Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies
30.1 (2024): 146-179
doi: 10.2478/hjeas/2024/30/1/8

Twisted Narratives: The Neoconservatives' Pursuit of War for Oil in the 1970s

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HJEAS

ABSTRACT
Following the oil crisis of 1973, President Nixon and other American officials made statements on the possibility of resorting to force in the event of OPEC's actual "strangulation of the West" (*Oil Fields as Military Objectives* 1). Such statements were followed by a set of articles that rationalized taking military action to seize the oil fields in the Middle East. This paper argues that academics, political advisers, and news commentators who later became known as neoconservatives were the leading voices behind these calls for war. Their arguments and detailed plans of attack initiated a serious discussion of the military option in various decision-making circles and in different media outlets. By revisiting these articles and analyzing their narratives, this essay draws a connection between the neoconservatives' war rhetoric in 1973–1975 and their war rhetoric in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. The essay contends that in the effort to maintain US hegemony and dominance over a volatile and strategically vital region, neoconservatives reemployed an orientalist discourse that transformed the Middle East and its "natives" into the West's cultural Other, namely, an opponent to democracy, modernity, and liberalism that can only be dealt with through the use of force. (RA)

KEYWORDS: Neoconservatism, United States, Middle East, oil crisis, oil embargo, Orientalism, clash of civilization

Introduction

To commemorate the 60th anniversary of *Commentary* magazine in 2005, a symposium was organized under the title "Defending and Advancing Freedom," in which the participants were asked to evaluate the Bush Doctrine and discuss the American position in the world. In his contribution to the symposium, Edward Luttwak reflected on the American invasion of Iraq; he stated that "almost all Iraqi—including Kurds" believed that "control of the oil fields" was the prime motive behind the war. This is, he claimed, because "they [Iraqi Arabs and Kurds] would never dream of invading another country except for loot, they exclude the possibility that Americans

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and British are expanding blood and treasure to establish a democratic and prosperous Iraq" (qtd. in Peretz). Luttwak is usually presented as an American historian, strategist, and expert in the Middle East, but rarely as a former officer in the IDF (Israel Defense Force) and a long-term consultant for both the IDF and the Pentagon. This paper demonstrates how Luttwak and other like-minded neoconservatives, including among others Robert Tucker, Norman Podhoretz, Eugen Rostow, Walter Laqueur, and Jordan Paust, played the role of expert in the service of an ideological project.[1] The analysis shows that their views on what is the best course of policy the US needs to adopt toward the Middle East, since the 1970s, have constantly been presented as political and strategic; and it argues that a more thorough background check would have proven their ideological motives and undisguised prejudice.[2] In fact, Luttwak's dismissal of Iraqis' conviction that oil was the prime motive behind the American intervention is even ironic given the fact that his article "Seizing Arab Oil," published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1975, is, as this paper demonstrates, probably the most brutal and detailed account of oil looting in history.

The neoconservatives' prejudices against Arabs and Muslims, and their links to and connections with the Israeli government and lobby in the US, have been extensively discussed in numerous books and articles.[3] Therefore, this article solely focuses on analyzing the neoconservatives' warmongering campaign against Saudi Arabia and Arab countries in the Gulf between 1974–1975.[4] The paper shows how the oil embargo and the subsequent oil crisis were seen by the neoconservatives as an opportunity to revive the post-World War II alliance and mobilize the public against an external enemy. They called for the US to attack and occupy the Arab oil fields in the Gulf as a way to prevent further increase in oil prices and prevent their use as a weapon in the hands of the Arabs. The article suggests that the neoconservatives articulated their response to the oil crisis by advocating a proactive foreign policy centered on military intervention to take over the Arab oil fields. Their logic rested on the following three cohesive assumptions: First, the ability of the US to control oil flow and prices is the glue that preserved the foundation of the Western alliance that is "the delicate network of monetary and commercial relations linking the advanced Western societies to one another" (Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky, *The Great* 83). Second, the Arab–Israeli conflict is secondary to the prime issue of the Soviet takeover of the oil fields; hence, to reach a peace settlement that is not in favor of Israel is to send a message that the US surrendered to Arab oil blackmail. Third, the Middle East is an unstable area, its inhabitants are

irrational, inherently anti-Western, and can only understand the language of force.

The article provides a close reading of some of the prominent neoconservatives' contributions in what became a campaign calling for a war for oil as a remedy for the economic, political, and cultural crises afflicting the West in the 1970s. The most notable accounts are Edward Luttwak's "Seizing Arab Oil," Robert W. Tucker's "The Issue of American Intervention" and "Further Reflections on Oil & Force" in *Commentary*, Walter Laqueur's *Confrontation: The Middle-East War and World Politics*, Paul Seabury's "Thinking About an Oil War" in *The New Leader*, and *The Great Détente Disaster: Oil and the Decline of American Foreign Policy* by Edward Friedland, Paul Seabury, and Aaron B Wildavsky. Additionally, the paper presents statements from other neoconservative journalists and politicians to demonstrate that a collective effort—only compared with the neoconservatives' effort to target Iraq in the 1990s and following 9/11 and currently against Iran—was initiated by neoconservatives in the mid-1970s to justify the use of force against the Arab countries as part of a larger attempt to advocate a confrontational foreign policy approach as opposed to détente and interdependent relations. The oil crisis was significant for the neoconservatives ideologically, as it presented an opportunity to revive the post-World War II alliance and mobilize the public against an external enemy. A war in the Middle East was seen by the neoconservatives as beneficial to prevent concessions of territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and as a remedy for the economic, political, and cultural crises afflicting the West in the 1970s. The crises encompassed the momentum gained by anti-war, women's rights, gay rights, and environmental movements, along with the emergence of Euro-communism in Europe, and neo-isolationism and anti-war sentiments in the US. Moreover, the war was perceived as a means to reestablish a formidable image for both the US and Israel after the former's quagmire in Vietnam and the latter's early setback during the 1973 war. The article also provides a close reading to the narratives used by neoconservatives during this period to show how notions such as militarism, unilateralism, preemptive war, and anti-Arab/-Muslim discourse have been part of the neoconservatives' narratives since the 1970s.

The neoconservatives' "gunboat diplomacy"

In order to put pressure on the international community to compel Israel to fulfill the Security Council resolutions 242 and 339, which stated the withdrawal from the Arab occupied territories of 1967, the Arab oil ministers

gathered in Kuwait on 17October 1973, and announced their intention to reduce their oil production by a recurrent monthly rate of 5%, and to halt oil supplies to the US and states that supported Israel during the 1973 war until Israel withdrew from the Arab occupied territories. (See "OPEC Resolution and Other Documents" in Paust, Blaustein, and Higgins, *The Arab Oil Weapon* 41–46). This action, historically known as the Arab oil embargo of 1973, was followed by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) decision to more than double the already hiked oil prices from $5.11 to $11.65 per barrel. As a result, the shortage of oil and the increase in its price exacerbated the economic crisis plaguing the Western world due to the collapse of Bretton Woods. All over Europe, inflation driven by high oil prices created a high deficit, almost doubled the cost of living, increased foreign debt, and raised the unemployment rate to the highest since World War II (Cooper, chapter 6; Stein 125–29). In the US, despite not being dependent on Middle Eastern oil, the economy "experienced its steepest decline since the 1930s" (Stein 101–17). Already struggling due to conditions largely unrelated to the oil price—such as the drain of the federal budget due to the Vietnam War, the lower growth rate, and increasing competition with Japan, Germany and other industrial countries—the American economy was hit hard by global inflation. Unemployment reached 9.2 percent; the mismanagement and panic over the availability of oil translated into long lines at gas stations and the disruption of the American oil market.[5] In 1974, the American economy entered a recession, which culminated in 1975–1976 (Stein 101–17). Moreover, the economic crisis prompted political unrest and social discontent. It led to the rise of Euro-communism in Western Europe and the collapse of the right-wing dictatorships in Spain, Portugal, and Greece (Stein 101–17).

A call for war loomed amidst this atmosphere. Several articles appeared in the American media with the notion of taking over the oil fields of the Arab countries in the Gulf. The authors of these articles shared similar views, were active in the same political circles, and in many cases worked for the same think tanks and magazines. This group of intellectuals, known as the neoconservatives, believed that keeping oil, "the world's greatest prize," in the hands of the Arab countries was an ill-formed strategy and the use of force was the only way to alter the new realities imposed on the West by oil producing countries represented by OPEC.[6] The neoconservatives' advocacy of a militant response to the use of oil as a weapon commenced before the oil embargo was imposed, and it persisted even after it. For instance, the Godfather of neoconservatives, Irving Kristol, noted:

> [I]nsignificant nations, like insignificant people, can quickly experience delusions of significance. . . . Smaller nations are not going to behave reasonably—with a decent respect for the interests of others, including the great powers—unless it is costly to them to behave unreasonably. . . . What is not comprehensible is the apparent Arab belief that they have both the right and might to use their oil to destroy the economies of Western Europe, the U.S. and Japan, to "bring these countries to their knees," as the Arab press puts it. And what is least comprehensible of all is the apparent impotence of these same nations in the face of such extreme behavior. . . . In truth, the days of 'gunboat diplomacy' are never over. . . . Gunboats are as necessary for international order as police cars are for domestic order.
>
> (qtd. in Chomsky 6)[7]

Walter Laqueur who, like Luttwak, was a former IDF officer, suggested in an article in *The New York Times*, a month into the embargo, that the US and its allies should take "military action" against the Arab "oil blackmail" ("Détente: What's Left of It?").[8] If Kristol and Laqueur's intentions were not clear, Daniel Pipes was more blunt in his request for the US to "Be Prepared to Seize Arab Oil," in a letter under this title to the editor of the *Boston Herald,* and he called for the US "to employ some 20th century gunboat diplomacy," in order to "dispel the preposterous idea that this super-power will allow denial of a vital commodity at the whim of desert sheikhs." The list of neoconservatives who used a similar narrative is endless. As this article demonstrates, the response that neoconservatives suggested to the oil crisis was almost exclusively militant. However, it is important to note that the neoconservatives' campaign for invading the oil fields of the Arab countries reached its peak long after the oil embargo of 1973 was lifted, which indicates that the main goal of this war campaign was not in any way a spontaneous response to the Arab countries' declaration of halting oil sales to the US.

Between the period of February 1974 and March 1975, the possibility of the United States engaging in war in the Middle East for the purpose of acquiring or securing oil resources was widely discussed in the American media. The most notable of these accounts was Robert W. Tucker's "Oil, the Issue of American Intervention" and "Further Reflections on Oil & Force," in *Commentary*, the neoconservatives' most prominent publication. The international relations professor expressed astonishment over the "apparent absence of force as an element in the crisis" and insisted that it was not just "excessive to insist that before using force one must exhaust all other remedies," but if it was forced to, the US should act "unilaterally" and not

wait for Western Europe's "attitude toward intervention" to be altered and for their "illusions" to be shed ("Oil"). His articles offered a detailed plan to occupy the area from Kuwait to Qatar, which he described in "Oil: The Issue of American Intervention" as a barren, unpopulated part of the Arabian Peninsula containing more than 50 percent of proven OPEC reserves, which makes it an easy target for a military Offensive:

> The one area that would appear to satisfy [military intervention] requirements extend from Kuwait down along the coastal region of Saudi Arabia to Qatar. It is this mostly shallow coastal strip less than 400 miles in length that provides 40 per cent of present OPEC production and that has by far the world's largest proven reserves (over 50 per cent of total OPEC reserves and 40 percent of world reserves). Since it has no substantial centers of population and is without trees, its effective control does not bear even remote comparison with the experience of Vietnam.

Following Tucker's lead, the American Israeli strategist Edward Luttwak anonymously published his detailed plan "Seizing Arab Oil" in *Harper's Magazine*. In this, he outlined a military "operation" to invade and occupy the oil fields of Saudi Arabia along with those of Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, and Kuwait—with the help of Israel and possibly Iran. The military operation suggested by Luttwak required a total force of 14,000 soldiers to carry the invasion and a resupply of another 40,000 soldiers to control and manage the oil reserves. The entire operation, he explained, would be finished within ninety days, "if not sooner." And in the aftermath "OPEC members would be faced with US control of Saudi oil reserves," which, if worked to the full, "could put all of them out of business for fifteen years." To operate the oil facilities after the invasion, Luttwak suggested importing a labor force from Texas and Europe to replace the uncooperative workers. For managing mobility in the desert, he suggested confiscating "every available truck and Cadillac found on the ground ("Seizing Arab Oil"). Taking into consideration Iran's strong position in OPEC and its interest in maintaining high oil prices, Luttwak argued that Iran posed the only serious opposition to this military operation:

> [W]ith a large army of 175,000 men, well-equipped and heavy in tanks even if poorly trained and worse led, with an air force that includes 100 Phantoms, with more coming, and with a navy already not insignificant, Iran could in theory do a great deal to oppose intervention. ("Seizing Arab Oil")

To overcome Iran's opposition to the war, he suggested offering Kuwait as a compensation to the shah of Iran in return for Iranian cooperation and as a way to offset Iranians' loss of revenue on their own output as prices declined. This cooperation, Luttwak explained, may result in a potential confrontation between Iran and Iraq or a Russian invasion of northern Iran; however, he concluded that the shah "would most probably accept an American action he cannot prevent, for the alternative would be war with Iran's only protector." According to his military plan, the scale of Luttwak's "operation" (at best) or "limited war" (at worst) would have stretched to include occupying the oil fields in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, and a potential war with Iran—if Iran refused to join the military intervention—or between Iran and Iraq. If that was not enough, Luttwak proceeded to suggest a preemptive attack on the military forces of Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, and economic warfare against Libya, Algeria, and Iraq ("Seizing Arab Oil"). In other words, his small and easy military operation was nothing less than an open-ended war against almost every country in the region.

Laqueur's "Détente: What's Left of It?" was another account that suggested a military action to take over the oil resources of the Arab countries; Laqueur, however, presented his military operation as a humanitarian effort to internationalize the oil resources. The aim was not to steal the Arab oil, he argued, but rather to safeguard the lifeblood of modern societies and allocate a share to poor and developing countries. Laqueur acknowledged that the repercussions of his proposed military action might affect "some desert sheikdoms"; however, its benefits, he charged, would extend to "the rest of mankind" ("Détente"). The authors of *The Great Détente Disaster* did not share Laqueur's courtesy; instead, their account directly called for using the claim of serving the international community's interests only as a deceptive tactic to gain support for US military actions from the American public and US allies:

> Like other aggressors, the United States could claim that it is acting not only in its own interest, though that is sure, but for world welfare as well. It could set up an international consortium to sell oil at 6 dollar a barrel, with 4 $ a barrel going to the exporters and $2 a barrel set up as an immense development fund to be allocated in lump sums through the World Bank, the United Nation Development Fund or any other agency set up by recipient poor countries. (Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky 189)

In contrast, the editor of *Commentary* magazine, Norman Podhoretz, did not even consider the US invasion of the oil fields to be an act of aggression. In his view, the Arab countries were the aggressors by threatening the "nation's sources of raw materials" (*Breaking Ranks* 357). Irving Kristol agreed with Podhoretz. In a contribution to *Commentary* magazine's symposium "America Now: A Failure of Nerve?," which the magazine arranged to discuss the American failure of facing the challenge posed by OPEC, Kristol considered the use of the word "aggression" to describe a military action against the Arab countries as being "simple-minded," for, he argued, "there are circumstances when a nation may justly initiate military action against another." To proceed to consider overlooking these circumstances by decision makers would hinder the US' ability to act decisively when deemed necessary (Barrett et al.).

The call for war by neoconservatives was not an undercurrent or a reactionary response; rather, it was a coherent and calculated effort. In the majority of their articles, neoconservatives presented the call for military action as a preemptive measure to protect and control the lifeblood of the West. This initiative extended beyond preventing another oil embargo or ensuring a stable flow of oil; it aimed to prevent the continued control of oil by the Arabs. Tucker and Laqueur explained this viewpoint respectively:

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

> Middle East stability, Israel quite apart, is deceptive; economic strength does not necessarily translate into political and military power. What power the Middle East oil producers have acquired is basically destructive: they are certainly in a position to cause a great deal of harm to the industrialized nations and the undeveloped countries that lack oil (i.e., the majority of mankind). (Laqueur, "The West in Retreat")

The vitality of the Middle East oil, thus, transformed the oil embargo from a threat into an opportunity. It provided a legal framework for justifying military action against the oil producing countries. This argument was the basis of another important neoconservative contribution to the 1970s war campaign. "The Arab Oil Weapon" by Jordan J. Paust and Albert P. Blaustein offered an in-depth analysis of the Arab embargo from a legal perspective.

The article argued that the oil embargo was part of an "Arab strategy" that coordinated the use of force against Israel with the employment of "an economic instrument of coercion (the oil 'weapon') against other states and people in order to place intense pressure upon their freedom of choice" (Paust, Blaustein, and Higgins, *The Arab Oil Weapon*). As such, the authors argued that the Arab strategy posed a violation to the United Nations Charter's goals and Article 4 (2), which pledged for all members "to refrain in their International relations form the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political dependence of any state, or any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nation" (Paust, Blaustein, and Higgins, *The Arab Oil Weapon* 72). Moreover, the authors drew up a list of effects that might result from the employment of the oil weapon; the inspected effects ranged from threatening the stability of the world economy, through undermining the UN's authority, to threatening the survival of the developing countries and causing the death of 20 million people (90–95). The legal case built by Paust and Blaustein showcases the way in which neoconservative academics operate as advocates or facilitators of US interests on a global scale.

Building a legal case to justify the use of US military force thus continued to be part of the neoconservatives' war advocacy. The same analogy presented by Paust and Blaustein in "The Arab Oil Weapon," in 1977, was employed by Paust in 2002 to justify US military action against Afghanistan in 2002, and against Iran in 2014.[9] In his article "Use of Armed Force against Terrorists in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond," Paust argued that

> [the US] can use military force in self-defense against ongoing processes of armed attack while executing the U.S. right to do so in accordance with the U.N. Charter, with or without congressional authorization, and whether or not there is any special Security Council authorization of enforcement action or NATO authorization of regional action. (439)

By the same token, his "Armed Attacks and Imputation: Would a Nuclear Weaponized Iran Trigger Permissible Israeli and U.S. Measures of Self-Defense?" in 2014 addressed the rights of Israel and the US to take military action against Iran. Paust argued that Iran's anti-Israel rhetoric, its support to Hamas and Hezbollah, and its intention to produce nuclear warheads provided the base for a preemptive act of self-defense:

> It is evident that an attack would begin not merely when Iran has fired a missile with a nuclear warhead toward Israel, not merely when Iran has "drawn" a missile with a nuclear warhead and aimed it at Israel, and not merely when Iran has pulled a missile with a nuclear warhead out of its "holster." In context, given the facts that (1) Iran has been publicly gunning for Israel, (2) Iran has been continuously complicit in ongoing armed attacks against Israel by Hezbollah and Hamas in violation of international law, and (3) Iran is bound by treaty law to not produce weapons grade nuclear material and nuclear weapons, one can recognize that a process of attack would be underway at least when Iran continues to violate international law, creates a nuclear warhead that it is bound to not produce or otherwise acquire, and starts to load the warhead onto a missile without backing down and making such clearly known. (45)

These statements show the neoconservatives' ability to construct a legal case to support arguments in favor of war and, how, after building such a legal case, neoconservatives and like-minded individuals who have had interests in maintaining the US imperial project relied on such legal frameworks to justify otherwise unjustifiable acts of imperialism. The fact that in the case of invading the Arab oil producing countries, this legal argument did not authorize or lead to a military action by the US, does not negate the danger and the influence the neoconservatives had. This is evidenced by the fact that Paust and Blaustein's legal framework was considered and recycled within the political circles in the US. For instance, it constituted aspects of Luttwak's testimony during the "Prospects for Peace in the Middle East" Congressional hearing. In this hearing, when asked by Senator McGovern whether international law would permit an act of aggression against the Arab countries, Luttwak argued that the embargo was itself an act of aggression; therefore, it provided an opportunity for the US to use force as a legal response:

> [T]here is no case for using force against someone who charges high prices. That is a case that cannot possibly be made. The use of force against someone who denies you a vital supply probably can be made.
>
> ("Prospects for Peace in the Middle East")

Never mind that the testimony was made more than two years after the embargo. Senator Henry Jackson also relied on Paust and Blaustein's arguments—especially the part related to the impact of the oil price increase on developing countries and the claim that the oil crisis would lead to the

starvation of millions of people (Mitchell 82–83).[10] Similarly, the neoconservatives' articles precipitated several statements by President Ford, his Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense, in which the use of force was considered as a possibility only in the event of the "economic strangulation of the West" (*Oil Fields as Military Objectives* 79). These statements were fortified by a press release from the Pentagon that indicated the alteration of the Seventh Fleet and by leaks about the US Marines' preparation for a potential invasion of desert countries (*Oil Fields as Military Objectives* 77–82; Stone, "War for Oil").[11] In *The New York Review of Books*, I. F. