to continue to support her allies but without direct military involvement—as in Vietnam—except in the case of a conflict involving a nuclear weapon. The doctrine initially was intended for US allies in South East Asia but later was extended to include Third World countries. *Ibid*, 36-39.

<sup>578</sup> Henry Kissinger described the Shah as the "rarest of leaders, an unconditional ally." Pollack, *The Persian*, 103.

oil-shipping routes to Western Europe and Japan.<sup>579</sup> In retrospect, for the Shah, US involvement in South East Asia and defeat in Vietnam combined with well-publicized domestic turmoil proved that the US could not assume any military commitment in the region and that Iran needed to step up and fill the vacuum created by Great Britain's decision to pull out its troops from the Gulf by the end of 1971. Supported by the US and Britain, the Shah was aware that the Gulf, Iran's "lifeline," had to remain secure and stable and that Iran should not trust that responsibility with anyone. These views were reflected in his memoir:

The security of our borders required constant vigilance, not only along the Gulf coastline but also to the East, where we faced possible incursions. Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India have all been subject to domestic and foreign strife, quite apart from the sorties of our neighbor the Soviet Union. Our lifeline was and is the Persian Gulf. We have no oil pipeline to the Mediterranean as do Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The stability of the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean were also of vital concern. Defense of the Straits of Hormuz required that the nations on the Arab side remain our friends. Our forces had to be strong enough to prevent these friendly but poorly-armed governments from being overthrown. Guerilla groups could be deterred only if they knew that Iran was prepared to move rapidly and forcefully to protect these nations.<sup>580</sup>

As such, the Nixon Doctrine presented an opportunity for the Shah to shift American policy in the Gulf from the "Twin Pillars" to a policy of total dependence on Iran. Besides expanding Iran's military and economy, the Shah recognized the necessity of aligning Iran with the US and Israel to withstand the pressures from the Soviets on its northern borders and from the Pan-Arabists in the south. To advance these convictions, Iran engaged in extensive military and security cooperation with the US and Israel. The Shah authorized the installation of two CIA radar posts on Iran's border to monitor Soviet missile tests in Central Asia, seized control of two islands at the mouth of the Gulf to grant Iran full control of the Strait of Hormuz—the most important checkpoint for oil—and funneled military aid on behalf of the US to Pakistan in its war with India. Iran also intervened in Oman and Yemen against revolutionary powers and provided aid and military support to Kurdish separatists to weaken Iraq.<sup>581</sup>

Iran became even more significant to the US in the context of détente. Following the Nixon-Brezhnev summit in Moscow, President Nixon made a stop in Tehran, in which the American president addressed the Shah saying "protect me," to which the Shah responded

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<sup>579</sup> Tad Szulc. "U.S., Britain Quietly Back Military Build-Up of Iran," *The New York Times*, July 25, 1971, accessed January 8, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/07/25/archives/us-britain-quietly-back-military-buildup-of-iran-they-provide-land.html>.

<sup>580</sup> Pahlavi, *Answers*, 142.

<sup>581</sup> US law prohibited the administration from sending military aid to Pakistan or India. Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, chapter 1, 2, Pollack, *The Persian*, 95-105, Alvandi, *Nixon*, 366-67.

that, “Iran, like Israel, must be able to stand alone.”<sup>582</sup> Nixon’s trip to the USSR was the first official trip by an American president to the USSR since the end of World War II, considered by historians as the beginning of a new era of superpower relations, and the advent of détente and arms control negotiations.<sup>583</sup> At the Moscow summit, the American and the Soviet leaders signed two important agreements, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Interim Agreement (SALT I) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) agreement, according to which the two powers limited the number of their strategic delivery systems and put an end to an unrestrained nuclear arm race that lasted for two decades.<sup>584</sup> This made the American-Iranian alliance more strategically and operationally relevant. Altering the Twin Pillar policy in favor of entrusting Iran with bigger responsibilities was necessary to secure the oil lifeline in the Gulf and to set détente in motion. Therefore, on the same trip, President Nixon promised to provide Iran with “all available sophisticated weapons short of the atomic bomb.” This decision exempted American arm sales to Iran from being reviewed by the State and Defense Departments.<sup>585</sup> Nixon also agreed to launch the first American-Iranian-Israeli covert operation against the Shah’s enemy, Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

As has been explained, the 1973 war posed an opportunity to prove Iran’s value to the US, increase its geopolitical importance, strike down on Arab radicals, and increase oil revenues. Iran did not join the Arab embargo; it permitted the US’ P-3 flights to stage out of Bandar Abbas in support of its Indian Ocean operations; opened its ports, airstrips, and fuel depots to the US military; supplied Israel with its energy needs during the crisis; and had its navy guarantee the safe passage of 25 million oil barrels a day from the Middle East to Europe, Japan, Israel, and the United States. Moreover, Iran increased its oil production to 6 million barrels a day in order to offset the effect of the cutback on the global market, thus demonstrating how vital she was to the US.<sup>586</sup> In other words, after 1973 it became clear that the US needed Iran as much as—if not even more than—Iran needed the US. To claim the Gulf as his domain of power, the Shah further built up Iran’s military power. According to State Department documents, between 1972-1976, Iran’s arm deals with the US exceeded the US’ arm deals with any other country. In addition to the US, the Shah purchased military equipment from Western

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<sup>582</sup> The Moscow Summit lasted for eight days, between May 22-30, 1972. Alvandi, *Nixon*, 62-64.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>584</sup> Sargent, *A Superpower*, 62-67.

<sup>585</sup> Alvandi, *Nixon*, 28-29. The record of the Shah-Nixon meeting can be found in Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 200, accessed November 19, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve04/d200>; Document 204, accessed November 19, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve04/d204>.

<sup>586</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 143-150; Alvandi, *Nixon*, 50-55.

Europe, Israel, and the Soviet Union.<sup>587</sup> The chief of Iran’s Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), General Ellis Williamson, described the arm deals with the Shah’s regime as follows:

So, I was constantly seeing people coming in with something to sell. Iran was a good business deal. It was called the commercial man’s smorgasbord. It was good, very good, and commercial interest was running extremely high.<sup>588</sup>

The Shah relied on the same narratives used by neoconservatives regarding the Soviet threat and détente to justify his hanker for armament. As an illustration, during a conversation with President Ford, the Shah noted: “The Soviets are talking détente, but never have their military been stronger. West of the Urals they have 40,000 tanks. They have a rapid Navy building program.”<sup>589</sup> Similar views were occasionally expressed by the Shah in his engagement with Western media. In an interview with *The New Republic*, he stated:

There exists what I call the USSR’s pincer movement. There exists their dream of reaching the Indian Ocean through the Persian Gulf. And Iran is the last bastion defending our civilization, what we consider decent. Should they decide to attack this bastion, our survival would depend only on our ability and will to resist.<sup>590</sup>

These observations carry an uncanny resemblance to the neoconservatives’ anti-détente rhetoric as discussed in the first chapter. While there is no way to measure the extent to which the Shah was influenced by neoconservative rhetoric it is fair to say that, by employing the same anti-Soviet/anti-détente narratives, he was able to gain the support of neoconservatives and hawks in the Congress. He also utilized Iran’s pro-Israel stand—as opposed to that of Saudi Arabia, which initiated the oil embargo—to put an end to the Twin Pillars policy and fortify Iran’s role as the only power capable of guarding the American interests and the flow of oil from the Gulf. Whether the Shah’s worries about communist expansion were genuine or not is irrelevant, since such narratives granted him larger access to American weapons.

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<sup>587</sup> The US lifted all the restrictions on its arm sales—apart from nuclear weapons—to Iran. Belmonte and Keefer, *Foreign Relations*, document 177, accessed May 21, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d177>.

<sup>588</sup> Bill. *The Eagle*, 202.

<sup>589</sup> Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 125, accessed May 17, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d125>.

<sup>590</sup> Oriana Fallaci, “The Shah of Iran: An Interview with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi” *The New Republic* December 1, 1973, accessed August 28, 2022, <https://newrepublic.com/article/92745/Shah-iran-mohammad-reza-pahlavi-oriانا-fallaci>.

### 4.2.3. The Oil Wealth and the Emergence of the Religious Opposition in Iran

In the domestic sphere, the Shah's vision to establish Iran as a regional hegemon required him to regain the support of the Iranian people after the Mosaddeq affair. In 1963, the Shah launched what he called the "White Revolution," a six-point reform program with the declared aim of transforming Iran from a semi-feudal country to a modern industrial nation.<sup>591</sup> The measures of the White Revolution included land reform, granting women suffrage, the establishment of literacy and health corps, nationalization of forests, public sale of state-owned factories, and profit sharing in industry.<sup>592</sup> In principle, these measures were supposed to gain the support of the common Iranians and reduce the power of the clergy, the merchants, and the aristocrats. The plan was not subjected to the approval of Iranian Majlis for ratification; instead, the Shah ordered a referendum act which rendered Iran's constitution of dubious legality. Many Iranians were not pleased with the Shah's revolution, and, in June 1963, massive protests swept the streets of Tehran, demanding the overthrow of the Shah. Religious leaders, students, farmers, teachers, and others participated in these protests, cutting across class, ethnic, and ideological backgrounds.<sup>593</sup> The uprising was suppressed by force and thousands were killed.

The Mullahs, who have been taking advantage of huge areas of land that fell under "Vaqf (charitable trust)," were angered by the Shah's land distribution plan that forced them to surrender their landholdings and by the White Revolution's political reforms that allowed women and non-Muslims the right to vote and participate in elections.<sup>594</sup> When the 1963 protests are discussed, the focus usually goes to the issues of land distribution and women's rights, both being the key aspects that angered the clergy. Nevertheless, there were other aspects of the White Revolution that were detested by a great number of Iranians. These included the fact that the Shah's promised revolution did not include any serious political or constitutional reforms and that the land distribution plan excluded large tracts of land owned by the Shah's family or were placed under the control of the Pahlavi Foundation.<sup>595</sup> Additionally, the Shah's economic reform gave leverage to foreign investors and the Shah's entourage over regular Iranians and applied economic and agrarian measures without

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<sup>591</sup> Andrew Scott Cooper, *The Fall of Heaven: The Pahlavis and the Final Days of Imperial Iran*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2016,) 187.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid, 108-109; Bill, *The Eagle*, 148.

<sup>593</sup> Bill, *The Eagle*, 147-153.

<sup>594</sup> Cooper. *The Fall*, 108-110; Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 158-159.

<sup>595</sup> Algar, *The Roots*, 55-59; Bill, *The Eagle*, 147-153.

estimating their long-term benefits or costs (e.g., migration from villages to cities, cultivation of crops not consumed in Iran; manufacture of goods that Iranians did not need or buy; transformation of agrarian land to manufacturing facilities). Another important but less discussed factor that caused the Iranian people to oppose the Shah's reforms is related to the global anti-colonialist movements; taking into consideration that the Shah's rule was repeatedly protected by foreign powers, many Iranians were skeptical of the Shah's intentions. They viewed the White Revolution as an attempt to preserve, rather than to transform, the political structure in Iran.<sup>596</sup>

It was in these days that Ayatollah Khomeini, the prominent cleric who later became the leader of the Islamic Revolution, utilized the Shah's American and Israeli connections to mobilize the public against the Shah. Khomeini recognized that the Shah's selective reforms had raised the expectations and aspirations among the Iranian people without delivering the political transition that had been promised. In other words, the Shah's so-called "revolution" was, he argued, an attempt to counter an inevitable revolution. In his public speeches, Khomeini did not focus on the land reform issue or the women's issue, rather he attacked the Shah's unconstitutional referendum and denounced the economic aspects of the White Revolution, claiming that it threatened Iran's independence since it affiliated the Iranian economy with the Western and weakened the agricultural sector.<sup>597</sup> Additionally, Khomeini claimed that the United States and Israel were the prime movers behind the Shah's policies, and that the Shah had become a "slave" to American interests and turned Iran into a "colony."<sup>598</sup> As a result, Khomeini was arrested in 1963; upon his arrest, three days of violent protests broke out; 300 protesters were killed by the military.<sup>599</sup>

By incorporating anti-American and anti-imperialist rhetoric, Khomeini linked the revolt against the Shah with the struggle against imperialism, and by doing so, his message attracted not only conservatives but a wide range of Iranians from different backgrounds and classes. To give but one example of the language used by Khomeini, the following is from a speech he gave, following his release from prison on April 10, 1964:

The objective is Islam; it is the country's independence; it is the proscription of Israel's agents; it is the unification of Muslim countries. The entire country's economy now lies in Israel's hands; that is to say it has been seized by Israeli agents. Hence, most of the major factories and enterprises are run by them: the television, the Arj factory, Pepsi Cola, etc. The two passenger planes scheduled to commute hajj pilgrims to Mecca

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<sup>596</sup> Bill, *The Eagle*, 147-153.

<sup>597</sup> Khomeini. *Šahīfeh-ye* Vol.1. 135-136; 269-278 and 72, 233, 249, 294, 390, 449.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid*, 270, 358-59, 390, 414.

<sup>599</sup> Takeyh. *Guardians*, 163-164.

belonged to Israel! Saudi Arabia objected to them and they inevitably stopped doing it. Today, even eggs are imported from Israel. Make firm your ranks. These are the agents of imperialism and imperialism must be uprooted.<sup>600</sup>

In the same year, the United States signed an agreement with Iran in which American residents were offered full diplomatic immunity. The agreement was followed by Iran's acceptance of a \$200 million loan to buy weapons from the United States. Khomeini's response to this incident is another illustration of the way he combined the opposition to the Shah with the worldwide struggle against colonialism:

At a time when the colonial governments are courageously freeing themselves from the shackles of colonialism and reject slavery, the modernist parliament of Iran, which boasts of a 2,500-years-old civilized history, and of ranking among the developed countries, has ratified the most disgraceful and insulting bill of the defamed government and introduces the noble nation of Iran as the most inferior and underdeveloped nation of the world.<sup>601</sup>

As the paragraph demonstrates, Khomeini's uncompromising rhetoric directly challenged the Shah's image as a leader who promised to turn Iran into a regional superpower; instead, Khomeini presented the Shah as an un-Islamic agent of imperial power, a leader that would turn Iran into a colony. By linking political reforms with economic development and incorporating the anti-American narrative in his discourse, Khomeini broadened the themes of his attacks on the Shah beyond the land reform and social issues, established Islamists as the main opposition to the monarchy, and gained the approval of leftist youth and the modern middle class who were already in despair with the Shah's leniency to the Americans.<sup>602</sup> Following this speech, Khomeini was exiled first to Turkey and then to Iraq. Under the protection of the Iraqi government, he continued his opposition to the Shah's regime by recruiting Iranian religious students in Iraq's Najaf Seminary, one of the major centers of theological training for young Iranian seminarians.<sup>603</sup> He established the Coalition of Islamic Societies, an underground organization that raised money, spread propaganda, and smuggled Khomeini's tapes that were distributed inside Iran.<sup>604</sup> After the White Revolution, anti-Americanism became a core principle of the Islamic Republic's ideology.<sup>605</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> Khomeini. *Ṣahīfeh*, 270.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*, 414-415.

<sup>602</sup> Takeyh, *Guardians*, 166.

<sup>603</sup> Cooper. *The Fall*, 104.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>605</sup> Until this day, the Iranian constitution describes the White Revolution as an "American scheme," and defines it as "a step toward strengthening the foundations of tyranny and increasing Iran's political, cultural, and economic dependency on world imperialism." Papan-Matin, Firoozeh. "The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1989 Edition)." *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2014): 159-200. doi:10.1080/00210862.2013.825505.

The following section explores the Shah's close ties with the US and Israel and the implications of these relationships. It demonstrates the negative consequences; mainly undermining the Shah's authority, the loss of domestic stability, and deteriorating relations with Iran's neighbors. It argues that the neoconservatives, who were influential in shaping US policy toward the region, have overlooked or downplayed the impact of the Shah's relationships with these foreign powers on the internal dynamics of Iran.

#### **4.2.4. Implications of Iran's Pro-American/Pro-Israeli Position on Iran's Domestic Affairs**

Despite the long history of rivalry between Persians and Arabs, as well as between Muslim Shias and Muslim Sunnis, Iranians had a special affection toward Palestine as a holy Muslim land that has been forcibly taken over by a foreign power. This sentiment intertwined with national feelings, as Iran also experienced colonization by Great Britain and was victim to imperial conspiracies. A few days after the outbreak of the 1973 war, an Iranian newspaper headline announced "the advance of Muslim armies on Tel Aviv," reflecting the emotional connection Iranians had towards the occupation of the Holy Land.<sup>606</sup>

While the Shah's alliance with Israel was primarily based on geopolitical interests to counter Pan-Arabists and secure financial and military support from the U.S., the Iranian people's affection for Palestine prevented the Shah from openly endorsing Israel. Official recognition of Israel was avoided, and any interaction between the two nations were kept secret from the public, including high-level visits by officials (e.g., the visit of Israel prime ministers David Ben Gurion in 1961 and Golda Meir in 1972).<sup>607</sup> When the Shah was asked about selling Iranian oil to Israel, he described it as a "business arrangement worked out with the oil consortium that [had] nothing to do with his government."<sup>608</sup> In 1973, when he supplied Israel with oil, he demanded that the sales remain secret.<sup>609</sup> In Iran's local media outlets, the Shah constantly made statements against Israel and refrained from publicly criticizing the Palestinian leadership:

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<sup>606</sup>Davis, ed., *The Yom Kippur*, 258.

<sup>607</sup> Iran avoided officially recognizing the state of Israel and only extended a *de facto* recognition in 1950 and throughout the 1960s-1970s, the Shah kept Iran's representation in Tel Aviv secret and only exchanged ambassadors with Israel after Egypt signed the peace agreement with Israel and had official representation in Israel in late 1970s. Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2008), 19-29.

<sup>608</sup>Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 47.

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*; Bill, *The Eagle*, 430.

We have stood and we will stand at the side of the Palestinians, despite the fact that some of the groups of the resistance trained Iranian saboteurs to infiltrate our territory, kill our people, and blow-up various installations . . . We know how to discriminate between the justness of the Palestinian question and the wrongdoing directed against us by some Palestinians. What I fear is that the Palestinians may allow international circumstances to make their cause a tool of the Soviet or some other international strategy. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the other Arab states would do well to help the Palestinians avoid such pitfalls.<sup>610</sup>

As the passage shows, the Shah maintained a delicate balancing act, expressing support for the Palestinians in public while discreetly cooperating with Israel. His approach aimed to avoid alienating the Arab states while leveraging the Israeli alliance to strengthen Iran's position in the region, particularly against Iraq. However, Israel found it advantageous to publicize its dealings with Iran as a means to intimidate other Arab countries, emphasizing the legitimacy of its presence with the recognition of a significant Muslim nation. As one observer stated, "The Israelis jumped on every opportunity to make their dealings with Iran public."<sup>611</sup>

Khomeini and other anti-Shah actors recognized the suffering of the Palestinian people as an issue that could be utilized to mobilize Iranians against the Shah and undermine his rule.<sup>612</sup> For instance, two days into the 1973 war, Khomeini called on the oil-producing Islamic countries to "use their oil and other resources as weapons against Israel and also refrain from supplying oil to countries helping it."<sup>613</sup> When the Shah decided not to join the oil embargo and supplied Israel with oil during the 1973 war, Khomeini urged the Iranian people to "compel the government to break its silence and join the ranks of the governments of Islamic countries to fight Israel."<sup>614</sup> Khomeini saw in the war an opportunity to criticize the Shah's "servility to America" by taking Israel's side over his fellow Muslims:

It is the Shah who has surrendered Iran's oil to the enemies of Islam and of mankind so that they may use it in the war against the zealous Muslims and Arabs. By the recent scandalous agreement calling for an increase in the extraction of oil, he has risen against the oil-producing countries that want to use this weapon against America. And finally, it is the wanton plunder; the purchase of armaments worth billions of dollars and the back-breaking succession of celebrations that have caused the enormous escalation in the prices of goods and the cost of living, threatening Iran with total famine.<sup>615</sup>

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<sup>610</sup> Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 25.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid*, 83-86. Support for the PLO from the revolutionary powers declined in the following years due to the ideological differences between the PLO as a secular movement and between the Iranian Islamists, while the Islamic Republic maintained its rhetorical support for the Palestinian cause throughout the 1980s.

<sup>613</sup> Khomeini. *Şahîfeh*, Vol.1. 2

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

Khomeini also called upon Iranian citizens, the army, and officials to strive for Iran's independence and target American and Israeli interests. He encouraged clerics to use religious gatherings to highlight the Shah's relations with Israel, mobilize the public against the Shah, and requested the establishment of a relief fund to support "soldiers of Islam," in their efforts to aid the Palestinian resistance.<sup>616</sup> The Palestinian plight remained a prominent part of Khomeini's rhetoric throughout and after the revolution, as evidenced by three events exemplifying how Khomeini utilized the Palestinian cause. First, the first foreign leader to visit Iran after the revolution was none other than Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader. He visited Iran on February 18, 1979, accompanied by 80 PLO members who were tasked with training Khomeini's guards and members of the revolutionary force. Second, one of the initial revolutionary decrees in Iran was the transformation of the Israeli compound in Tehran into a headquarters for the PLO. Additionally, several PLO offices were allowed to be established in various Iranian cities.<sup>617</sup> Third, Khomeini declared the Egyptian peace treaty with Israel a violation of Islamic law and labeled the Egyptian president an infidel.<sup>618</sup>

Dr. Ali Shariati is another prominent Iranian figure who vehemently criticized the regime's connections with Israel. After completing his doctorate in sociology and Islamic Studies in Paris, Shariati returned to Iran in 1965 and became one of the most vocal critics of Israel, imperialism, and capitalism. He drew significant inspiration from Frantz Fanon's theories of violence, decolonization, active resistance, and the political engagement of colonized intellectuals, which he passionately conveyed to his Iranian audience.<sup>619</sup> Throughout the 1970s, while teaching at Mashhad University and delivering lectures in various religious circles in Tehran, Shariati emerged as a prominent figure among Iranian youth. His ideology presented Islam as a revolutionary belief system and a liberation movement emphasizing social justice, unity, and opposition to tyranny as Islam's core values.<sup>620</sup>

Shariati effectively introduced anti-imperialism into Islamic discourse, linking Islam to Third World activism, and depicted Israel as a tool of imperialism. He asserted: "We are not hostile to the Jews, but we are hostile to Israel. And that is not because of its religion, but because it is fascist and because it is a basis for Western colonialism and imperialism."<sup>621</sup> His

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid, 6-7.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid, xxi; Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 83-86.

<sup>618</sup> Khomeini's attacks against Sadat were also motivated by the latter granting asylum to the Shah.

<sup>619</sup> Dustin J. Byrd and Seyed Javad Miri, eds, *Ali Shariati and the Future of Social Theory, Religion, Revolution, and the Role of the Intellectual* (Leiden: Brill, 2018) 157-169.

<sup>620</sup> Cooper, *The Fall*, chapter 7, Byrd and Javad (eds.) *Ali Shariati*, 200-211.

<sup>621</sup> Byrd and Javad (eds.) *Ali Shariati*, 200-211.

approach resonated with both Islamists and moderates, offering a common ground between Sunnis and Shias while presenting Islam as an alternative to the duality of capitalism and communism. Shariati's ideas held great significance and influence:

When we say, "return to one's roots," we are really saying one's cultural roots ... some of you may conclude that we Iranians must return to our [Aryan] racial roots. I categorically reject this conclusion. I oppose racism, fascism, and reactionary returns ... [our people] do not find their roots in [pre-Islamic] civilizations ... for us to return to our roots [means rediscovery of] our Islamic roots"<sup>622</sup>

Thousands of Iranians were imprisoned, tortured, and executed for possessing Shariati's books and cassette tapes. Shariati himself was imprisoned between 1973-1975 and prevented from teaching or lecturing in Iran, prompting him to leave for the UK. Tragically, three days after his departure, he was found dead in suspicious circumstances, with many accusing the Shah's secret police of his execution.<sup>623</sup>

Although he did not live to witness the overthrow of the Shah, Shariati was regarded as the philosopher of the Islamic Revolution, and his writings provided the ideological framework for the Iranian uprising. Khomeini embraced Shariati's thesis, incorporating anti-imperialist, anti-American, and anti-Zionist narratives into his oppositional discourse, thereby expanding the scope of his attacks against the Shah's regime beyond land reform and social issues. The adoption of anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, and anti-American discourses positioned Islamists as the primary oppositionist to the monarchy, making their rhetoric more appealing to leftists, youth, and the moderate middle class, who were already discontent with income inequalities, the Shah's rapid modernization efforts as well as his alignment with the U.S.<sup>624</sup> The Shah's oil policies also contributed to growing criticism. Iranians perceived his policies as a conspiracy to exhaust the country's chief natural resource and foster dependence on Western products. The memory of the Shah's collaboration with oil companies, the US, and Great Britain against the first elected Iranian government in the 1950s and his opposition to nationalizing Iran's oil industries, were fresh in their minds. And although the Shah's hawkish position on oil prices and his leadership of OPEC against the international consortium conflicted with the interests of the US in decreasing oil prices, inside Iran the opposition remained suspicious of the Shah's policies. Especially since Iran was producing oil at a level

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<sup>622</sup> Ibid, 77. For more on Shariati's philosophy, see his books *My Father and Mother We Are Accused* (Beirut: Dar Alameer, 2003), *Islam and the Schools of the West - The Complete Archeology* (Beirut: Dar Alameer, 2008), and *Al-Hussein – Adam's Heir* (Beirut: Dar Alameer, 2004).

<sup>623</sup> Byrd and Javad (eds.) *Ali Shariati*, 36.

<sup>624</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 166.

beyond the country's revenue requirements and the revenues were spent on buying Western products and advanced military equipment neither of which was needed by Iranians. The following quote is from *The Rise*, the defense publication of the *Organization of Iranian Muslim Students*, one of the main anti-Shah bodies in the US at the time, and the quote illustrates how opponents of the Shah of Iran perceived him as an agent of imperialism due to his history of serving Western interests:

The reason Iran was selected to play the role of the "Mini-U.S." in the region has certain historical roots. It has been more than one century that Iran has been under political and economic aggression of the colonialists and has lost its political and economic independence, except between 1950-1953 under the government of Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh. Dr. Mossadegh closed the doors of Iran to the imperialists (British imperialism was dominant in Iran at the time). He nationalized the oil industry. but it did not last long, before the CIA and Britain, quite against the will of the people of Iran, engineered a coup in 1953, and overthrew the popular government of Dr. Mossadegh. The Shah came back to power. He followed the old policy of "open doors" to serve the interests of his imperialist masters, now under the hegemony of U.S. imperialism. Since then, the U.S. has been supplying arms and economic assistance to Iran, in order to keep the reactionary regime of the Shah in power, and instead, the Shah has shown that he and his regime are very obedient servants of their imperialist masters... [The US participation in the Coup against Mossadegh was to achieve its purposes] First, the U.S. wanted to establish a secure base for her imperialistic operations in the area; a base which would serve to offset any Soviet influence. Secondly, the U.S. wanted to plunder Iran's national resources and shift the Iranian economic system toward dependent capitalism. When dependent capitalism is accomplished, the Iranian economic system will depend upon the importation of Western technology and consumer goods, making the country even more dependent upon the U.S.<sup>625</sup>

In the eyes of the anti-Shah groups, the US and oil companies were undermining Iran's oil industry and its independence by encouraging the Shah's foolishness to maximize their own profits. They believed that the Shah was unable and unwilling to jeopardize his rule by challenging the very powers that reinstated him on Iran's throne. This rhetoric can only be understood within the context of opposition to the Western-led international economic order, in which developing or Third World countries were exploited by the European powers, multinational companies, and the US. Thus, the hostility toward the Shah's regime was articulated coherently and acutely within the discourse of the global anti-colonial and neocolonial movements of the 1970s.

The Shah faced his critics with an iron fist, unleashing his secret police to silence voices, control the press, suppress unions, parties, and all other forms of political opposition. Additionally, restrictions were imposed on religious gatherings and pilgrimages to the Shia

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<sup>625</sup> Organization of Iranian Muslim Students, "Iran in World Affair," *The Rise*, July 1977. 14-18.

holy sites in Mashhad and Qum. Islamic scholars and clerics were also arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and even executed. Similarly, Iranian troops attacked, injured, and arrested students who protested the Shah's regime in Iranian universities. For many Iranians, the US and, to a larger extent Israel, were complicit in the Shah's authoritarian rule; Israelis not only trained the Shah's secret police but many stories were circulated about them being personally participating in interrogating and persecuting detainees.<sup>626</sup>

The Iranian people's resentment against the Shah's cooperation with the US and Israel was demonstrated by the increase in the attacks against Americans, with the number of attacks growing substantially with the oil wealth. According to Professor of International Studies, James A. Bill, between 1971 and 1975, more than 30 bombings and threats of bombing were directed against American organizations and facilities in Iran, including 6 times bombing of the US Information Service facilities and bombing the US embassy in Tehran twice.<sup>627</sup> The issue of American safety was highlighted in the executive summary of the "U.S. Policy Toward the Persian Gulf" study:

The presence in certain Gulf states, particularly Iran and Saudi Arabia, of growing numbers of American personnel, both government employees and employees of private American companies, poses new and potentially difficult problems. There is the risk that American citizens might become involved in international and domestic conflicts involving their host government or that their presence might require US intervention or otherwise limit our options in a crisis. There is also the problem of potential negative economic and sociological impact of large numbers of Americans upon peoples of very different cultures, with resultant internal and bilateral political problems which can be exploited for anti-American and anti-government ends.<sup>628</sup>

In conclusion, the Shah's pro-American and pro-Israeli attitudes were not the only reason for the Shah's lack of popularity among Iranians. However, the use of anti-Israeli/anti-American rhetoric, the emphasis on the Shah's connections with the US and Israel and on the Shah as an agent of imperialism, and the equivalence between opposition to his rule with resistance to imperialism indicated the fact that the Iranian people did not hold the US in high regard. The CIA's involvement in the 1953 coup, US political and military support for the Shah as well as Washington's negligence of the human rights violations committed by the Shah's secret police cast doubt over the moral authority of the US, which was regarded as complicit in the Shah's

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<sup>626</sup> After the revolution, several SAVAK officers escaped to Israel including the vice-chief Parviz Sabeti. Algar, *The Roots*, 69-70; Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 25-27.

<sup>627</sup> Bill, *The Eagle*, 191.

<sup>628</sup> Adam M. Howard and Edward C. Keefer, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974-1976*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2011), document 292, accessed January 19, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v26/d292>.

oppression by many Iranians. Opposition to the Shah's pro-American/pro-Israeli stand thus became the common ground that unified the opposition and made it more inclusive to all classes and trends.

### **4.3. Political Decision-Making in Arab Countries: Strategic Imperatives vs. Ideological Considerations**

The 1973 war was the main conflict that galvanized the neoconservatives against the Arab countries. As demonstrated in the second chapter, the neoconservatives presented the war as a suicidal and unjustifiable act of aggression by the Arab countries against Israel. They argued that what was at stake is not merely the territories Israel would be forced to retreat and give up, but it was a conflict over Israel's "right to exist" and "survival". They also claimed that the war was motivated by irrational and ideological reasons —i.e., Muslims' deep hatred of the West and their desire to bring back the glory of the past and thus triumph over Western civilization.

However, the facts remain that the war was anticipated for the very reasons declared by the Arab countries. These reasons included Israel's internationally recognized occupation and the unilateral annexation of Arab territories, along with US refusal to "modify its commitment to the present policy of Israel."<sup>629</sup> The *de facto* annexation practiced by Israel in the occupied territories—building settlements, military bases, and restricting resources—created a sense of emergency to change the status quo, which itself was one of the declared objectives of the war.<sup>630</sup> Additionally, the Egyptian and the Syrian regimes were revolutionary regimes, the political legitimacy of which was largely jeopardized by the defeat of 1967 and their inability to restore the territories they had lost during the war.

Regardless of whether the neoconservatives agree or not, these countries had pragmatic and legitimate reasons to initiate the war, if only to restore their political legitimacy. The fact that Egyptian army was able to advance and force the Israeli military to withdraw from Sinai—up until American air support restored the balance in favor of Israel—proves that the war itself was not a suicidal act. Taking into consideration that neither the Syrian nor the Egyptian

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<sup>629</sup> See subchapter 2.2.3. for details.

<sup>630</sup> Resolution 242 was unanimously approved by the UN Security Council, including the votes of the US, and Israel. While the text of the resolution was interpreted by the majority of the international community as mandating Israel to withdraw its forces to the pre-1967 border, Israel and the US interpreted the resolution differently, seeing it as mandating Israel's "withdrawal from territories" rather than "the territories" occupied during the 1967. Golda Meir, Israel's Prime minister at the time, and many other Israeli officials made it clear their intention was not to withdraw from any land taken during the 1967 war. Their refusal to withdraw refutes the claim that peace negotiations would have achieved the same goals as those achieved by initiating the war in 1973. Resolutions 242 and 338 were reaffirmed by other resolutions like 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 476 (1980), 478 (1980), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008), etc. See Chomsky, *Peace*, 107-119.

armies had any targets outside the occupied territories and that the military operations were put on hold once the peace negotiations were reinitiated, it becomes evident that the war goals did not include a total destruction of Israel, and the declared goals for the war were primarily strategic and not ideological.<sup>631</sup>

Now that we established that the war itself was not ideological in nature, it is important to discuss the other aspect of war: the use of the oil weapon by the Arab oil-producing countries. To do so, we first need to emphasize that in the mid-1970s, the world was undergoing a global economic crisis related to several factors. The crisis began with the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 and the shift in the oil regime in favor of producing countries rather than oil companies. The oil price increase was the result of these factors and was a collective effort by OPEC oil-producing countries, both Arab and non-Arab. This refutes the claim that ideology and the desire to destroy the West were motives behind increasing the oil prices. The 1973 war was only an opportunity to create a situation where the price increase could be justified by the shortage of production and the corresponding panic over oil, but it was not the reason for it.

However, while this can explain the increase in oil prices, it cannot fully explain the use of oil as a weapon and the Arab oil-producing countries' decision to side with the revolutionary regimes in Syria and Egypt. Especially considering that the Gulf countries had no interest in antagonizing the US, as they relied on the US for support and protection— or as the neoconservatives would put it, “their survival.” After all, they had no territories occupied by Israel, shared no borders with Israel, and feared radical Arabs, including Palestinians, more than they feared Israelis. As such, irrationality (hatred of the West and desire to destroy Israel even if at the expense of their own destruction) might be a narrow-minded explanation for the oil-producing Arab countries' decision to side with the Palestinians and support the revolutionary regimes in Egypt and Syria. It brings forth a legitimate question of whether the decision of the Arab countries was driven by ideological beliefs (the desire to destroy Israel, and antagonism to the West) and were, consequently, irrational, or whether they were driven by geopolitical, pragmatic necessity and, consequently, rational.

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<sup>631</sup> Ideology may have played a role in mobilizing the public for the war effort considering that the Arab armies did not fully recover the losses they have incurred in the 1967 the war of attrition, but I believe it had no role in the decision to initiate the war, since the Syrian and the Egyptian regimes were secular regimes.

### 4.3.1. The Gulf Countries and the Palestinian Cause

It is widely recognized that the Holy Land, known as “historical Palestine,” holds significant importance for Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. Nevertheless, while the sentiments shared by Jews and Christians toward this land is understood within their religious context, similar sentiments among Muslims are often misconstrued by neoconservatives and likeminded ideologues. They interpret these sentiments as part of a clash of civilizations and a supposed Muslim desire to humiliate the West.<sup>632</sup> However, Palestine, and Jerusalem in particular, hold a special place in Islam that is unrelated to the religious wars of the Middle Ages. During the first eight years of Islam, Muslims directed their prayers toward Jerusalem, not Mecca. *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, located in Jerusalem, is considered as Islam’s third holiest shrine, and the land of Palestine blessed in six different verses in the Quran. Up until 1948, Muslims from around the world traditionally visited the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem as part of their *Haj* (Pilgrimage to Mecca) and *Umrah* (the lesser Pilgrimage) journeys.

Beyond its religious importance, historical Palestine was known for its ethnocultural and religious diversity, fertility, and its strategic location between the Red and the Mediterranean Seas. As a result, it became a destination for religious activities, education, and commerce under various administrative and colonial systems that ruled the area. Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula occasionally traveled to historical Palestine for these purposes.<sup>633</sup> It should come as no surprise that when the content of the Balfour declaration was published in an Egyptian newspaper in 1918, it was met with protest across the Arab world, including in the Gulf, with expressions of support for Palestinian Arabs recorded long before the creation of

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<sup>632</sup> For instance, in an interview with Bernard Lewis, he referred to the “Dome of the Rock,” in Jerusalem as a holy place for Christian and Jewish people, but as “a mark of the conflict [between Islam and Christianity], for Muslim”. He translated the inscriptions on one of the building walls as “a clear challenge for Christianity,” quoting: “He is God. He has no companion. He does not beget. He is not begotten.” However, Lewis’s analysis overlooks crucial information that one would expect an expert in Islam to know. First, the “Dome of Rock” is the oldest Islamic monument in history and holds immense significance for Muslims. It is the site where Prophet Mohammad made his *Al-Eraj* trip to heaven in an encounter with God. Second, the actual verses inscribed on the building read differently from Lewis’s translation: “He is Allah [God], the One. Allah [God], the Absolute. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is none comparable to Him” (Qur’an, 112:1-4). These verses hold high value for Muslims, setting the first pillar of Islam. They are commonly cited in Muslim prayers and inscribed in mosques, monuments, and shrines worldwide, including the Dome of the Rock. Nevertheless, by declaring Allah as the one and the only God, these lines challenge every other religion on the planet. Third, the Dome of the Rock has many more inscriptions, including what is presumed to *Ya-Sin*, the 36th chapter of the Quran, containing 83 verses. Lastly, the verses inscribed inside the building also refer to Jesus as “the Christ,” “God’s word,” and a “spirit from God.” For Lewis’s interview, see Hay Adam’s “Islam and the West: A Conversation with Bernard Lewis” *Pew Research Center*, April 27, 2006, accessed December 24, 2022. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2006/04/27/islam-and-the-west-a-conversation-with-bernard-lewis/>.

<sup>633</sup> Within the borders of *Al-Haram al-Sharif* (the area that contains Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock, and the Wall of Tears) there are more than 18 Islamic religious schools that represent different schools in Islam, beside other schools for Christians and Jews.

the Israeli State in 1948.<sup>634</sup> For instance, an appeal for Palestinian rights was published in the Mecca newspaper *Al-Qiblah* as early as 1921. Even before the discovery of oil and when the Gulf was one of the world's most impoverished regions, the Gulf nations held campaigns to collect donations, public meetings, and political strikes to show support for the Palestinian Arabs, particularly following the uprising of 1929 (*Buraq* Uprising), and 1936-1939 (the period of the Arab Revolt against the British mandate and Jewish influx in 1936).<sup>635</sup>

The support for the Palestinian cause mobilized public opinion and impacted the political decisions of Arab leaders. Historian Rosemarie Said Zahlan, in her book, *The Making of the Modern Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman*, highlights that “the first major event to mobilize political consciousness [in the Gulf countries] was the Palestine problem.”<sup>636</sup> Palestine became intricately entwined with the political legitimacy of the regimes across the region. This connection extended beyond revolutionary regimes in countries like Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, which based their legitimacy on the concept of Pan-Arabism and their struggle against colonialism. Even the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, presented themselves as defenders of Islam and Arab values against communism, secularism, and foreign invasion.<sup>637</sup>

The alliance with Britain, the US (who established, supported, and maintained Israel) and Iran, their non-Arab ally (who was perceived to be in the process of turning the Gulf countries into a new Palestine) became a cause of embarrassment and criticism. On the one hand, the rulers of these Arab countries were seen to contradict their presumed “Islamic values” by supporting powers that persecuted Muslims and constantly violated Islamic holy sites in Palestine. On the other hand, they were seen as facilitators of Iran's Persianization policies. This duality resulted in a fusion between anti-government sentiments, the oil-producing countries' decisions regarding the Palestine problem, and Arab-Iranian relations. This fusion

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<sup>634</sup> The Balfour declaration was a statement made by the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arthur James Balfour, to the leader of the British Jewish community, Lord Rothschild, in 1917, in which the former promised to support the establishment of a Jewish state in Mandatory Palestine in exchange for Jewish support for the war effort. The declaration violated the promises previously made to King Hussein —considered to be the sole leader of the Arabs from Lebanon to the Arabian Peninsula at the time— in exchange for an active Arab participation in the war against the Ottoman empire.

<sup>635</sup> Suleiman Mousa, “A Matter of Principle: King Hussein of the Hijaz and the Arabs of Palestine.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 2 (1978): 183–94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/162371> . On the Gulf and Palestinian relations, see Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *Palestine*, 1-27; *The Making*, 27-30.

<sup>636</sup> Zahlan, *The Making*, 54. For instance, as a result of his refusal to recognize the Balfour Declaration, Britain suspended its support to King Hussein, in favor of a rebellion leader from central Arabia called Ibn Saud, who established the modern Saudi State. See, Mousa. “A Matter,” 183–94.

<sup>637</sup> For instance, the logo of Al-Ba'ath Party in Syria and in Iraq include the Palestinian flag; the Free Officers' revolution against the monarchies in Egypt and Iraq were legitimized by the claim that the Kings were responsible for the losing Palestine in 1948.

was superseded by emergence of Pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism, to which the Palestinian cause and the loss of the holy city of Jerusalem in the 1967 war were central. The decisions of the rulers of the Gulf countries regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict had less to do with the desire to destroy the West and more to do with their domestic and regional policies. They had no interest in empowering the Syrian and Egyptian regimes, but, at the same time, they were considering the impact of the Palestinian issue (the loss of Jerusalem in particular) on their religious and conservative citizens and the propaganda war launched against them from revolutionary governments in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. They also weighed the fact that a great number of their citizens were influenced by socialism and Arab nationalism as demonstrated by the emergence of leftist and the anti-imperialist trends within the Gulf itself.

Using their immense natural and financial resources in support of Palestinians became a way for the Gulf leaders to legitimize their own rule and to counter leftist and Arab nationalist propaganda. In other words, taking on the Palestinian cause enabled Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries to steer the regions' leadership away from "revolutionary governments" and toward the "reactionary governments" of the Gulf, especially as their former leadership—Nasser's Egypt and Assad's Syria—was severely undermined by the results of the 1967 war and the loss of Jerusalem.<sup>638</sup> This support was demonstrated by political, financial, and humanitarian aid; for instance, allowing Palestinians at large to work in the Gulf countries. The use of the so-called oil weapon was but another phase in a policy that aimed to protect the political and national interests of the Gulf countries.<sup>639</sup> The fact that up until 2020, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries refused to recognize and normalize their relations with the state of Israel, even as the Palestinian authority and the frontline states did (with the exception of Syria), is an indicator that these countries made their own regional and domestic calculations, and their policies can be mainly understood in light of these calculations.

#### **4.3.2. Gulf-Iranian Relations Prior to the Oil Crisis**

The other factor that impacted the oil decisions of the Gulf countries, and which was nonetheless absent from neoconservative analysis, was these countries' relations with Iran. Alongside the domestic and regional pressure, driven by the Palestine problem, urging the Gulf regimes to actively support the Arab cause, Iran's relations with the Arab countries of the Gulf

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<sup>638</sup> For instance, *Fateh* the leading and the largest PLO fraction was established in Kuwait in 1950. Its membership included the brother of the Kuwait Amir Shaikh Fahd bin Ahmad. Following 1967, more than 400,000 Palestinian were permitted to work in Kuwait alone. Zahlan, *Palestine*, 36-38.

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

were significant for the threat Iran posed to both Saudi Arabia leadership and the independence of the Gulf monarchs. Historically, these nations were subject to Persian attacks, and even the dispute over the name (Persian Gulf vs. Arabian Gulf) reflects their attempts by each part to assert their identities in that region. After the British withdrawal, fears of a Persian takeover of the Gulf sheikdom resurfaced, particularly since the Shah's first act was to occupy the three relatively large Arab Islands in 1971. What is not commonly known is that Iran had previously seized the oil-rich region of Arabstan/Khuzestan and few other smaller islands in the Gulf.



Figure 3, Arabstan Map<sup>640</sup>

Arabstan/Khuzestan (See figure 3) has historically presented a serious issue for Iran because its inhabitants are predominantly Arabic-speaking people who descend from Arab tribes and do not identify themselves as Persian. Throughout history, they have not been under the control of the Iranian central government.<sup>641</sup> The discovery of oil in 1908 intensified the interest of the Iranian and the British governments in the region. Before 1925, the Arabstan region was an autonomous sheikdom, similar in size and development to the rest of the Gulf sheikdoms. During the time, the British government paid an annual stipend to the Arab ruler Sheikh Khazal

<sup>640</sup> Figure 3, Arabstan Map, Kiepert, Heinrich, Creator, Heinrich Mahlmann, and Carl Ritter. *Overview Map of Arabia. Based on C. Ritter's Geography Book III, West Asia, Parts XII-XIII*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1852. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668546/>.

<sup>641</sup> Khuzestan also known as Arabstan and Ahwaz is located in the southwestern side of Iran and consists of the land between the Iraqi frontier and the Persian Gulf to the West and south and the Zagros Mountains to the north and east see figure 3. Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran: Updated through 1978* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh UP, 1979), 110-117.

ben Jaber from the Ka'ab tribe—one of the largest Arab tribes in the Gulf—and guaranteed support against any external attack, in return for his promise to maintain internal security and not interfere in oil extraction in his territories.<sup>642</sup> In 1925, Shah Reza Pahlavi occupied Arabstan/Khuzestan, seizing control of it and imprisoning its last Arab ruler. Before the Persian invasion, Sheikh Khazal had complained to the League of Nations against Tehran's harassment, formed a coalition with surrounding tribes (including tribesmen from Kuwait and Bahrain), and sought British support against the Persian invaders.<sup>643</sup> However, when forced to choose between the Khazal and the Shah, the British chose the latter. The Shah's forces, being better equipped and larger in numbers, led to Khazal's defeat by the Shah's army, resulting in the establishment of full Persian control over Arabstan/Khuzestan.<sup>644</sup>

The integration of Khuzestan/Arabstan into Iran, along with the growth and further development of oil fields and the increased size and importance of the regions' ports (namely Abadan and KhorramShahr), coupled with an increase in the number of educated urban population, heightened political awareness among the Arab youth of region. More and more of them embraced Arab nationalism and called for independence. When Shah Mohammad Reza took the throne in 1946, the Arab tribes called for the separation of Khuzestan/Arabstan from Iran. Consequently, the Iranian authorities banned the use of the Arabic language, Persianized place names (e.g., Arabstan to Khuzestan, Al-Muhammerah to KhorramShahr, and so on), and redistricted the provinces in order to erase the name and boundary of Arabstan. They also relocated some of the Arab tribes to North Iran and settled Persian in their place.<sup>645</sup>

With the exception of Palestine's religious significance, the similarities between Arabstan and Palestine cannot be dismissed: both areas were considered to be Arab territories under British control; neither was an independent unit before the British mandate. In both areas, Arabs were promised independence by Great Britain, but did not end up getting it. Moreover, Arab sovereignty over both areas was lost due to wars that were ill-fought—neither had an actual army. Iran's Persianization policies and Israel's Hebraization policies attempted to strip away the Arab cultural identity of Arabstan and Palestine, respectively. Furthermore, Arabstan and Palestine were perceived by the rest of the Arab world as being stages in Israel's and Iran's

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<sup>642</sup> Even as it became part of Iran, the area remains largely inhabited by Arabic tribes. Currently, the number of the ethnic Arab population in the region is estimated between 4-6 million Arabs. Mustafa AlNajar, *the Political History of Arabian Arabstan, 1897-1925*. [مصطفى عبد القادر النجار، التاريخ السياسي لإمارة عربستان العربية] (Cairo: Al-Maarif, 1971), Ali Neima AlHillo, Al-Ahwaz, Tribes and Dynasties: Demographic Study of Arab in Arabstan. [علي نعمة الحلو. الأحواز قبائلها واسرها، بحث ديمغرافي للإنسان العربي على أرض عربستان] (Al-Najaf: Modern Arab Press, 1970).

<sup>643</sup> Cottam. *Nationalism*, 110-117.

<sup>644</sup> AlNajar, *the Political*, 215-246; Cottam. *Nationalism*, 110-117.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid.

larger expansion projects—Greater Israel and the Persian empire, respectively. For instance, in the 1960s, Pan-Arabists employed the issue of liberating the Arab population in Iran and integrating Arabstan with Iraq, as well as Iran’s relations with Israel as part of their propaganda offensive against Iran. It is important to note that the territories and populations of Palestine and Arabstan were larger than those of most Gulf countries. However, within less than fifty years, the demography of both regions was altered by the influx of non-Arab immigrants. In the case of Palestine, it was mainly European Jews, and in the case of Arabstan, it was Persian tribes.<sup>646</sup> This influx of immigrants in many ways affirmed and actualized the threat of Iran’s expansionist project. This threat was further solidified by Iran’s pursuit of expansion in the Gulf, which began after the annexation of Arabstan. In 1927, Iran laid claim to Bahrain and seized several small islands in the Gulf, historically inhabited by Arabs, as well as other Arab islands. The Gulf countries’ concerns and complaints regarding the illegal settlement of Persian tribes in their territories were well-documented in the British archives, evoking memories of the issue of Jewish immigration to mandatory Palestine, prior to Israel’s establishment.<sup>647</sup> The Gulf states’ fears were shared by Saudi Arabia, which was aware that if Iran could take over the enormously wealthy and strategically important Gulf states, it might acquire the power to move against Saudi Arabia. It is important to note that for four years after Ibn Saud, the founder of the Al Saud dynasty, established the Kingdom of Hejaz and Najd in 1926—later becoming modern-day Saudi Arabia—Iran not only refused to recognize Ibn Saud’s authority over the two sacred mosques in Mecca and Medina (Islam’s holiest shrines) but also banned Iranians from making pilgrimage under the new rulers.<sup>648</sup> The Saudi rulers derived their political legitimacy from being the custodians of “the two Mosques” and perceived their Shia subjects as a misguided sect whose loyalty lay with their fellow Shias in Iran. This perception was exacerbated by Iran’s refusal to acknowledge Ibn Saud’s authority over the holy mosques, which irked the Saudi rulers. They feared that such defiance would have a significant impact on the kingdom’s political stability and social cohesion. Although the two sects, Sunnis and

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<sup>646</sup> Ibid. The Public Front to Liberate Arabstan, an anti-Iranian movement established in the former Arabstan in 1958, adopted flag almost identical to that of the Palestinian flag as a way to unite both causes. See “the Ahwaz Flag Story” *Ahwaz Network*, accessed 24 December 2022. <https://ahwazflag.org/web/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ahwazflag-facts.pdf>.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid, 249-260. Gulf rulers’ concerns over Persian immigration to their countries were expressed to the British authorities on several occasions, see among other, J.A. Snellgrove “Iranian Immigration in the Persian Gulf” December 18, 1964. British Foreign Office, Arabian Department, 1-8. *The Arabian Gulf Digital Archive*, FO 371/179744, accessed March 16, 2022. <https://www.agda.ae/العربية/catalogue/tna/fo/371/179744/n/3>.

<sup>648</sup> Shia is the largest religious minority in Saudi Arabia, and Iran has the world’s largest Shia community and contains the most important Shi’ism centers of education and seminaries, which means that most of the Shia clerics in Saudi Arabia obtained their religious degrees in Iran (i.e., the cities of Qom and Mashhad). Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*. (New York: New York UP, 2000), 83-112.

Shias, have never engaged in a full-blown religious war, the rift between the two has always caused tension and suspicion among their adherents, especially considering that the majority of Shia are Persians and the majority of Sunnis in the region are Arabs. Hence, the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia is complex, encompassing religious, ethnic, and political dimensions, and it has long been present in the politics of both countries, both past and present.

Additionally, Iran's seizure of the Arab islands and its extensive support provided to Oman in quelling the Dhofar insurgency served as a reminder to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries of Iran's potential to conduct direct military action outside of its own borders. Consequently, the Gulf countries had no reason to be reassured about avoiding a fate similar to that of Arabstan or Palestine, or that Iran will not exploit the schism between the Sunni and Shia populations of the Gulf countries to weaken them in the service of political or hegemonic goals. That being the case, the newly established Gulf regimes considered it vital for the survival of their states to form alliances with major powers and cultivate positive ties with more influential and larger Arab states. The following paragraphs exemplify how serious the Arab Gulf countries' fear of an Iranian takeover of their land was and how that fear was linked with the trauma of Palestine and Arabstan. The first statement is taken from the introduction of *The Arabian Gulf or another Palestine*, a pamphlet issued and distributed by *The National Union of Kuwaiti Students*, a Pan-Arabist unit established in 1964 in Cairo:

This study was prepared for the Arab people and to bring awareness among Arab youth to the cause of the Arabian Gulf which is as important as the Palestine cause. What is happening in the Arabian Gulf is in fact nothing but another form of what had happened in Palestine prior to 1948, when the Zionist movement mobilized all its capabilities to organize Jewish immigration to Palestine. The communications and meetings among all parties that have interests in the Arabian Gulf are ongoing to fill the vacuum that will be left by the British withdrawal in 1971. Britain will never abandon its oil interests, however, since it cannot handle the cost of maintaining a military presence in the region, it worked to mobilize all the powers that have interests in the region to serve the British economic and strategic interests. The Iranian government's claims of ownership over areas of the Gulf along with the organized foreign immigration are parts of Britain's alleged plan to preserve the "balance of power" against what it claims to be communist infiltration.<sup>649</sup>

Before analyzing the above excerpt, I would like to quote the following paragraph from *Al-khalij*, one of the oldest and most popular state newspapers in the Gulf, issued in the UAE:

Luce [Sir William Luce, Luce the British Political Resident in the Gulf] is waving the Iranian stick, Al-Sharjah [one of the United Arab Emirates] stands alone against pressures and threats amidst total Arab silence. We reached a deadlock. What happened in Palestine in 1948 is happening again in the Gulf. Khalid [the ruler of Al-Sharjah]

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<sup>649</sup> The National Union of Kuwaiti Students, *The Arabian Gulf or Another Palestine* (Beirut: Al-Bayan, 1969) 9.

stated: no agreement with Iran without the people's consent, it is an Arab national cause, the islands belong to Al-Sharjah they belong to the Arab nation, I urgently call upon our Arab brethren to have a collective stand against the aggression.<sup>650</sup>

These examples demonstrate that both the Gulf governments and the revolutionary movements in the Gulf relied on the Palestinian analogy in their quest to rally support against the Iranian threat. Both accounts compared the state of the Gulf countries to that of Palestine prior to the establishment of Israel, drawing parallels between Iran's expansion policy and that of Israel and considering this expansion an issue of regional security in the Arab world.

The entanglement between the issue of Palestine and the fear of an Iranian takeover explains Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries' support for the Palestinian cause and the frontline states. It was evident that in the event of an Iranian invasion of the Gulf, their armies would neither be equipped nor prepared to withstand a long war, necessitating support from Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi, and Jordanian armies. Additionally, the decision to raise oil prices can be explained by these countries' need for armament and their fear of antagonizing Iran and Iraq, both of which were more in need of oil revenues than them. The pressure these regimes faced from their domestic front and from the other Arab countries only added to these reasons.



Figure 4, The Oil Weapon<sup>651</sup>

<sup>650</sup> Al-Khalij Newspaper headlines, issue 302, November 1, 1971. *The Arabian Gulf Digital Archive*, FO 1016/915 /248, accessed March 16, 2022. <https://www.agda.ae/العربية/catalogue/tna/fo/1016/915/n/248>.

<sup>651</sup> Figure 4: Salah Fahim, *Al-Ahram*. October 19, 1973.



Figure 5, The [Western] agents<sup>652</sup>

The caricature in (Figure 4) from *Al-Ahram*, the official newspaper in Egypt, demonstrates the kind of pressure imposed on the Gulf countries to use the oil weapon. The caption at the top of the picture reads: “In their meeting in Kuwait, the oil producing countries decided to reduce their production by 5%.” The caption at the bottom states: “Tomorrow may the weapon get longer.” The caricature ridicules the way the Gulf countries imposed the oil weapon by presenting the percentage of the oil reduction (the 5%) as the sword’s blade, while the size of the actual oil weapon is depicted as the sword’s sheath. In other words, the caricature shows that even though Gulf countries declared the embargo on the US and countries that supported Israel, their decision was criticized and perceived as not being strong nor serious.

Figure 5 presents a picture published in the fifth issue of the *Omani Liberation Public Front* magazine, capturing King Husain of Jordan alongside the Sultan of Oman (Qaboos) attending a joint Iranian, Omani and Jordanian military drill. The caption on the picture states: “The two agents, Qaboos and Husain observe the joint forces in Thumrait.” The accusation leveled against the Sultan of Oman and the king of Jordan was that they were agents for imperialist powers (the US, Israel, Britain), and in this case, Iran was included. This was a way to discredit and challenge the Arab monarchies’ political legitimacy. The same issue of the magazine included interviews with three of the highest-ranking officials in the PLO (George

<sup>652</sup> Figure 5: July 9: *Omani Liberation Public Front Journal*, July 5, 1975. 62.

Habash, Nayef Hawatmeh, and Ahmed Jibril); articles that accused the Gulf leaders of colluding with the Iranian, American, and British forces; statements that unified the resistance against imperialist agents in the Gulf with the resistance of Palestinian Arabs against Israel; and letters of support from liberation movements in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, and Turkey.<sup>653</sup> Figures 5 and 6 demonstrate the kind of domestic and regional pressure on Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries at the time, providing a rational explanation for the rulers of these countries to oppose the US or, at the very least, to show signs of opposition to decry accusation of being imperialist patrons. Moreover, such examples show that, contrary to the neoconservatives' accounts portraying the citizens of the region as a passive force, the peoples of the Middle East (Arabs, Persians, and otherwise) were active in the struggles against imperialism and all forms of neocolonialism. Many, if not the majority, of the revolutionary movements in the region were secular, socialist and democratic in nature.

The political consensus started to take a turn toward conservatism in the 1970s when the governments in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, with their eminent wealth, began countering the revolutionary rhetoric by developing a conservative anti-communist rhetoric and advocating Pan-Islamism over Pan-Arabism. Utilizing the Palestinian cause, they aimed to sway public opinion away from the revolutionary powers that failed to liberate their territories.<sup>654</sup> In Iran, Khomeini adopted the same strategy. The Palestinian cause was used by the opposition to the Shah to delegitimize his rule while simultaneously discrediting the leftist powers inside the post-revolutionary Iran. By framing the political decisions of the Arab countries in the 1970s within a narrow ideological framework based on massive religious and cultural generalizations, the neoconservatives failed to grasp the region's historical and geopolitical context and the complexities behind the political decision taken by the Arab countries at the time. They overlooked the fact that the foreign policy of the Arab nations is akin to that of any other nation—an extension of domestic policy and a reaction to international events—shaped not only by their values and principles but also by their imperative security and national interests.

#### 4.4. Conclusion

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<sup>653</sup> Ibid, 8, 12, 18, 24-32, 57-59.

<sup>654</sup> As demonstrated by Saudi Arabia support to Muslim brotherhood in Egypt in the late 1960s early 1970s, and to Taliban in the 1980s.

In the second chapter, I argued that the neoconservatives emerged and acted as the intellectual elite serving an imperial project. With their purported expertise, they provided a framework to justify military action against oil-producing countries. In the third chapter, we observed similar narratives being propagated by neoconservatives against OPEC and Third World countries. This chapter highlighted some geopolitical realities that affected American-Iranian relations, Arab-Iranian relations, and domestic politics within Iran and the Gulf countries. It demonstrated that contrary to the neoconservative narratives that explained the regions' politics using a single and strictly ideological framework, the Gulf countries' policies were shaped by complex and interconnected factors. These factors included geopolitical concerns, public opinion, security, and economic considerations, and they were influenced by a combination of shared interests, divergent values, and historical and cultural contexts. The neoconservative framework, therefore, once again appears shortsighted and superficial, seemingly lacking a foundation built on the thorough and rigorous study of the factors that impacted the oil-producing countries' political decisions. Their opinions seemed to prioritize immediate and simplistic solutions over comprehensive and evidence-based analysis.

In *Orientalism*, Said described the "Orient" as a "system of representation" shaped by forces that brought it into Western knowledge, consensus, and ultimately Western imperialism. This chapter revealed some of the aspects intentionally ignored in the neoconservative representation of the Gulf region during the period covered in this thesis. For instance, the neoconservative framework overlooked the political significance of the Palestinian issue. The chapter showed how the Arab oil-producing countries' decision to support frontline nations during the 1973 war was impacted by the sensitivity of the populations of these countries towards the Palestinian issue and by the experience of the occupation and Persianization of the Arabstan region, and was by no means purely ideological, as portrayed in neoconservative narratives. It also showed how the Shah's alliance with Israel was used to mobilize public discontent with the Shah, on the basis that Iran's strong ties with Israel are contradictory to its predominantly Muslim identity, a compromise of its sovereignty and independence, and an indirect endorsement of Israel's policies towards the Palestinian people.

The fixation on communism as the main threat to the region's stability and the perception of the region's inhabitants as passive were other flaws in the neoconservative system of representation. They disregarded the fact that imperialism posed an equivalent threat to the region's natives and, as a result, influenced the region's political choices and domestic policies. The US role in taking down Mosaddeq's government in 1953, her unconditional support for Israel, the calls to seize Saudi Arabia's oil fields in 1975, and US support for the

Shah's military buildup are all factors that were ignored in the neoconservative analysis. These events significantly impacted the region's cohesion and public opinions, which had broader implications for the geopolitical landscape. The next chapter will further explore how these issues profoundly affected the power dynamics among Gulf nations and influenced regional alliances and conflicts. It also explains how the neoconservatives inside and outside the Ford administration significantly impacted the foreign policy of the United States toward the Gulf region and contributed to the overall breakdown of the US-Iran alliance, as opposed to solidifying the US-Saudi alliance which later became the key pillar of US policy in the Middle East.

## Chapter 5

### Replacing the Shah: The New Oil Regime in the Middle East

The American media seem quite oblivious to the way Iraq and Venezuela are demanding an increase in oil prices of even more than 25 percent. They are only interested in me and Zaki Yamani. They're determined to portray me as the robber baron, the supporter of price increase, with Yamani cast as the good guy. Nothing could be further from the truth.<sup>655</sup>

Saudis have never shown any respect for human rights, either now or in the past. Even a petty burglar faces having one of his hands chopped off. The liberal press in America prefers to ignore all this, although they don't hesitate to blacken the reputation of Iran.<sup>656</sup>

We followed the principle 'my enemy's enemy is my friend,' and our relations with Israel began to develop. But now the situation has changed. . . . I think occasionally of a new equilibrium in the region. . . . Perhaps [it] can be integrated into an Islamic framework.<sup>657</sup>

Shah Reza Pahlavi

#### 5.1. Introduction

The year 1976 was decisive in the history of Iran: the unraveling of the American-Iranian alliance, Saudi Arabia taking over the leadership of OPEC, the deterioration of Iran's economic growth after years of prosperity, the emergence of the first organized opposition to the Shah, an attempt to assassinate him, and mass protests against his rule. In fact, many historians go as far as to consider 1976 the year that marked the beginning of the revolution against Iran's last Shah. In this chapter, I tie the events in 1976 with the war campaign the neoconservatives launched against Arab countries and their rhetoric and policies that antagonized the Shah.

Iran's new economic capabilities and military supremacy were not enough to turn Iran into a regional hegemon. The Shah needed to improve Iran's relations with her neighbors and gain their recognition and support for Iran's regional leadership, largely because Teheran was presented as complicit with the US invasion plans outlined in the neoconservative war campaign after the embargo. As part of his attempt to reassure the Arab countries, the Shah made statements about the necessity of keeping the "Gulf region free of foreign influence," he

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<sup>655</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 517.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid, 535.

<sup>657</sup> Parsi, *Treacherous*, 59.

supported calls for Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories, provided economic aid to some of the Arab countries (e.g., \$120 million in budgetary help and \$850 million in the form of economic credit to Egypt, \$150 million in economic credit to Syria, \$30 million to Morocco, and \$7.4 million to Jordan), and signed an agreement to put an end to the Iraq-Irani dispute. The first section of this chapter expands upon the ramifications of the neoconservative rhetoric since the 1973 (mainly the war campaign against Saudi Arabia in 1975 and the combined attacks against OPEC and NIEO) and how it impacted the political dynamic in the Gulf region. In brief, it pushed the region's countries toward unity and reconciliation to preserve the power of OPEC and deter any foreign invasion. At the same time, it increased the security concerns of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, initiated an arms race in the region, and intensified the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran over regional leadership, control of OPEC, and leverage with the US.

The second section analyzes the neoconservative campaign against Iran in the administration, the media, and Congress. It argues that the neoconservatives aimed to pressure the Shah to get him to moderate his hawkish position on oil pricing and reorient his foreign policy to align it more closely with US and Israeli interests. The section shows how the American media attacked the Shah in person as well as Iran's human rights record and military buildup. The neoconservatives also leaked information to the press that harmed American-Iranian relations. The section points out that though the neoconservatives did not consider human rights as a factor that should impact US policy toward Iran, the human rights framework they developed made Iran's human rights record a partisan issue and increased the pressure on Iran in Congress. Lastly, the neoconservatives inside the administration, particularly the Defense and Treasury Departments, were responsible for the shift in Ford's foreign policy in favor of Saudi Arabia as opposed to Iran. The section demonstrates the role played by neoconservatives in intensifying Iran's economic crisis by pushing the administration to reject the bilateral oil deal that would have rescued the Shah from the economic setback that hit Iran in the second half of 1975 and to sway the administration toward an alliance with Saudi Arabia versus Iran. Saudi Arabia's decision to break OPEC's line and flood the world oil markets with Saudi oil to undercut OPEC's pricing structure alienated the Shah and exposed his weakness, as it caused a strain in American-Iran relations and the deterioration of the Iranian economy. This pressure directly impacted the Shah's political decisions at home and abroad. The chapter relies heavily on the available records of the Ford administration, congressional hearings and reports, memoirs by and media interviews with the Shah, Iranian, American, and Saudi officials as well as books and articles by leading neoconservatives.

## 5.2. The Regional Ramifications of the Neoconservative War Campaign

The public statements of American officials, the leaks about military training, articles by neoconservatives, and the publication of the Congressional feasibility study created a wide range of reactions. Major Arab newspapers carried headlines that included: “America Warns the Arabs, Threatens Nuclear War Over Petroleum,” “Ford Threatens to Size Arab Oil by Force of Arms,” and “Ford and Nixon Statements: Tantamount to Declaration of War.”<sup>658</sup> In response to these threats, the Saudi oil minister stated that the use of force would lead to blowing up the oil fields of Saudi Arabia and other oil producing countries in the Gulf stated that they already placed explosives around their principal oil fields and charged so that they could be set off at a moment’s notice.<sup>659</sup> However, since the chapter’s aim is to specifically analyze the impact of the neoconservative war campaign (the articles from 1975 first introduced in chapter 2 above) and not that of official threats that immediately followed the 1973 oil embargo, it is important to distinguish between the reaction to US official statements and those that followed the neoconservatives’ invasion articles.

For instance, following Secretary Kissinger’s remarks to the *Business Week* magazine in which he indicated that the US “could not rule out completely the use of military force against oil-producing nations,” the American ambassador to the Saudi Kingdom, James Akins, informed the Department of State that the Saudi Minister of Petroleum, Sheikh Ahmad Yamani, had told him that King Faisal was “depressed and worried by [the] American threats,” and that he had never seen the King “so worried and so questioning of his relationship with the United States.”<sup>660</sup> Within a week, the State Department instructed Akins to calm down Saudi officials and to point out that the “gravest emergency” referred to by secretary Kissinger “did not apply to the present situation.”<sup>661</sup> Akins was also directed to inform the Saudis that Secretary Kissinger had “never mentioned the possibility of an invasion of Saudi Arabia in

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<sup>658</sup>“Arab Anger Stirred by Ford’s Warning on Oil” *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 1974, accessed June 4, 2020. <https://latimes.newspapers.com/image/385866483/?terms=seize%20Arab%20oil&match=1> .

<sup>659</sup> William J. Coughlin, “Arab Western Envoys Fear US Might Seize Oil Fields”. January 11, 1974. *Los Angeles Times*, accessed August 1, 2022. <https://latimes.newspapers.com/image/381904174/> .

<sup>660</sup> For Kissinger’s remarks see, Bernard Gwertzman. “Kissinger Speaks of Force as Last Step in the Gravest Emergency’ Over Oil” January 3, 1975. *The New York Times*, accessed August 12, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/01/03/archives/kissinger-speaks-of-force-as-last-step-in-the-gravest-emergency.html>. For Akins’s correspondence with the State Department see, Galpern and Keefer, *Foreign Relations*, document 30, accessed December 9, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d30>; Galpern and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 52 accessed August 9, 2022. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d52>.

<sup>661</sup> Document 30.

particular,” and that during the same interview he had “highlighted the importance of maintaining the relationship of friendship between Saudi Arabia and the US.”<sup>662</sup> Within weeks, similar messages were delivered by the Secretary of State and President Ford to reassure the Saudis that the US had no intention of military or economic confrontation with the Kingdom.<sup>663</sup> As a result, the American embassy reported that the US-Saudi tensions over Secretary Kissinger’s remarks “dissipated.”<sup>664</sup>

Conversely, when the neoconservative war campaign was launched between February and March 1975, the fear of a potential American invasion resurfaced again. Documents from the State Department indicated that Ambassador Akins informed the State Department that the Saudi officials expressed their discontent with what they perceived to be an “anti-Saudi” campaign in the press and Congress. The ambassador made it clear that the threat of invasion would have been quietly forgotten, “had it not been picked up, embellished, and presented to the world in five separate articles all of which were widely quoted and discussed in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East.”<sup>665</sup> Ambassador Akins was referring to Tucker’s “Oil: The Issue of American Intervention” and “Further Reflections on Oil & Force” in *Commentary*; Luttwak’s [Miles Ignotus] “Seizing Arab Oil” in *Harper’s Magazine*; Laqueur’s “Détente: What’s left of it?” in *The New York Times*. The fifth article was “War for Oil,” a response to the neoconservative articles by I. F. Stone in *The New York Review of Book*.<sup>666</sup> To reduce the tension caused by these openly hostile neoconservative articles, Ambassador Akins advised the State Department to issue a forthright condemnation of what he referred to as the “invasion articles.”<sup>667</sup> However, unlike in the case of the Department’s response to official statements in January, no official condemnation followed. And although such lack of action was logical and consistent with the ways of American politics (the Federal Government is not responsible for articles printed in the free press), it still contributed to regional (Arab) fears of invasion. Moreover, the Congressional Committee on International Relations was discussing the “Feasibility Study of the Oil Fields as Military Objectives,” referred to in the previous chapter.<sup>668</sup> To calm the Saudis, Ambassador Akins took the initiative and stated in an interview

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<sup>662</sup> Ibid.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid.

<sup>665</sup> Document 52.

<sup>666</sup> As explained in his airgram to the State Department in April 13, Document 52.

<sup>667</sup> Hibbeln and Howard, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 130, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve09p2/d130>.

<sup>668</sup> See subchapter 2.2.1. for details.

in Saudi Arabia that those who are calling for war in the Middle East are “criminally insane,” and followed the interview by writing a lengthy paper for *Foreign Affairs*, titled “War for Oil,” in which he refuted the neoconservative arguments one by one.<sup>669</sup> The ambassador stated:

Why the concentration on the Arabs as the enemies when other countries in OPEC have been fully as anxious to maximize their income from oil, is it simply to deprive the Arabs of their “oil weapon,” and remove pressure on Israel? This hardly seems possible, as even Israel could not “win” in such a world catastrophe. Perhaps these New Hawks have no motive at all; their guiding light may be simply malice and stupidity.<sup>670</sup>

It is important to note here that Akins was not just the US ambassador to Saudi Arabia, but he was also one of the State Department’s chief oil experts.<sup>671</sup> The response to Akins’s strong words came within months, when he was informed through an article in *The New York Times* that he was discharged from his position. In his book *The Arabists: The Romance of An American Elite*, Robert Kaplan described Akins as “the antithesis of the soft, social-science type of Arabist that neoconservatives, in particular, love to hate,” and stated that Akins was fired for being “too partial to the Arabs.”<sup>672</sup> Twenty years later in an interview Akins described the circumstances in which he was fired:

I remember when a large number of reports appeared in the American media about the United States occupying the Arabian oil fields. I gave a TV interview saying that ‘anyone who thinks that should happen is a madman, a criminal, and an agent of the Soviet Union.’ Well, it turns out that Kissinger was the briefer behind those reports (it was Kissinger’s way of making the Arabs nervous). Had I known that, I obviously would not have chosen the words I did. I may be brazen, but I’m not suicidal.<sup>673</sup>

If anything, this incident shows that there indeed existed some coordination between US officials and neoconservative writers and how there was an intentional effort not to defuse the tension created by the threats of war with the aim of driving the Arab countries to neutralize the oil as a weapon in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and drive them to moderate their position on oil prices. This claim is supported by the backchannel opened between American and Saudi officials to turn the Kingdom against Iran which, as has been demonstrated, was the strongest supporter of high oil prices. On one occasion, Secretary of the Treasury William Simon told

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<sup>669</sup> According to the State department documents the Akins interview was “widely quoted in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world and Prince Fahd, now the Saudi Crown Prince, said this went a long way toward defusing the issue.” *Foreign Relations*, Document 52.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid.

<sup>671</sup> James E. Akins, “The Oil Crisis: This Time the Wolf Is Here” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Apr., 1973): 462-490. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20037995> .

<sup>672</sup> Robert D. Kaplan. *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite*. (New York: Free Press, 1995), 171-172.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid, 176.

Saudi ministers that “Saudi Arabia has probably 150 years of production left, whereas Iran has only 15 years. Maybe Iran will build its industry and when the oil runs out, they can take you and get the oil back.”<sup>674</sup> Such comments played to the fears of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries over the Shah’s grandiose military and economic program and his regional, hegemonic ambitions.

### **5.2.1. Settling Territorial and Political Disputes in the Gulf**

As explained in subchapter 3.3 above, one of the principal objectives of the neoconservative war campaign was breaking the power of OPEC, so the collective response of OPEC members to the threat of war is crucial to the understanding of the political dynamic in the region. Shortly after the publication of war-mongering articles by the neoconservatives, OPEC held its first Conference of Sovereigns and Heads of State of OPEC Member Countries in Algiers in March 1975. The official statement, known as the “Solemn Declaration,” reflects the tension caused by the threat of war:

[OPEC leaders] condemn the threats, propaganda campaigns and other measures which have gone so far as to attribute to OPEC member countries the intention of undermining the economies of the developed countries...denounced any grouping of consumer nations with the aim of confrontation, and condemn any plan or strategy designed for aggression, economic or military, by such grouping or otherwise against any OPEC member country.... proclaim their profound faith in the capability of all peoples to bring about a new economic order founded on justice and fraternity which will enable the world of tomorrow to enjoy progress equally shared by all in cooperation, stability and peace.<sup>675</sup>

The fact that the conference was held immediately after the publication of the belligerent articles penned by the neoconservatives and not after the previous officials’ statements, indicates that the neoconservative arguments for war (and the lack of official rebuttal from the White House) were perceived more seriously than the Ford and Kissinger statements and that the organization’s collective response aimed to refute the easiness by which taking over the Arab oil fields was portrayed by these arguments. This was made clear by the proclaimed readiness of the member states “to take immediate and effective measures in order to counteract [external] threats with a united response whenever the need arises, notably in the case of

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<sup>674</sup> Cooper, *Oil King*, 179. I am aware that this exact quote has been used before (see footnote 374 above), but I find it necessary to repeat here. More on the “back channel” between American and Saudis official see Jeffrey Robinson, *Yamani: The Inside Story* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1989), 206-207.

<sup>675</sup> “OPEC Solemn Declarations,” *Conference of Sovereigns and Heads of State of OPEC Member Countries*, March 4-6, 1975. *Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries*, accessed August, 4, 2022. [https://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/static\\_files\\_project/media/downloads/publications/Solemn\\_Declaration\\_I-III.pdf](https://www.opec.org/opec_web/static_files_project/media/downloads/publications/Solemn_Declaration_I-III.pdf).

aggression.”<sup>676</sup> OPEC member states in the Gulf also considered the establishment of a joint security system and followed the summit with several practical steps to resolve their political disputes and affirm their solidarity against any external aggression. Chief among these developments was an agreement among the littoral states to exclude the presence of external powers in the region, be they American or Soviet. This was expressed by the Shah, in an interview with the British magazine the *Observer*, where he affirmed that he wanted “any permanent American military presence removed from the Persian Gulf area, including the American naval base in Bahrain,” and that he “expects Iraq to agree to a similar exclusion of Soviet bases in the Gulf.”<sup>677</sup> Several bilateral agreements in the region followed the OPEC Summit with the aim of settling political and territorial disputes and affirming the solidarity among member states.

Iraq under the leadership of the Arab Socialist *Ba'ath* Party presented the source of many of the regional issues in the Gulf. Iraq adopted a pro-Soviet international posture, lead a propaganda war against the reactionary monarchies in the Arabian Peninsula, and provided financial and military aid to subversive revolutionary, nationalist, and secessionist movements in the Gulf—including the Iranian National Front, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Arabstan, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf.<sup>678</sup> The reconciliation with Iraq was perceived as necessary by the Arab countries for several reasons: 1) To diminish the Soviet influence in Iraq and through it in the Gulf—which was presumed to be the justification for any future American military intervention—by providing Iraq with a financial alternative to that provided by the Soviet Union, 2) to take advantage of the large and strong Iraqi army in the event of an American or Israeli aggression against their countries or at the very least to be able to invoke the Iraqi card as a way to deter any military intervention, 3) to create a balance of power between the Iranian military primacy in the Gulf and that of the Arab countries, 4) to harmonize the relations between the Gulf states and reduce the internal tension by putting an end to Iraq’s anti-monarchical propaganda. The reconciliation mission was translated to practical steps that took

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<sup>676</sup> Ibid. It is worth noting here that this summit was the only summit to gather all OPEC heads of states in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is itself an indicator of the seriousness by which the threats of war were taken. The next OPEC head of state meeting took place more than two decades later in 2000 in Venezuela. See “Brief History,” *Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries*, accessed, August 31, 2022. [https://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/about\\_us/24.htm](https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/24.htm).

<sup>677</sup> Belmonte and Keefer, eds, *Foreign Relations*, document 123. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d123>.

<sup>678</sup> F. Gregory Gause III. *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 16-45.

place in the same year, including: demarcating the borders between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, between Saudi Arabia and other Gulf sheikhdoms, and among the Gulf sheikhdoms; reopening the closed borders between Iraq and Kuwait; putting an end to Iraq's support to the insurgency in Oman and establishing diplomatic relations—for the first time—between Iraq and Oman, which resulted in ending the revolution in Dhofar.<sup>679</sup> Along with these, the most important development regarding reconciliation among OPEC member states took place during the summit when the Shah and then Iraq's Saddam Hussein met for five hours, and followed their meeting by declaring their intention to settle their differences and free the Gulf region from foreign influence. They also discussed a joint Gulf security arrangement and on March 6, 1975 established the framework for the Algiers Accord, which provided territorial adjustments and sustained the new relationship of reciprocity and respect.<sup>680</sup>

Easing the tensions between the main powers in the region (Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia), did not necessarily end their competition over power. However, since Iran and Iraq were known to be the most vigorous combatants, the announcement of their reconciliation during the OPEC summit sent a strong message about the stability of the region and affirmed the solidarity among OPEC members in the face of any foreign aggression. For instance, one of the consequences for signing the Algiers Accord was that it exposed Kuwait to the threat of Iraq which was expressed by the Kuwaiti ambassador to president Ford, who complained about Iraq being freed from its involvement with the Kurdish issue: "They still have their eyes on us. With the Kurd problem solved, they may turn their eyes to the south ... So it is a little distressing over the long run."<sup>681</sup> In addition, the announcement of a \$7 billion nuclear deal between Iran and the US was interpreted by *The New York Times* as a possible means for Iran to develop nuclear weapons: Iran spent the American money on buying fuel that could "be reprocessed to produce pure plutonium, which is used to make nuclear bombs."<sup>682</sup> This, together with the news that Israel possessed 10-20 nuclear weapons that were "available to use," meant that it is only a matter of time before Iraq would consider developing its nuclear capabilities. Thus, Iraq and Iran both became a source of anxiety to the Gulf Arab countries.

The reconciliation with Iraq meant that Iran was no longer focusing on Iraq and could pursue other goals. The dispute between Iran and Iraq dispute dates back to the fall of the Iraqi

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<sup>679</sup>Ibid. Al-Mosffer, *Gulf to Gulf*, 62-82.

<sup>680</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 421-422; Bill, *The Eagle*, 206. Hibbeln and Howard, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 60, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve09p2/d60>.

<sup>681</sup> Cooper. *The Oil Kings*, 245

<sup>682</sup> Leslie H. Gelb, "U.S. Nuclear Deal with Iran Delayed" *The New York Times* March 8, 1975, accessed, May 2, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/03/08/archives/us-nuclear-deal-with-iran-delayed.html>.

Hashemite monarchy in 1958 and the rise of the anti-monarchical Ba'athist regime, which made the decision to adopt pro-Soviet policy and withdraw from the Baghdad pact.<sup>683</sup> The animosity between the two countries continued to escalate due to ideological differences (Iran as a pro-Western monarchy and Iraq as the pro-Soviet revolutionary government) as well as their historical dispute over the Shatt Al-Arab waterway and Iran's 1971 occupation of the Arab islands (Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and lesser Tunb Arab) in the Gulf.<sup>684</sup> Iran in coordination with the US and Israel provided military and financial support for the Kurdish insurgency in northern Iraq with the aim that such support would keep Iraq from taking an active role in the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>685</sup> Iraq hosted many members of the Shah's religious opposition, including Khomeini, and provided support for the Arab nationalists and their quest for autonomy in Iran's Khuzestan/Arabstan; and this support included intensive propaganda warfare against the Iranian central government.<sup>686</sup> By signing the Algiers Accord, Iraq wanted to put an end to Iranian, and by extension American and Israeli, support for the Kurds' insurrection in Northern Iraq, which was consuming Iraq's military power and resources. In retrospect, by signing the Algiers Accord, Iran put an end to Iraq's support to the Arab nationalists and the anti-Pahlavi activities in Khuzestan/Arabstan and confirmed Iran's supremacy by getting Iraq to concede part of the Shatt al-Arab waterway to Tehran.<sup>687</sup> It is important to note here that the Shah's decision to sign the Algiers accord and consequently to stop supporting the Kurdish separatist movements was taken unilaterally without any consultation with the Americans or Israel.<sup>688</sup> Hence, it was received with discomfort and suspicion from both sides.

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<sup>683</sup> The pact was then named as the Central Treaty Organization "CENTO. Bill, *The Eagle*, 117.

<sup>684</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 49, 51-52.

<sup>685</sup> On American and Israeli support for the Kurds, see Shlomo Nakdimon, *A Hopeless Hope: The Rise and Fall of the Israeli-Kurdish Alliance*. Translated by Bader Oqaily. (Amman: Dar El-Jaleel, 2004)

<sup>686</sup> Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 115-117. Following the fall of the Shah, the Iraqi regime tried to persuade Arab Iranians into revolt against the Islamic Republic. For Iraqi propaganda about Ahwaz see Khair Allah Telfah, *The Ahawz: A Stolen Arab Land*. [خير الله تلافاح. الأحواز عربية] (Baghdad: AlHurria, 1983). Ibrahim Khalaf Alobaidi, *The Ahawaz, an Arabic Land*, [إبراهيم خلف عبيدي، الأحواز أرض عربية سليبية] (Baghdad: Alhurria, 1980).

<sup>687</sup> Cooper. *The Oil Kings*, 241-245. By signing the agreement, Iraq had made two major concessions: she gave up Iraqi territory on Shat Alarab and totally ignored the Arab islands seized by Iran which formerly were the reason for breaking relations with Iran. Belmonte and Keefer, eds, *Foreign Relations*, document 274, accessed, March 3, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d274>.

<sup>688</sup> The Shah convinced president Nixon to funnel aid to the Kurdish revolt in Northern Iraq. The Kurdish ability to fight was bolstered by support —arms, money, and freedom of movement, as well as artillery and antiaircraft support—from Iran and Israel. After the Algiers Accord, the Kurds were in an untenable position and the Iraqis took advantage of this by launching a heavy offensive. Barzani, the Kurdish leader, called off the fight and thousands of Pesh Merga guerrillas fled eastward to Iran. William Tuohy, "Flight of Kurds Called Finish of 14-Year Rebellion." *The Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1975. <https://latimes.newspapers.com/image/385656887/>; Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, Chapter 7.

Normalizing relations with Iran allowed Iraq to stabilize and rebuild its political, social, and economic systems, as well as its military. However, it also “freed the Iraqi army from its preoccupation with the Kurds and enable[d] it to deploy the majority of its forces against Israel,” as noted by the Defense Intelligence Agency.<sup>689</sup> The reaction to the Algiers Accord by the US and the Israel is reflected in a correspondence between Henry Kissinger and the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin that took place three days after the OPEC summit. In which, Kissinger stated that he was “shaken” by the Shah’s decision “to sell out the Kurds,” describing it as a brutal act.<sup>690</sup> He claimed that in a previous conversation with the Shah, the latter brought up the idea of approaching Iraq and that Kissinger “strongly” told him that it “was a bad idea.”<sup>691</sup> Rabin responded to Kissinger by indicating that the Shah’s decision to reconcile with Iraq “had to be taken into account” in Israel’s policies toward Iran and regarding the peace settlement with Syria and Egypt.<sup>692</sup> Rabin was referring to Israel’s previous commitment to withdraw from the oil fields in Sinai as part of the peace settlement between Israel and Egypt, which, according to Rabin, was made under the impression that the Shah would supply Iran with its oil needs to replace the oil fields it would lose by handing Sinai back to Egypt. However, after Iran signed the Algiers Accord without consulting with the US, there was no guarantee that the Shah would commit to supplying Israel with oil or that he would not side with the Arabs in the case of a future embargo.<sup>693</sup>

The neoconservatives were particularly outraged by the Iranian reconciliation with Iraq. Largely because they feared Iraq whose Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union was, according to a study prepared by the CIA headed by George H. W. Bush at the time, “the most far-reaching security treaty the Soviet have with any Third World country.”<sup>694</sup> Moreover, as Luttwak and Friedland observed in 1972, the Iraqi leadership was vociferously supportive of Palestinians but, due to the Kurdish opposition on its northern borders and the threat from Iran, Iraq was only able to provide limited support during the 1967 war.<sup>695</sup> When

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<sup>689</sup> Belmonte and Keefer, eds, *Foreign Relations*, document 273, accessed, March 3, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d273>.

<sup>690</sup> “The Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions” March 7-22, 1975 - Kissinger’s Trip - Vol. I (3) *the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library*. Memorandum of Conversation. March 9, 1975, 1-9, accessed March 2, 2021, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0331/1553951.pdf>

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-11.

<sup>692</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 243-245.

<sup>693</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>694</sup> Hibbeln and Howard, document 26, *Foreign Relations*, accessed 18 December, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve09p2/d26>.

