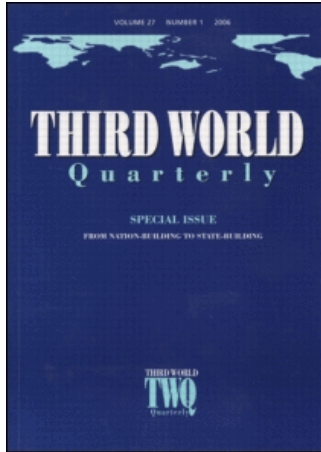


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Manufacturing war: Iran in the neo-conservative imagination

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam ^a

^a Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

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Manufacturing War: Iran in the neo-conservative imagination

ARSHIN ADIB-MOGHADDAM

ABSTRACT *This article investigates how Iran is represented by neo-conservative activists and analysts primarily in the USA. It starts with the epistemological contention that every political activity occurs within a context, which is constituted by invented narratives, institutions, norms and other ideational factors. In a second step empirical evidence is marshalled that shows the mechanisms of contemporary US neo-conservatism, its impact on the decision-making process in Washington and the consequences for Iranian–American relations.*

Now, certainty consists in believing that the existence of what has been recognized as true can never be other than what we believe, and to believe, in addition, with respect to that belief that it cannot be otherwise, so that if it is taken as belief with respect to the first belief, then it cannot be otherwise, and so on ad infinitum. (Abu Nasr Farabi)¹

Dialectic consists not in trying to discover the weakness of what is said, but in bringing out its real strength. It is not the art of arguing (which can make a strong case out of a weak one) but the art of thinking (which can strengthen objections by referring to the subject matter). (Hans-Georg Gadamer)²

Nearly 11 centuries and seemingly unbridgeable intellectual cultures separate the Muslim philosopher Abu Nasr Farabi, who died in 950 AD at the age of 80, and Hans-Georg Gadamer, the German philosopher and pupil of Martin Heidegger who died in 2002 at the age of 102. Yet, despite their disparate location in time and culture, both men formulated surprisingly comparable ideas on method and the ‘construction’ of reality. Gadamer’s most famous book, *History and Truth*, which was published in 1960, presents a theory of hermeneutics that attacks the objectivity of positivistic theories and argues that prejudice is present in all interpretation. In Gadamer’s view any act of understanding is both bound by context and determined by language. ‘The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text’, Gadamer states, ‘is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to the tradition’. That tradition, he argues, ‘is not simply a

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam is in the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, Manor Road, Oxford OX1 3UQ, UK. Email: arshin.adib-moghaddam@politics.ox.ac.uk.

permanent precondition; rather we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves'.³

Abu Nasr Farabi expressed a comparably sceptical view of scientific determinism when he argued that 'every demonstration is . . . the cause of the scientific knowledge acquired thereby, but not all demonstration conveys the knowledge of the cause of the thing's existence'.⁴ Although I am oversimplifying, it is probably correct to say that the ultimate argument of both men is that one must not presume that there exists a sphere of human relations that is somehow detached from a manufactured context—historical, economic, philosophical, traditional, ideational, political or other. All human facts, Gadamer and Farabi agree, are invented, objectified, internalised and ultimately introjected.⁵

Although this brief sketch may make the ideas of both thinkers appear commonsensical enough to accept, we too often continue to assume that facts are somehow detached from a manufactured context, that they exist on their own without a historical background and ontological present signifying them.⁶ Notions of unchangeable laws of nature or a-historical continuity constrain our capacity for understanding that facts are socially engineered, that they are elastic, relative, differentiated.⁷ To some 'postmodern' and 'critical theorists', this may seem unchallengeable. But if we switch our focus away from these approaches to the reality of contemporary international relations studies in general, and to analyses of West Asia in particular, we see that the majority of scholars take 'facts' for granted, that they fail to focus on the social engineering of world politics.⁸ One serious consequence of the absence of critical approaches in my empirical field of study is that the image of Iran as a country in the grip of enigmatic, hostile revolutionaries led by intransigent, retroactive Mullahs is surprisingly salient. Part of the problem, I will argue in the following paragraphs, is that the Islamic Republic has occupied a prominent place in the imagination of influential neo-conservative strategists with direct links to the decision-making process in Washington and immense resources to influence the public discourse in the USA.⁹ Together with their allies in the Likud party in Israel (some of them are now members of Kadima), that neo-conservative coterie has manufactured an image of Iran which has made the country's 'irrational nature' an established fact among influential strata of international society.¹⁰

The missing link in that cause–effect relationship is the role of a specific context (in our case neo-conservatism) in the production of reality (in our case the image of Iran as an international pariah governed by irrational religious zealots), a dialectic which both Farabi and Gadamer well understood. It would be a mistake to underestimate that dialectic, especially with regard to Iran's nuclear file. For is the ideological representation of Iran not governed by the strategy to expel from competing realities the notion of a Third World country that is attempting to exercise its right to national development; to contain the view that Iranians are as rational as the Japanese, Germans or other nations who have developed a nuclear energy programme? The answer is yes, in my opinion, which explains my focus on

the neo-conservative habitat of producing the image of Iran as an 'international pariah' in the following paragraphs. I am not so much interested in quantifying the proliferation of anti-Iranian discourses in neo-conservative circles. It is rather more central, I think, to account for the way Iran is spoken about, to analyse who does the speaking, to explore the institutions which codify people to speak about the country, and to understand the political culture that signifies and legitimates the things that are said. What is at issue in this article, in short, is the overall discursive representation of Iran by neo-conservative ideology, the way in which Iran is 'translated' to us by an exalted, cumbersome, coterie of activists with an overtly and self-consciously anti-Iranian agenda.¹¹

Institutions and processes: narrating the war script

No manufacturing of consent, no engineering of facts, no ideological effort to 'produce' reality, no campaign to transform a specific political consciousness can function if, through a pattern of institutions, functionaries and media outlets, it does not constitute an overall strategy. And, inversely, no such strategy can achieve lasting effects if it is not based on a consensus serving, not as a headquarters, conspiracy or a predetermined, static outcome, but as the smallest common denominator among its adherents. With regard to Iran that consensus is constituted by influential, idea-producing conglomerates established by neo-conservative functionaries and activists with close links to Jewish lobbying organisations and likeminded parties in Israel. These all adhere to a common interest: to subvert the Iranian state and, by extension, to recode Iranian behaviour in accordance with US and Israeli interests in West Asia and beyond.¹² Let me start exploring some of the strategies pursued to that end from a comparative perspective by sketching the involvement of neo-conservative functionaries in the build-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.¹³

