

## Global Social Contract: A Recipe for Anarchy A Critical Study of the American Political Philosophy during the George W. Bush Administration.

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As the world enters a novel stage of division between a sphere of freedom and democracy, and a sphere of despotism, “the clash of civilisations”, a habit of mind reflected earlier by Samuel Huntington, is again poignantly relevant in understanding why wars may break out. It is therefore fashionable now to blame the danger of war on a “clash of civilisations”, but the main reason why wars may indeed break out is not likely to be the general differences between the old civilisations of the world but modern developments within them that are producing inflexibility, intolerance, and belligerence.

Such attitudes indeed have been more common within the United States, which, by dint of its military and economic power, can affect international relations more decisively than any other country. Attitude of assertiveness and militancy in dealing with other countries have long been spreading among leading American policymakers. This trend, though it has no single origin, can be traced in its most general characteristics to the American universalism as it was inspired by the neo-conservatives that ran the George W. Bush administration.

Unlike Western universalism which has never been understood separately from the concrete realities of human life as known in history, the American universalism as it was inspired by the neo-conservatives is ahistorical, rigid, a kind of unchanging norms or a set of principles that has no place for particularities. It was mostly summarised in the idea that America’s borders must be extended to bring in and assimilate regions to the American way. Such a plan was made possible, the neo-conservatives thought, by creating a global social contract. The latter was often introduced by them in the language of “virtue” that is associated to the adherence to “the right ideas”.

From a neo-conservative perspective, in order to achieve virtuous social and political unity, the consensus of any civilisation with its root in the moral and cultural striving of individuals can and must be replaced with ideological unity. Global order, the neo-conservatives were convinced, was supposed to result when all individuals that belong to different civilisations are taught to accept the same universal principles. This essay then will try to diagnose some of the flaws of the American universalism that characterised the American political philosophy during the George W. Bush administration. To put it in another way, this analysis will endeavour

to investigate why the proposed American global social contract which is divorced from history and diversity was a recipe for anarchy rather than perpetual peace. It might be convenient therefore to start the present analysis with a preliminary discussion about neo-conservatism as a prominent force in American intellectual history and its role in shaping both American character and political opinion.

### a) **Neo-conservatism: A Prominent Persuasion in American Politics**

Neo-conservatism is a notoriously slippery and hard to define term, in part because its definition has shifted as its enemies have changed. The first generation of neo-conservatives, including Henry Jackson, Irving Kristol, and Norman Podheretz, were former liberals who believed that America needed to stand up and fight communism. Accusing their former colleagues on the left of going soft, they claimed that America's survival and the fate of the free world required toughness, not compromise (Gerson, 1996: xiii). They held key positions in the Reagan and Bush I administrations- to some what lesser extent, the Clinton administration. After 9/11, however, neo-conservatism gained new adherents. The second generation of neo-conservatives, including Robert Kagan, William Kristol, and Paul Wolfowitz, who had wholly dominated foreign policy making of the Bush II administration, continued to believe in American exceptionalism, but they added an idealistic note when they invoked the theme of the universality of American principles.

Those neo-conservatives often spoke of the need to reinvigorate "virtue" in America, and contended that America needed an infusion of its "moral values" and a return to its "Founding Principles". The latter were understood as "universal", morally compelling and originally deriving from Enlightenment. Accordingly, the true American virtue, the neo-conservatives believed, was summed up in specific rights and principles and that these were understood best by a certain philosophical and political elite. The latter, as represented by the neo-conservatives, claimed that there existed an American "universal", political and economic model that was suitable for all cultures and societies, and that the whole world had to adjust to its "universal principles".

The neo-conservatives, hence, wanted societies to conform to what they considered the solely acceptable political and economic model. This model was often summarised in the terms "democracy" and "capitalism". The latter, which they considered as forces used to destroy existing spoilt institutions and habits, were used by them interchangeably. This means that they took them as names for different, but closely connected linked dimensions of the same desirable society. On the basis of what they considered moral grounds, the neo-conservatives asserted that America's moral obligation was to spread "democracy", "freedom", and "capitalism".

This mandate, they believed, provided a justification for exercising power on the largest possible scales. In a seminal neo-conservative work, "*The End of history and the Last Man*", Francis Fukuyama has argued that "*liberalism has won and there are no more contenders*" (Fukuyama, 1989:13). According to him, the collapse of all rival political ideologues had consecrated the American economic and political system. The lack of alternatives to this, he believed, explained why history had reached an end. For Fukuyama, the pursuit of economic prosperity and political freedom would triumph all other considerations. Since the United States has attained a high degree of political and economic development, it has a responsibility to spread and protect democratic and liberal advancements (Fukuyama, 1989:15).

The neo-conservatives believed also in the morality of force and focused on the "uni-polar" power of the United States. They saw military force as the first, not the last option of foreign policy, and found it as viable means of inducing reform (Halper & Clarke, 2005: 11). Indeed, the claim of America's use of power on behalf of its moral superiority have become a common feature of American foreign policy ever since the neo-conservatives' dominance of American government in the 1960's. Accordingly, it has been propagated in a number of American think tanks where the neo-conservatives had more than a foothold. These included the Claremont Institute and the Hoover Institution on Religion on the Coast West, the American Enterprise Institute, the Institute on Religion and Public Life, the Ethics and Public Policy Centre, and the Heritage foundation in the East Coast. The Project for the New American Century, founded in 1997, has played the central role in spreading the neo-conservatives' ideas about an American benevolent hegemony inside and outside the United States, including the plan for the war against Iraq. It has gathered and co-ordinated the activities of a large number of many neo-conservative intellectuals, political activists, and former public officials like Richard Perle, Donald Ramsfeld, Dick Cheney, William Kristol, and Paul Wolfowitz. Other prominent neo-conservatives who have been voices of the chorus that preached America's moral superiority were Charles Krauthammer, Robert Kagan, Michael Leddon, Harry Jaffa, Michael Novak et al.

The neo-conservatives cited above were committed to virtue, capitalism and American international hegemony. Many of them took positions as staffers in such places as the U.S. Congress, the White House, the department of the federal government, think tanks as it has been already mentioned, magazines, journals, newspapers, and televisions, and, of course, academia itself. They could be found also in departments of political science of American universities, especially in the sub-fields of political theory, national security, international relations, and American national government.

The political philosophy of the American neo-conservatives reflected their conviction that they possessed a realism and "truth"

others lack. They strongly believed that they represented verities and principles that bind all human beings. These principles, in their view, were impersonal and superior to all human desire. They were for all time and places. Hence, they were the ultimate standard for “right”. The latter was understood as a set of values that announce their content apart from history and particular circumstances that are considered irrelevant to ascertaining what is “right”. Such an advocacy of “universal principles” owes much to the influence of the German philosopher Leo Strauss (1899-1973) who contributed to an anti-traditional impetus by supporting ahistorical and abstract way of thinking about political right (Strauss, 1999:294). Being influenced by the Straussian vision that only a universal standard for the good society deserves respect, the neo-conservatives could develop the notion that historically evolved societies and traditions should yield to what is universally applicable. In his widely read and celebrated contributor to neo-conservatism ideology, *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), Professor Allan Bloom (1930-1992), one of Strauss’s doctoral students, has exemplified the anti-traditional and ideological universalism that is at the heart of the current push for American Empire. Bloom wrote:

*When we Americans speak seriously about politics we mean that our principles of freedom and equality and the rights based on them are rational and everywhere applicable. World War II was really an educational project undertaken to force those who did not accept these principles to do so. (Bloom, 1987:153)*

In this perspective, political morality could be understood as conformity to a plan. Since America’s claim of universality gives its principles a monopoly on virtue, there was the imperative that the world should be reshaped according to the American image. It is worthy noticing then that the new American virtue was summarised in the idea of dominating the world. This point of view, in fact, had been worked long and hard by the neo-conservatives in American foreign policy, but it has become more persistent ever since 9/11. The latter was the opportunity for the neo-conservatives to convince both Americans and the world that they represented virtue, and were called to defeat evil. They, therefore, called for military actions not just against the perpetrators of the deeds of terrorism, but against any state or entity that poses a potential threat to the United States or its friends. They claimed they were arguing the case of “moral right”, whereas those who did not accept their views were morally obtuse or perverse.

A voice that has echoed this belief was President George W. Bush who divided the world into two starkly opposed forces: One force loves freedom, led of course by the United States, the other one hates it. In his words, “[e]ither *you are with those who love freedom, or with those who hate innocent life*” (Bush, 2003:5). Political virtue, then, was for the neo-conservatives a matter of choice between what they

considered as “good” and “evil”. It was a submission to a plan made by virtuous ideologues who were siding with God. President George W. Bush, again as the speaker of the neo-conservatives, was given the task to transmit to humanity the following message:

*There is a value system that cannot be compromised, and that is the values we praise, and if these values are good enough for our people, they ought to be good enough for others... These are God-given values. These aren't United States values (Woodward, 2002: 325)*

According to this view, the neoconservative political philosophy was not assumed to make the Americans willing to compromise with other cultural, social, and political contexts. It was assumed, on the contrary, to make them politically insistent in spreading their principles. These sentiments reflect a fundamental break with the central virtues of Western tradition which are manifested in concrete practices like “humility” and “self-control”, and “willingness to compromise”.

Not only did the neoconservative political philosophy foster radically social and political ramifications, but also it scorned the historical, spiritual and intellectual inheritance that was challenged by the Enlightenment. Indeed, the belief that good social and political order has its source in ahistorical abstract thinking was one of the prominent features of the neoconservative political philosophy. Mankind, the neo-conservatives were persuaded, can and must live without the historical heritage that the British Conservative Edmund Burke called “*the general bank and capital of nations and ages*” (Burke, 1987: 76). According to them, then, “the bad old days” should be rejected and replaced by ahistorical and rational principles in order to set society’s direction. And since they considered America as the world leading example, they applied this view on it. Accordingly, in re-interpreting American history, the neo-conservatives took the Founding out of its historical and philosophical context, and defined it as a revolutionary break with the past. By doing so, the neo-conservatives hoped to present American principles as a rejection of the Old Western world, and as being “universal principles” that are “rational” and everywhere “applicable” to use Bloom's words. Two prominent neo-conservative authors with considerable media visibility who have expressed this view are William Kristol and David Brooks. In their vantage point of view, “*American greatness...is that of an exceptional nation founded on a universal principle*” (Kristol & Brooks, 1997:26). In this perspective, America is not a nation that has its origin far into an English and European past, but an idea or a set of principles.

Another anti-traditional view was expressed by Allan Bloom who contended that it was the Enlightenment that founded America. He believed that American Founding raised questions that are central to understanding and realising American freedom, and to

addressing problematic issues such as religion. “*The domesticated churches in America*”, Bloom claimed, “*preserved the superstition of Christianity, overcoming of which was perhaps the key to liberating man*” (Bloom, 1987:161). Christianity, according to Bloom, is not integral to the American Founding, a fact that seems utterly contradictory to many American documents from the Mayflower Compact to the Constitution that express fundamental beliefs about man’s relationship to and dependence on God. The American mind that Bloom wrote about in his best selling book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, is the *enlightened* mind, a mind that has left the superstitions of Christianity and old Europe behind.

Desiring power over others has often been understood in philosophy as one of the permanent and most prominent feature of human nature. Civilisation, therefore, has created religious, social and political restraints to domesticate and moderate it. By checking and restraining such a perilous feature, civilisation could mitigate conflicts. During the George W. Bush administration which was dominated by the neoconservatives, however, these traditional restraints were taken for granted. This could be seen in the actions of American politicians and intellectual leaders who ignored constitutional restraints and multilateral institutions.

The neo-conservative moral and cultural trends, which stipulated that those who know what needs to be done should dominate others, gave prominence to the idea that societies ought to be radically remade. This belief led to uncompromising attitudes of many leading American politicians in discussing how to handle opposition to American aim in the world. One representative voice of these forces was the media commentator Charles Krauthammer who supported this view when he said that the United States should adopt “an un-bashed unilateralism” on behalf of its values. This prominent neo-conservative had often wanted the United States to use its military might to affect changes in the world. The United States, in his words,

*is no more international citizen. It is the dominant power in the world, more dominant than any since Rome. Accordingly, America is in a position to reshape norms, alter expectations and create new realities. How? By unapologetic and implacable demonstrations of will* (Krauthammer, 2001: 14)

Such sentiments reflect a fundamental break from the mainstream Western tradition and oppose its the central virtues such as “self-restraint”, “humility”, “empathy”, and the fact of influencing others by example and not force. This modest aspiration, in fact, was given voice in 1630 by John Winthrop, governor of Massachusetts Bay Company, when he said:

*We will be like a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and caused Him to withdraw His present help from us,*

*we shall be made a story and by word throughout the world* (Winthrop, 1973: 46).

An opposite attitude toward this older view, however, was expressed in “*Foreign Affairs*” article written in 1996 by William Kristol and Robert Kagan. They, on the contrary, claimed that a “*policy of sitting atop a hill and leading by example is a policy of cowardice and dishonour*” (Kristol & Kagan, 1996: 30). In their view, the United States as an exceptional nation and by virtue of its commitment to universal principles had the right to strike pre-emptively and unilaterally. This vantage point, in fact, had become a common place. In 1991, Charles Krauthammer recommended “a robust interventionism”. He said:

*We are living in a unipolar world. We Americans should like it- and exploit it, where our cause is just and interests are threatened, we should act- even if ... we must act unilaterally* (Krauthammer, 1991: 35).

The old American expansionism, which counselled isolation from the world, was indeed transformed by the neo-conservatives into an assertive nationalism. This could be seen in their philosophy which held that the United States foreign policy had to be committed to the objective of spreading an American universalism in all parts of the world. The universalism the neo-conservatives supported, however, was a means through which they thought they could batter down existing institutions. For mankind to be liberated from oppression, they were persuaded, inherited societies and beliefs had to be destroyed. Thus, in order to understand the extent to which the American universalism that was propounded by the neoconservatives was radical, we need to see how the very idea of universalism was understood in older Western and traditional views.

#### **d. Universalism: Radical v. Traditional**

On the international scale, we could see that the neo-conservatives upheld a universalist philosophy that had at its heart the idea of sameness. The latter saw humanity as composed of one people, one civilisation, and one culture. It regarded American values, democracy, and politics as “universal” and “everywhere applicable”. And yet, the realities and events of the current world have shown that the neo-conservative strategy which consisted in representing the United States as founded on universal principles, articulating global values, and striking pre-emptive wars to combat the “enemies of civilisations”, “terrorists”, or “tyrants” show that the neoconservative plan has indeed fell short of expectations. It is therefore compelling to ask the question why such a highly organised intellectual elite did not succeed.

The answer might be found in early proved theories which stipulate that to transfer Western values to places that have been deeply inoculated against them by culture is to invite confrontations.

In fact, the theme that the spread of Western values throughout the world has done so much evil to world stability was dealt with immeasurably in modern cultural studies. In *Jihad vs. McWorld* (2002), for instance, Benjamin Barber, professor of Civil Society at the University of Maryland and a principle of the Democracy Collaborative, has portrayed a world ravaged by the spread of Western culture, and the no-less-contemptible residue. He argued that Western capitalism has rapidly dissolved the social and economic barriers between nations, and transformed the world's diverse populations into a blandly uniform market. On the other hand, ethnic, ethnic, religious and racial hatreds have fragmented the political landscape into smaller and smaller tribal units (Barber, 2003: 110). In another way, this view was shared by British philosopher Roger Scruton. In his book *The West and the Rest: Globalisation and the Terrorist Threat* (2002), Scruton claimed that it was Western enterprise with its multinational outreach that produced the technology that non-Western terrorists have exploited so effectively against the West. And that it was Western science that developed weapons of mass destructions (Scruton,2003:128).

Though the present political and economic realities of the time show the rightness of these arguments, modern cultural studies authors like Barber and Scruton tend to be anti-Western. After all, it is thanks to Western prosperity, Western legal systems, Western forms of banking, and Western communications that human initiatives reach now so easily across frontiers to affect the lives and aspirations of people all over the world. Therefore, the usual explanations whose only defensible arguments would be "consumerist capitalism" and "dangerous Western advanced technology" will be of no use to us in this analysis.

Another reason why this standard image of the West will be put aside is that rather than discussing the expansions of communications, contacts and trade around the world, this analysis will be focussing on a universalistic philosophy that centres on idea of "sameness" and the impacts it had on the world as a whole. Such an idea of sameness, which was first introduced in Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, emphasises that all humans must share the same aspirations, and undermines the importance of cultural features that distinguish societies one from another. In fact, it was Bloom who summarised the moral basis of the "American Project" in the world as the following:

*Class, race, religion, natural origin or culture all disappear or become din when bathed in the light of natural rights which give men common interests and make them truly brothers.* (Bloom, 1987:97)

Thus, According to Bloom, the virtuous social cohesion stems from a common devotion to some principles he names natural rights. In his view, the historically evolved order is not morally a significant source of unity:



*By recognising and accepting man's natural rights, men found a fundamental basis of unity and sameness... natural rights give men common interests and make them truly brothers, [human being therefore are asked] to give up their cultural individuality, and make themselves into that universal abstract being who participates in natural rights.* (Bloom, 1987:97)

Thus, cultural, social, moral and political unity was a central feature in the American neo-conservative political philosophy. The latter therefore far from being racist was universalistic. It contended that all human beings share the same aspirations. Moreover, it dismissed the traits common to human beings, and reduced the importance of cultural features distinguishing societies from one another. Such a neoconservative universalistic vision will be compared with some older Western traditional and philosophical views. A brief preliminary discussion of how key words such as “universalism”, “common good”, and “virtuous unity” were understood in mainstream Western tradition is therefore required. Also, analysing the very philosophical conception of the idea of social contract and comparing it with the way the American neo-conservatives perceived it may throw more light on the purpose of this analysis which concentrates on diagnosing why the neo-conservatives’ proposed global social contract did not succeed.

During their worldwide campaign, the American neo-conservatives claimed that societies ought to be radically remade to conform what they considered the solely acceptable universal principles. They believed that they knew what was “right” everywhere and any times. Their universalism assumed the existence of a clear guide lines of how societies should organise and govern themselves. Their moral and political unity centred on a kind of homogeneity that is achieved at the expense of diversity.

It might be commented first and for most that Western universalism was not a doctrine about remaking man and society. It did not envision some kind of radical transformation of man’s temporal existence. On the contrary, it held that the creative efforts of individuals can make use of existing situations, and assume new changes according to the needs of personal and historical circumstances. Though mainstream Western tradition had assumed an existence of universal truths, it did not understand them in the abstract separated from history. In considering how life might be improved, it took into consideration the historical circumstances and traditions of a given life. In the natural law tradition, as represented for example by a Roman thinker like Cicero and a Christian thinker like Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a connection was made, however vaguely, between the ability to grasp the higher good for man and having at one’s disposal the guiding tradition. According to Aquinas, old customs and long established laws have a special dignity. Their very age, Aquinas thought, suggests their being sanctioned by the needs of human nature itself (McInermy, 1996:

39). In this way, the natural law was not understood as something apprehended through the purely abstract ratiocination of particular individuals. It is, on the contrary, a norm whose discernment requires the co-operation of many persons over time.