<sup>695</sup> Saul Friedlander and Edward Luttwak, “War and Peace in The Middle East: An Israeli Perspective” in Phyllis Sherman, Ed. *World Politics and the Jewish Condition; Essays Prepared for A Task Force on The World of the 1970s of the American Jewish Committee*. (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972), 118.

the Shah settled territorial disputes with Iraq and dropped Iran's support of the Kurdish separatist movement without informing the US, neoconservatives and the Israeli expressed their fear that the reconciliation between Iraq and Iran freed the Iraqi army to join in any future war with Israel, jeopardized Israel's reliance on the Iranian oil, and proved the Shah to be untrustworthy.<sup>696</sup> Senator Henry Jackson and his aides, Richard Perle, Elliott Abrams, and Paul Wolfowitz, argued that the Shah was an unreliable and inconsistent ally, that his "policy shifts" posed threats to American interests and Israeli security, and demanded that the State Department reassess its relationship with Iran and reconsider its plans to sell Iran nuclear reactors.<sup>697</sup>

Additionally, the Shah's reconciliation with Iraq and his rapprochement with the Arab countries were accompanied by a policy change toward Israel. Following threats of military action against Arab countries, the Shah sought to improve his relations with his Arab neighbors and distance himself from Israel. Iran allowed the PLO to operate a bureau in Tehran and voted in favor of the "Zionism is form of racism" resolution. The Shah also made several public statements as well as remarks to American officials in which he expressed support to UN Resolution 242. For instance, during an interview with the Lebanese magazine *Hawadis*, the Shah rejected Israel's claim that its conquest of the Arab territory is based on security needs:

Israel is making a big mistake in relying on the occupied Arab territories for its security... In these days of long-range planes flying at 80,000 feet, and ground-to-ground missiles which go over any obstacle, there is no such thing as secure borders for Israel. ... The only security for Israel is an international guarantee of its former borders. ... Has Israel enough men to occupy the entire Arab world? Can she go to Algeria? Can she fight Saudi Arabia? Furthermore, can Israel sustain such military expenditures for the next ten years? Who has to pay for it? You Americans, for what? For supporting a very immoral question—the occupation by force of the land of some country by another country?<sup>698</sup>

In the same interview, the Shah went even further by suggesting the possibility of Iranian participation alongside the Arabs: "[e]ither Israel accepts the implementation of the United Nations resolutions or there is no alternative to war." He asserted that if such a scenario were to occur the new war "will be our war. We support the Arab view because the Arabs became a victim of foreign occupation."<sup>699</sup> Besides his desire to please the Arabs, the Shah was aware

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<sup>696</sup> See subchapter 3.2.2. for details.

<sup>697</sup> This was the content of a letter sent by Jackson's office to Henry Kissinger and leaked to the *Washington Post*. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Kissinger and Jackson: the Feud Goes On" *Washington Post*, April 13, 1975.

<sup>698</sup> Quoted in Parsi, *Treacherous*, 52.

<sup>699</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 227.

that the Palestinian cause was popular amongst Third World countries, as has been explained in subchapter 3.4.2.

The Shah's rapprochement with Arab countries also reflected his growing frustration with the Israelis, who, he was convinced, were behind then the negative coverage of Iran in the American media and the opposition to Iran in Congress. In his account of the Iranian revolution, the famous Egyptian journalist Mohammed Heikal referred to an incident which reflected the extent to which the relations between Israel and Iran became strained. Heikal claimed that the Israeli Mission in Tehran warned the Shah of attempts to Islamize his armed forces, to which the Shah responded by sending a message through the SAVAK to the Israelis, asking them "to stop spreading alarmist rumors" about the situation in Iran.<sup>700</sup> The Shah also considered warnings about domestic unrest in Iran and the coverage of his human rights violations against the opposition to be "prompted by the Israelis' pique at Iran's cooperation with the Arab governments in OPEC and the Shah's improved relations with Saudi Arabia and Egypt."<sup>701</sup> The Shah's new attitude toward Israel was spotted by *The Washington Post*, which reported:

Until now the leader of the Middle East's most populous and powerful country had dealt with Israel on special, almost intimate terms. But the Shah's latest pronouncement last weekend warned that the special relationship was coming to an end. ... While devoid of overtly nasty anti-Israel rhetoric, it raises serious alarms considering the multi-billion-dollar American arms sales to Tehran and Washington's policy of depending on Iran for western defense of oil-rich Persian Gulf and northern approaches to the Soviet Union.<sup>702</sup>

One can argue that the Shah's political choices were not received favorably by the anti-Shah and the pro-Israel forces in the Congress and the Ford administration. This was translated into a media campaign critical of the US support for the Shah. Over and over the Shah was portrayed as a megalomaniac dictator determined to raise oil prices in order to feed his greedy thirst for weapons.<sup>703</sup> In fact for quite some time, the Shah was encouraged to do so, and he was constantly reminded that his military supremacy was the only guarantee for his country's political and economic independence.

State Department documents and the memoirs by the Shah and his minister of the royal court Assad Allah Alam indicated that the Shah, Kissinger, and President Ford himself pinned the anti-Shah media campaign on the Israeli lobby and the pro-Israel powers. In fact, the Shah, who was convinced that the Israeli were behind the attacks against his regime in the American

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<sup>700</sup> Heikal. *Iran*, 150.

<sup>701</sup> Documents found in the U.S. Embassy after the Revolution supported this claim, Ibid, 144.

<sup>702</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 227; Belmonte and Keefer, *Foreign Relations*, document 163, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d163>.

<sup>703</sup> See subchapter 3.2 and all its sections.

media, ordered his court minister to hire an Israeli company—recommended by the Israeli Foreign Ministry—to work on improving Iran’s image in the American media and mold American public opinion in favor of the Shah’s rule. The Israeli public relations company operated under a new body called The Center for Media Research.<sup>704</sup> The Israelis took advantage of the Shah’s conviction that they had the power to sway American public opinion in his favor and used it to persuade the Shah to approve joint Israeli-Iranian ventures.<sup>705</sup> As a former Israeli diplomat explained, “Even though we couldn’t deliver on those promises, it didn’t hurt us that the Shah believed that we did have those powers.”<sup>706</sup>

### 5.2.2. The Aftermath of Reconciliation: The Gulf States and the Iraq-Iran Nexus

The Israeli and the Americans were not the only ones to be sensitive to the new Iranian-Iraqi friendliness. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries remained suspicious of the Shah and they did not rule out the possibility of an alliance between Iran and Iraq. Prior to the Algiers Accord, Iraq and Iran were at each other’s throats and their rivalry created a sense of relief for their neighbors. By resolving their issues, both countries were perceived to be free to pursue their regional ambitions. It is important to note here that the ease with which the taking over of the oil fields by military action was presented in the neoconservative articles increased the anxiety of Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf sheikhdoms; they feared a scenario in which Iran and Iraq take joint military action to divide the region’s oil between them. Saudi Arabia constantly expressed its concern over Israel’s violation of its northern airspace, and over news in the Israeli media about Israel’s intention to occupy Saudi coastal areas on the Red Sea. However, the Saudis were aware that Israel’s geopolitical vulnerability hindered its ability carry out any military action against the Kingdom, at least not without the American assistance—a possibility the Saudis eventually ruled out by switching their oil policies and settling the dispute with the Americans.<sup>707</sup> In retrospect, Iraq and Iran, alternatively, were the only regional powers with relatively strong armies, at a close distance, and both had historic claims to their

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<sup>704</sup> The Israeli Foreign Ministry connected the Shah with Daniel Yankelovich, a Jewish-American public relations consultant. Parsi, *Treacherous*, 32-33, 279; Alam, *The Shah*, 463-464.

<sup>705</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 427-428.

<sup>706</sup> Parsi, *Treacherous*, 32-33, 279.

<sup>707</sup> The US ambassador to Saudi Arabia reported that visiting Congressmen suggested Israel planned to occupy parts of northwest Saudi Arabia, reflecting efforts to push Saudi Arabia to alter its oil policies. Hibbeln and Howard, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 150. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve09p2/d150>.

neighbors' territories.<sup>708</sup> In addition, the (mistaken) claim that the oil reserves of both countries were smaller than those of their smaller neighbors and would soon run out while their populations were larger played to a scenario where either one or both may seek to take over the oil fields of their neighbors—a claim neoconservatives made sure to assert in their articles repeatedly.

The fears of oil producing countries were fortified when on March 25, 1975 King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was assassinated amidst rumors of American involvement in his execution. The question of who was going to be the king's successor and whether the transition of power would be carried out smoothly and peacefully in a large family like the Saudi royal family prompted a fear that Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil producer, might fall in turmoil and if so, impact the stability of the world's oil market. This fear was accompanied by worries that Iran might take advantage of the unrest to justify a military operation against Saudi Arabia as a way to prevent "a Qaddafi-like development."<sup>709</sup> This scenario was the topic of conversation the Shah had had with both Presidents Ford and Nixon and during these conversations the American presidents expressed their support for Iran's invasion of Saudi Arabia if the latter was to go through political turmoil.<sup>710</sup> The assassination of King Faisal, therefore, materialized the Saudis' fear of Iranian-American or Iranian-Iraqi plots against their country. For instance, the American ambassador reported to the State Department that Zaki Yamani had told him that "the talk of eternal friendship between Iran and the United States was nauseating to him and other Saudis. They know the Shah was a megalomaniac, that he was highly unstable mentally, and that if we didn't recognize this there must be something wrong with our powers of observation."<sup>711</sup> Yamani was clearly referring to the CIA report about the Shah and to Treasury Secretary William Simon's (twice cited) comments about the Shah being a "nut." Of course, this fear was not baseless considering the fact that the Shah's conversations with Nixon and Ford and his proposed military operation against Saudi Arabia were revealed to the Saudis by Simon and other American officials, the neoconservative articles in 1975, and CIA leaks to the

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<sup>708</sup> Iran historically claimed Bahrain and only recognized its independence in 1970, while Iraq's attempts to seize Kuwait began after its independence and continued until the US ended Iraq's invasion in 1991. See Gause III. *The International Relations*, chapter 1 and 2.

<sup>709</sup> Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 125; document 119, accessed 17 May, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d119>.

<sup>710</sup> Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 125.

<sup>711</sup> Yergin, *The Prize*, 638-639

press in 1976.<sup>712</sup> This shows how the US administration was intentionally aggravating the distrust between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The small Gulf countries also maintained a cautious course of action toward Iran and Iraq. Despite their eagerness to assert the unity of OPEC, they preferred to line up with Saudi Arabia. For instance, upon Saudi Arabia's request, Bahrain renewed an appeal for the US to terminate the work of the US Navy's Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR) stationed at its shores. Bahrain's request for the departure of American forces was not new; it was first made following the 1973 war. However, this time the appeal was not rhetorical but was delivered formally to the American embassy in Manama and set June 1977 as the deadline to leave.<sup>713</sup> In a memorandum from Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Joseph J. Sisco to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), "the allegations of US invasion plan in the Gulf," "[t]he lack of explicit support for MIDEASTFOR from the two largest countries in the Gulf region (Iran and Saudi Arabia)," "the Shah's recent statements on the eventual removal of "third parties" from the Gulf," and discussion of new "Gulf security arrangement" were cited as the reasons behind Bahrain's rigid determination to have MIDEASTFOR off of her shores.<sup>714</sup> Requesting the removal of the American naval force stationed in the area might appear to contradict Saudi Arabia's and the Gulf countries' fear of Iran and Iraq, for the American protection was perceived to be necessary for them to face such a threat. However, the Gulf countries did not trust the Americans, especially after the invasion articles, and preferred to support the strengthening the Saudi's power over relying on the US. In correspondence with American officials, Bahraini Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammad bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa insisted that the American Navy's presence in the Gulf was harmful to American-Arab relations and that "modernizing Saudi Arabia['s] defense forces [and not stationing MIDEASTFOR] is the sort of constructive military contribution the United States can make in the area." He also stressed "the importance of US help in developing the Saudi defense capability to permit the appearance of something like a balance with Iran."<sup>715</sup> Moreover, the Gulf countries joined Saudi Arabia's campaign to normalize relations with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and provide financial aid to Yemen and Oman to help

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<sup>712</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, Chapter 6, 10; Robinson, *Yamani*, Chapter 14; "The Shah on Israel, Corruption and Torture." *The New York Times*, October 22, 1976, accessed March 8, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/10/22/archives/the-Shah-on-israel-corruption-torture-and.html>.

<sup>713</sup> Hibbeln and Howard, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 58 accessed September 1, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve09p2/d58>.

<sup>714</sup> Hibbeln and Howard, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 60.

<sup>715</sup> Hibbeln and Howard, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 71, accessed July 8, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve09p2/d71>.

the two countries put an end to their leftist opposition and facilitate the withdrawal of the Iranian troops stationed in their territories.<sup>716</sup>

Saudi suspicions of the Shah's reconciliation with Iraq were also fueled by the fact that the agreement with Iraq was preceded by a trip the Shah made to USSR. where he signed an economic agreement that was described by the Iranian finance minister as "the largest ever" between the two countries. They concluded a trilateral gas swap partnership whereby Iran would double its gas supplies to the Soviet Union through the construction of a new pipeline, and, lastly and most importantly, the Shah was explicitly asked by the Soviet leader Brezhnev to drop his support to the Kurdish opposition.<sup>717</sup> According to Michael Pye, the effect of these deals economically and politically was to "further strengthen the signatories' investment in each other's stability." Knowing that Iranian-American relations were strained over oil prices, the Shah's strategic decision to turn to the Soviets sent the message that he became unhinged.<sup>718</sup>

The war rhetoric, the fear of military intervention in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, and the competition for regional hegemony between Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq was translated into a regional arms race. According to Gregory Gause's *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf*, "[b]etween 1975 and 1979, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq accounted for 56 percent of all the arms imports in the Middle East, which amounted to more than one quarter of all those in the Third World."<sup>719</sup> There is no doubt that the sharply increased oil revenues allowed an influx of arms to the region and that many of the conflicts among the various countries in the region that drove them toward armament had existed prior to the publication of the neoconservative articles or the war threats by American officials. However, the largest influx of arms to the region started in the period that immediately followed these threats. For instance, Qatar and Bahrain were not even on the US' arms buying list prior to March 1975. In the case of Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, they tried to obtain the military capacity to become the dominant power in the region, then to prevent the other two from achieving the same goal.<sup>720</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> Hibbeln and Howard, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 224, accessed July 9, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve09p2/d224>.

<sup>717</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 398.

<sup>718</sup> Michael Pye, "In the Belly of the Bear? Soviet-Iranian Relations During the Reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi." PhD diss. University of St Andrews, 2015.172.

<sup>719</sup> Gause III. *The International*, 33.

<sup>720</sup> As evidenced by the correspondence between the gulf countries and the US officials from March 1975 onward, see Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 166, 141, 138 and Hibbeln and Howard, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 43, 50, 62, 65,68.

### 5.2.3. Iran's Military Buildup and the Neoconservative Opposition

Between 1970 and 1972, US foreign policy considered maintaining the stability of the Gulf region and the cooperation between its countries as the primary objective. Therefore, as has been explained, Iran became the US' most indispensable ally and the guardian of its oil lifeline.<sup>721</sup> The following quote from Kissinger expresses the importance he ascribed to Iran in carrying out US objectives:

Under the Shah's leadership, the land bridge between Asia and Europe, so often the hinge of world history, was pro-American and pro-West beyond any challenge. Alone among the countries of the region—Israel aside—Iran made friendship with the United States the starting point of its foreign policy. That it was based on a cold-eyed assessment that a threat to Iran would most likely come from the Soviet Union, in combination with radical Arab states, is only another way of saying that the Shah's views of the realities of the world paralleled our own. Iran's influence was always on our side.... The Shah absorbed the energies of radical Arab neighbors to prevent them from threatening the moderate regimes in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Persian Gulf.<sup>722</sup>

The oil crisis, however, reoriented US policy in the Gulf region toward economic interests. This reorientation was expressed in the US foreign policy assessment report of 1975 which included among its priorities the "continued access to the region's oil supplies at reasonable prices and in sufficient quantities," and the need for oil exporters to employ "their rapidly growing incomes in constructive ways to sound economic development and supportive of the international system."<sup>723</sup> In other words, American strategic interests, the keystone of the American-Iranian strategic alliance, were overshadowed by American economic interests. These economic interests differed fundamentally from those of Iranian as viewed by the Shah (i.e., higher oil prices). Neoconservatives and their allies in the administration believed that the Shah had become too strong and too independent, and that oil revenues were feeding the Shah's desire for weaponry which, in turn, required higher oil prices. Therefore, they started putting pressure on the administration to reduce its dependence on Iran. The neoconservatives' American Enterprise Institute linked higher oil prices to the armament in the Middle East in several of its publications, e.g., *Arms in the Indian Ocean: Interests and Challenges*; *The Middle East: Oil, Politics, and Development*; *Oil and America's Security*; *The Energy Crisis*

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<sup>721</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Volume XXIV, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula, 1969–1972; *US Department of States Bulletin*, Vol. LXVII No. 1723, July 3, 1972. 242, accessed August 31, 2022, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015077199415>.

<sup>722</sup> Offiler. *US Foreign*, 59.

<sup>723</sup> "Department of States Current policy: Persian Gulf/ Arabian Peninsula." June 1975. (Washington: Department of State Publication, 1975), 3, accessed July 7, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d035278461&view=1up&seq=5>.

*Contrived?* In addition, neoconservatives encouraged the view that Israel was the only reliable ally for the US in the Middle East and believed that it was necessary for the US to station American forces in the Gulf and not to rely on Iran or any other power in protecting oil supplies. In “America, Europe, and the Middle East,” Eugen Rostow stated:

[T]he American nuclear umbrella requires the permanent presence of substantial American conventional forces in and near Europe, and in and near other areas vital to our security.... Their presence means that in the event of crisis, the allied governments do not have to choose between using the nuclear weapon and abandoning important interests. Conventional forces provide a conventional alternative, substantial enough to be effective, both in itself and in giving time for diplomacy.<sup>724</sup>

Neoconservatives also argued that Iran’s armament justified the Arab requests for weaponry, which, in turn, posed a threat to Israel. Kemp’s “The Middle East and the International System, Military Build-up: Arms Control or Arms Trade?” was presented during the congressional hearing on The Persian Gulf, 1974: Money, Politics, Arms, and Power. In the article, Kemp argued that US armament policy in the Middle East in light of the oil wealth boom was extremely dangerous for Israel:

[The Arabs] have more money, more manpower, and more friends. Their performance in October 1973 suggests that their capacity to coordinate joint military operations has improved. Over time, they could establish an effective high command and even a ‘common market’ for arms procurement. This could lead them to develop a capability that would be as protracted and as bloody as the October 1973 encounter.<sup>725</sup>

Still, Kemp considered the flow of arms to the Gulf, principally to Iran, to be more threatening to the interests of the US and Israel than the arming of countries that were actually in a state of active war with Israel and shared borders with it (e.g., Syria and Egypt). For, he argued, “external powers [the US, the USSR, and even Saudi Arabia] have much greater control over events along the Arab-Israel border,” which made the flow of arms and the decision to use them dictated by the wealth of these powers. In retrospect, Iran’s wealth, power, and independence placed “the destiny of the Gulf, and for the next ten years, of the West, in the hands of the Shah, a man who has numerous enemies.”<sup>726</sup>

In Kemp’s report, the Shah’s regime was presented as fragile and susceptible to instability and change. This characterization was similar to the one used by the neoconservatives in their war campaign articles to describe the Arab countries. Here, the

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<sup>724</sup> Losing US control over the world’s largest oil reserve in the Middle East evoked Germany’s defeat in World War II, in which Hitler’s Army was crippled when he lost access to oil. Rostow, “America, Europe,”

<sup>725</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, “The Military Build-up: Arms Control or Arms Trade?” *The Adelphi Papers* 15, no. 114 (1975): 31–37, accessed April 5, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1080/05679327508448390>.

<sup>726</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

fragility of the Shah's regime was used by Kemp to justify halting US arms sales to Iran while, in the neoconservative articles, the fragility of the Arab monarchs was used to justify the call for looting their oil fields. In both narratives, we see the same type of logic at work to protect the West whether by controlling the region's oil or by controlling the powers in it. The Shah's regime was indeed unstable, as proved by its very downfall, but that does not mean that Kemp or the neoconservatives foresaw the future. Rather, as history teaches us, governments that are not founded on people's consent and will are doomed to fall, and the Shah's regime was no exception. This Orientalist rhetoric reveals the double standard at play in withholding support from the Shah's regime when his policies changed while supporting countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt. We can also spot the implication that any alternative to the Shah's regime (even pro-Western regimes that were established by and maintained by Western protection) would necessarily be a threat to the West, which echoes the notion that the region's native is irrational and incapable of rationally handling the wealth and power brought by oil.

Besides attacking the Shah's military buildup in the media, the neoconservatives also attacked him in the Congress. The impression that the US did not implement any significant arms control or human rights measures prior to the Carter administration is false. During the Ford administration, the Congressional Subcommittee on International Organization held the first ever hearing to investigate "Human Rights in Iran," and the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976 was passed by the Congress. It required states that receive arms shipments from the US to certify that they would not use the weapons for any purposes other than internal security and self-defense. It also called for prohibiting arms sales to countries that have "a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."<sup>727</sup> The act was followed by a report prepared by Kemp with the help of Robert Mantel on "U.S. Military Sales to Iran."<sup>728</sup> Before discussing their report, it is important to establish the claim that their report can be considered as the work of neoconservatives. Prior to preparing this report, Mantel worked under both William Simon in the Treasury Department, and Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld in the White House. In Congress, he was a staff member for the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee alongside Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz. Kemp worked under Wolfowitz in the Persian Gulf office in the Pentagon; he was the assistant editor of the *National Interest* journal and held positions in neoconservative think

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<sup>727</sup> Joe Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy: From the 1960s to the Soviet Collapse* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP, 2016), Chapter 2.

<sup>728</sup> Robert Mantel and Geoffrey Kemp. "US. Military Sales to Iran." A staff report to the subcommittee of foreign assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relation, United States Senate 1976 Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1976, accessed May 25, 2022, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31210024779827>.

tanks (e.g., Center for the National Interest and the Center for Strategic and International Studies). He remains a strong advocate for war against Iran and authored several books on the topic including his comprehensive study of the military option against Iran in *War with Iran: Political, Military and Economic Consequences*.<sup>729</sup>

The Kemp and Mantel report “U.S. Military Sales to Iran,” described US military sales to Iran as being “out of control” and “poorly managed,” and concluded that any future arms sales to Iran should be subject to “effective Congressional oversight.”<sup>730</sup> It also acknowledged that most of the sophisticated equipment that were sold to Iran were dependent on the US commitment to provide Iran with spare parts, ammunition, technical/logistical items, or training associated with the use of this equipment, and that the Iranian armed forces were not trained to operate most of the sophisticated military systems purchased by Iran. In other words, the US can utilize the Iranians’ military dependency on the US to put pressure on Iran regarding its oil and foreign policy. Following the presentation of the results of the study, American-Iranian arms deals became subject to the State and Defense Department’s review process for the first time in history.<sup>731</sup> Pressure was indeed implemented, as months after the publication of the report *The New York Times* reported that:

High Ford Administration officials are urging the United States to tell the Iranians that an increase in the price of oil would lead to reconsideration of the multibillion-dollar American program of arms sales to their country, according to well-placed officials.<sup>732</sup>

The newspaper indicated that the pressure was exerted by high officials in the State and Treasury Departments and the Pentagon, and we know that at the time the neoconservatives were active in those places.<sup>733</sup> In fact Kissinger shrugged off Kemp’s report, and referred to it as the work of the neoconservative and the Israeli lobby, which he argued were responsible for the US’ “trouble” with Iran. Topping it all off, he accused *Commentary* of pressing for the severance of military sales to Iran:

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<sup>729</sup> See, Geoffrey Kemp, *War with Iran: Political, Military and Economic Consequences* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2013); *Forever Enemies? American Policy & the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1994); Geoffrey Kemp, ed. *Iran’s Bomb: American and Iranian Perspectives*, (Washington, DC: Nixon Center, 2004).

<sup>730</sup> Mantel and Kemp, “US Military,” IX-XIV. It is important to note that the output of Mantel and Kemp study originated in the American Enterprise Institute’s publication *Arms in the Indian Ocean: Interests and Challenges*. Dale R. Tahtinen and John Lenczowski, *Arms in the Indian Ocean: Interests and Challenges* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975).

<sup>731</sup> Mantel and Kemp, “US Military,” VIII.

<sup>732</sup> Leslie H. Gelb, “US Aides Said to Ask for Pressure on Iran” *The New York Times*, November 11, 1976, accessed January 8, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/11/11/archives/us-aides-said-to-ask-for-pressure-on-iran-but-kissinger-reported-to.html>.

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid.* To emphasize: William Simon was Secretary of the Treasury, Donald Rumsfeld was Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz headed the Persian Gulf office in the Pentagon.

They want a carom shot off of Iran onto arms sales for Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Since we are doing so much for Israel and it is so strong, it is hard to kill arms sales to the Saudis who are much weaker. So the best approach is to attack through Iran and kill the idea of all arms sales to the Gulf, thus blocking the Saudis and Kuwaitis. This is despite the close relationship between Iran and Israel. Look at Commentary magazine and you can tell me what is happening.<sup>734</sup>

Neoconservatives were indeed in favor of halting weapon shipments to the Middle East, but the pressure on Iran was not matched with the pressure put on Saudi Arabia. The reason for this was that, as the study acknowledged, Saudi Arabia did not pose the same level of threat as the one posed by Iran—in terms of its military capability, the size of its armed force, and its political dependency on the US—and its oil policies were in accordance with US interests.<sup>735</sup> Days after the release of the report, the administration announced new arms deal to Saudi Arabia that included thousands of second-generation missiles and “smart” bombs. *The New York Times* reported that the deal with Saudi Arabia had nothing to do with empowering the Kingdom against the Iranian military buildup.<sup>736</sup>

Another important aspect of Kemp and Mantel’s report was its threatening tone; the report asserted the need to consider a “dramatic change in Iran’s leadership” and concluded that the administration needed to prepare a “contingency plan” to deal with any emergency situation.<sup>737</sup> According to the report, the Iranian armed forces lacked the skills and capabilities to operate the sophisticated military systems purchased by their country. Consequently, Iran remained dependent on the US for the follow-on support services, such as ammunition, maintenance, training, and spare parts. The report concluded that Iran could not go to war “without U.S. support on a day-to-day basis,” and its military forces could not operate the sophisticated weapons the Shah was purchasing “unless increasing numbers of American personnel got to Iran in a support capacity;” which, according to the report, might not even be sufficient.<sup>738</sup> These messages were contradicting the image that was delivered to the Arab countries about the Shah’s desire to seize their oil fields. This demonstrates that the purpose of publishing the study at the time was to exert pressure on the Shah and to reassure Arab countries that the Shah could not undertake any military action against them without US assistance. This view is supported by the fact that the study presented a detailed assessment of the Iranian

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<sup>734</sup>Howard and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 292. accessed April 23, 2022. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v26/d292>.

<sup>735</sup> Mantel and Kemp. “US. Military,” XI, 9.

<sup>736</sup> Leslie H. Gelb, “U.S. Ready to Sell Missiles to Saudis” *The New York Times*. 1 August, 1976. <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/08/01/archives/us-ready-to-sell-missiles-to-saudis.html>, accessed 12, May 2021

<sup>737</sup> Mantel and Kemp. “US. Military”, X, 50.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid, X, VII.

defense program, its strategic strengths and weaknesses, and discussed at length the major threats facing Iran as well as the potential targets in the country.<sup>739</sup> In addition, the study explicitly spoke of a regime change scenario and how it could be contained:

[I]f there were a revolution in Iran and the Shah were replaced by an anti-U.S. regime, that regime would find it virtually impossible to maintain the current inventory of U.S. weapons without sustained cooperation with the United States. This might moderate a new regime's policies. However, if the regime were intent upon eliminating the U.S. role and presence in Iran, the United States could retaliate by bringing Iran's military machine to a virtual standstill.<sup>740</sup>

As this paragraph and others in the study indicate, the alternative to the Shah was presented as a potential ally. Hence, the message was sent to the Shah that his sophisticated armed force was dependent on the US, and that without US support his country could not withstand his enemies, maintain his regional supremacy, or protect his strategic oil fields. In light of the neoconservative call for taking over the oil fields of the Gulf, their opposition to OPEC and the example Iran was setting for Third World countries, one cannot ignore the possibility that the wide circulation of the study's findings and its timing aimed to put pressure on the Shah to change his policies in accordance with American and Israeli interests. In other words, the study can be considered part of a program of psychological warfare against Iran, similar to the one lunched against the Arab countries after the oil crisis. The insistence on having Congressional oversight of the arms sales aimed to restrict the administration's ability to conduct arm deals with Iran covertly and overtly.<sup>741</sup> Although not even mentioned in the Kemp and Mantel report, it is worth noting that linking the conduct of human rights with arm sales was an important component of the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976, which was issued prior to the Kemp and Mantel report.

The administration's pressure on the Shah to moderate his oil policies was met by the following threat: "if Iran's oil income does not rise to meet his development spending plans," Iran will take steps to revise its foreign policy.<sup>742</sup> The Shah fulfilled his threat by actions. He signed a \$528 million arms deal with the Soviet Union.<sup>743</sup> In an interview with C. L. Sulzberger of *The New York Times*, the Shah explicitly stated that the arms deal with the USSR was a

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<sup>739</sup> Ibid, 8-12, 50-53.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>741</sup> Kissinger repeatedly argued that if states wanted to buy arms, they would eventually find suppliers. Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 177, accessed May 21, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d177>.

<sup>742</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 342; See also subchapter 3.2.

<sup>743</sup> Pye. "In the Belly" 175.

response to what he described as “some quarters in the United States—quarters with masochistic tendencies who always try and hurt their friends and allies, those who wish to embargo the sale of all arms to the Middle East.”<sup>744</sup> The Shah also took steps to neutralize his country’s relations with the Soviets. In contrast to his anti-Soviet public discourse, Iranian-Soviet relations grew stronger between 1975-1976, as evidenced by the increase of economic and military exchange, and the diplomatic concessions on both sides. There is no doubt that the quarters the Shah was referring to were the neoconservatives as acknowledged by Henry Kissinger in his correspondence (as quoted earlier in this chapter).<sup>745</sup> The Shah was aware that the opponents to his armament were mainly the neoconservatives and anti-détentists, so he tried to justify his armament by using arguments to their liking. He framed the American-Iranian military alliance as part of the war against the Soviet Union. On many occasions, the Shah recycled *Commentary*’s anti-Soviets arguments. For instance, during a meeting with President Ford in Washington, the Shah shared views that could be easily attributed to neoconservatives; he attacked détente, the anti-war powers in the US, and exaggerated the Soviet influence over Syria and Iraq:

The Soviets are talking détente, but never have their military been stronger. West of the Urals they have 40,000 tanks. They have a rapid Navy building program.... We need the U.S. to be stronger than ever. Or the Soviets will spiral slowly everywhere...The intellectuals will destroy the world without knowing how to replace it. They don’t have a plan. They would be street cleaners in a Communist regime...I wonder if the Syrian-Iraqi feud is not partly Soviet-inspired.<sup>746</sup>

The Shah also presented the opposition inside Iran as being exclusively communist to refute any consideration of an alternative to his role. For instance, when three American military advisors were killed in Tehran, the Shah’s initial reaction —without any investigation— was to order his minister of court to inform the American ambassador that the attack was carried out by communists. He used the incident to convince the Americans that the delay in selling arms to Iran was empowering the pro-Soviet elements inside Iran:

Above all, let the ambassador know that in our opinion the blame for this atrocity rests with the communists. They’re taking advantage of the US Senate and the idiotic questions raised in its committee. Various senators suggested US advisors might one day be taken hostage. The terrorists are now trying to impress the fear on the minds of the American public. They hope that violence will excite a popular backlash, forcing

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<sup>744</sup> C. L. Sulzberger, “Iran’s Shah: Arms and the Man” *The New York Times*, March 19, 1975, accessed October 4, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/03/19/archives/irans-Shah-i-arms-and-the-man-foreign-affairs-iran-has-no.html>.

<sup>745</sup> Pye. “In the Belly,” 50.

<sup>746</sup> Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 125.

Congress to ban arms sales to Iran. I'm also convinced, tell him [...], that various US journalists and newspapers are controlled by communists.<sup>747</sup>

The Shah referred to the arm sales' report and claimed that the news of tension between Iran and the US was harmful to US interests for it empowered his communist opponents inside Iran.<sup>748</sup> Neither attacking the communists nor getting cozy with the Soviets allowed the Shah to reduce the attacks against his country; the American media campaign against Iran further intensified. A report in *The Washington Post* suggested that a close relationship with Iran should be "diluted if not terminated," and that US involvement with Iran was as "a one-way street running against—American—national interests."<sup>749</sup> Kissinger acknowledged that the attacks against the Shah in the media were driven by the neoconservatives in the Treasury and Defense Departments:

Treasury and Defense are going after the Shah. Simon ... is going around saying the Shah is dangerous and shouldn't have exotic weapons. And [Robert] and Defense are viciously anti-Iran... We have thrown away Turkey and now Iran... Anyway, it will be rough in Iran. But if we get rid of the Shah, we will have a radical regime on our hands.<sup>750</sup>

The Shah was convinced that pro-Israel powers and the Jewish lobby were behind the Kemp and Mantel report as well as the attacks against Iran on the media. It was at this time that he ordered his court minister to arrange with the Israeli ways to "influence American public opinion."<sup>751</sup> During a press conference with Kissinger, the Shah described the pressure on his country to make price concessions as "blackmail," and asked: "Can the United States or the non-Communist world afford to lose Iran? What will you do if one day Iran will be in danger of collapsing? Do you have any choice?"<sup>752</sup> It can easily be seen that such rhetoric fueled the suspicion of the Arab oil producing countries toward the Shah and led to their decision to slow down his military buildup and deplete him financially by lowering oil prices. Ironically, *The*

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<sup>747</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 503.

<sup>748</sup> In his memoir, the Shah indicated that it was during this period of time that the first signs of organized opposition against his rule emerged and linked it to the criticism he was receiving in the American media. See Pahlavi, *Answers*, 149

<sup>749</sup> There was no record of the White House issuing this statement, but Kissinger's talk in the Plenary Meeting of The U.S.-Iran Joint Commission covered most of the statement's themes. The Statement Draft is available, Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 181, accessed June 12, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d181>. For Kissinger's talk see, Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 182, accessed June 12, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d182>.

<sup>750</sup> Ibid. Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 181.

<sup>751</sup> *The Shah*, 445-446, 515-516, 523-526.

<sup>752</sup> Bernard Gwertzman, "Shah Cautions U.S. Against Arms Cut," *The New York Times*, August 7, 1976, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/08/07/archives/Shah-cautions-us-against-arms-cut-reacting-to-humphrey-staff-report.html>.

*Control of Arms Transfers and Perceived Security Needs* report, prepared by Edward Luttwak for the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in 1980, described the Iranian military force under the Shah as a “weak military entity” and its sophisticated weaponry as “ineffective.”<sup>753</sup> It also indicated that Iran’s military power “deployments had an almost purely defensive and indeed deficit character,” that the Iranian army possessed “only a fraction of the planned inventory [bought from the US].”<sup>754</sup> Luttwak’s report is important to indicate how the assessment of Iran’s military power was exaggerated at times and understated at other times to serve the political objectives of the moment. It also shows that the criticism of the arms sales to Iran ignored the fact that the Shah was more interested in receiving the weapons, spare parts, and training his country had already paid for and were withheld by the Congress than in buying new weapons, except for the F16 fighters.<sup>755</sup> In other words, Luttwak, Kemp, and other neoconservatives in the AEI who were supposed to offer expert, unbiased assessment were in fact selling a political agenda and adapting their rhetoric, and, consequently, US policy to serve this agenda.

The neoconservative stance on Iran’s armament can be summed up in four points. First, the backlash against the Shah’s military buildup was the result of his oil and foreign policy, namely, the Shah’ criticism of Israel, aid to Egypt and Syria, and his decision to reconcile with Iraq. Second, neoconservatives were against US reliance on any country in the region besides Israel. Third, the neoconservatives rejected the flow of arms to Iran claiming that it justified the Arab requests for armament. Fourth, the violations of human rights by the Shah’s regime against the Iranian people did not impact neoconservative views on arming Iran, but the issue of human rights in general became a bargaining chip between the neoconservatives and their opponents in the Congress (the anti-war doves, the Internationalist, and the McGovernites).

The Shah occasionally blamed the Israeli lobby and the pro-Israel powers in the administration for the criticism leveled against his regime in the American media and Congress. The Shah’s accusations were not unfounded. When his Court Minister, Alam, addressed the Shah’s concerns about the Jewish lobby’s role in leading the “anti-Iran campaign” in Congress and the media to a group of the Jewish lobby representatives during a visit—arranged by Israeli

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<sup>753</sup> The report discussed Iran’s defense options and theatre strategies in case of potential Soviet military invasion, insurgency, or *coup de main*. Steven L. Canby, and Edward N. Luttwak, *The Control of Arms Transfers and Perceived Security Needs*. Prepared under contract #AC9WC112 by C&L Associates, Potomac, Md., for US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 14 April, 1980. 74-108

<sup>754</sup> Ibid.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid. Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, chapter 7, US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Europe and the Near East and South Asia, *United States-Europe Relations and the 1973 Middle East War*. 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., November 1, 1973 and February 19, 1974.

officials—the representatives admitted that they “originated a campaign against US arms sales to Saudi Arabia and in the process unwittingly gave rise to restrictions subsequently applied to Iran.” The lobby representative then promised to “redress the situation.”<sup>756</sup> On another occasion, the Shah discussed joint action with an Israeli representative to “persuade the US Senate to accept Arms sales to Iran.”<sup>757</sup> Alam’s memoir details the Shah’s preoccupation with the “anti-Iranian campaign,” and his conviction that improving Iran’s public image was essential to reducing Congressional pressure and maintain US military supplies to Iran. Alam’s diary also shows that the Shah was following the presidential election and was aware that the democratic nominee Carter was running on a platform that supported human rights, violently criticized military build-up in the Middle East, and blamed Iran for the rise in oil prices.<sup>758</sup> In response, the Shah ordered his security force to improve the facilities for political detainees, prevent torture, and released 1,597 political prisoners. In addition, he allowed a degree of public opposition and freedom of speech that was not permitted before.<sup>759</sup> In a direct attempt to sway the negative press in the Western media the Shah allowed the Red Cross, the International Association of Jurists, and Amnesty International to tour Iran’s prisons, investigate the treatment of political prisoners, and review Iran’s criminal justice system. Additionally, he ordered the establishment of the State Council to protect the rights of individuals against violation by the government and the Imperial Commission to mentor the work of government agencies.<sup>760</sup> In his memoir he talked about these reforms:

The first signs of organized opposition to my rule came toward the end of 1976 from liberals, left-wingers, and people of wealth and power inside my country. Meanwhile, I had already allowed the International Red Cross, the International Association of Jurists, and Amnesty International to review our criminal justice system. I readily asked for and accepted their comments, criticism, and suggestions. We paid a good deal of attention to some of their recommendations. Needless to say, the media reported the alleged abuses in great detail but paid little heed to the changes we made as a result of these missions.<sup>761</sup>

The quote indicates that the Shah’s reforms were addressed primarily to foreign observers. This backfired, as the little freedom he allowed helped spread the news about the regime’s

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<sup>756</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 507; see also 469-470, 484, 490-492.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid.*, 524-525.

<sup>759</sup> “A Chronology of Major Events in Iranian Turmoil,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 1979, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/02/12/archives/a-chronology-of-major-events-in-iranian-turmoil-1976-1977-1978-1979.html>.

<sup>760</sup> The Israeli company hired by the Shah to improve Iran's image in American media advised the government to address political liberty, prisoner torture, and Iran's role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It also recommended reorganizing information distribution, which the Shah agreed to implement. Alam, *The Shah*, 527.

<sup>761</sup> Pahlavi, *Answers*, 149

corruption and human rights violations, organize the opposition and provide it with unified goals. This, in turn, led to an increase in the number of protests. It is obvious from the quote that the Shah either did not or would not face reality in the domestic arena.

### 5.3. Breaking the Shah

The impact of the oil price increase on Iran was enormous: the country's economic growth rate reached 33 percent in 1973 and 40 percent in 1974; its oil revenues increased by 65 percent from 2.8 billion from the 1972-1973 period to 4.6 billion by the 1973-1974 period. A year later, Iran's revenues increased by 287 percent, reaching 17.8 billion dollars.<sup>762</sup> The Shah did not freeze or invest oil revenues in projects abroad—as did most OPEC countries—he rather spent oil revenues on domestic projects and on buying large quantities of military hardware.<sup>763</sup>

This sudden wealth, however, created other issues, like massive internal migration from rural areas to cities, an influx of foreign labor, and inflation as well as shortages in infrastructure, equipment, and skilled labor to facilitate the new projects and the massive industrialization plans.<sup>764</sup> But the most dangerous of all these challenges was that Iran's development plans rested on the assumption that the oil market would remain tight, oil prices would keep rising, and the demand for oil would stay high, without any consideration of the Western recession's impact on the demand for Iranian oil.<sup>765</sup> Against his wishes, the ramification of the oil shock of 1973-1974, the increase of non-OPEC oil producers, and the expansion in constructing nuclear power plants led to a substantial decline of oil demands and prices. By 1975, the Shah planned a further 35 percent increase in oil prices to meet Iran's development plans. President Ford's advisors warned that if the Shah was able to advance his plans that would lead to "catastrophic effects in both developed and developing countries."<sup>766</sup> President Ford, who desperately needed the economy to improve as he was running for the presidency, made several attempts publicly and privately to urge the Shah to restrain oil prices,

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<sup>762</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, chapter 6; Cooper, *The Fall*, chapter 10.

<sup>763</sup> This included the world's largest fleet of military hovercraft, F-4E, F-5, C-130 and F-14 aircraft, laser guided bombs, Hawk Missiles, chinook helicopters, and M60 and Chieftain Tank. Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, chapter 5.

<sup>764</sup> Pollack, *The Persian*, 109-118.

<sup>765</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, Chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>766</sup> A lengthy memorandum to President Ford from his Assistant for National Security Affairs Brent Scowcroft indicated the "significant inflationary and recessionary impact" of the oil price increase and urged the president to send a firm letter to Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela requesting a halt on the oil price increase. Galpern and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 106, accessed May 6, 2023, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d106>. Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, chapter 7.

but the Shah rejected these. It is important to note that the Shah's refusal to halt the oil prices was not motivated by his desire to gain more revenue but by the fact that Iran's economy was in serious trouble and oil was the only source of income. In his memoir, Alam described his meeting with the head of the planning organization, Majid Majidi:

He told me that we're in deficit on this year's budget by as much as \$4 billion and that the government is conniving at the most senseless extravagance; for example, they've purchased 4,000 lorries without having a single man qualified to drive them. These losses we've incurred in buying wheat, sugar and other basic foodstuffs are beyond belief. And then again, a further \$2 billion has gone on loans to foreign countries. According to Majidi the government agencies didn't even see fit to inform him of their expenses until after the event.<sup>767</sup>

By the end of their meeting, Alam wondered if the deterioration of the economic situation in Iran "may be the first vague rumbling of impending revolution."<sup>768</sup> To add insult to injury, Western oil companies decreased their purchases of Iranian oil as opposed to Saudi oil. The Shah understood the oil companies' decision to decrease their demand of the Iranian oil to be intentional to pressure Iran to hold oil prices steady before OPEC's scheduled meeting in Doha. "The bastards have thrown down a serious challenge to us. So much for their protestations of goodwill," the Shah commented on the conduct of the oil companies.<sup>769</sup>

The economic crisis in Iran did not decrease the Ford administration's pressure on the Shah, which by mid-1976 became more vicious. The US pressured Iran on arms sales, Iran's nuclear program, and the issue of human rights to get the Shah to moderate his position on oil. The link between the Congressional pressure over arms sales and the Shah's oil policies was clear in President Ford's letter to the Shah on October 30, 1976. In it, President Ford referred to the increase in the OPEC countries' oil revenue as a way to counter the Shah's claim concerning Iran's need for higher oil prices for development reasons. He then compared the increase in oil prices with the increase in the prices of imported goods to counter the Shah's claim that the increase in oil prices was matched by increased prices in industrialized countries exported goods. Lastly, he made a clear link between the progress of arms sales and Iran oil policies:

[T]his administration is determined to continue to assist your nation in developing its military establishment and meeting its goals for economic development and to cooperate with Iran in seeking solutions to major regional and worldwide economic and political problems. I am sure you have been fully informed of the administration's successful

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<sup>767</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 464.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid.

<sup>769</sup> 459; Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 295.

resistance to Congressional attempts to block the sale of F-16 aircraft and other military equipment to Iran. The struggle with certain segments of American opinion on this subject has by no means been won, however, and I fear that there will be further and perhaps greater pressures next year. By working together, we can overcome these pressures and solidify the close relationship between our two countries. However, Iranian support for an OPEC decision to increase the price of oil at this time would play directly into the hands of those who have been attacking our relationship.<sup>770</sup>

The President did not just request the Shah to cooperate in getting the oil prices down but he also threatened to withhold arms sales and nuclear cooperation. Along with the President's letter, Iran was, as discussed before, under fire in Congress and the media regarding her human rights violations, arms sales, and nuclear program.<sup>771</sup> President Ford's threats reflected an altered position of supporting Kissinger's policy "of aiding OPEC members—including heavy arms aid for Iran" and leniency toward Simon and Rumsfeld's policy of "confrontation against the international oil cartel (OPEC) in general and Iran in particular to break world oil prices."<sup>772</sup> The alteration of Ford's position was the result of a growing fear—largely advocated by neoconservatives—that the economic crisis might lead to another recession, which in retrospect would lead to a worldwide spread of communism and the collapse of the Atlantic alliance (the rise of communist parties in Italy, Portugal, France, and Spain played into this fear). The President also feared the economic situation's impact on his presidential campaign, especially since his energy policy was already under attack not just by Jimmy Carter, the Democratic nominee, but also by his rival — former California Governor Ronald Reagan—for the GOP nomination.<sup>773</sup>

The Shah's response to Ford was delivered as the latter was on his way out of the White House after he lost the election against then Georgia governor Jimmy Carter. The Shah's letter to Ford reflected his frustration and despair; he compared the moderation of his country's position on oil prices with "committing suicide," and informed Ford that Iran would neither pay for the Western European countries' "failure or inability to put their house in order," nor deplete its "finite and most precious wealth just to allow these countries to continue their

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<sup>770</sup> Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 191, accessed June 13, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d191>.

<sup>771</sup> The Congress' first hearing on Iran's human rights is but an example.

<sup>772</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 294-95.

<sup>773</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak. "Ford-Reagan Wrestle for '1976'?" *The Washington Post* February 20, 1975; James Reston. "Ford and Reagan?" *New York Times*, June 13, 1976, accessed July 8, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/06/13/archives/ford-and-reagan.html>.

politicizing and indecision.”<sup>774</sup> Moreover, the Shah made it clear that he was not intimidated by the pressure coming from the US and that his policies on oil would not be altered:

You are no doubt fully aware, Mr. President, of my deep concern for the need to maintain close cooperation between our two countries. However, if there is any opposition in the Congress and in other circles to see Iran prosperous and militarily strong, there are many other sources of supply to which we can turn for our life is not in their hands. If these circles are irresponsible then it is hopeless, but should they be responsible, they will certainly regret their attitude to my country. Nothing could provoke more reaction in us than this threatening tone from certain circles and their paternalistic attitude.<sup>775</sup>

The circles the Shah was referring to were, among others, the neoconservatives, who, as has been demonstrated, sought the weakening, if not the total destruction, of OPEC’s political power and control over oil by attacking Iran. The Shah was indeed a strong force in OPEC, but he was not the only one. Saudi Arabia controlled the largest share in OPEC’s production, and was in principle the only country that— by leveling its production—could determine and control oil prices, as noted in the Congress hearing “Foreign Policy Choices for the Seventies and the Eighties” in May 1976:

Only Saudi Arabia has the capacity to increase the level of its production to help meet the anticipated increase in demand as we move out of our recession. There are, to be sure, those who point to non- OPEC [sic!] states, such as Iran, and say that Iran occupies a potentially pivotal position in this regard and that we can be bailed out by Iran. However, the figures, to me, suggest the contrary. Iran could not supply the United States in the event of a Saudi embargo or a sustained scheme of production cutbacks. At the moment it has only 1,500,000 barrels a day spare capacity and, given present U.S. consumption patterns and our dependency on Middle Eastern crude, this amount would constitute a mere pittance in comparison to the level of demand—this, in spite of the fact that Iran is the region’s second ranking producer and exporter.<sup>776</sup>

As stated earlier, Saudi Arabia favored posing a freeze on oil prices while Iran strongly opposed the Saudis’ stance. On May 28, during the OPEC meeting in Bali, the Shah went out of his way and agreed not to go beyond a 5 percent increase in the prices. He explained his decision to “connive” to the Saudis by the desire to “save President Ford embarrassment in the midst of his reelection campaign.”<sup>777</sup> However, at the next OPEC meeting in Doha, on December 17, Iran managed to secure the approval of the majority OPEC members—all but Saudi Arabia’s

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<sup>774</sup> Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 192, accessed, August 1, 2020, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d192>.

<sup>775</sup> Ibid. Please note that this exact quote was used earlier (see footnote 440 above), but I felt I had to repeat it here.

<sup>776</sup> Clearly the writer meant to say OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries), US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Foreign Policy Choices for the Seventies and the Eighties*. 94<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., January 28, February 25, and March 1976. 212

<sup>777</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 492.

ally UAE—for a 15-20 percent increase in the oil prices. Eventually they settled for a 15 percent increase. The Saudis rejected OPEC’s decision and threatened that “Saudi Arabia would lift all restraints on oil production and let the market decide how much it would produce.”<sup>778</sup> The Kingdom announced that it would take extreme measures to prevent the implementation of the new price set by OPEC, and indeed it did. It increased the level of its domestic oil production (from 8.5 million barrels a day to 11.8 million) that meant Saudi Arabia and UAE share would count for 40 percent of OPEC’s output.<sup>779</sup> By doing so, Saudi Arabia flooded the market with oil at a lower price than that of the rest of OPEC and if any other country decided to increase its production to make up for its loss of revenues, the prices would go further down. The Saudi’s move in Doha was considered by observers at the time as “the most radical intervention in the market ever by an oil producer,” and the Iranian media described it as a declaration of an “oil war against OPEC.”<sup>780</sup> President Ford expressed his appreciation for Saudi Arabia’s “international responsibility” and described the rest of the OPEC member states as being “irresponsible.”<sup>781</sup>

The Kingdom’s decision to go against the price hawks in OPEC, namely Iran and Iraq, is clearly related to fears of the neoconservative invasion rhetoric and the triumph of the neoconservative anti-détente and anti-Iran advocacy in the 1970s. The fear of a potential US invasion to seize its oil fields, the rivalry with Iran over the leadership of the Gulf and with Iraq and Egypt over the leadership of the Arab world, the desire to gain Third World countries’ support by lowering their energy bill, and the perceived need to maintain a strong alliance with the US to guarantee the stability of its political system were all elements behind Saudi Arabia’s decision to hold the line against any increase in the oil prices. We can also add to this list one important lesson: the Saudis understood while the Shah did not that a moderate position on oil prices was the only way to guarantee the flow of arms and the relief from pressure on human

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<sup>778</sup> Galpern and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 113, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d113>.

<sup>779</sup> Flora Lewis, “Saudis Warn the West to Show Appreciation of Oil-Price Restraint” *The New York Times*, December 18, 1976, accessed May 13, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/12/18/archives/saudis-warn-the-west-to-show-appreciation-of-oilprice-restraint.html>; Steven Rattner, “World Oil Business Thrown into Chaos,” *The New York Times*, December 18, 1976, accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/12/18/archives/world-oil-business-thrown-into-chaos-2tier-pricing-expected-to-lift.html>

<sup>780</sup> Eric Pace, “Muted Tension Marked Meeting of OPEC as Price Crisis Grew” *The New York Times*, 18 December, 1976. accessed 21 April, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/12/18/archives/muted-tension-marked-meeting-of-opec-as-price-crisis-grew.html>. Alam, *The Shah*, 535. Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 360-361.

<sup>781</sup> Lewis. “Saudis Warn”.

rights issues.<sup>782</sup> Of course, this was the position of the Defense and Treasury Departments—the neoconservative stronghold at the time— whilst the State Department preferred an increase in the oil prices. Zaki Yamani, the Saudi minister of oil reflected on that in his biography: “Yes. The real interest of the United States was in higher oil prices. I do not recall that Dr. Kissinger ever mentioned the subject of oil prices with us. Their whole interest was in raising the price of oil.”<sup>783</sup> This contradiction in the administration’s views regarding the oil prices and the fact that the Saudi and the neoconservatives stood behind the decision to break the Shah is reflected in a classified letter from Minister Yamani to Secretary Simon in which he criticized the State Department for encouraging the Shah to increase the oil prices: “There are even those who think that you encourage it [the Shah wishes to increase oil prices] for obvious political reasons and that any official position taken to the contrary is merely to cover up this fact.”<sup>784</sup> Along with these remarks, the correspondence between the Saudis and American officials (mainly from the Treasury, Defense, and the White House) reflects the extent of coordination between two regarding the latter’s position in OPEC. The correspondence reinforces the idea that Saudi Arabia’s decision was motivated by desire to restore American trust and support, secure the flow of arms, and replace Iran as the main political power in the region.<sup>785</sup> The correspondence also reflects the alteration of President Ford’s position, moving away from Kissinger’s camp and closer to Simon and Rumsfeld’s camp. For instance, as a way to overcome its economic crisis, Iran negotiated a bilateral oil deal with the US. The deal, according to Kissinger and Iran’s finance minister, would have provided the Shah with a “financial lifeline and a way out of the trap he had set for himself and now could not get out of.”<sup>786</sup> This bilateral oil deal was, according to Kissinger, “violently opposed by Simon, Rumsfeld, Zarb, and Bob Ellsworth.”<sup>787</sup> As has been explained, these were the same men who were keen on deepening US ties to Saudi Arabia at the expense of Iran. In fact, the rejection of the oil deal with Iran can be explained by the American decision not to antagonize Saudi Arabia. A look at Ford’s National Security

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<sup>782</sup> As stated earlier, the US approved the largest arms deal with Saudi Arabia in exchange of the latter’s moderate position on oil prices in OPEC’s coming meetings. The double standard by which the American media was speaking against Iran’s human rights record as opposed to that of Saudi Arabia was expressed by the Shah following the OPEC meeting in Doha when he ordered his court minister to make a reference to Saudi Arabia’s betrayal of Iran. He told Alam, “Saudis have never shown any respect for human rights, either now or in the past. Even a petty burglar faces having one of his hands chopped off. The liberal press in America prefers to ignore all this, although they don’t hesitate to blacken the reputation of Iran” Alam, *The Shah*, 535.

<sup>783</sup> Robinson, *Yamani*, 206-207.

<sup>784</sup> Ibid.

<sup>785</sup> See: Galpern and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 81, 113, 114, 159, 183, and 189.

<sup>786</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 298.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid.

Council report, “US–Iran Oil Purchase Arrangement,” shows how the administration’s decision on the oil deal with Iran took into consideration the impact of the deal on American–Saudi relations. The report concluded that signing the bilateral oil deal with Iran would “help the Shah out of a foreign exchange bind” and provide security for American oil supplies, however, it would also be a “blow to [our] political relationship with the Saudis.”<sup>788</sup> It is important to note here that the administration was aware of the importance of the oil deal for Iran, for the status of the Iranian economy was no a secret. During a press conference with Kissinger, only months before the US decided to reject the bilateral deal, the Shah responded to question about whether he would consider bartering some of Iran’s oil to pay for weapons systems he had ordered. The Shah responded: “We are not that broke yet, we are borrowing to help other countries—India, Egypt and many African countries, we are not yet broke [sic!] enough to be forced to pay I wouldn’t say blackmail-but forced prices.”<sup>789</sup>

Secretary Kissinger described the attacks against the Shah in the Congress and media as a “Joe McCarthy–like cold war” and explicitly blamed alteration of the US position toward the Shah on the pro-Israel coalition that was formed following the 1973 war. “[T]his is despite the close relationship between Iran and Israel. Look at *Commentary* magazine and you can tell me what is happening,” he told his envoy.<sup>790</sup> On another occasion, he warned the President of “the Reagan bunch,” and what he considered to be the “anti-Iran” vicious campaign.<sup>791</sup> For the neoconservatives and their likeminded allies in the administration, the Shah’s oil policies, nuclear program, hegemonic aspiration, accompanied with the alteration of his foreign policy in the region, proved that Iran was getting too strong and too independent. This was made abundantly clear by the Shah threats to the US following the publication of Kemp’s report:

If you try to take an unfriendly attitude toward my country, we can hurt you all badly, if not more so, than you can hurt us, ... not just through oil—we can create trouble for you in the region; if you force us to change our friendly attitude the repercussions will be immeasurable.<sup>792</sup>

The confidence with which the Shah was delivering his threats in the presence Kissinger was a display of the deterioration of the US prestige in the aftermath of Vietnam and the oil

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<sup>788</sup> Belmonte and Keefer, eds. *Foreign Relations*, document 152, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d152>.

<sup>789</sup> Gwertzman, “Shah Cautions.”

<sup>790</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, 320-321.

<sup>791</sup> Ibid.

<sup>792</sup> Eric Pace, “U.S. Influence on Iran: Gigantic and Diverse” *The New York Times*, August 30, 1976, accessed April 8, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/08/30/archives/us-influence-on-iran-gigantic-and-diverse-us-influence-on-iran.html>.

embargo. The neoconservative attacks against the Shah did not target him as a person only; he represented OPEC power, the triumph of Third World countries in the UN, the New International Order at play, and all what they considered at fault in détente. Iran, on whose behalf the Shah was speaking was a third world Muslim majority country—with all that it entails in the neoconservative mindset.

#### 5.4. Conclusion

By the end of 1976, Iran was running up a \$4 billion budget deficit, and Iranian oil production fell to 1.6 million barrels a day, which makes up to a loss of \$6 billion in revenue over the year.<sup>793</sup> The decline on oil demand impacted Iran far more than the rest of the oil producing countries. Iran's large population, big spending, and rapid industrialization made it more vulnerable to the modest changes in output and income. Additionally, unlike Saudi Arabia and most other oil producing countries that invested their oil revenues offshore and were able to safely absorb and accommodate the fluctuation of oil prices, Iran's oil revenues were pumped directly into the Iranian economy. The Shah had approved the fifth part of his industrialization plan on the basis of banking on a consistent flow of high price oil and demand for production without taking into consideration the risk of deficit and recession in the oil market. His plan consisted of \$30 billion in spending commitments against only \$21 billion in government income with the assumption that the oil prices would continue to increase and allow Iran's economy to recover, meet its obligations, and maintain social services.<sup>794</sup> Contrary to his plan, the inflation rate reached 30-40 percent and industrial production declined by 50 percent. There was not enough money to offer credit and finance for small businesses; Iranians suffered food shortages, power cuts, and a decline in infrastructural capacity. The government was unable to maintain or continue many of the projects the regime started as part of the White Revolution, or to pay for hiring civil servants. The economy was crippled, the unemployment rate skyrocketed with more than 400,000 construction workers laid off, and greater numbers of university graduates unhired.<sup>795</sup> In a letter to the Shah, Alam described the deterioration of Iran's economic situation as a result of Saudi Arabia's decision to disregard the Iranian pressure and halt the oil prices during OPEC's meeting in Doha, he stated:

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<sup>793</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 457, 464.

<sup>794</sup> Cooper, *The Oil Kings*, Chapter 8; Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin, *Eternal Iran. Continuity and Chaos the Middle East in Focus* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2005), 81-85.

<sup>795</sup> Ibid.

prolonged power-cuts right across the country, occasioning slow-down in industrial output and serious financial losses; dreadful communications; shortages of every essential foodstuff save bread; a total disregard for the public's needs; soaring inflation; promulgation of new decrees without any preparation or warning- all these things have been brought but either by deliberate sabotage from within or else by the sheer incompetence of government in thrall to the CIA and other such organizations. ... We have squandered every cent we had only to find ourselves checkmated by a single move from Saudi Arabia.<sup>796</sup>

The Shah's leadership was not established by popular consent; in fact, as has been explained, he was restored to his throne by the intervention of foreign powers (1953), and he was only able to preserve his rule by means of oppression and corruption. As such, stability and economic prosperity for the Shah were not just a matter of economy but rather a matter of political legitimacy. The more strained the economic situation got in Iran, the more the Shah's popularity plummeted. The more his legitimacy was compromised, the more people joined his opposition and took to the street calling for his overthrow.

Some historians claim that the Shah was unsuccessful in handling the crisis or that he should have taken more drastic measures to bring back stability to the streets. Be as it may, I see no available means of crisis prevention that would have kept the Shah on his throne. From late 1976 to January 16, 1979, when Reza Pahlavi left Iran for Egypt and Khomeini assumed control, Iran went through a loop: protests and strikes succeeded by government's crackdown, creating so-called martyrs, injuries and detainees, and then more strikes and protests followed by more oppression and more martyrs. In this chapter, I did not intend to put the blame for the fall of the Shah on the shoulder of the neoconservatives nor to claim that the rhetoric or action of the neoconservatives were the only reason for Saudi Arabia's decision to seek the elimination of the Shah's monopoly over OPEC's pricing decisions or undermining his political and military power. There were many underlying reasons for Saudi Arabia to act the way she saw fit with her own economic and political interests and needs at the time. These interests and needs were for the most part economic and only took a militant tone due to the threat of war the neoconservatives initiated in the region.

This chapter showed how the political dynamics of the Gulf region changed following, if not in response to, the neoconservative war campaign in 1975. On the one hand, the new leadership in Saudi Arabia responded to the war threats by taking steps to restore the alliance with the US, build their military force, and marginalize the Iranian influence in the Gulf. To achieve the latter, the Kingdom sought to decrease oil prices in order to limit Iran's ability to

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<sup>796</sup> Alam, *The Shah*, 536-37.

buy more weapons, requested the withdrawal of Iranian forces from Oman and Yemen, and settled the dispute with Yemen and Iraq. Iran, on the other hand, also witnessed a drastic increase of its military power, responded to the war threats and the attacks on OPEC by increasing military spending and improving relations with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. Iran also launched a “charm offensive” toward the Arab countries by criticizing Israel and solving the border dispute with Iraq. By taking these steps, the Shah aimed to preserve the unity of OPEC, ensure continued increase in oil revenues, and put pressure on the US to maintain the flow of American armament and support for Iran’s nuclear program. As has been argued throughout this dissertation, the neoconservatives wanted to break the power of OPEC, halt arms sales to the Middle East, put an end to American support to Iran’s nuclear program, and establish Israel as the only ally for the US in the region. The chapter argued that the neoconservatives in the Ford administration led a campaign against Iran in the American media and Congress, aiming to break the Shah’s leadership of OPEC, cripple his hopes of regional hegemony, and reduce his political independence and military might. These neoconservative objectives matched those of Saudi Arabia, and both coordinated economic warfare against Iran that eventually led to the economic crisis that hit Iran in 1976. In the years that followed the Islamic Revolution, the neoconservatives spared no time to pin President Carter’s human rights policy as being responsible for the downfall of the Shah, but in this chapter, I pinpointed the events that subsequently paved the way for the revolution and how the neoconservatives in the Nixon and Ford administrations played a significant part in them.

Moreover, the chapter reiterated my earlier argument that the politicization of the issue of human rights and its connection with American interests was initially developed by the neoconservatives and utilized by them to put pressure on Iran. In subsequent years, the Shah understood the limit to his power without US support and attempted to restore the alliance with the US by moderating his stance on oil prices and taking steps to improve Iran’s human rights record. However, these steps ended up being too little too late. As opposed to the neoconservative narratives in which the Middle East “native” was presented as a passive force in the politics of their country, the Iranian people proved to be an active force. The social tensions already at a high level in Iran only worsened with the economic turmoil that followed the 1976 OPEC meeting. The Iranian people lost faith in the Shah’s White Revolution and its glorious promise. Labor strikes and protests spread all over Iran and thousands of young Iranians found in Islam a solution that promised to bring social justice, liberation, and refuge from the oppression and corruption of the Shah’s regime.

## Conclusion

Over the years, the neoconservatives wrote and reflected on a broad range of foreign policy issues from Vietnam to Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s and from the Balkan to Somalia in the 1990s. Yet the Middle East has commanded unmatched attention, if not obsession, on their part. While neoconservative views regarding US foreign policy toward the Middle East are traditionally presented as part of the foreign policy stance of the third generation of neoconservatives, this thesis amply demonstrated that neoconservatives from the first and second generations have in fact been consistent in their foreign policy views with the third generation, especially in relation to Islam, international organizations, and Israel. It also shows that, in the case of Iran, neoconservative views were not developed in response to the threat posed to US interests with the fall of the Shah's regime and the rise of the Islamists to power in Iran following the 1979 revolution. To the contrary, this thesis links neoconservative rhetoric and policies toward the Middle East in general and Iran in particular to prominent neoconservative figures from the first and second generations. It concludes that since the 1970s the neoconservatives have attempted to influence US policy decisions in relation to the Middle East and often succeeded in doing so. This included policies that aimed to replace the US alliance with the Shah's regime with a new one with Saudi Arabia, which eventually led to the Shah's downfall. It illustrates that the neoconservatives' concern with Iran is not tied to the country's Islamic theocracy, human rights record, authoritarian rule, or nuclear ambitions. Instead, their apprehension stems from Iran's capacity to exert regional dominance. As such, it was perceived, by neoconservatives, as a threat that could undermine the presence of the US as the primary power in the region and jeopardize her two key interests: the uninterrupted flow of (cheap) oil and the security of Israel.

This thesis, hence, exposes neoconservatism as a new phase of the same old Orientalism: an intellectual movement to advance an imperialist discourse serving the hegemonic and geopolitical interests of great powers, particularly the United States. The dissertation reached several conclusions that help understand neoconservatism as a political movement that relies on militaristic means to advance political goals and how its policies eventually harmed rather than served US interests. The conclusions I reached in the thesis can be summed up in the following key points:

1. Neoconservative foreign policy following the 1973 war bore a striking resemblance to the policy of neoconservatives following the 9/11 attacks.

Regarding neoconservative foreign policy, the thesis demonstrated that the neoconservatives of the first, second, and third generations were consistent in their foreign policy views. The first chapter of this dissertation provided an overview of neoconservatism, its main figures and foreign policy tenets. It outlined the prevalent interpretation or perspectives on neoconservatism as depicted in the seminal works dedicated to the history of neoconservatism, like Vaisse, Fukuyama, Dorrien, and Murray, who described the first and second generations of neoconservatives as being New York intellectuals and journalists who aimed to preserve American culture and way of life by attacking the counterculture and the left turn taken by American liberalism in the 1960s. These intellectuals, the argument goes, were mainly concerned with domestic affairs and did not share their successors' Manichean view of international relations and US foreign policy. The well-known perception among these historians, as the first chapter showed, was that neoconservatives underwent a shift from intellectual pursuits to placing a stronger emphasis on politics, actively participating in the decision-making process during the administrations of Ronald Reagan and to a larger extent during the tenures of Presidents George W. Bush. However, the dissertation showed that the 1973 war provided the framework for the first generation of neoconservatives to construct their foreign policy views and made the Middle East the focus of neoconservative foreign policy for decades to come. By providing examples and analyzing the rhetoric and policies advocated by prominent neoconservative figures in the 1970s, the thesis demonstrated that the neoconservatives viewed the 1973 war and the consequent oil crisis as a struggle between good and evil, with the United States embodying the force of good and the Arab and Muslim world the force of evil. This belief led them to advocate for an active US role in maintaining a global order primarily through the use of force and the call for invading and occupying the oil fields of the Arab countries in the Gulf. The thesis concluded that the neoconservative obsession with initiating wars to topple political regimes in the Middle East (the Iranian regime in the 1980s, the Iraqi regime in the 1990s, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Iran after the 9/11 attacks, Egypt in 2013, etc.) was not and is not necessarily based on policies of these regimes (e.g., lack of democracy, nuclear ambitions, human rights violations, supporting terrorism), but rather on the degree to which these countries presented a threat to US domination in the region. The foreign policy advocated by neoconservatives toward the region was not based on practical realism or idealistic goals, but rather leaned toward power-driven politics or *Machtpolitik*. That is to say, their political inclination tended more toward the use and pursuit of force in all circumstances, rather than employing power judiciously and only when necessary.

Throughout the thesis, I provided a comparison between the rhetoric and policies advocated by neoconservatives of the first and second generation and those of the third generation. This comparison showed that the spread of democracy, the clash of civilizations, advocacy for unilateral political action, and the immorality of the UN have all been integral building blocks of neoconservative rhetoric since the 1970s. It is now clear that the language and narratives used by neoconservatives against the Arab countries in the 1970s is similar to the language used to advocate for political and military action against Iran ever since the Islamic Revolution, and in many cases by the very same individuals. For example, subchapter 2.2, titled “Neoconservative Gunboat Diplomacy,” compares the rhetoric used against the Arab oil producing countries following the 1973 war with that employed against Iran by neoconservative individuals since the Islamic revolution in 1979. Similarly, in the third chapter, the subchapters titled “The New Economic Order Would Increase Inequality and Destabilize the World” and “NIEO will Lead to Nuclear Proliferation” respectively provide additional examples of the rhetoric employed by neoconservatives like Wohlstetter, Tucker, Michael Ledeen, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Bernard Lewis, and Jordan Paust against Middle Eastern countries’ nuclear aspirations in the 1970s, particularly but not exclusively focusing on Iran. This rhetoric resurfaced in the 2000s against Iraq and Iran, mostly voiced by the same individuals, echoing a troubling recurrence of historical language and attitudes.

2. Neoconservative foreign policy toward the Middle East is largely constructed upon ideological foundations rather than being primarily shaped by political or economic considerations.

Despite presenting themselves as experts on the Middle East, the thesis demonstrated that, to a large extent, the neoconservatives lacked a real understanding of the region’s history, culture, politics, internal dynamics, and economy. Their advocacy against the Arab and Muslim countries stemmed from what might be called an Orientalist ideological stand that perceived the Arabs and Muslims as being inherently evil, irrational, and hegemonic. As such, the use of force was presented as the only logical way to deal with such entities, leading to the view that the US needs to exercise its power, even preemptively or unilaterally, when Arab and Muslim countries adopt policies that do not align with US interests. The neoconservative rhetoric, introduced through extensive quotes from their published writings, reused and replicated fixed ideas and theoretical viewpoints from classical Orientalists about “Arabs and Muslims” to explain the economic and political developments in the region, without any genuine examination of the area’s geopolitical dynamics, culture, and history. Hence, the narratives

presented by neoconservatives, touted as supposed experts of the region, not only disregarded the contextual origins of the region's political issues but also dismissed the local perspectives on their potential resolutions.

This issue was discussed at length in the fourth chapter, titled "Geopolitical Realities," which offers a critical evaluation of neoconservative narratives about the Middle East and how key neocons misinterpreted the motives behind increasing the oil prices and imposing the oil embargo, purely within ideological terms, by claiming that the sole motivation for increasing the oil prices and for the oil embargo was Arab/Muslim "irrationality" and desire to "destroy the West." The chapter highlighted and analyzed three aspects that were entirely omitted from the neoconservative analysis of the region. The first aspect was the significance of Palestine for the Arabs and Muslims of the region, demonstrating how support for the Palestinian cause was tied to the legitimacy and public support of any political system, including that of the Shah. The second aspect addressed the issue of the Arabstan/Khuzestan region in Iran, which Arab countries considered to be occupied by Iran, and its impact on the political reactions of the Gulf countries. The third aspect covered the ongoing political awakening in the region and the Cold War between moderate Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia and radical Arab countries led by Egypt and Iraq. Discussing these aspects demonstrated that contrary to the simplifying claims of the neoconservatives (who sought to explain regional politics within a singular, rigid ideological framework), political decision making in the Arab countries operates exactly like in any other part of the world: it is an extension of their domestic policy and responds to global events. It is guided by values and principles of their own, but is also significantly influenced by national interest, geopolitical concerns, and public opinion.

Additionally, the neoconservatives deliberately exaggerated the economic impact of the oil embargo, portrayed the 1973 war as being a war for Israel's survival, and framed the situation in the Middle East not in its accurate regional and historical context but simply as part of the struggle with the Soviet Union (which was a factor, but not the only or dominant one). The thesis concludes that the neoconservatives constructed their narratives using sophisticated arguments against the expansion of communism abroad and détente policies at home. Their objective was to revive the Western alliance against communism internationally while appealing to opponents of détente and supporters of Israel among Cold War proponents, liberal hawks, and staunch conservatives at home. This effort consequently elevated the importance of controlling Middle Eastern oil as a cornerstone for safeguarding the survival of Western civilization. For the neoconservatives, it even rationalized the call for military action to invade and occupy the Arab oil fields (1975). This was done with a simplified argument suggesting

that a region of such significance should not be governed by regimes that are hostile or unfriendly towards the West.

Upon analyzing the various neoconservative narratives and the policies they advocated for and supported, it became clear that the oil crisis was significant for them ideologically, as it presented an opportunity to revive the post-second World War alliance and mobilize the public against an external enemy. A war in the Middle East was seen by neoconservatives as a possible excuse to making concessions of territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and as a means to reestablish a formidable image for both the US and Israel after the former's defeat in Vietnam and the latter's early setback during the 1973 war.

3. The neoconservatives participated in the construction of an ineffective human rights foreign policy framework, which impacted the Shah's conduct of Iran's human rights policy in a way that empowered his opponents.

When discussing Iran, many neoconservatives tend to consider the application of President Carter's human rights foreign policy to be responsible for the fall of the Shah of Iran. In fact, along with the US retreat from responding to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Carter's human rights policy was the main reason for neoconservatives to migrate to the Republican party and support Regan in the 1984 election. Therefore, it was important to analyze and discuss the issue of human rights in neoconservative rhetoric and policies. The thesis concluded that the neoconservatives' influence on Carter's human rights framework was substantial. One aspect of their influence involved their advocacy for linking US aid to the human rights conduct of recipient countries, which they achieved through the creation of the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs – all of which predates Carter's inauguration on January 20, 1977. The neoconservative focus on human rights aimed to weaken the détente policy and challenge groups perceived as advocates for appeasement with Moscow and supporters of Third World ideologies within the US and Europe. The thesis offered an analysis of the neoconservative response to Third World countries' activism in the UN with a special focus on Resolution 3379—equating Zionism with racism— as a case study to analyze the neoconservative human rights rhetoric. I concluded that neoconservative stance on the issue of human rights was ideologically motivated, it undermined the moral leadership of the US, and failed to serve American interests in the long run. The neoconservatives used their platforms to enlarge the issue of human rights so as to become part of the confrontation between communist totalitarian regimes and liberal democracies, and to restore public faith in American exceptionalism, democracy, and values, thereby gaining domestic backing for a more confrontational foreign

policy as opposed to détente. They even utilized the language of human rights to counter the criticism leveled against the US and her allies, mainly Israel and apartheid-era South Africa in the General Assembly of the UN, by claiming that countries that are actively criticizing the US and its allies on the account of their human rights performance had a far worse human rights record. Hence, they argued that the US should not just link its aid to Third World countries' human rights records but also prevent aid from countries that criticize the US and its allies and provide aid to countries that are in line with the US regardless of their human rights performance. Their argument was based on the premise that the USSR paid no consideration to human rights in her aid policy. By withholding aid from her allies, they argued, the US would only be granting leverage to the allies Moscow. Another aspect of the neoconservative human rights framework involved drawing a distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Authoritarian regimes, they argued, occasionally and randomly violated the human rights of their citizens, suggesting these regimes were less repressive and potentially more open to reform compared to totalitarian regimes, where human rights violations were systematic and purposeful.

The neoconservatives wanted the US to reserve human rights concerns for the Soviet Union and other communist countries and to ignore Israel, South Africa, and other right-wing governments playing a key part in American empire building. The debates over human rights between the neoconservatives and their opponents in the Democratic Party at the time politicized the issue and made it partisan, which as a result helped develop the framework for the human rights foreign policy of the Carter administration. Iran under the Shah found herself at the center of this dispute. While the neoconservatives willingly defended South Africa and Israel, they ignored, and at times even participated in the criticism leveled against Iran. This points to their dislike of and distrust towards the Shah, and refutes their criticism of the human rights policy of the Carter administration, which they came to blame for the Shah's downfall. In his presidential election campaign, Carter's stance on the issue of human rights indeed had an impact on the Shah's political reforms. Yet, the politicization of the issue of human rights (before Carter's inauguration) made it clear to the Shah that the issue of human rights was used to attack and pressure Iran into changing her foreign and oil policies. Based on this understanding, the Shah failed to introduce genuine changes: his reforms were addressed to foreign observers and left little impact on Iranian people. Additionally, leftists, middle-class people, and liberals were viewed by the Shah as the most vocal opposition to his rule, which, in turn, allowed more time for his religious opposition to develop.

By analyzing the issue of human rights, the dissertation provided an analysis that counters the narratives brought about by several neoconservatives regarding the fall of Iran's Shah, e.g., *Debacle, the American failure in Iran* by Michael A. Ledeen and William H. Lewis, *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos* by Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* by Kenneth M Pollack, *The Last Shah: America, Iran, and the Fall of the Pahlavi Dynasty* by Ray Takeyh, among others. These authors argued that the fall of the Shah resulted from a combination of economic and social challenges stemming from the Shah's urbanization plans and financial decisions as well as his leniency toward his opponents due to pressure from the Carter administration's human rights foreign policy. Their narratives about the Iranian Revolution ignore the widespread anti-colonial and neocolonial political and cultural discourse among developing nations at the time and how it impacted the Iranian people's aspiration for sovereignty and independence, and provided a common ground that united the Shah's opposition against imperialism as manifested by the Shah's alliance with the US. Moreover, these accounts tend to understate the extent of US support for the Shah's authoritarian rule, her intervention in overthrowing Iran's first elected government (1953), and her continued unconditional support for Israel. These factors alienated the Shah from his people, bred anti-Americanism, and contributed to a sense of betrayal among Iranians. In contrast to the Orientalist neoconservative narrative that portrayed the Middle East "native" as passive and irrational, the Iranian people proved to be an active force. Social tensions, already elevated in Iran, worsened with the economic turmoil following the 1976 OPEC meeting. Iranians lost faith in the Shah's White Revolution and its promises, as well as in America's moral leadership. Labor strikes and protests spread throughout Iran, and thousands of young Iranians turned to Islam, seeking social justice, liberation, and refuge from the oppression and corruption of the Shah's regime.

4. The neoconservative call for invading the Gulf oil fields in 1975 did not serve US interests, but had significant political implications for the Gulf region that directly exacerbated Iran's political and economic situation, contributing to widespread protests against the Shah and ultimately leading to his downfall.

The lack of understanding of the region's history and politics, displayed by the neoconservatives, was translated into advocating for policies that did not serve US interests in the long run and occasionally even backfired. For instance, the neoconservative advocacy for a confrontational, militarized approach instead of a diplomatic one to address the oil embargo endangered key US interests in the region as Arab countries requested the termination of the

work of the US Navy in the Gulf. The threat of war led to a further increase in oil demand and prices, hindered political reforms, development, and economic growth plans in the region, notably affecting countries like Iraq and Iran. The threat to invade Saudi Arabia, the home of Islam's holiest sites, significantly influenced public opinion in the Arab world. It fueled anti-American sentiments, drew them closer to the Soviet Union, and, in retrospect, empowered radical regimes over moderates. That was also the case in Iran, where the seemingly unlimited support extended to Israel and the Shah's connections with the US and Israel was utilized by the radical powers to forge a common ground for the opposition to unite. The threat of a war also escalated demands for military equipment and instigated an arms race in the region. It increased the uncertainty, distrust, and suspicion of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, not just toward the US but also to Iran and Iraq. Neoconservative calls for war painted an easy path to military victory. The lesser countries in the region, therefore, feared a military attack by Iraq and the Soviet Union, a joint military action by Iran and Iraq to divide the region's oil between them, and/or a proxy military action by Iran or Israel on behalf of the US. Consequently, while it served Iran and Iraq's interests to strengthen their relations with Arab countries to gain support for increasing oil prices, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf regimes were more inclined to reduce oil prices. They aimed to mend their strained relations with the US and simultaneously counter the regional dominance of Iraq and Iran, limiting their capacity to purchase more arms. Additionally, the Saudis recognized that maintaining a moderate stance on oil prices was crucial to ensuring the inflow of arms and easing pressure on human rights issues from the US.

Similarly, just as the geopolitical strategies of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf nations were impacted by the invasion rhetoric, they also impacted the Shah's political perspectives. The thesis concluded that the Shah, who was an avid observer of US media, was influenced by the call for invading the oil fields of Saudi Arabia and the openly hostile American approach to Third World countries' rights to development and sovereignty over natural resources. The Shah was convinced that maintaining control over the oil-shipping routes was the key to protecting Iranian independence and turning her into a regional power; high oil prices and obtaining large quantities of sophisticated weapons were but means to this end. The thesis demonstrated that in the period that followed the publication of the neoconservative invasion articles the Shah made every attempt to assure his Arab neighbors that Iran was not complicit in US military plans and tried to reducing his country's dependence on the US. The Shah aligned OPEC's oil decisions with Third World countries' right to development and sovereignty; he took steps in support of the Palestinian cause and in favor of reducing the tension with the Arab countries, notably Iraq, and advocated for the withdrawal of all foreign powers from the Gulf region. The

Shah also made genuine attempt to diversify Iran's sources of energy and weapons, and increased cooperation with the Soviet Union.

5. The neoconservatives actively worked to undermine the Shah and sought to replace the US alliance with Iran with an alliance with Saudi Arabia; their aim was to force the Shah to change his oil and foreign policy and give up his hegemonic aspirations.

The changes in the Shah's policies and his attitude toward the US and Israel were not in line with the strategy advocated by the neoconservatives and their allies in the Ford administration. These powers sought to break the power of OPEC and its alliance with Third World countries, halt arms sales to the Middle East, prevent the proliferation of nuclear technology, and establish Israel as the only ally for the US in the Middle East. Their ultimate goal was to revive the post-war Western alliance and fix the what they perceived as a political, cultural, and economic crisis hurting the West. To achieve these goals, undermining the power of Iran was necessary. The neoconservatives led an extensive campaign within the Ford administration, in the American media, and in Congress, with the aim to reduce US dependence on the Shah, crippling Iran's regional hegemony and military might, and to break the Shah's leadership of OPEC. The goals of the neoconservatives matched those of Saudi Arabia, and both coordinated economic warfare against Iran that eventually led to the economic crisis that hit Iran in 1976.

The economic crisis empowered the Shah's opponents and for the first time Iran witnessed the emergence of organized opposition and widespread demonstration that demanded the Shah's ousting. Stability and economic success were fundamentally tied to the Shah's political legitimacy. The Shah did not ascend to power through constitutional means nor public approval; rather, he was reinstated by a foreign intervention. Military control and oppression enabled him to maintain authority and stability while economic prosperity reduced political tension and the possibility of upheavals. Yet, due to her large population, extensive spending, and rapid modernization, Iran was more susceptible to the fluctuations in oil prices. Even minor changes in oil production and income had a marked impact on the Iranian economy. Unlike many oil-producing nations such as Saudi Arabia, who invested their oil revenues offshore to buffer against price fluctuations, Iran directly injected its oil earnings into its domestic economy. This approach left Iran less equipped to manage and absorb the impact of shifting oil prices. The Ford administration clearly understood this; yet, when the Shah requested a bilateral oil deal from the US to help the Iranian economy recover, the neoconservative powers in the administration blocked the deal.

The thesis concluded that there is strong evidence to suggest that Iran's nuclear program in the 1970s was motivated by economic reasons rather than by aspirations for hegemony and military dominance. During that period, the Shah's primary focus was to bolster Iran's economy and industrial capabilities. Given the much-publicized estimation that Iran's oil reserves would be depleted within two decades and considering that oil served as the country's main energy source and primary income, it becomes evident that developing a nuclear alternative was among the few, yet notably effective, strategies to ensure Iran's long-term prosperity. Iran was not unique in her pursuit of nuclear energy. Many of the industrialized nations considered nuclear technology to be more economical than oil and almost all of them were actively increasing their reliance on nuclear energy as a way to reduce their oil bills and speed up their development programs. Moreover, Iran did not need a nuclear weapon to achieve regional hegemony, as she had a sufficient conventional military power that was by far the largest and the most developed in the region and a military budget that surpassed that of other neighboring states. If Iran faced any severe security issues, she had the capacity to defend herself without jeopardizing relations with the US and developed countries.

After summarizing my conclusions in the aforementioned key points, the next logical step is to consider the broader implications of neoconservative foreign policy in our contemporary world. Next, I will elaborate on the significance of the findings from my thesis and identify areas that warrant further exploration. None of the accounts about neoconservatism, whether old or new, has explored the connection between the rise of neoconservative foreign policy following the 1973 war and the direction of US foreign policy toward the Middle East, including the fall of the Shah. This lack of exploration is mainly due to the fact that neoconservative foreign policy toward the Middle East only came under scrutiny following the 9/11 attacks and the US invasion of Iraq. The US debacle in Iraq was attributed to the neoconservatives not only because they were disproportionately represented in the Bush administration at the time of the war but also due to their advocacy for the US to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime, which predated the Al-Qaeda attacks on New York City. Their primary objectives were not preventing the Iraqi dictator from acquiring a nuclear arsenal or sharing weapons of mass destruction with his alleged associates in Al-Qaeda, but to democratize Iraq and alter her authoritarian regime – which reflected the neoconservatives' broader ideological commitment rather than having a set of attainable military or political goals.

This thesis presented the ideological framework through which neoconservatives have come to perceive the Middle East from the first generation onwards. It demonstrated that the neoconservative inclination towards a military solution in the Middle East has been rooted in narratives propagated by their Orientalist ancestors. These narratives historically justified the acquisition of other people's lands and resources under the banners of civilization and enlightenment. It is important to discuss the emergence of neoconservative foreign policy in the 1970s. This discussion highlights that neoconservative foreign policy emerged after a decade marked by the end of a long history of colonialism and calls for a new world order, during which Third World countries became aware of their power and right to development and sovereignty. Its aim was to perpetuate the old system, wherein rights were distributed according to power. In this paradigm, weaker states were expected to align their interests with those of stronger states, risking punishment if they pursued their own interests. The US response to the oil producing countries' decision to increase oil prices in the 1970s was the first application of neoconservative foreign policy toward the region. The confrontational foreign policy and the hostile rhetoric they propagated had a far-reaching impact on and in the region. While many historians focused on neoconservative views and rhetoric toward communism and the Soviet Union in the 1970s, almost no one discussed their views and rhetoric toward Islam and the Middle East. Prominent neoconservative politicians and intellectuals explained the political and economic issues in the region in ideological terms and through false narratives and pushed for a foreign policy that lacked a real understanding of the region and its complexities.

My thesis offers an alternative understanding of the historical, economic, and political factors that shaped the political environment in the Middle East at the time, challenging conventional narratives and shedding light on local dynamics often overlooked in mainstream analyses. Choosing to focus on Iran held significance due to the pronounced repercussions the country experienced as a result of decisions made within the political landscape of the United States. In opposition to the narratives put forth by the neoconservatives, the downfall of the Shah's regime demonstrated that endorsing authoritarian regimes is not a good policy in the long run, that politicizing the issue of human right undermine US moral authority, and that adopting a language that antagonizes a group of people based on their religion and ethnicity only serves the interests of powers that thrive on polarization and hostility. Furthermore, while American historians and intellectuals are entitled to their own views and opinions about the politics and history of other countries, it remains crucial to hear the voices and needs of the indigenous, local populations before crafting foreign policy or forming opinions about a given

country. Islam is acknowledged as the fastest-growing global religion with nearly two billion followers, less than 20 percent of whom are Arabs and an even smaller percentage of whom are Persians. Using Islam as a sole, or even dominant, explanatory factor for political conflicts in the Middle East is an ill-advised policy that prevents a solution to the problems of the region.

I propose to conclude by highlighting potential avenues for expanding and utilizing my dissertation. This thesis has the potential for further expansion by investigating the relations between neoconservatives and the Likud party in Israel, founded in 1973, offering an even more nuanced understanding of the geopolitical dynamics of the time. Figures like Netanyahu, who maintained a cozy relationship with many neoconservatives and neoconservative think tanks, played a pivotal role in shaping policy discussions. Exploring the intersections between neoconservative ideologies and the political landscape in Israel holds the promise of valuable insights. This investigation can shed light on the collaborative efforts between neoconservative politicians in the United States and Israel, revealing how their alliances have played a pivotal role in influencing the trajectory of US foreign policy in the region long after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Another aspect the thesis explored and can be further investigated is the strategic use of language. Analyzing how language is employed to construct narratives, particularly those used to justify wars, reveal the weight certain linguistic expressions and discourses carry and their impact on public perception. By focusing on the linguistic strategies employed, this aspect of the thesis can serve as a tool for identifying similar narratives when employed by politicians in contemporary contexts and at times of conflict or tension.

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