*'Anyone can go to Baghdad'*¹⁴

It is no secret that there are strong ideological and institutional links between the neo-conservative coterie surrounding the White House and various parties in Israel.¹⁵ 'No lobby has managed to divert US foreign policy as far from what the American national interest would otherwise suggest', write John J Mearsheimer, Professor at the University of Chicago, and Stephen Walt, dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, 'while simultaneously convincing Americans that US and Israeli interests are essentially the same'.¹⁶ One oft-cited example of this nexus is a paper authored by Douglas Feith (among others), who was US Undersecretary of Defense for Policy from July 2001 until August 2005. The paper bears the curious title, 'A clean break: a new strategy for securing the realm'. Produced in July 1996 by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, a think-tank based in Washington, DC and Jerusalem, the paper urges Israel to reconsider its strategic posture. The report advocates the 'principle of pre-emption, rather

than retaliation alone'. It suggests that Israel work with 'moderate' regimes such as Jordan and Turkey in order to 'contain, destabilise, and roll back some of its most dangerous threats'. In addition, it recommends that Israel 'focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq—an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right—as a means of foiling Syria's regional ambitions'. Historically valuable, if viewed within the context of the current situation in Iraq, the paper also suggests that Israel support Jordan in advocating restoration of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq.¹⁷

The list of functionaries involved in the production of the paper reads like a who's who of the neo-conservative cabal (it will become clear later that the same people are involved in the campaign against Iran). Apart from Douglas Feith, the list includes Richard Perle, one of the central advocates of the Iraq war and until recently chairman of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board; Charles Fairbanks Jr, a personal friend of Paul Wolfowitz; David Wurmser formerly of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and ex-special assistant to John Bolton at the State Department; and his wife Meyrav Wurmser, who runs the Hudson Institute and directed the Washington office of the Middle East Media Research Institute. (Memri is an invention of Col Yigal Carmon, who spent 22 years in Israeli intelligence and later served as counter-terrorism advisor to former Israeli prime ministers Yitzak Shamir and Yitzak Rabin.)¹⁸

In July 1996 the then prime minister of Israel, Binyamin Netanyahu, presented the central strategic tenets of the 'Clean Break' paper to the US Congress. The case for an invasion of Iraq was followed up by the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA) and the Project for a New American Century. JINSA's board of advisors included Vice President Dick Cheney, former US ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton, and Douglas Feith before they entered the Bush administration. Leading neo-conservatives such as Richard Perle, Michael Ledeen, Stephen Bryen, Joshua Muravchik and former CIA director James Woolsey continue to be members of the board at the time of writing. The Project for a New American Century's declared goal is 'to promote American global leadership'.¹⁹ It is chaired by William Kristol, editor of the rightwing *Weekly Standard*. Already by January 1998 the Project had sent a letter to then US president Bill Clinton advocating a 'strategy for removing Saddam's regime from power' and demanding a 'full complement of diplomatic, political and military efforts' to that end. This appeal was followed by a letter to congressional leaders Newt Gingrich and Trent Lott in May 1998, urging that 'US policy should have as its explicit goal removing Saddam Hussein's regime from power and establishing a peaceful and democratic Iraq in its place'. Out of the 17 signatories to the two letters, 11 have held posts in the Bush administration since the invasion of Iraq was launched in March 2003. Elliot Abrams, who had orchestrated the Iran–Contra operation, when the Reagan administration scandalously used the proceeds of arms sales to Iran (despite its own embargo) to circumvent a congressional prohibition on funding Nicaraguan rebels, was recruited as Senior Director for Near East, Southwest Asian and North African Affairs on the National Security Council and was promoted to Deputy National Security Adviser, responsible for

advancing Bush's strategy of advancing democracy abroad.²⁰ Richard Armitage was named Deputy Secretary of State; John Bolton, Under Secretary, Arms Control and International Security (promoted to US Ambassador to the UN); Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs; Zalmay Khalilzad, Special Presidential envoy to Afghanistan and 'Ambassador-at-large for Free Iraqis' (promoted to US Ambassador to Iraq); Richard Perle, chairman of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board; Peter W Rodman, Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs; Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defence; William Schneider, Jr, chairman of the Pentagon's Defense Science Board; Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense (promoted to Director of the World Bank); and Robert B Zoellick, the US Trade Representative (promoted to US Deputy Secretary of State).²¹

It would be naïve to assume that the institutionalisation of the neo-conservative nexus in a myriad of think-tanks and lobbying organisations did not create the structural platform to advocate the case for war against Iraq. Let me put forward a general hypothesis here. Neo-conservatism does not refuse aggression. On the contrary, it habituates us to accept war as rational; it puts into operation an entire machinery for producing 'true' facts in order to legitimate militaristic foreign policies. Not only do neo-conservatives speak of war and urge everyone to do so; they also present an 'aestheticised' version of war. Via neo-conservatism then, justice, patriotism, morality, even chivalry, find an opportunity to deploy themselves in the discourse of war. Not, however, by reason of some naturally positive property immanent to war itself, but by virtue of the properties neo-conservatism and other militaristic ideologies ascribe to it. Let me turn to explaining how a comparable '*Kriegskontext*' with the same 'eponymous heroes' is manufactured with regard to Iran.²²

*Real men go to Tehran*²³

One newly established link in the chain of neo-conservative think-tanks tied to Jewish lobbying organisations advocating confrontation with Iran is the Coalition for Democracy in Iran (CDI). Founded in 2002 by Michael Ledeen and Morris Amitay, who used to be executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the organisation aims to foster political support for regime change in the Islamic Republic. Members include Raymond Tanter of the Washington Institute for Near East Affairs (WINEA), itself an invention of AIPAC, Frank Gaffney, president of the Center for Security Policy (CSP) and Rob Sobhani, who has close personal and political links to the son of the deposed Shah of Iran, Reza Pahlavi. Ledeen, Amitay and Sobhani joined forces at the AEI in May 2003 in a seminar entitled 'The Future of Iran: Mullahcracy, Democracy, and the War on Terror', co-sponsored by the Hudson Institute and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. All three have connections with the media agency Benador Associates, which manages both their op-ed placements and television appearances. Eleana Benador represents Richard Perle, James

Woolsey, Charles Krauthammer, Martin Kramer and other neo-conservative advocates. The Foundation for Defense of Democracies also supports the Alliance for Democracy in Iran (ADI), which is backed by prominent political strategists such as Jerome Corsi. Whereas the CDI and ADI support the restoration of the monarchy in Iran, the Iran Policy Committee (IPC) acts as a lobbying organisation for the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK), which is listed as a terrorist organisation by the US State Department and the European Union. Those readers who are familiar with Fox News and its propensity for ready-made, formulaic analysis by former members of the US armed forces will recognise some of the supporters of the IPC: Lt Col Bill Cowan, US Marine Corps (ret); Lt Gen Thomas McInerney USAF (ret); Maj Gen Paul E Valley, US Army (ret); Capt Charles T Nash, US Navy (ret); and Lt Gen Edward Rowny, US Army (ret). Other IPC members are also familiar faces: the aforementioned Raymond Tanter; Clare Lopez, a former CIA analyst; and Jim Atkins, US ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the presidency of Richard Nixon.

Creating more and more interlinked foundations, think-tanks, and other institutional platforms tied to the neo-conservative cabal has served its political purpose. In the US Congress the Iranian government has been targeted by several bills, including the Iran Freedom and Support Act, sponsored by Senators Rick Santorum (R-Penn.) and John Cornyn (R-Texas), and a comparable bill proposed by Rep Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Florida Republican and strident anti-Castro campaigner. Funding of \$3 million for Iranian opposition activities was inserted by Congress in the 2005 budget on the initiative of Sen Sam Brownback, a Kansas Republican and a member of the Institute on Religion and Public Policy which has recently launched its in-house 'Iran Project'. This is aimed at enhancing 'the understanding of Iran's policy-making process and politico-Islamist system'.²⁴ The aforementioned Santorum, moreover, advocated regime change in an address to the National Press Club concerning 'Islamic fascism' in July 2006, stating that 'every major Islamic leader has openly identified the US as its enemy'.²⁵

Influence on the levers of power in Washington is not only secured through lobbying efforts. There is also persuasive evidence for covert activity. In August 2004 it was revealed that classified documents, including a draft National Security Presidential Directive devised in the office of then Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith was shared with AIPAC and Israeli officials. The document set a rather more aggressive US policy towards Iran and was leaked by Lawrence Franklin, an 'expert' on Iran who was recruited to Feith's office from the Defense Intelligence Agency.²⁶ An FBI counter-intelligence operation revealed that the same Franklin had repeated meetings with Naor Gilon, the head of the political department at the Israeli embassy in Washington, and with other officials and activists tied to the Israeli state and Jewish lobbying organisations. Franklin was sentenced to 12 years and seven months in jail in January 2006 for disclosing classified information to Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman. Both were members of AIPAC.²⁷

Douglas Feith himself has longstanding links to Zionist pressure groups. The Zionist Organisation for America (ZOA), for instance, honoured him and his father for their service to Israel and the Jewish people in 1997. He is also cofounder of One Jerusalem, a Jerusalem-based organisation whose ultimate goal is securing 'a united Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel'.²⁸ A second co-founder of this organisation is David Steinmann, who is chairman of JINSA (see above). He is also a board member of the Center for Security Policy (CSP) and chairman of the executive committee of the Middle East Forum. Two other co-founders of One Jerusalem are directly tied to the Likud Party: Dore Gold was a top advisor to former prime minister Ariel Sharon and Natan Sharansky was Israel's minister of diaspora affairs from March 2003 until May 2005 (he resigned from the cabinet in April 2005 to protest against plans to withdraw Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip).

Let me sketch now how the neo-conservative machinery works within a specific political context, namely Iran's ninth presidential elections in June 2005. Here, the strategy to inject the public discourse with false facts and predictions was evident before, during and after the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. 'Any normal person familiar with the Islamic republic knows that these are not elections at all', wrote Michael Ledeen of the AEI in an article entitled 'When is an election not an election'. 'They are a *mise en scène*, an entertainment, a comic opera staged for our benefit. The purpose of the charade', Ledeen claimed, 'is to deter us from supporting the forces of democratic revolution in Iran'.²⁹ Kenneth Timmerman reiterated the neo-conservative message in an article for the *National Review Online* entitled 'Fake election, real threats', which was reprinted by the *Washington Times*. Citing Abolhassan Banisadr, the first president of the Islamic Republic, who fled into exile and has not been in Iran for nearly 30 years, Timmerman predicted that no more than 27% of eligible voters in Iran would participate in the elections (his estimate missed the real turnout by over 34%).³⁰ Danielle Pletka, vice president for foreign and defence policy studies at the AEI, made a similarly misleading prophecy. In 'Not our man in Iran', she argued that Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani was handpicked by the 'machinations of the mullahs' to win the election. (Rafsanjani lost, of course, having received seven million votes fewer than Ahmadinejad.³¹) Other articles by Nir Boms, vice president of the Center for Freedom in the Middle East and former academic liaison at the Israeli embassy in Washington, DC; by Elliot Chodoff, a major in the reserves of the Israeli army; and by Abbas Milani and Michael McFaul, who direct the Project on Iranian Democracy at the conservative Hoover Institution in California, were similarly misleading.

The campaign to trivialise the democratic process in Iran before and during the elections served a dual, interdependent purpose: rendering the ninth presidency of the Islamic Republic illegitimate *a priori* and, by extension, representing Iran as an irrational actor, as a country where there is no regulatory context in which decision makers and others operate. Such manipulation helps produce the image of Iran as a 'rogue' country which, in turn, serves the important function of legitimating diplomatic and, potentially, military aggression. The strategy has appeared to be at least

partially successful. After the election leading journalists, including John Simpson of the BBC, alleged that Ahmadinejad had been one of the students responsible for holding US diplomatic staff captive between 1979 and 1980.³² This rather apocryphal claim was rejected by the CIA only after it had its impact on global public opinion. Crucially it minimised the diplomatic power of the Ahmadinejad administration before its first serious engagement with the international community at the United Nations in September 2005. (All this happened before Ahmadinejad's excessive tirades against Zionism in general and the Israeli state in particular.)

Let me add in parenthesis that tracing the impact of neo-conservatism on the way Iran is portrayed is not, of course, to defend the political process in Iran. The Islamic Republic has not constituted a representative democracy at this stage of its development,³³ and I don't think that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's raucous and bellicose posture in general and his abominably limited understanding of the history of the holocaust is representative of the political culture of the country. Yet it should also be added emphatically here that neo-conservative activists favour this type of West Asian politician. 'There are benefits to having an enemy that openly bares its teeth', suggests Daniel Pipes in this regard, 'for Westerners, it clarifies the hostility of the regime much more than if it subtly spun webs of deceit'.³⁴ 'Let us state the obvious', writes Reuel Marc Gerecht of the AEI in a similarly congratulatory mood: 'The new president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is a godsend.'³⁵ Ilan Berman, the author of *Tehran Rising: Iran's Challenge to the United States* agrees: 'Thank goodness for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.'³⁶ The Muslim democrat, I am in no doubt, is anathema to the neo-conservative *Weltanschauung*.

Neoconservative science fiction and Iran's nuclear file

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad unconsciously serves neoconservative interests because he has made it that much easier to portray Iran as a monolithically irrational, even fascist country.³⁷ In another parallel to the way Iraq was portrayed before the invasion,³⁸ likening Iran to absolute evil—in contemporary world politics always epitomised by Nazi Germany—has become a central pillar of the neo-conservative campaign to discredit the country. Ahmadinejad 'has cast himself as Adolf Hitler reincarnated' writes George Melloan in a column for the *Wall Street Journal* representatively.³⁹ Moreover, by adopting a retroactive political discourse permeated by a static notion of Shia-millennial symbolism and imagery as a means to appeal to the (neo)conservative factions of Iranian society and especially the orthodox clergy, Ahmadinejad has further inhibited Iran's bargaining power with regard to the nuclear issue. It should not come as a surprise that the neo-conservative apparatus feeds on Ahmadinejad's anachronistic rhetoric, knitting his abominations closely together in one thoroughly anti-Iranian episteme: 'So a Holocaust-denying, virulently anti-Semitic, aspiring genocidist, on the verge of acquiring weapons of the apocalypse', writes Charles Krauthammer, 'believes that the end is not only near but nearer than the next

American presidential election... This kind of man, 'Krauthammer continues, 'would have, to put it gently, less inhibition about starting Armageddon than a normal person'.⁴⁰ 'There is a radical difference between the Islamic Republic of Iran and other governments with nuclear weapons [sic]', Princeton emeritus Professor Bernard Lewis agrees. 'This difference is expressed in what can only be described as the apocalyptic worldview of Iran's present rulers... Mr Ahmadinejad and his followers clearly believe', Lewis emphasises, 'that the terminal struggle has already begun... It may even have a date, indicated by several references by the Iranian president to giving his final answer to the US about nuclear development by Aug 22 [2006]'. 'This year', we are told, 'Aug 22 corresponds, in the Islamic calendar, to the 27th day of the month of Rajab of the year 1427. This, by tradition, is the night when many Muslims commemorate the night flight of the prophet Muhammad on the winged horse Buraq, first to the "farthest mosque," usually identified with Jerusalem, and then to heaven and back (cf Koran XVII.1).' Lewis delves even deeper into the realms of ideological mythology when he tells us that 'it would be wise to bear the possibility in mind' that 22 of August 'might well be deemed an appropriate date for the apocalyptic ending of Israel and if necessary of the world'.⁴¹ The same theme was picked up by Kenneth Timmerman: 'As the world prepares to confront an Iranian regime that continues to defy the International Atomic Energy Agency over its nuclear programs... we must listen to what Iran's leaders say as we watch what they do. A religious zealot with nuclear weapons is a dangerous combination the world cannot afford to tolerate.'⁴² Timmerman heads the so called Foundation for Democracy in Iran (FDI) and is a member of the Committee on the Present Danger.⁴³ The latter organisation issued a policy paper in January 2006 calling for more sanctions against Iran and lobbys the Bush administration to 'energetically assist' dissidents to bring about the downfall of the Iranian state.⁴⁴

Much too occasionally the neo-conservative campaign to present Iran as an irrational polity receives setbacks.⁴⁵ In May 2006 bloggers and investigative journalists exposed as wholly invented a story by Amir Taheri, whose opinion pieces are managed by Benador Associates (see above).⁴⁶ In an article for the *National Post* of Canada (founded by the media mogul Conrad Black and now owned by the Asper family), Taheri had claimed that a new law would require Iranian Jews to 'be marked out with a yellow strip of cloth sewn in front of their clothes while Christians will be assigned the colour red. Zoroastrians end up with Persian blue as the colour of their zonnar.'⁴⁷ Accordind to Taheri 'the new codes would enable Muslims to easily recognise non-Muslims so that they can avoid shaking hands with them by mistake and thus becoming *najis* (unclean)'.⁴⁸ To reiterate the message, the article ran alongside a 1935 photograph of a Jewish businessman in Berlin with a yellow, six-pointed star sewn on his overcoat. The *National Post* was forced to retract the bogus piece and apologise publicly. But by then the *New York Post*, part of the media empire controlled by Rupert Murdoch, the *Jerusalem Post*, which also featured a photo of a yellow star from the Nazi era over a photo of Iranian President Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad, and the *New York Sun* had picked up the story.⁴⁹ In another *New York Post* column in 2005 Taheri claimed that Iran's ambassador to the UN, Javad Zarif, was one of the students involved in the capture of US diplomats in Tehran between 1979 and 1980. The story was retracted after Dwight Simpson, a professor at San Francisco State University, wrote to the newspaper explaining that the allegation was 'false'. On the day of the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran Zarif was a 'graduate student in the Department of International Relations of San Francisco State University. He was my student', Simpson told the editors, 'and he served also as my teaching assistant'.⁵⁰ Worryingly Amir Taheri was among a group of 'experts' on Iran and the region invited to the White House for a meeting with Tony Blair and George W Bush in May 2006.⁵¹

Not surprisingly AIPAC has made fears about Iran's nuclear energy programme a central pillar of its congressional agenda. At its largest ever policy conference in May 2005 AIPAC presented a Disney-inspired multimedia tour aimed at fostering the argument that Iran is developing nuclear weapons. Similarly the American Jewish Committee (AJC) has taken out full-page advertisements in influential US newspapers since April 2006 entitled 'A nuclear Iran threatens all', depicting radiating circles on an Iran-centred map to show the potential reach of the missiles. 'Suppose Iran one day gives nuclear devices to terrorists' the ad reads. 'Could anyone anywhere feel safe?'.⁵² The same message is reiterated by 'native informants'; old ones like Manuchehr Ghorbanifar, arms dealer and a central player in the Iran–Contra scandal who recently met envoys from the Pentagon in Rome,⁵³ and new ones like Amir Abbas Fakhavar, who advocated the policy of 'regime change' in his testimony to a Senate Homeland Security Committee in July 2006.⁵⁴ In an interview with the *Sunday Telegraph* in the same month, Fakhavar reverted to the other neo-conservative themes explored above, stating that the 'world has to do something—whatever it takes—so that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad does not become another Hitler'.⁵⁵ Sitting safely in his office at the Foundation for the Defence of Democracies, Fakhavar even promotes military action against Iran: 'Whatever the world does against the Iranian regime', he assures us, much in the same way Iraqi exiles did in the build-up to the Iraq war, 'the Iranian people will be supportive'.⁵⁶

The theme to equate Iran with Nazi Germany, which is central to the neo-conservative propaganda against the country, has already entered the political consciousness of decision makers in western Europe and the USA. The prolific investigative journalist of the *Inter Press Service*, Jim Lobe, recently reported that Senator John McCain had likened the nuclear stand-off with Iran to the situation in Europe in the 1930s.⁵⁷ Angela Merkel, leader of the '*Grosse Koalition*' between the conservative Christian Democratic Union and the centre-left Social Democratic Party in Germany appears to adhere to a similar view: 'Looking back to German history in the early 1930s when National Socialism was on the rise, there were many outside Germany who said "It's only rhetoric—don't get excited"', Merkel told policy makers at the 2006 Munich security conference.⁵⁸ 'There were times when people could have reacted differently and, in my view, Germany is obliged to do

something at the early stages... We want to, we must prevent Iran from developing its nuclear programme.⁵⁹ Another prominent policy maker to employ that threat scenario is New Gingrich, who argued that Iran could be planning for a pre-emptive nuclear electromagnetic pulse attack on the USA that would turn one third of the country 'back to a 19th century level of development'.⁶⁰ Gingrich, it should be added, is a member of the Senior Advisory Board of the United States Commission on National Security/21 Century. The Commission has produced a series of policy recommendations that discuss US national security challenges up to 2025.

Neo-conservative grand strategy and Iran

Questioned at the theoretical level, neo-conservatism is not ordered in accordance with a unifying headquarters or conspiracy.⁶¹ Contemporary neo-conservatism should be understood rather as an ideological space open in three dimensions. In one of these we have already situated the neo-conservative functionary, for whom writing the script, the speech, the terminology of a specific political discourse is central (eg the 'axis of evil' invented by David Frum). In a second dimension we may situate the decision maker, neo-conservatism's public face, who proceeds by relating diversified but consensual discourses in such a way that they are then able to claim causal validity and strategic value (eg Richard Perle, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, etc). These two dimensions are largely empirical in that they are part of the day-to-day affairs of politics in Washington, DC (and in the 'think-tank belt' scattered around Dupont Circle for that matter). The third dimension, in my opinion, is that of strategic value, which develops as a long-term state interest out of the latter; it forms a salient grand strategy and is hence not easily discarded or altered. It is here that we meet the legitimization of war; its translation from the empirical realms of day-to-day politics into theorised reality; it is this realm that is least transparent, causal, ontological. What evidence is available to us today if we seek to explore Iran's position in that third dimension? Let me frame this question with two political realities that define Iran's place in the strategic imagination of contemporary neo-conservatives.

First, the 'global war on terror' and the Bush doctrine of pre-emption have emerged as the primary institutions of US foreign policy, advocating military intervention against potential adversaries even if they are not considered an *immediate* threat to US national security.⁶² According to Norman Podhoretz, who was editor-in-chief of the influential neo-conservative magazine *Commentary* between 1960 and 1995, the 'global war on terror' is instrumental in producing a 'new species of imperial mission for America, whose purpose would be to oversee the emergence of successor governments in the [West Asian] region more amenable to reform and modernisation than the despotisms now in place.' 'After taking Baghdad', Podhoretz prophesied, 'we may willy-nilly find ourselves forced by the same political and military logic to topple five or six or seven more tyrannies in the Islamic world'.⁶³

The pre-emptive strategic doctrine, which was announced in June 2002 by President Bush at the military academy at West Point, provides the political

legitimacy for such an agenda. Setting out an interventionist framework for US foreign policy, Bush declared that the country will confront 'evil and lawless regimes', if necessary, by military force.⁶⁴ The US National Security Strategy published three months later institutionalised the 'Bush doctrine'. According to its authors, the USA 'has long maintained the option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat...The greater the threat...the greater is the risk of inaction and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, *even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack*.'⁶⁵ There is enough evidence to conclude that Iran is on that target list. First, there is the circumstantial evidence, eg the repeated warnings by Seymour Hersh, Scott Ritter, Robert Fisk and others that the war on Iran is already on its way, or the reports leaked to the *Sunday Times* that 'under the American plans Britain would be expected to play a supporting role, perhaps by sending surveillance aircraft or ships and submarines to the Gulf or by allowing the Americans to fly from Diego Garcia'.⁶⁶ Second, there is the 'factual' evidence exemplified by the classified version of the National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 17 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 4,⁶⁷ leaked to the *Washington Post*. This broke with 50 years of US counter-proliferation efforts by authorising pre-emptive strikes on states and terrorist groups that are close to acquiring weapons of mass destruction or the long-range missile capable of delivering them. In a leaked, top-secret appendix the directive named Iran, Syria, North Korea (and Libya) among the countries that are the central focus of the policy.⁶⁸

Moreover, NSPD 17 also sets out to respond to a WMD threat with nuclear weapons. This nuclear 'first strike' policy is reiterated in presidential directive NSPD 35 (Nuclear Weapons Deployment Authorisation), issued in May 2004, the Nuclear Posture Review in January 2002 and the Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations published in March 2005. In addition, US Senate Joint Resolution 23 ('Authorisation for Use of Military Force') empowers the president 'to take action to deter and prevent acts of terrorism against the United States' without consulting Congress.⁶⁹ There are even calls to change international law to legitimate the policy of pre-emption. In another similarity to the Iraq war, when scholars such as Fouad Ajami covered the invasion with an 'academic canopy', Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz argues that 'by deliberately placing nuclear facilities in the midst of civilian population centres, the Iranian government has made the decision to expose its civilians to attacks...if all else fails...Israel, or the United States, must be allowed under international law to take out the Iranian nuclear threat before it is capable of the genocide for which it is being built.'⁷⁰

Second, Iran was mentioned 16 times in the new National Security Strategy (NSS) of the USA, a 'wartime document' that uses such emotionally charged phrases as 'tyrannical regime', 'ally of terror', which 'harbor[s] terrorists,' and is an 'enemy of freedom, justice, and peace' to describe the Islamic Republic.⁷¹ Moreover, despite a 1981 treaty of non-interference in domestic Iranian affairs, the NSS spells out a policy of subversion against the

Iranian state, as a means to 'protect our national and economic security against the adverse effects of their bad conduct'.⁷² To that end, the US State Department has established an in-house 'Iran Desk' and 'Iran watch units' in Dubai as well as in US embassies in the vicinity of Iran, and a \$75 million programme aimed at 'expanding broadcasting into the country, funding nongovernmental organisations and promoting cultural exchanges'.⁷³

This policy of subversion is further diversified by a parallel process probing tensions between Iran's ethnic minorities and the central government in Tehran. A research project to this end was implemented by the Marine Corps Intelligence, which focuses on 'crises and predeployment support to expeditionary warfare'.⁷⁴ This strand of current US policies *vis-à-vis* Iran, unsurprisingly, is overwhelmingly endorsed by neo-conservative functionaries and is exemplified by an AEI conference in October 2005 entitled 'Another case for Federalism' and chaired by Michael Ledeen. 'The "Iranian" people have no connection to a glorious past', we are told much in that same spirit, 'and thus no foundation for a flourishing future'.⁷⁵ Michael Rubin agrees: 'Iran is more an empire than a nation... When the Islamic Republic collapses', we are reassured, 'a strong unified Iran will be a force for stability and a regional bulwark against the Islamism under which the Iranian people now chafe'.⁷⁶ 'To the extent that the different nationalities each have their own identities and oppose the essentially Persian regime', Edward Luttwak joins the chorus, 'they are likely to applaud external attacks on the nuclear installations rather than rally to the defense of their rulers'.⁷⁷ Luttwak ignores, of course, that both President Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei are 'Iranian-Azeri', that is, members of the largest *minority* community populating the country.

War continued by other means

In conclusion, I would like to discuss at least three central concerns with regard to the preceding analysis. First, is a military attack on Iran imminent? I doubt that the political establishment in Washington has been won over on this one yet. The Democrats' resurgence in the mid-term elections in November 2006, Donald Rumsfeld's and John Bolton's departure from the Pentagon and the UN, respectively, the continuing disaster in Iraq and the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan indicate that Republican neo-conservatism represented by the Bush administration is facing profound challenges. Moreover, the USA is facing a legitimacy crisis in the international arena, and in the geostrategic modifications engendered by an increasingly 'multipolar' world order. Hence Russia's efforts to reassert its role in Central Asia and the Northern Caucasus exemplified by joint military exercises with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan under the Collective Security Treaty Organisation in August 2006 and the coercive 'energy politics' pursued by Gazprom. Hence China's increasingly assertive role in East Asia and its recent multibillion-dollar investments in Africa. Hence Iran's successful strategy to mobilise support in Asia, Latin America

and Africa which has been recently re-emphasised by President Ahmadinejad's calls for 'Asian Unity' in his speech to the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, which comprises Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Hence also his repeated calls for a strategic partnership with leftist governments, most prominently those of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Fidel Castro in Cuba and Evo Morales in Bolivia, and Iran's diplomatic initiatives in Africa. Moreover, containing Iran or marginalising the country from the 'international community' appears to be futile because, parallel to Iran's involvement in prominent international institutions such as the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the UN, the country is also a vocal member of a range of other, lesser known intergovernmental organisations: the Developing Eight (D-8) comprising Egypt, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey, the Economic Co-operation Organisation, including Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan and the G-77, which was founded in 1964 to lobby the UN on behalf of developing nations and has grown to include 133 countries. Iran's diplomatic manoeuvring space is significantly enhanced by involvement in these organisations because they create effective outlets to counter the communicative power of the US state, dissecting its efforts to mobilise political and public opinion against the country—especially with regard to the nuclear issue. In the light of these currents of contemporary world politics, legitimating another military aggression in West Asia internationally will be difficult indeed.

These constraining international factors do not mean, of course, that neo-conservatives will not continue to work towards military aggression against Iran. This brings us to a second question: are there no competing narratives in the USA? Let there be no misunderstanding in this regard. I do not claim that neo-conservatism has a total grip on the political culture in the USA. This is quite impossible in a pluralistic democracy. But there is no escaping the fact that neo-conservatives have a strong influence on the levers of power in Washington. This has been repeatedly lamented by former high-ranking officials. For example, Graham Fuller, a former Vice-Chairman of the National Intelligence Council for long-range forecasting at the CIA, concedes that 'Efforts to portray Iran with some analytical balance have grown more difficult, crowded out by inflamed rhetoric and intense pro-Israeli lobbying against Tehran in Congress'.⁷⁸ Stephen Walt and John J Mearsheimer are equally critical. In an emphatic article published by the *London Review of Books* they argue that 'the thrust of US policy in the region derives almost entirely from domestic politics, and especially the activities of the 'Israel Lobby'. Walt and Mearsheimer define that lobby as 'the loose coalition of individuals and organisations who actively work to steer US foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction'.⁷⁹

I agree with Walt and Mearsheimer that there is no such thing as a neo-conservative headquarters, manifesto, conspiracy or even party. There are Republican and Democrat sympathisers, Jewish and non-Jewish functionaries, Christian fundamentalists and Muslim collaborators (and

'entertainers' such as Glenn Beck, whose primetime show on CNN is openly anti-Islamic, and anti-Iranian for that matter).⁸⁰ But the empirical evidence suggests that the pervasive concentration of neo-conservative think-tanks and activists—the neoconservative apparatus—constitutes a consensus providing an image of Iran as an international 'pariah'. Along with this image goes a 'macro-culture'. This is the overarching habitat I have explored at the beginning of this article in relation to the ideas of Gadamer and Farabi; the place where the image of Iran as an international threat is implanted. For what gives the country its negative image in the 'West' is not its own ontological content but the act of institution, an installation, a consecration that gives significance to what has, in itself, a neutral content.⁸¹ It is within that very tight-knit, ubiquitous neo-conservative habitat that the invasion of Iraq was made possible and it is within a similarly pervasive *Kriegskontext* that the idea of military intervention against Iran is cultivated.

What is at stake in revealing neo-conservative propaganda is not to undifferentiate US foreign policies. I am not suggesting a monocausal link between neo-conservatism and hostility towards Iran, no automatism, no inevitable political outcome. What I have hoped to explore in this article, rather, is the nihilistic international agenda that neo-conservatism promotes: the social engineering of a militaristic ideology which has secured a place in that ferociously contested space we may call 'international political culture'. Consider the comments of Patrick Clawson at a symposium organised by the militant *FrontPageMag.com* in July 2005. Clawson, deputy director of the Washington Institute for Near East policy, bluntly advocated covert operations in order to sabotage nuclear facilities in Iran: 'Accidents are known to happen (remember Three Mile Island or Chernobyl). If there were to be a series of crippling accidents at Iranian nuclear facilities . . . that would set back the Iranian program.'⁸² Consider also neo-conservative writings during Israel's invasion of Lebanon in summer 2006.⁸³ 'No one should have any lingering doubts about what's going on in the Middle East' Michael Ledeen proclaimed. 'It's war [and] there is a common prime mover, and that is the Iranian mullahcracy, the revolutionary Islamic fascist state that declared war on us 27 years ago and has yet to be held accountable.'⁸⁴ 'All of us in the free world owe Israel an enormous thank-you for defending freedom, democracy and security against the Iranian cat's-paw wholly-owned terrorist subsidiaries Hezbollah and Hamas', echoed Larry Kudlow.⁸⁵ 'They are defending their own homeland and very existence, but they are also defending America's homeland as our frontline democratic ally in the Middle East'.⁸⁶ William Kristol strengthened the plot:

What's happening in the Middle East isn't just another chapter in the Arab–Israeli conflict. What's happening is an Islamist–Israeli war . . . Better to say that what's under attack is liberal democratic civilization, whose leading representative right now happens to be the United States . . . Communism became really dangerous when it seized control of Russia. National socialism became really dangerous when it seized control of Germany. Islamism became

really dangerous when it seized control of Iran . . . The right response is renewed strength—in supporting the governments of Iraq and Afghanistan, in standing with Israel, and in pursuing regime change in Syria and Iran. For that matter, we might consider countering this act of Iranian aggression with a military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities. Why wait? Does anyone think a nuclear Iran can be contained? That the current regime will negotiate in good faith? It would be easier to act sooner rather than later. Yes, there would be repercussions—and they would be healthy ones, showing a strong America that has rejected further appeasement.⁸⁷

Ultimately, then, neoconservative functionaries inscribe the narrative of war in international relations; they inscribe it in institutions (eg the Committee on the Present Danger), language (eg the ‘axis of evil’), mindsets (eg ‘Why do they hate us?’), and policies (eg the doctrine of pre-emption). This strategy transforms other countries into replaceable variables. To be more precise, pre-emption and the ‘war on terror’ are made into versatile ideological agents that can be employed to legitimate military aggression *globally*—not only in the Iraqi, Iranian, Venezuelan or Syrian context, but also with regard to other conflict scenarios (China – Taiwan, Russia – Chechnya, etc). Thus, from the neo-conservative perspective, Lebanon, Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and others are just episodes in the same neo-conservative project, namely the ‘Fourth World War’ invented by Eliot Cohen and popularised by ex-CIA director James Woolsey. Even if we successfully avert one crisis, neo-conservatives are always busy planning the next. In essence that political strategy is reassuringly mimetic: once a specific war project has bedded in, its supposed chivalry is loudly trumpeted, bundled up in a morally righteous and infallible narrative—in essence the legitimisation of US neo-imperialism—and stitched into the political fabric of contemporary America. It is in this sense that neo-conservatism reveals itself as war—a war continued by other means. The perverse irony of this malicious ideology is that it makes us think that it serves the liberation of mankind.