Likewise, the ancient Greeks, notably Aristotle, were interested in how good could be achieved in different political circumstances. According to Aristotle, moral and higher aspirations have to be adjusted to what is correctly possible in the present, so that a better society can be formed. The standard of politics for Aristotle is not an abstract model claiming ideals of perfection and standing above all societies as most neo-conservatives thought. Aristotle, in contrast, intimated that the historical knowledge of a particular people might be a guide to finding out what was politically best for that a people. (Aristotle, 1992:104) According to mainstream Western tradition, thus, approximating the higher form of human existence is not a matter of conformity to an abstract norm.

The criticism that can be directed against the American universalism is that it treated a single particular attribute or membership, individuality, class, tribe, state, nationality, or identity as salient, distinct, definitive and self-sufficient. Whether of economist, nationalist, biologist, or ideological cast, the neo-conservative view of man and society employed philosophically artificial categories. Furthermore, it simply ignored the infinite intricacy of human existence and the deeper affinities among human beings. It produced an artificial togetherness that was inherently condescending to everything but itself.

It can be commented then that the idea of universalism was misunderstood by the neo-conservatives, and so can be said about their vision of the "common good". The latter, they were persuaded, is manifested in a homogenous way. This is, however, impossible. Many individuals and groups can contribute to the general or common good in their diverse capacities and personalities without giving up their distinctiveness. An example of this kind of thought is the phrase *el pluribus unam*, which sums up the achievement of the American Founding Fathers, and translates the unity of the states and Americans within a plurality of religions and cultures. The American Founders did not intend to obliterate diversity. They, on the contrary, hoped to harmonise many interests. From this kind of unification, the whole American society could draw strength. In fact, what would hold the American nation together, besides sturdily constructed political institutions, was the self-limitation and mutual respect of different religions, communities, groups, and interests.

The pursuit of the common good without obliterating diversity was also sustained by the ancient Greeks. Aristotle, once more, though he was a strong advocator of the common good, rejected the idea that good society would result from the imposition of virtuous unity at the expense of cultural and social diversity. Aristotle wrote:

*Obviously, a state which becomes progressively more and more a unity will cease to be a state at all... [T]he farther it moves away from plurality towards unity, the less a state it becomes... The state consists not merely of a plurality of men, but of different kind of men.* (Aristotle, 1992: 112)

According to Aristotle, since man is a social being, he needs to receive from others the diverse upbringing, education, and economic well-being in order to become more fully human. Though he affirmed a moral standard, he believed that society is the harmony of many different interests and motives. He, therefore, disparaged Plato's suggestion about the attempt to unify the state as if it were a single individual. Aristotle thought: "*so even if it were possible to make such unification, it ought not to be done; it will destroy the state*". (Aristotle, 1992:113)

It would be a mistake then to think that the common good would be realised at the expense of diversity. By the latter it is meant here countless personalities, interests, civilisations, cultures, causes and cases. For universal values to be expressed in a life that continually presents new challenges, all individuals, communities and societies must have freedom to find their own way, a truth that the neo-conservatives have failed to recognise. The very idea of freedom, in fact, though it was central in their political philosophy, was mistaken by them. As it has been clearly argued in many of their political and official speeches, the neo-conservatives were determined to make those who are not in tune with the proposed global social contract "forced to be free". (Halper&Clarke, 2004:11) This means that the neo-conservative unity was built on the principle of force, a fact that breaks the logic of the very idea of social contract.

### c. Social Contract: Between Freedom and Force

Though it exists in many forms, the ruling principle of social contract was announced by the Enlightenment English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). In his great work *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes wrote about the anarchic condition of the state of nature which dedicated the necessity of politics and the indispensability of law. In a state of nature, Hobbes asserted, people are free to do as they choose, and at the same time, they are exposed to the freedom of others to do as they choose. Consequently, human beings are left in a condition of perpetual insecurity. Hence, a state of nature in Hobbes's words is a condition "*of continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short*" (Hobbes, 1985:212). The remedy to this anarchic condition, Hobbes thought, was the laws and contracts. He therefore stated in his book that individuals should live, by consent, under a strong

civil government, a common wealth where men acknowledge their obligations to the peaceful liberty of others.(Hobbes, 1985:212)

In a social contract, we have self-chosen obligations. Hobbes asserted that there can be “*no obligation on any man which ariseth not from some act of his own*”(Hobbes,1985:310). This means that the obligations are not imposed, commended or coerced, but freely undertaken. In this way, the law in a social contract is legitimate, since it is based on the consent of the individuals who formed that contract. The ruling principle of the social contract, according to Hobbes, is that the rational beings who have agreed to form a contract should obey the law that was founded upon their free choice and consent.

On the basis of this guiding principle, it can be argued that the social contract that was propounded by the neo-conservatives breaks this law. The neo-conservative proposed social contract, in fact, was based on “force” and “fraud”, the two major features that characterised once the state of nature.

The neo-conservative political philosophy had the principle that societies must conform to what they considered the solely acceptable political and economic model. Particular regimes they called “rogues” or “evil”, especially ones located in or having connections with the Middle East, they believed, had to be changed to achieve global peace.

One might comment first of all that no governments in the world are above criticisms. Secondly, regimes that were disapproved by the neo-conservatives are noxious and brutal. In fact, as Roger Scruton claimed, they are not governed by politics but ruled by power.(Scruton,2003:7) The problem is that as soon as men decide that all means are permitted to fight an evil, their good becomes indistinguishable from the evil they set out to destroy. The neo-conservatives have often argued that military force is the preferred option for responding to foreign challenges and realising “virtuous” intentions. A neo-conservative who has openly supported this belief was Robert Kagan who advocated “the *brutal laws of an anarchic Hobbesian world*” and thought that “*power is the ultimate determinant of national security and success*”. (Kagan,2003:37) “Force” and “fraud” that ruled the state of nature, however, did not preserve men, but destroyed them. They resulted, on the contrary, in a state of fear, a condition of constant anxiety and perturbing warfare where violence and conflict are more or less the whole of the human condition.

Thus, the anarchy of the state of nature captured earlier by Hobbes reflects today’s experience where independent states are unsecured with respect to one another as individuals once were in the state of nature. With their vision of a global social contract that is both divorced from diversity and based on the principle of power, the neo-conservatives have retuned the world to the anarchic condition of the state of nature. Their behaviour that abjured the law, and their reliance on force alone; putting aside multilateral institutions and depending on military action as the only solution to

solve international problems, gave America the right to do what she could in the name of self-preservation.

In another book entitled *Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy* (2004), Benjamin Barber, has provided an insightful response to the dubious and dangerous doctrines of pre-emptive attacks and preventive wars that have characterised the Bush's administration foreign policy. Barber stated:

*We are drawn back into a war of all against all, and if not all, then all perceived "enemies". The list grows and grows: Iraq today, the "axis of evil" with North Korea and Iran included, tomorrow; Sudan, Syria, Indonesia and Pakistan next week; Malaysia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and the Philippines next year.* (Barber, 2004:93)

America's ignorance of international laws and institutions broke the contract between world-nations. With its reliance on force, its declarations of pre-emptive wars, and its being the almost unrivalled power, the United States today resembles the strongest man in Hobbes's state of nature. The result is predatory conduct of terrorism, since both parties; the United States and its so called "enemies", are operating outside the law. America's military and pre-emptive actions and the emergence of a disturbing pattern of devastating suicide bombing performed by a young generation whose honour and status is infused with the imagery of martyrdom have brought the world full circle to Hobbes's state of anarchy.

It can be argued here that the neo-conservative proposed global social contract that did not tolerate diversity and coerced laws was a source of un-ending wars. Since it stressed that there must have been some bond connecting human beings from different societies and civilisations, it provided an appeal for the strong against the weak. And since persons and political entities confronted each other as belligerent, life has become a struggle of "us" against "the" and verse versa. The neo-conservative global social contract then was prone to self-absorption.

To question the universalistic philosophy of the neo-conservatives, however, is not the same as to question a prominent role of the United States in the world. America must defend itself, protect its interests, and shoulder some of the responsibility for the peace and well-being of the world. To act wisely in a world of great dangers as well as opportunities, however, America does need a strategy, one based on mature, historically well informed, subtle thinking and marked by humility quite different from the one popularised by the neo-conservatives. What is argued here is that the strategy of the neo-conservatives did not answer to that description. Federalist N°6 (Hamilton), which discusses international affairs, contains a pointed criticism of the kind of

moral conceit and utopianism that was found at the very heart of neo-conservatism:

*Have we not already seen enough of the fallacy and extravagance of those idle theories which have amused us with promises of an exemption from the imperfections, the weaknesses, and the evil incident to society in every shape?* (Hamilton,1937:59)

The same Federalist contains a sharp criticism of wishful thinking in international affairs:

*Is it not time to awake from the deceitful dream of a golden age and to adopt as a practical maxim for the direction of our political conduct that we, as well as the other inhabitants of the globe, are yet remote from the happy empire of perfect wisdom and perfect virtue?* (Hamilton, 1957:59)

Given the diversity and complexity of the world, a political philosophy that tries to impose the right solution is a fiction. Encompassing and specifying the needs of different cultural, social and political contexts is not possible, for life is too varied, manifold, and diverse for there to be a definite clarity about how to act. In addition, for a virtuous order to be possible, human beings need to have humility and self-control. All social beings emanate from properly ordered individual lives. This view finds strong support in the even older traditions of Asia. The Confucian understanding of the origins of sound political order is a case in point. The moral and political ethos of Confucianism is conveyed in the following sayings, which approve of ancient rulers who wanted to demonstrate their virtue to the rest of the world. These rulers wanted first to govern their own state well:

- Wanting to govern well their state, they first harmonise their own clan.
- Wanting to harmonise their own clan, they first cultivated themselves.
- Wanting to cultivate themselves, they first corrected their minds.
- Wanting to correct their minds, they first made their will sincere...
- When the will is sincere, the mind is correct.
- When the mind is correct, the self is cultivated.
- When the self is cultivated, the clan is harmonised.
- When the clan is harmonised, the country is well governed.
- When the country is well governed, there will be peace throughout the land.(Legge,1971:355)

## Conclusion

The American universalism that characterised the Bush's administration derived from a very different sense of priorities and therefore from a very different notion of "virtue". The latter, as it was conceived by the neo-conservatives, was not a matter of character and conduct, but rather a matter of always holding the right opinion. The idea that you are either for or against virtue, then, will always lead to violence. Peace and harmony is impossible without peaceful and harmonious people. An exemplary society, therefore, presupposes exemplary individuals. To attain a spiritually and culturally richer life and more comfortable existence, human beings need to govern themselves at the centre of their personalities. Thus, moral character is important to social and political order, a virtue that the neo-conservatives did not possess. In fact, what the neo-conservatives needed to know is an ethical conception of virtue, the one that has to do more with man's private state. The reason for this is that social and political life cannot be expected to serve the higher purposes of human existence, unless they evolve from decent humane, individual lives. From a plausible moral realism might emerge a reconstructed sense of proportion and order of priorities and a more sober assessment of what can be achieved through politics.

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