

BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

**Examining the Connection
Between Leo Strauss and Neoconservatism
Bachelor Thesis**

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Declaration of originality

I hereby declare that the submitted bachelor thesis is my own work that has not been published elsewhere. All of the sources used in this thesis are cited and referenced in the Bibliography.

In Bratislava, April 30th 2013

Maroš Kost'

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis examines the relationship between political philosophy of Leo Strauss and political theory and practice of the political movement called Neoconservatism. It will scrutinize the relevance of claims by scholars and publicists elaborated mainly after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, that seek to trace the inspiration of G. W. Bush administration policies back to the political thoughts of Leo Strauss. Method of testing the alleged link between Leo Strauss and ideas advanced by Neoconservatives, is to evaluate argumentation of some crucial Works linking these ideas to Strauss, and consequently to contrast it with political thinking of Leo Strauss itself.

The first part describes the features of Neoconservatism as a political movement with its key intellectuals and government officials. In this part also the very brief presentation of Leo Strauss will be advanced. The second and third chapter present argumentation advanced by media writers and by scholar of political philosophy Shadia Drury which links Neoconservative ideas to Strauss. The fourth chapter will present relevant ideas of Leo Strauss and complex Picture of his philosophy, and compare it with interpretations of Strauss s' ideas that make him the alleged inspiration of Neoconservative ideology.

Conclusion to which this bachelor thesis leads is that argumentation which links Strauss to Neoconservative policies of fostering democracy by intervention and regime change is misplaced, while the second broad theme regularly advanced, the presentation of Bush administration as

a representation of governance of philosophers that rule over masses by deception, and Strauss as author of that idea, is an indefensible speculation. This thesis also concludes that several of the theoretical themes that Drury uses to substantiate alleged Strauss-Neoconservatism connection, are marked by the Drury's misinterpretation of Strauss's works. Thus Drury fails to provide plausible theoretical basis for the alleged connection.

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Abstrakt

Predmetom tejto bakalárskej práce je skúmanie vzťahu medzi politickou filozofiou Lea Straussa a politickou teóriou a praktickou politikou Neokonzervativizmu. Táto práca preverí relevanciu tvrdení akademikov a publicistov, formulovaných prevažne v období po americkej invázii do Iraku roku 2003, ktoré vykresľujú inšpiráciu politiky administratívy G. W. Busha politickým myslením Lea Straussa. Metódou testovania údajného spojenia medzi Straussom a ideami neokonzervatistov, je zhodnotenie argumentácie niektorých kľúčových prác, ktoré spájajú tieto ideje so Straussom, a ich následné kontrastovanie so samotným politickým myslením Straussa. Prvá časť popisuje znaky politického hnutia Neokonzervativizmu spolu s jeho kľúčovými intelektuálmi a vládnymi činiteľmi. V tejto časti bude taktiež ponúknutá stručná charakteristika Straussa a jeho myslenia. Druhá a tretia kapitola prezentuje argumentáciu ponúknutú mediálnymi autormi a akademičkou politickej filozofie Shadiou Drury, ktorá spája ideje Neokonzervativizmu so Straussom. Štvrtá kapitola sa venuje rozboru niektorých relevantných ideí Lea Straussa a vykresľuje komplexný obraz Straussovej filozofie, pričom tieto porovnáva s interpretáciami Straussových myšlienok, ktoré ho označujú za inšpiráciu neokonzervatívnej ideológie.

Záver ku ktorému táto bakalárska práca dospieva, je že argumentácia, ktorá spája Straussa s neokonzervatívnou politikou šírenia demokracie intervenciami a zmenami režimov, je nesprávna. Rovnako je neobhájitelnou

špekuláciou druhá, často zastávaná argumentácia, ktorá prezentuje administratívu G. W. Busha ako stelesnenie vlády filozofov, ktorí vládnu masám pomocou Iží, a Straussa ako autora tohoto konceptu. Táto práca taktiež tvrdí, že niekoľko teoretických tém, ktoré Drury používa na podporenie údajného spojenia Neokonzervativizmu so Straussom, sú roduktom chybnnej interpretácie Straussových textov Shadiou Drury. Drury teda zlyháva v snahe dodať údajnému spojeniu teoretický základ.

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Introduction

Was the Iraq war starting in 2003 fought for ideological causes? Or was the democratization of the country just pretext for reaching other goals? Are the Neoconservatives in Washington antidemocrats who ruled the country by mass deception and manipulation? All these claims were advanced in the past by many, and according to some the source who provided ideological pattern for each of these acclaimed policies was Leo Strauss. After the launch of Iraq war of 2003, that aimed on democratization of country, simultaneously, in America, there has immediately occurred a debate in political circles about parallels between ideas of Neoconservatives and philosophy of German emigree Leo Strauss, and about their alleged inspiration by Strauss. Critics of Strauss held opinion that his teachings has provided credence for policies of Neoconservatives, among which the most controversial was the promotion of regime change and of armed interventions in order to establish democracy by removing authoritarian regimes. There was only little written about Neoconservatives and their connection to Leo Strauss before the intervention of Iraq of 2003. The substantive presence of Neoconservative Republicans in then Bush administration led critics of Bush policies to search for ideological roots of these. By connecting some members of administration to Alan Bloom, the follower of Strauss, and to Leo Strauss himself, critics readily pointed at number of so called Straussians in Bush administration, and thus traced the ideological background of the administration as well. However the most of the literature assuming the connection has not been produced by scholars who made honest effort to study Strauss's works, but by political commentators and journalists. Their papers lack in substantiating their claims by relevant quotations by Strauss and in order to legitimize their assumptions they often turn to the apparent authority in the field Shadia Drury. This paper offers account of argumentation proposed by these authors, and it concludes that both broad themes into which their assumptions can be summarised, the idealistic theme of militant commitment to spread democracy and the

hardedged realistic theme of elitism and public manipulation, have not legitimate foundation in the teaching of Leo Strauss. This paper also argues that the Drury's interpretation of Strauss, which is mostly the source of inspiration for the media authors, is grossly mistaken. There surely is the connection between the teaching of Leo Strauss and the Neoconservatism. There might be several parallel ideas to be found among the two, same as they can be found among Strauss and other political movements. But surely the connection has a different character than Drury and her colleagues assume.

Basic Assumptions

This chapter will present Leo Strauss and Neoconservatism whose relationship is the subject of examination of this work. It will briefly describe Neoconservatism as a political movement with its key theoretical proponents and political representatives. Also it will introduce Leo Strauss and some basic features of his philosophic work, crucial for understanding of detailed analysis of his ideas presented in chapter four, which are considered by some to be inspirational for Neoconservatism.

Leo Strauss

Leo Strauss was born in 1899 in Kirch-Hain, Hessen, Germany. Raised as an orthodox Jew he studied at the universities of Marburg and Hamburg. He spent his postdoctoral year at Freiburg, where Husserl was the professor of philosophy and the young Heidegger was his assistant. From there Strauss went to Berlin and held a position at the Academy of Jewish Research, until in 1932 he received a Rockefeller Grant, left Germany and eventually settled in the United States (Bloom, 1990, pp. 235,236). He taught at university of Chicago from 1949 to 1967 where he had become an extraordinarily influential teacher. He wrote books interpreting wide range of texts and authors and investigating the fundamental problems of political philosophy. His primary interests as a political philosopher was what he considered to be the crisis of the West. The true crisis was the lost of belief in its purpose, in its superiority. Since Strauss understood modern West as being constituted by a purpose of the construction of a universal society of free and equal nations of free and equal men and women enjoying universal affluence, which came to characterize the West only in modernity, the lost of belief in that purpose led to the crisis of the West (Cropsey, 1987, p. 908). By his challenge of social

science based on the fact-value distinction he aroused the indignation of many social scientists. Strauss held that liberal democracy is the only decent and just alternative available to modern man. At the same time he was aware that liberal democracy is exposed to both practical and theoretical threats. He studied reasons for abandonment of reason by most modern philosophers. (Bloom, 1990, pp. 238, 239). Strauss spoke against doctrines of historicism and relativism which rejected political philosophy in its original form and have led to the theoretical crisis. For Strauss this theoretical crisis had consequences in the practical crisis, as it made wholehearted defence of the West impossible. It deprived liberal democracy of belief in the rationality of its purpose and standards. The tension between reason and revelation represented by Athens and Jerusalem Strauss considered to be the core, the nerve of Western intellectual history, the secret of the vitality of Western civilization. By refuting revelation modern philosophy has put an end to that conflict (Cropsey, 1987, pp. 909, 910). Strauss has rediscovered the lost art of writing. By studying Medieval Jewish thinker Maimonides and his predecessor and inspirator Farabi, an Islamic thinker, Strauss became aware that these Medieval thinkers practiced a forgotten art of writing. They used esoteric and exoteric language in their writings to hide their intentions from all but a select few. Strauss discovered these thinkers used esoteric writing to deliver true, private teaching, which could be observed only by a few truly initiated to the philosophic art. The exoteric side of writings, the level observable by uninitiates, delivered the teaching which was dedicated for public consumption (Bloom, 1990, p. 243).

Neoconservatism

“Neoconservatives are the first seriously intellectual movement on the American right since the 19th century. Neoconservatives are unipolarists who want to remake international order under U.S. hegemony, destroy American

enemies and eliminate UN and other international institutions making a claim to international jurisdiction.” (Pfaff, 2003)

Neoconservatism has emerged on the U.S. political spectrum by the early 1970s. At its inception, nearly all representatives of this political movement were either former socialists like Arnold Beichman, Sidney Hook, Emanuel Muravchik; old liberals (some of them former socialist) such as Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Irving Kristol, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Ben Wattenberg; or a ‘refugees’ from the New Left like Norman podhoretz or Michael novvak (Dorrien, 2004, p. 7). Neoconservatism didn’t originate as the ideological offshoot of Conservatism. The first generation of Neocons felt that they had nothing in common with what Conservatism in America at that time stood for. These political figures and intellectuals were firstly labeled Neoconservatives by Michael Harrington and his colleagues in the Democratic party to clearly separate them from dominant faction in party (Dorrien, 2004, p. 7). He wanted to excommunicate from the Democratic party the group which stood in opposition to the form of liberalism dominant in the Democratic party at the time. Neoconservatives had felt that Democratic party had lost its bearings. Then democratic party stood for appeasement and politics of liberal guilt, while Neoconservatives stood for a self-confident and militantly interventionist Americanism. To them, good liberalism was expansionist, nationalistic, and fiercely anticommunist; it preferred patriotic values that were sneered by the liberal elite (Dorrien, 2004, p. 7). Neocons despaired over the ascension of antiwar activism, feminism and moralistic idealism in the democratic party. However, the name Neoconservatives stuck with the group, because despite their lack of any connection to political right at the outset of their transformation, Neocons begun to align themselves with the political right, and accepted the label Neoconservative. Irving Kristol, the big name of Neoconservatism, was first who already in early 1970s joined the Republican party, while he had adopted rightwing economic ideas and admittedly moved toward some kind of Conservatism (Dorrien, 2004, p. 9). Others like Bell or Moniham distanced themselves from Neoconservatism after it had become Republican movement. The crucial moment of

Neoconservative separation from Democratic party came with foreign policy issues in the Carter era. The American foreign policy of appeasement managed by democratic president led to the surrendering to the Soviet power throughout the world, and had accomplished Neoconservative turn to the Republican party (Dorrien, 2004, p. 9).

By the coming of Ronald Reagan in 1980s Neoconservatives already were not unhappy with their label at all. The term legitimized their place in the Republican party, while distinguishing Neocons from other forms of Conservatism which were less urbane, ethnic and ideological than Neoconservatism. Many Neocons won highranking positions already in Reagan's administration. Among others Eliot Abrams, Kenneth Adelman, Chester Fin, Robert Kagan, Max Kampelman, Jeane Kirkpatrick, William Kristol, Richard Perley, Eugene Rostow and Paul Wolfowitz (Dorrien, 2004, p. 10). Neocons provided intellectual credence to military buildup and anti-communist foreign policy of the era.

Neoconservatives had enjoyed period of largest influence during G.W. Bush administrations. Neocons influenced Bush administration decisions on supply-side economy, tax cuts, the erosion of the wall separating church and state, bioethics and stem cell research. Many Neoconservatives such as Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis Libby, Eliot Abrams, Douglas Feith, Richard Perley, David Frum, David Horowitz, Murray Friedman, Bernard Lewis, Michael Ledeen or Robert Kagan held prominent positions in administration (Abrams, 2010, p. 1). When considering the core ideas and principles that are characteristic of Neoconservatism, it is necessary to distinguish between at least two distinctive generations of the movement adherents with varying opinions on substantial issues. It is usually overlooked, especially when elaborating on alleged inspiration of Neoconservative policies by thoughts of Leo Strauss, that Neoconservative persuasions came through substantial changes since the time of its emergence in sixties through Reagan period until its contemporary form which it has acquired during the post Cold War era. Like Gary Dorrien writes, two pairs of fathers and sons symbolize this crucial shift in Neoconservative perception of US foreign policy performance. George H.W.

Bush and Irving Kristol are, Despite being willing interventionists, realists who rejected visionary foreign causes (Dorrien, 2004, p. 16). First president Bush didn't went on to conquerre Iraq to topple dictatorial rule of Sadam Hussain and to install democratic regime in its place. President George W. Bush and many of his administration officials were influenced by the leading advocate of neoimperial "American Greatness" William Kristol who maintained that true Neoconservatism was about the aggressive promotion of pro-American liberal democracy throughout the world (Dorrien, 2004, p. 17). Approach to the question of democratization of the world makes the most principal ideological difference existing among various proponents of Neoconservatism. That difference divides Neoconservatism into universalistic democratizers or Democratic Globalists and democratic realists who are skeptical about implementing democracy throughout the world. The division of Neocons into these two categories also with a few exceptions fits also the division of Neocons into old and the younger generation. The old generation with figures like Irving Kristol, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Charles Krauthamer or John Bolton is predominantly advocating democratic realism and almost whole of the younger generation which became part of a movement in the times of unparalleled American strength after the Cold War period with a few figures from the older one are typically a Democratic Globalists (Dorrien, 2004, p. 4).

Joshua Muravchik, the Neoconservative intellectual himself, in 2007 wrote that since Carter era Neocon movement coalesced around four core Beliefs which united Neocons for thirty years to come; They were moralists who despised not only communism but also all dictators and tyrants, and who endorsed spread of American values. Secondly, They were internationalists in the Churchillian sense, who believed that disturbances tolerated in one place are likely to repeat in another and since American security can be threatened far from home it was prudent to eliminate the troubles at the outset, rather than waitt them to mature and grow nearer. Third, Neoconservatives believed that in confronting evil or determined adversary military force is the only efficient instrument, while economic sanctions, diplomacy or UN intervention were just meaningless alternatives. The fourth core idea, Muravchik says, was the belief in democracy both at home and abroad (Muravchik, 2007). As

Abrams writes, Neoconservative ideas helped to revive the spirit of a Wilsonian interventionist, democratic internationalist and unilaterally globalist foreign policy implacably opposed to totalitarianism (Abrams, 2010, p. 1)

In 1997 at the time when the geopolitical threat of communism was the matter of history and the coalition of any imaginable combination of states could pose no real danger to United States, Neocons expressed their objections about the way that Clinton administration had operated with the U.S. position of global predominance. In the Statement of Principles by the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) think-tank signed by Neocons like Eliot Abrams, Paul Wolfowitz, Francis Fukuyama, Norman Podhoretz, I. Lewis Libby, William J. Bennett among others and also by other conservative unilateralists like Donald Rumsfeld or Dick Cheney they argued against incoherency of Clinton's foreign and defence policies. The essential element of their approach to foreign policy is to increase US defence budget to the level that it would maintain American security and advance American interests in the new century (PNAC, 1997). Signatures of this PNAC statement argue for the US military strength that should support a foreign policy which boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad. They declared as well, that America has to take a position of global leadership to fulfill its vital role in maintaining peace and security in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East for to avoid challenges to its interests that could stem from abandoning its global responsibilities (Ibid.). The signatures stated that the cause of American global leadership was at the time neglected what in their opinion had led to the need of four consequential measures to implement into US foreign policy. Those core principles that should be adopted by the administration in order to assume the role of American global leadership are: the need to increase defense spending significantly; the need to strengthen American ties to its democratic allies and to challenge regimes hostile to American interests and values; the need to promote political and economic freedom home and abroad; and finally the need to accept responsibility for America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to American security, prosperity and principles (PNAC, 1997).

“The Bush Doctrine—the right of the United States to wage preemptive war—represented the ultimate crystallization of neoconservative thinking” (Abrams, 2010, p. 1).

The Mastermind behind Neocon Policies

The matter of this chapter is to present and to examine core issue of this work. That is first of all to present the alleged connection between Leo Strauss and Neoconservatives as proposed by some writers and political journalists with all its variableness.

It may not come as a surprise that political philosopher of a format as Leo Strauss has left kind of personal imprint in the political thinking of his age which couldn't be overlooked. Although Strauss was more of an interpreter of old philosophic texts than a herald of his own philosophic endeavour he also didn't lack in expressing himself about what he saw as the issues of political philosophy of his time. Whatever kind of acclaimed connection between Strauss and Neoconservatives proposed by variety of authors on the topic would be considered, they all have been developed from Strauss's primary academic concern- his fight against forces of historicism and positivism. However, at the time when political philosophy as such in America practically ceased to exist and was supplemented by positivism and historicism, Strauss's lifelong opposition to that condition of political thinking was especially appealing not only to Neoconservatives. As Paul Gottfried in his book *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America* mentions, Neoconservatives as well as Catholics and American intellectual right in general has welcomed Strauss and his followers with open arms because of his interpretations and political stands as a means of combating what were considered to be the all-pervasive dangers of relativism and nihilism produced by the forces of positivism and historicism (Gottfried, 2012, p. 4). However, the character of the inspiration of the Neoconservative movement by teachings of Leo Strauss is the subject of academic and public dispute.

Although the presence of Neoconservative elements was strongly felt already in both Reagan's administrations of eighties, and in that of first Bush as well, The theme of Leo Strauss Neoconservatives connection erupted in

the full scale in the media only in 2003 shortly after the US invasion of Iraq. After that event many mainstream political journals in the US and in Europe and Asia as well published articles by authors who traced the logic of the invasion to the teachings of the political philosopher Leo Strauss. Although the claims of particular authors on the topic were varying in some aspects, they all were unanimous in the claim that Leo Strauss is the mastermind behind the Neoconservative policies. Also in their analyses they were implicitly unanimous in presupposing that Bush administration policies towards Iraq were navigated by Neoconservatives in the administration. James Atlas in the New York Times claims that the Bush administration's foreign policy is entirely a Straussian creation, and he takes seriously the claim that the Iraq war of 2003 turns out to have been nothing less than a defense of Western civilization as interpreted by the late classicist and political philosopher Leo Strauss (Atlas, 2003). Jeet Heer in the Boston Globe informs the readers that despite his life of quiet scholarly obscurity, Strauss has exerted a strong posthumous sway among those who bustle through the corridors of power, and that we live in a world increasingly shaped by him (Heer, 2003). The Economist identifies Strauss as the latest from the list of alleged puppeteers pulling the strings of G. W. Bush (The Economist, 2003). In the article The Long Reach of Leo Strauss William Pfaff states that Strauss's followers are in charge of US foreign policy, and that Strauss has been the main intellectual influence on Neoconservatives (Pfaff, 2003). Earl Shorris in his work Leo Strauss George Bush and the Philosophy of Mass Deception claims that since the Reagan administration Strauss's disciples methodically infected and then corrupted the government of the most powerful nation on Earth, firstly in social policy and then more particularly in the department of defense (Shorris, 2004). Also before the media attention which Leo Strauss earned after the start of Iraq war of 2003, there were published several articles linking Strauss with the ideological framework of Neoconservatives, however, they were in their number incomparable to the latest wave of the discourse. Brent Staples in the article Undemocratic Vistas has identified Leo Strauss as being particularly influential on the Reagan and the first Bush administrations (Staples, 1994). All of these media publications

were to some degree varying in their interpretations of what Strauss had thought or said, but they were unanimous in claiming that teaching of Strauss has provided intellectual foundation for “Neoconservative policies”. The method by which these media writers has come to their conclusion has followed according to the subsequent pattern: Firstly they have identified the US. government as affiliated by Neoconservatives, and have ascribed to those Neoconservative political figures in administration a deciding role in the decision making process of a particular event. Regarding the latest discourse of the matter, those were either alleged policy of armed democratization of Iraq, or the means by which then US. administration has pursued that policy. Consequently, depending on the particular interpretation of one or the other policy by the commentators, they have figured out what Strauss had to think in order to provide intellectual credence for the practical policies the authors are attempting to explain. In general they omit to quote Strauss himself or even to refer to some of his Works. In the Works of the media writers who elaborated on the Strauss- Neoconservatives connection two broad themes stand out and are in combination or separately circulating in most of the connection-claiming literature. The first one is what could be described as the “militant commitment to the worldwide spread of liberal democracy”; the second theme concerns what concerned authors portray as sort of evil elitism.

The first theme explains the purpose of Bush foreign policy. It presupposes the democratization of the country to be an ultimate purpose of US. invasion into Iraq of 2003. It elaborates on the persuasion of so called Neoconservative Democratic Globalists who has endorsed spread of democracy throughout the world, and traces the idea of fighting war for such an idealistic purposes to teachings of Leo Strauss. James Atlas ascribes the policy of armed democratization practiced by Bush administration to Strauss’s concern about fragility of liberal democracy. Atlas claims Strauss believed that to make the world safe for the western democracy, one must make the whole globe democratic, each country in itself as well as the society of nations (Atlas, 2003). Catherine and Michael Zuckerts claim that this theme which they refer to as Straussian Wilsonianism or Idealism, authors base on

Strauss's concern about historicism and positivism which produce relativism in political thinking (Zuckert & Zuckert, 2006). Moral relativism underlayed also dominant foreign policy approaches of the era. The extreme consequence of relativism in political thinking was the theory of the convergence of the United States and the Soviet Union, which was much in vogue in 1960s and the 1970s (Frachon & Vernet, 2003). Strauss and Straussians allegedly affirmed the necessity for moral clarity instead of value relativism and the drifting foreign policy established under it (Zuckert & Zuckert, 2006, p. 4). Strauss's influence on US. foreign policy is linked to his tendency to view the world as a place where isolated liberal democracies live in constant danger from hostile elements abroad, and face threats that must be confronted vigorously (Hersh, 2003). Strauss's concern about moral cognitivism and his view of the vulnerability of liberal democracy to which he was comitted doesn't alone endorse the logic of policy of armed democratization. Those who elaborate on the "idealistic militant democratization" theme claim it by combining Strauss's concern of moral clarity, with his devotion to liberal democracy and with so called Straussian notion of regime. To support they claim about provision of intellectual credence by Strauss for policies of militant democratization authors unanimously quote William Kristol, one of the prominent Neoconservative intellectuals. Kristol claims Strauss has restored a political science that places the regime in the forefront of analysis, and that president Bush's advocacy of "regime change" is a not altogether unworthy product of Strauss's rehabilitation of the notion of regime (Lenzner & Kristol, 2003). Building on Strauss's concern about fragility of liberal democracy, need of moral clarity in combination with Straussian notion of regime the authors commenting on the first theme have assumed that Strauss and Neoconservatives held that nature of political regimes is much more important than all institutions or international arrangements for keeping peace in the World. The greatest danger comes from states that do not share the (American) values of democracy, and to change those regimes and encourage spread of democratic values constitutes the best means of strenghtening the security (of the United States) and peace (Frachon & Vernet, 2003).

The second broad theme proposed by authors who assert inspiration of Neoconservative policies by Strauss is what could be named as evil elitism. This theme is in the mainstream media also connected to the Iraq war and to the Bush foreign policies in general. While the first theme of the commitment to spread liberal democracy is used to explain purpose of Bush (Neoconservative) foreign policy, the second theme serves to explain the means by which that purpose has been pursued. It explains the means by which Bush administration sought to procure consent to the Iraq war. As the authors elaborating on the first theme has presupposed that the aim of Iraq war was democratization of the country, the second theme presupposes that the means by which Bush administration tried to procure consent for the invasion were deliberate lies. In particular apparently false claims about the weapons of mass destruction, apparently false claims about existing connection between the attacks of 9/11 and Saddam Hussein, and later the claims about linkages between Al Qaeda and Iraq in general. The authors who endorse the Strauss- Neoconservatives connection through that theme conclude it by linking controversial means by which Bush administration has justified Iraq war to the so called Straussian concepts of elitism and of noble lie. The logic of the alleged connection between mentioned concepts and theoretical substrate of Neoconservative affiliated Bush administration is as follows. Bush administration had used apparent lies to get United States into war. There were numerous Neoconservatives at the high-ranking positions in that administration. Neoconservatism as a political movement might held Leo Strauss as one of its crucial theoretical inspirations. So the lies that Bush administration has used had to be endorsed by the group of Neoconservative officials who picked on the so called concept of Noble lie of their intellectual mentor Strauss. Since the Noble lie is allegedly in Strauss's political philosophy used by elites in order to hide truths that are not fit for public consumption, Neoconservative officials had to establish themselves as that elite since they are the qualified ones for using Noble lies.

Authors who endorse the second theme claim that for Strauss the best regime is one in which the leaders govern moderately and prudently, curbing

the passions of the mob while allowing a small philosophical elite to pursue the contemplative life of the mind. Such a philosophical elite may discover truths that are not fit for public consumption, therefore it may use esoteric and exoteric language in order to keep it for the intelligent few rather than the ignorant many (Heer, 2003). William Pfaff holds that teaching of Strauss was a bleak and anti-utopian philosophy that goes against practically everything Americans want to believe. It contradicts the conventional wisdom of modern democratic society (Pfaff, 2003) .

Earl Shorris in his essay *Leo Strauss, George Bush and the Philosophy of Mass Deception* informs readers that one of the great services that Strauss and his disciples have performed for the Bush regime has been the provision of a philosophy of the noble lie, the conviction that lies are virtuous and noble instruments of wise policy (Shorris, 2004).

As the common example of using the Strauss's noble lie concept by Neocons in Bush administration, authors point to the alleged deceitful intelligence conduct by one Straussian in Pentagon. Seymour Hersh in his essay depicts how the Pentagon's Special Plans Operation directed by Abram Shulsky, despite C.I.A. intelligence opposition, succeeded to persuade the president of the evidence about what Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld believed to be true- that Saddam Hussein had close ties to Al Qaeda and that Iraq had an enormous arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Hersh implies Abram Shulsky who received his doctorate under Strauss, and was a scholarly expert in his Works had in a way used Straussian teachings in helping to find the case for the war on Iraq through the selective intelligence. Shulsky has also published an essay on how Strauss's views might be applied to the intelligence-gathering process called *Leo Strauss and the World of Intelligence* (Hersh, 2003). However, this assumption of Hersh about intelligence materials being maneuvered by Shulsky led OSP in favor of the invasion, is not based on proper understanding of the process which pertained consent for the invasion. As Peter Minowitz writes, the report by the deputy inspector general for intelligence-review of the pre-Iraqi war activities of the Douglas Feith led Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy issued in February of

2007, “does chastise Feith’s office for promulgating PCTEG-generated assessments about Iraq’s relationship to Al-Qaida that were inconsistent with the consensus of the intelligence community”. PCTEG was the Policy Counterterrorism Evaluation Group, created by Feith after 9/11 To analyze intelligence reports about links between terrorist groups and host countries. In contrast to Hersh’s claims, the report concludes that the Shulsky led OSP had nothing to do with these inappropriate intelligence maneuvers (Minowitz, 2009, p. 24).

In the overview of the two mentioned themes which media authors conclude, there is obvious tension among the claims of the two. While the first theme concludes Strauss and Neoconservatives endorse militant spread of democracy for idealistic purposes, the second theme of elitism and noble lye implies Hard-edged realistic character of the Strauss’s teaching. Some authors made attempt to resolve this contradiction by emphasizing only one of the two themes, or by concluding that the first idealistic theme is only exoteric or public doctrine and serves only as a instrument of the ruling elite endorsed by the second realistic theme.

Shadia Drury and Leo Strauss

The attention that Strauss and Straussians had earned after the escalation in 2003 is only a part of the discourse regarding the topic. Besides the authors that have picked on the topic during the uproar of 2003 there are also scholars who unlike media writers made honest effort to study Strauss, and who have published complete books concerning the issue. Among those the most prominent and one whose critique of Strauss and his followers is the harshest one is a Canadian professor of political philosophy Shadia Drury. Drury has published two complete studies of Strauss in which she assumes the direct inspiration of Neoconservatism by Strauss's teachings. Both Works of Drury were published long before the last wave of interest about the issue, the first *Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* in 1988 (it was updated in 2005), and the other *Leo Strauss and the American Right* in 1999. Her work was also used as a source of arguments and quotations by many of the mainstream media authors. This chapter will argue that despite being by her scholar career better positioned to illuminate often equivocal and obscure teaching of Strauss, her interpretation of Strauss is in many aspects more distorted than the media analyses she has inspired. Moreover, the simplistic and reductionist character of her interpretation escalates by each of her publication. In her essay from 2003 she is already able to observe the parallels between Strauss's teaching and the tactics of Hitler. After enumerating of the resemblances between the two, she concludes by warning for the readers: "Anyone who wants to avoid the horrors of the Nazi past is well advised not to accept Strauss's version of ancient wisdom uncritically. But this is exactly what Strauss encouraged his students to do" (Drury, 2003).

Drury totally rejects the first alleged 'idealistic' theme of Strauss's teaching which we observe in the media. In her essay from 2003 she says that in contrary to the articles by James Atlas or Seymour Hersh which depict Strauss as the lover of freedom and democracy, Strauss had a profound antipathy to both liberalism and democracy (Drury, 2003). In her opinion the democratic idealism is only the surface while the hard-edged realism is

Strauss's esoteric true doctrine. Although Drury's interest in Strauss and Neoconservatives dates long before the wave of attention the topic has aroused after the start of Iraq war, by her media publications and the update of The book Political Ideas of Leo Strauss she readily joined those who had linked Iraq war to Strauss. Following from her assertion she ascribes Iraq war to the Strauss's concepts of elitism, noble lie and his concern about limitations of liberal democracy which Neoconservatives allegedly endorse. In Drury's view Strauss has endorsed the rule of wise who would stand above the law. The goal of the wise is to ennoble the vulgar, while only weeping, worshipping and sacrificing could serve as the means for that. Thus Drury concludes religion and war – perpetual war – would lift the masses from the anymality of bourgeois consumption and the preoccupation with creature comforts (Drury, 2003). In her view this is what the Iraq war represented. That quotation also summarizes almost all the ominous characteristics that Drury ascribes to the Strauss's teaching. She claims Strauss's political ideas are radically elitist and that he had no use for liberalism and little use for democracy (Drury, 1999, p. 2). In her view contrary to Plato's sunny disposition, Strauss finds the truth dark, even sordid, and threatening to political order and stability. So she assumes, for Strauss, the role of elite philosophers is to manipulate the images in the cave instead of descending into it with knowledge of the sunny truth (Ibid., p. 80). Her reasoning why the general academic community is not aware of the gloomy character of Strauss's teaching, is that Straussians are compulsive liars and they do not want their ideas discussed openly or even known to anyone outside the charmed cycle (Ibid., p. 2, 80).

Besides ascribing the cause of Iraq war to the Neoconservative inspiration by Strauss, Drury argues the Neoconservative ideology echoes the themes of Strauss's political thought. For her what is troublesome about the Neoconservatives who dominate the Republican party, is that in looking to Strauss for guidance, they are flirting with an ominous form of tyranny – a tyranny with an endless appetite for war, death, and sacrifice (Drury, 1988, 2005, pp. 12, 13). Strauss has bequeathed to the American Neoconservatives a heady concoction of ideas that explains their penchant for secrecy, lies, and

deception, their confidence in the almost limitless manipulation of public opinion, their aggressive foreign policy, their virulent nationalism, and their madly theological approach to politics (Ibid., p. 12). Those are for Drury the traits of practical policies into which Neoconservatives had dragged the second Bush administration. However, Drury lacks in substantiating this, and all of other similar claims about the sinister character of Neoconservative policies by any agenda that would document her claims. She limits her argumentation to the ascribing controversial means that led to the invasion of Iraq to Neoconservative officials in Washington. She omits the role of highranking government personnel such as Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney or president Bush himself, non of whom is a Neoconservative, in pursuing the Iraq war. In her view those who had employed deception and manipulation in order to engage America in the aggressive foreign policy, were Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense (highest-ranking Neoconservative in Bush administration) and Abram Shulsky of the Pentagon's Special Plan Operations (Ibid., p. 10). In brief, Drury's assumption about the ominous character of Neoconservative policies follows from the premises- Iraqi case represents the manipulative, deceptive,... madly theological approach to the politics; there were two or three Neocons who could be directly involved in that case; thus Drury concludes Neoconservative policies are infested by manipulation, deception, ... and madly theological approach. The method by which Drury ascribes ominous character to the Neoconservative policies which she traces to the intellectual inspiration by Strauss, is deeply flawed.

The ideas that should serve as the theoretical substratum for these alleged policies are in Drury's opinion to be found in Straussian political thought. In particular those are: the preoccupation with religion, the conviction that nihilism is the source of the crisis of American liberalism, the deprecation of Enlightenment rationalism, the antipathy to liberalism, the emphasis on nationalism (Drury, 1999, p. 138). However, as the following chapter will show most of these themes don't reflect the authentic teaching of Leo Strauss, so the alleged connection through theoretical level is not established properly.

Dispelling the Myths

The fertile source of the numerous claims assuming that Strauss endorsed kind of hard-edged elite rule, originates in the misperception of Strauss's interpretation of Plato's Republic. Most of the critics, including Shadia Drury, assume that Strauss considered the rule of philosophers over ignorant masses, to be the most suitable form of government. However, truth is that Strauss didn't endorse such a political order, nor did in his interpretation of Republic Plato. Strauss interpreted Republic as an anti-utopian work which shows the impossibility of the completely just political order. In his book *The City and Man* Strauss claims that Republic supplies the most magnificent cure ever devised for every form of political ambition, and that Republic conveys the broadest and deepest analysis of political idealism ever made (Strauss, 1964, pp. 65, 127). On the contrary to the claims of Strauss's critics, unlike the majority of interpreters who argue that Plato's considered view is that philosophers should rule, Strauss, according to Steven Smith contends that the proposal for the philosopher-king is neither desirable nor possible (Smith, 2006, p. 93). The claim that Plato represented the biggest lifelong philosophic authority and inspiration for Strauss is correct. But Strauss held an alternative interpretation of Plato's works that runs contrary to the conventional version. Smith argues that Strauss's Plato was less monolithic, less absolutist, and less dogmatic than the totalitarian virtuecrat he has been made out by the majority of interpreters (Ibid., p. 89).

What Drury terms as the Strauss's despise for liberalism, is in fact the Strauss's concern about its condition. Liberalism has lost the persuasion about its basis, about its superiority, its absolutist and universal character. As Samuel Abraham observes, that condition makes liberalism in the eyes of many critics aimless, void and defenseless (Abrahám, 2005, p. 9). Strauss points to the iconic quotation endorsed by modern liberals, to show the critical condition of liberal democracy. "To realize the relative validity of one's convictions and yet stand for them unflinchingly, is what distinguishes a civilized man from a barbarian." Strauss claims, that statement for him seems

to represent the crisis of liberalism a crisis due to the fact that liberalism has abandoned its absolutist basis and is trying to become entirely relativistic (Strauss, 1989, p. 17). Thus Strauss was not opposed to liberalism, rather he was critical of its modern day condition caused by the modern rationalism. Strauss was concerned about the survival of liberal democracy, and his main concern as a political philosopher was what he has termed the crisis of the West. The loss of belief of the Western liberal democracy in its principles and purpose means crisis of liberal democracy as such, because its universal applicability is intrinsic to its definition. Strauss argues, that the West was once certain of its universal purpose, that was expressly stated for example in the immediate past in famous official declarations made during the two World wars. He claims, that society which was accustomed to understand itself in terms of a universal purpose, cannot lose faith in that purpose without becoming completely bewildered (Strauss, 1964, p. 3). The modern social science refutes the possibility of valid universal principles defined by the reason, and thus contests the spiritual foundation of Western society. As Thomas Pangle explains, "Our culture has prided itself on being rooted in the objective normative truth for and about all of humanity: the "natural rights" of man, the "palpable truth" disclosed by reason or "the light of science." It follows that this culture of ours cannot lose faith in reason, as the ground for universally evident and valid human norms discoverable in nature or human nature, without losing faith in itself, in its very core" (Pangle, 2006, p. 8).

Although Drury is incorrect about the alleged Strauss's "antipathy to liberalism", she is right about assuming other Strauss's persuasion which he allegedly shares with Neoconservatives. When she claims that Strauss was convinced that nihilism is the source of the crisis of American liberalism, she is not mistaken as in the rest of the characteristics she ascribes to Strauss's thought. However, it would be more accurate to say that Strauss believed that nihilism is the crisis of American liberalism itself, rather than that nihilism is the source of it. The source of the crisis are rather the forces of Historicism and Positivism which relativise human knowledge. In the Western societies the guiding principles of religion were abandoned and replaced by the supremacy

of reason during Enlightenment. The reason on which the absolutist and universal principles of liberal democracy are based, was undermined by Historicism and Positivism which questioned the possibilities of reason. Therefore American liberalism is for Strauss left without faith in reason, in the principles of liberal democracy, in its very foundation. Thus the West finds itself in the state of nihilism without faith in religious revelation, nor with the faith in reason. Historicism denies the universalistic human norms on which liberal democracy is based, because like Strauss says, it shows that universal questions and their formulation is bound to be historically conditioned, i.e. to remain dependent on the specific situation in which they are suggested (Strauss, p. 33). Strauss believed that the Platonic image of the cave represents the basic condition of all men living as the prisoners of the authoritative opinions of their time and place. But at the same time the possibility of liberation from that condition through education. In the form of Positivism and Historicism Strauss faced the denial of that possibility of getting by unaided reason beyond the necessities of life in the cave (Bloom, 1990, pp. 240, 241). Meaning the denial of possibility of finding permanent, nonarbitrary principles by reason. The belief that all thought is necessarily tied to a specific historical situation, must regard as illusory or misguided any attempt to liberate thought from the cave of its historical situatedness (Smith, 2006, p. 94).

Another plausible parallel to be found between Strauss's thought and alleged Neoconservative motifs is what Drury terms as "the deprecation of Enlightenment rationalism". Strauss's concern about Enlightenment rationalism is that it has dismantled the order based on Biblical revelation, and has left society with a moral vacuum. Strauss claims that only law revealed and sanctioned by omnipotent and omniscient God, can make possible genuine morality, the basis for moral life. For Strauss, the natural morality, morality based on pure reason, can not provide sufficient basis for genuine moral life. Strauss argues that natural morality is, strictly speaking not morality at all, and that "it is hardly distinguishable from the morality essential to the preservation of a gang of robbers" (Strauss, 1952, p. 141). Strauss

emphasizes that connection between revelation and moral life in discussing the stance of Jewish scholar Halevi. Strauss says Halevi was conscious of defending morality itself when defending Judaism, for him the only true-revealed religion, against philosophers. The philosophers who denied the divine lawgiver, denied the obligatory character of the moral law (Ibid. p. 141). Strauss criticised Spinoza and the radical Enlightenment he represented for removing religion from public sphere of life. Enlightenment divested religion of its authoritative normative function of the law, and turned it into a matter of conscience and private belief. Like Smith says, Strauss's concern with the attack on religion was less due to his persuasion about the possibility of faith, than what he termed orthodoxy. The claims of orthodoxy- revelation, miracles, the immutability of the law- had been shaken by Spinoza and the Enlightenment. For Strauss, the transformation of religion into a matter of inner faith, reducing it of its public, that is of its legal character, was a victory of the Enlightenment over orthodoxy (Smith, 2006, p. 73).

The theme of Strauss's preoccupation with religion which he is according to Drury supposed to share with Neoconservatives, is the problematic one. As mentioned above, Strauss's concern about religion was primarily of its moral force in the society. He was aware of the conflict between reason and revelation, between Athens and Jerusalem. Strauss held that the teachings of reason are completely different and incompatible with the teaching of revelation, but at the same time one could not completely refute claims of the other (Bloom, 1990, p. 244). Strauss himself was not religious although being brought up in orthodox Jewish family. He believed in the possibilities of reason, and he manifested that belief in his lifelong fight against positivism and historicism, which implicitly or explicitly asserted the impossibility of finding permanent nonarbitrary principles by reason. Thus despite Strauss's concern about emptiness left in the society after erosion of religion, Strauss would not in any way prefer religion over reason, and he would not endorse religion as a public doctrine in a liberal democratic society.

The other theme that Drury ascribes to Strauss, the emphasis on nationalism, has not legitimate foundation in teaching of Strauss. Drury would

assume that Strauss endorsed nationalism as one mean by which the guiding public principles could be restored after erosion of religious beliefs. However, such an assumption can't be found explicitly or implicitly expressed in Strauss's writings.

While Drury and other authors use misinterpretation of Strauss's philosophy to theoretically substantiate their arguments about alleged Neoconservative inspiration by Strauss, they also fail in supporting their claims by pointing to the outlooks, or practical conduct of individual Neoconservative figures. In order to prove the explicit expression of the connection between Neoconservatism and Strauss, authors point to the Irving Kristol, the founding father of Neoconservatism, and his alleged Straussian outlook. According to those authors Kristol recognizes Strauss as the greatest influence on his thought. One of those authors is Shadia Drury, who, as Peter Minowitz argues, cites the opening of Kristol's 1995 essay to document that claim. However, in that essay Kristol identifies Strauss as being only one of his two major influences. The other being liberal thinker Lionel Trilling (Minowitz, 2009, p. 268). The other personel who in Drury's and others view represents the common Neoconservative – Straussian identity is Paul Wolfowitz. Wolfowitz, the undersecretary of defense in the second Bush administration was the highest-ranking Neoconservative in government. According to Drury, he is „a self-proclaimed follower of Strauss“ and “one of the key architects of the war on Iraq” (Drury, 1988, 2005, p. 10). Thus Wolfowitz together with Shulsky and Perley is by accusers often used to link Iraq war to the Straussian ideological foundation. Notwithstanding the fact that presence of one or two Straussians in Pentagon or in defense department of the Bush administration wouldn't make Straussianism to be the ideological pattern of the Iraq war, whether of its purpose or of the means by which the war was pursued, Wolfowitz in fact doesn't fit into the Straussian cabal theory of the accusers. Despite identifying Wolfowitz as a self-proclaimed Straussian, Drury lacks in supporting her assertion by any quotation by Wolfowitz himself. Wolfowitz studied under Strauss at Chicago, and took one course with Alan Bloom, the prominent follower of Strauss, at Cornell, but that doesn't

automatically make him to be a Straussian. Minowitz in his book quotes two interviews with Wolfowitz from 2003 in which Wolfowitz denied he was a Straussian. As a key mentor of Wolfowitz, Minowitz rather identifies Albert Wohlstetter, military strategist and economist who (unlike Strauss) was articulating regime-change arguments regarding Iraq, and believed that democracy can “grow vigorous roots anywhere in the world”. Among others Minowitz quotes Francis Fukuyama, who worked for Wolfowitz at two different positions (also erstwhile Neoconservative), who affirms that Wolfowitz “never regarded himself as a Strauss protégé, and that his views on foreign policy were much more heavily influenced by Wohlstetter” (Minowitz, 2009, p. 25). How Drury and other critics fail to substantiate their argument about the role of Straussians in the war on Iraq by the Abraham Shulsky case, was already explained in previous chapter.

Conclusion

In regard of the reasoning laid out in chapters two, three and four, this paper concludes that the Strauss-Neoconservatives connection as presented by Shadia Drury and various publicists, is misplaced. The claimed link between Strauss and the Neoconservative movement is highly overstated. The arguments Drury and other authors use to support their claims about the alleged inspiration of Neoconservatism by the teachings of Leo Strauss are almost unexceptionally based on their misinterpretation of Strauss's thought combined with the false assessment of theoretical outlook of Neoconservatism in general, and of the key individual Neoconservative figures as well. Drury is profoundly contradictory in her interpretation of Strauss. The peak of her failure can be observed in her analysis of Strauss Political Ideas of Leo Strauss, in which she concludes that Strauss's elitism is not necessarily undemocratic, and that Strauss makes it clear that he is not an enemy of democracy (Drury, 1988, 2005, p. 194). In the updated introduction to that very same book, and in the quotation mentioned above in Chapter three from her 2003 essay as well, she already claims that Strauss was a sworn enemy of freedom and democracy (Ibid., p. 9).

There is certainly not any legitimacy for the link between Strauss's thought and the Iraq war of 2003. Both themes by which Iraq war was traced to Strauss, the idealistic theme of fostering democracy by intervention and the hard edged-realistic theme of elitism and mass manipulation, have been based on the distorted interpretation of Strauss and on superficial and exaggerated evaluation of the performance of Strauss-related Neoconservatives in Bush administration. Strauss's thought doesn't provide intellectual credence for any of the alleged means by which or motives for which Iraq war has been carried on. Nor was Paul Wolfowitz, one of the key architects of the Iraq war, correctly presented as a Straussian, neither was the role of the true Straussian Abraham Shulsky in starting the war evaluated properly.

The assessment of Strauss's philosophy presented by media authors who endorse the connection lacks in supporting their claims by relevant quotations and their commentaries don't carry signs of genuine study of Strauss's works. Despite Drury's scholar career with the obvious focus on political philosophy of Leo Strauss, her interpretation of Strauss is no less distorted than the one of political journalists and commentators. On the contrary, her numerous publications regarding the topic present the caricature of Strauss's teaching, which is greatly distanced from the authentic Strauss. Drury in her comparative study of Strauss and Neoconservatives rightly names several themes which Neoconservatism shares with Strauss. But simultaneously, there is even larger number of allegedly shared themes which are the product of Drury's misinterpretation of Strauss. Nor is her method of assuming the connection on theoretical level plausible, since she uses for defining themes of Neoconservatism merely persuasions of Irving Kristol. No doubt that Irving Kristol is one of the founding fathers of the Neoconservatism, and that he is also one of the most influential intellectuals of Neoconservative movement. But, despite the fact, that Kristol owes his views also to other intellectual sources than Leo Strauss, Neoconservatism can not be properly assessed on the sole analysis of his outlook. For example other two leading Neoconservatives, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, had nothing in common with Strauss (Zuckert & Zuckert, 2006, p. 265). The book by Nathan Abrams about Norman Podhoretz and Neoconservatism, in which Abrams argues that Neoconservatism was in fact a Podhoretz's personal ideology, lists Strauss name in its index only once, and it doesn't mention Strauss in any relation to Podhoretz. Neoconservative ideology is not homogeneous to the extent that it could be measured on the basis of persuasion of any of the leading Neoconservatives. Constalation of ideological forces in the US has significantly changed since the times of emergence of the Neoconservative movement, and so did also the international arrangement. While at the time of its inception Neoconservative movement was formed by the liberals and former socialists, who were in ods with what the Democratic party at the time stood for, Neoconservatives of the second generation are conservatives in the right sense of the term and they form the

backbone of the Republican party. Until the 1990s US conduct in the global arena was conditioned by the realities of the bipolar world. However, since the end of the Cold War US has found itself in the position of uncontested global supremacy, what has led to the redefinition of its foreign interests and obligations. So has possibilities of Marxist ideology been obliterated and liberal democracy seemed to be the only viable alternative for humanity. 'The end of history' has been declared, and the New World Order was designed. This new paradigm of global arrangement was mirrored also into the shift in Neoconservative approach to the US foreign policy. The Cold War generation of Irving Kristol was dominated by democratic realists, who were skeptic about US interventionism. The generation which emerged during 1990s considered democratic realism of their forerunners to be unsuited for an age of US unparalleled power, and have championed democratic globalism.

Finally, beyond doubt it is that Neoconservatism shares some persuasions with the philosophy of Leo Strauss. However, so do also other forms of American conservatism. The core themes on which Drury primarily establishes her argument about the alleged connection between Strauss and Neoconservatives, are surely not authentic themes of Strauss's philosophy. It is the often secretive and seemingly tension ridden character of Strauss's works itself, which has made the widespread Strausophobic controversy possible. However, it is not a matter of an extraordinary endeavor to see that the controversy was a product of exaggerated and distorted interpretations of Strauss.

Résumé

Predmetom tejto práce je skúmanie vzťahu medzi učením Lea Straussa a Neokonzervativizmom. Do dnešného dňa bolo publikovaných nespočet politických komentárov či celých kníh, ktorých autori poukazovali na spätosť Neokonzervativizmu s osobou Lea Straussa. Zjavná eskalácia záujmu o túto problematiku, ako vo verejných tak aj akademických kruhoch, pritom nastala v roku 2003, v súvislosti s Americkou inváziou do Iraku, ktorej deklarovaným cieľom bola demokratizácia krajiny. Argumentácia článkov, ktoré boli k danej téme publikované v mainstreamových politických periodikách sa spravidla pridržiava dvoch základných tematických okruhov. Mediálni autori sa po roku 2003 v ich príspevkoch obmedzujú na stotožňovanie údajných ideí Neokonzervativizmu, ktoré mali stáť za prostriedkami, ktorými bola dosiahnutá a cieľmy pre ktoré bola vedená Iracká vojna, s politickou filozofiou Lea Straussa. Zatiaľ čo spomínanými prostriedkami, ktorými bola dosiahnutá invázia, sú údajne lži a manipulácia verejnosti elitami, cieľom tejto invázie je šírenie liberálnej demokracie. Spomínaní mediálni autori dochádzajú k záveru, že Iracká vojna bola produktom Neokonzervatívov v administratíve G. W. Busha, pre ktorých bolo v tejto záležitosti vedúcou inšpiráciou práve politické myslenie Straussa. Nie vždy sú spomínané témy oba prítomné v jednotlivých príspevkoch súčasne. Pre zjavný rozpor medzi krajne realistickou témou elitizmu a manipulácie, a idealistickou témou globálneho šírenia liberálnej demokracie, niektorí autori venujú pozornosť len jednej z nich, alebo tvrdia, že idealistická téma šírenia demokracie je len verejnou doktrínou v službách krajného realizmu Neokonzervatívnych elít. Mediálne príspevky, ktoré prisudzujú Neokonzervativizmu tento spôsob inšpirácie filozofiou Lea Straussa, spravidla nenesú známky akéhokolvek priameho štúdia Straussových diel. Práve naopak, ich tvrdenia o povahe Straussovho učenia nie sú podporené žiadnou priamou citáciou Straussových textov. Legitimitu svojich tvrdení sa často

snažia zabezpečiť odkazmy na zdanlivú autoritu v danej problematike, Shadiu Drury.

Shadia Drury je Kanadskou profesorkou politickej filozofie, ktorej podstatnú časť akademickej kariéry tvorilo štúdium a interpretácia Straussa. Drury publikovala dve kompletne knihy venované štúdiu Straussa, pričom obe ešte v období dlho pred nedávnym rozruchom okolo Straussa a Neokonzervatívcoch spôsobeným Iráckou vojnou. Ako však táto bakalárska práca usudzuje, napriek jej akademickej kariére v oblasti politickej filozofie, interpretácia Straussových myšlienok, ktorú Drury ponúka pre podporu údajného ideologického spojenia medzi Straussom a Neokonzervatívcami, je prinajmenšom kontroverzná a zavádzajúca. Drury popisuje niekoľko teoretických tém, ktorými sa snaží dokumentovať ideologickú inšpiráciu Neokonzervativizmu politickým myslením Straussa. Témy, ktoré majú tvoriť tento prienik sú: presvedčenie, že nihilizmus je zdrojom krízy amerického liberalizmu; odsúdenie osvietenieckého racionalizmu; antipatia voči liberalizmu; zdôrazňovanie nacionalizmu; a náboženská predpojatosť. Táto bakalárska práca tvrdí, že väčšina z týchto tém nemá legitímny pôvod v Straussovom učení a, že témy, ktoré Drury Straussovi prisudzuje oprávnené, nerobia z jeho myslenia antidemokratickú reakcionársku filozofiu ako ju vo všeobecnosti interpretuje Drury. Táto metóda hľadania spoločných tém je však taktiež zavádzajúca, keďže Drury tu stavia len na témach formulovaných Irvingom Kristolom, čo, napriek Kristolovej významnosti pre Neokonzervativizmus, nie je dostatočnou reflexiou Neokonzervativizmu.

Druhou rovinou, v ktorej sa Drury pokúša dokázať priame prepojenie medzi Straussom a neokonzervatívcami, je poukazovanie na údajne explicitne vijadrenú inšpiráciu niektorých vedúcich neokonzervatívcov učením Lea Straussa. Takéto vijadrenia mali podľa Drury formulovať napríklad spomínaný Irving Kristol, či Paul Wolfowitz. Z takýchto údajných vijadrení potom Drury usudzuje spoločnú identitu neokonzervatívcov a "straussiánov". Avšak tu Drury opäť zavádza, keďže, ako iné zdroje dokumentujú, ani jeden zo spomínanej dvojice prominentných neokonzervatívcov Straussa neoznačil za primárny zdroj svojich politických presvedčení. Zatiaľ, čo Kristol Straussa

označil len za jeden z dvoch rovnocenných paralelných vplyvov, pričom tým druhým bol liberál Lionel Trilling, Paul Wolfowitz vo viacerých rozhovoroch uviedol, že nie je straussiánom, a zároveň nevelká snaha venovaná skúmaniu jeho osoby postačuje k tomu, aby bolo zrejmé, že vojenský stratég Albert Wohlstetter, nie Leo Strauss, je Wolfowitzovou najrelevantnejšou intelektuálnou inšpiráciou. Najmarkantnejším prejavom chybnosti úsudkov Shadie Drury je jej protirečivosť v hodnotení esenciálnych otázok charakteru Straussovej filozofie. Ako táto práca dokumentuje, vo svojej rozsiahlej analýze Straussovej filozofie z roku 1988, 'Politické ideí Lea Straussa', Drury robí záver, že Straussov elitizmus nie je nevíhnutne antidemokratický a že Strauss preukázal že nie je nepriateľom demokracie. No v úvode rozšírenej verzie tej istej knihy z roku 2005, ako aj vo svojej eseji z roku 2003, Drury už rozhodne tvrdí, že Strauss bol zaritým nepriateľom slobody a demokracie.

Táto bakalárska práca prichádza k záveru, že metóda, ktorou Drury a iní autori stotožňujú Neokonzervativizmus s učením Lea Straussa, je neadekvátne. Preto je aj údajný charakter spojenia medzi neokonzervativcami a Straussom, ktorý títo autori vykresľujú, produktom mylných konštrukcií. Samo Straussovo učenie svojim obskurným a zdanlivo rozporuplným charakterom vytvára priestor pre širokú škálu možných interpretácií. Ako však táto práca naznačuje, interpretácia ktorú ponúka Shadia Drury, je skreslením a karikatúrou Straussových myšlienok, veľmi vzdialenou od autentického učenia Straussa. Ako sa zdá, istá miera inšpirácie Neokonzervativizmu myšlienkami Straussa je nespochybniteľná. Tú je však možné sledovať aj na iných, tradičných, formách amerického konzervativizmu. Straussianyzmus však nie je možné stotožňovať s Neokonzervativizmom, rovnako ako nie je možné označiť Straussa za primárneho inšpirátora ideológie Neokonzervativizmu, či za pôvodcu ideí navigujúcich zahraničnú politiku USA.

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