Notes

- 1 Abu Nasr Farabi, ‘Kitab al-burhan’ (Paraphrase of Aristotle’s *Analytica Posteriora*), in Seyyed Hossein Nasr with Mehdi Aminrazavi (eds), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, Vol I, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p 94.
- 2 Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, London: Continuum, 2004, p 361.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p 203.
- 4 Farabi, ‘Kitab al-burhan’, pp 98–99.
- 5 I am drawing on the sociological theory of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann here. See Berger & Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, New York: Anchor Books, 1966. See also Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, ‘Islamic utopian romanticism and the foreign policy culture of Iran’, *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 14 (3), 2005, pp 265–292.
- 6 For such ‘realist’ approaches to the international politics of West Asia, see Raymond Hinnebusch & Anoushiravan Ehteshami (eds), *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, London: Lynne Rienner, 2002; Shibley Telhami, *Power and Leadership in International Bargaining: The Path to the Camp David Accords*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990; and Barry Buzan & Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. For a study in the neo-realist, Waltzian tradition, see Birthe Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, Richmond, UK: Curzon, 2000. For a discussion of the various approaches, see Raymond Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003; and

- Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *The International Politics of the Persian Gulf: A Cultural Genealogy*, London: Routledge, 2006.
- 7 See Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
 - 8 See, further, Adib-Moghaddam, *International Politics of the Persian Gulf*, esp chs 1, 5.
 - 9 The necessarily imperfect term 'neo-conservative' denotes those functionaries, bureaucrats, decision makers and academics who advocate an offensive and ideologised foreign policy posture for the USA. The most prominent proponents are Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Elliott Abrams, Douglas Feith, Michael Ledeen, Charles Krauthammer, Jeane J Kirkpatrick and William Kristol. See Julie Kosterlitz, 'The neoconservative moment', *National Journal*, 17 May 2003, pp 1540–1546. In the 7 April 2002 issue of the *New Statesman*, Michael Lind described the emergence of US neoconservatism as follows: 'How did they get the name? Many of them started off as anti-Stalinist leftists or liberals. They are products of the largely Jewish American Trotskyist movement of the 1930s and 1940s, which morphed into anti-communist liberalism between the 1950s and 1970s and finally into a kind of militaristic and imperial right with no precedents in American culture or political history. They call their revolutionary ideology "Wilsonianism" (after President Woodrow Wilson), but it is really Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution mingled with the far-right Likud strain of Zionism.' For a history of US neo-conservatism, see Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979; and Herbert von Borch, *Amerika—Dekadenz und Größe*, Munich: R Piper & Co, 1981, esp p 121ff. For a recent analysis of neo-conservative grand strategy, see, among others, Andrew J Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; and John Bellamy Foster, 'Naked Imperialism', *Monthly Review*, 57 (4), 2005, at <http://www.monthlyreview.org/nakedimperialism.htm>, accessed 12 May 2006.
 - 10 For the term 'international society', see Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, London: Macmillan, 1995.
 - 11 On discursive formations, see Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans AM Sheridan Smith, London: Routledge, 1989. See also Edward W Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.
 - 12 On this point, see John Mearsheimer & Stephen Walt, 'The Israel lobby', *London Review of Books*, 28 (6), 23 March 2006, at <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/mear01.html>, accessed 23 May 2006.
 - 13 See, further, Adib-Moghaddam, *International Politics of the Persian Gulf*, chs 3, 4.
 - 14 The phrase 'Anyone can go to Baghdad. Real men go to Tehran' has been attributed to a senior Bush official in May 2003.
 - 15 See Leon T Hadar, 'The "neocons": from the Cold War to the "global intifada"', *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, April 1991, pp 27–46, at <http://www.washington-report.org/backissues/0491/9104027.htm>, accessed 23 August 2006; Michael Lind, 'A tragedy of errors', *The Nation*, 23 February 2004, at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040223/lind>, accessed 28 August 2006; and Leila Hudson, 'Lessons from Wal-Mart and the Wehrmacht: Team Wolfowitz on administration in the information age', *Middle East Policy*, XI (2), 2004, at http://www.mepc.org/journal_vol11/0406_hudson.asp, accessed 1 September 2006.
 - 16 The authors accurately observe that the lobby, while predominantly Jewish, also includes prominent Christian evangelicals and non-Jewish neo-conservatives such as former CIA Director Woolsey and former Education Secretary William Bennett. Mearsheimer and Walt, 'The Israel lobby'.
 - 17 See, among others, Joel Beinin, 'Pro-Israel hawks and the second Gulf war', *Middle East Online*, 6 April 2006, at <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero040603.html>, accessed 4 September 2006; and Karen Kwiatkowski, 'The new Pentagon Papers', *Salon*, 10 March 2004, at http://dir.salon.com/story/opinion/feature/2004/03/10/osp_moveon/index.html, accessed 2 September 2006.
 - 18 Brian Whitaker, 'US think tanks give lessons in foreign policy,' *Guardian*, 19 August 2002. See also his 'Selective Memri', *Guardian*, 12 August 2002.
 - 19 All material pertaining to the Project is quoted from documents accessible at <http://www.newamericancentury.org/>, accessed 12 August 2005.
 - 20 In that capacity Abrams also invited Iranian exiles and separatists to a meeting at the White House in July 2006.
 - 21 See also Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, 'The neo-conservative *asabiyya*', *State of Nature*, 4, 2006, at <http://www.stateofnature.org/neoconservativeAsabiyya.html>, accessed 12 August 2006.
 - 22 See also Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, 'Inventions of the Iran–Iraq war', *Critique*, forthcoming.
 - 23 Mearsheimer & Walt, 'The Israel lobby'.
 - 24 Quoted from the Institute's webpage, at www.religionandpolicy.org, accessed 12 July 2006.
 - 25 See Golnaz Yazdchi, 'Santorum portrays Iran as top source of "Islamic fascism"', calls for regime change', *National Iranian–American Council*, 21 July 2006.
 - 26 Brian Bennett, Elaine Shannon & Adam Zagorin, 'A web of intrigue: inside the Israel espionage investigation', *Time Magazine*, 5 September 2004.

- 27 'Pentagon man jailed over spying', BBC, 20 January 2006.
- 28 See <http://www.onejerusalem.org>, accessed 12 August 2006. The organisation is chaired by the aforementioned Natan Sharansky.
- 29 Available at <http://www.nationalreview.com/ledeen/ledeen200506160752.asp>, accessed 11 July 2006.
- 30 Available at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/commentary/20050616-100858-6525r.htm>, accessed 5 July 2006.
- 31 Available at http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all.pubID.22685.pub_detail.asp, accessed 8 July 2006.
- 32 John Simpson, 'Iran's new leader: a familiar face?', BBC, 28 June 2005.
- 33 See further Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, 'The pluralistic momentum in Iran and the future of the reform movement', *Third World Quarterly*, 27 (4), 2006, pp 665–674.
- 34 Available at <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/2814>, accessed 25 July 2005.
- 35 Available at <http://weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/006/617pwzfq.asp>, accessed 25 July 2005.
- 36 <http://weeklystandard.com/comment/berman200601190821.asp>, accessed 27 July 2005.
- 37 For a critical commentary in Persian, see Farid Marjai, 'konferanc-e holocaust va diplomac-ye Iran' (The holocaust conference and Iran's diplomacy), *Ettemad Melli*, 259, 29 Azar 1385 (20 December 2006), p 11.
- 38 This is another similarity to the build-up to the invasion of Iraq, when the US media played a key role in reproducing and thereby disseminating both the 'Hitler–Hussein' and 'US–New World Order' analogies. In a study on the number of stories citing Saddam Hussein and Adolf Hitler, and the New World Order in the the *Washington Post* before, during and after the second Gulf war, Shaw and Martin found out a direct correlation between the intensity of conflict and the employment of the phrases by the *Post's* reporters. In the pre-war period between 30 June 1990 and 1 August 1990 Hussein and Hitler were mentioned twice (an average of 0.06 news stories per day) and the New World Order phrase not at all (obviously because the phrase had not yet entered the jargon of US policy makers and Iraq had not yet invaded Kuwait). In the build-up to the US offensive from 2 August 1990 to 15 January 1991, the Hussein–Hitler analogy was used 118 times (an average of 0.71 news stories per day) and the New World Order phrase 50 times (an average of 0.30 stories per day). During the air war from 16 January 1991 to 22 February 1991 the Hussein–Hitler comparison was referred to 39 times (an average of 1.03 times per day) and the New World Order phrase was mentioned 45 times (an average of 1.18 numbers of stories per day). During the US offensive on the ground, that is in a period of four days between 23 February 1991 and 27 February 1991, the Hussein–Hitler analogy was mentioned seven times (an average of 1.40 number of stories per day) and the New World Order norm five times (an average of one story per day). The employment of both phrases decreased in the post-war period between 28 February 1991 and 30 March 1991. The Hitler–Hussein comparison was made seven times (an average of 0.23 stories per day) and the New World Order phrase was used 21 times (an average of 0.68 news stories per day). See Donald L Shaw & Shannon E Martin, 'The natural, and inevitable, phases of war reporting: historical shadows, new communication in the Persian Gulf', in Robert E Denton Jr (ed), *The Media and the Persian Gulf War*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993, p 53.
- 39 Available at <http://www.ivanyi-consultants.com/articles/aboutiran.html>, accessed 29 July 2005.
- 40 Charles Krauthammer, 'In Iran, arming for Armageddon', *Washington Post*, 16 December 2005, emphasis added.
- 41 Bernard Lewis, 'August 22: does Iran have something in store?', *Wall Street Journal*, 8 August 2006.
- 42 Kenneth R Timmerman, 'Is Iran's Ahmadinejad a messianic medium?', *Daily Star*, 30 December 2005.
- 43 See, further, Ron Jacobs, 'Kenneth Timmerman's Iranian "democracy" and the "intelligence" summit', *Monthly Review Webzine*, 1 February 2006, at <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/jacobs010206.html>, accessed 12 May 2006.
- 44 Marc Perelman, 'US probes diplomacy on Iran nukes', *Forward*, 27 January 2006.
- 45 See, as another example, William Kristol, 'Unacceptable? Is the America of 2006 more willing to thwart the unacceptable than the France of 1936?', *The Weekly Standard*, 11, 24 April 2006.
- 46 Before the Islamic revolution, between 1972 and 1979, Taheri was executive editor-in-chief of *Kayhan*, one of Iran's main daily newspapers.
- 47 Amir Taheri, 'A colour code for Iran's infidels', *National Post*, 19 May 2006.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 Jim Lobe, 'Iran the target of disinformation campaign', *Inter Press Service*, 23 May 2006.
- 50 Larry Cohler-Essess, 'Bunkum from Benador', *The Nation*, 3 July 2006, at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060703/cohleresses>, accessed 3 September 2006.
- 51 Guy Dinmore, 'Bush and Blair meet Iranian opposition', *Financial Times*, 31 May 2006.
- 52 Jim Lobe, 'Iran showdown tests power of "Israel lobby"', *Inter Press Service*, 12 April 2006.
- 53 Jay Solomon & Andrew Higgins, 'Exiled Iranian has another run as US informant', *Wall Street Journal*, 13 July 2006.

- 54 Shervin Boloorian, 'Fakhravar stands with neoconservatives, calls for US sponsored regime change in Iran', *National Iranian – American Council*, 24 July 2006.
- 55 Toby Harnden, 'Ex-student hailed as Iran's hope', *Sunday Telegraph*, 2 July 2006.
- 56 Quoted in *ibid*.
- 57 Jim Lobe, 'The demagogue neocons love to hate', *Inter Press Service*, 25 January 2006.
- 58 Peter Konradi, 'Iran as bad as Nazis: Merkel', *Sunday Times*, 5 February 2006, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-2025730,00.html>, 2 September 2006.
- 59 Quoted in *ibid*.
- 60 Joseph Farah, 'Gingrich sees Iran threat to US like Nazi Germany: ex-Speaker latest official to raise alarm on threat of nuclear EMP attack by Tehran', *WorldNetDaily*, 20 November 2005, at http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=47501, accessed 12 July 2006.
- 61 This is expressed from a neo-conservative perspective in Irwin Stelzer (ed), *Neoconservatism*, London: Atlantic, 2004.
- 62 See, further, Adib-Moghaddam, *International Politics of the Persian Gulf*, esp section 4.3.1.1. For the new militarism in US foreign policy, see Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*, New York: Metropolitan, 2004; Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*, New York: Metropolitan, 2003; Carl Boggs (ed), *Masters of War: Militarism and Blowback in the Era of American Empire*, London: Routledge, 2003; Clyde Prestowitz, *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions*, New York: Basic, 2004; Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire*, London: Verso, 2003; John Bellamy Foster, *Naked Imperialism: The US Pursuit of Global Dominance*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2006; and Bacevic, *The New American Militarism*.
- 63 <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/Summaries/V113I2P21-1.htm>, accessed 24 July 2006.
- 64 'Bush's United States Military Academy graduation speech', *Washington Post*, 2 June 2002.
- 65 Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>, accessed 24 July 2006, emphasis added.
- 66 Available at <http://www.business.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-2125207,00.html>, accessed 2 July 2006.
- 67 Available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-17.html>, accessed 10 July 2006.
- 68 Mike Allen & Barton Gellman, 'Preemptive strikes part of US strategic doctrine: "all options" open for countering unconventional arms', *Washington Post*, 11 December 2002.
- 69 Available at <http://www.law.cornell.edu/background/warpower/sj23.pdf#search=%22US%20Senate%20Joint%20Resolution%2023%20%22>, accessed 12 August 2006.
- 70 Alan Dershowitz, 'Amend international law to allow preemptive strike on Iran', *Forward*, 20 August 2004.
- 71 Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf>, accessed 4 July 2006.
- 72 *Ibid*.
- 73 Available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/12/AR2006031201016.html>, accessed 4 July 2006.
- 74 Guy Dinmore, 'US marines probe tensions among Iran's minorities', *Financial Times*, 23 February 2006.
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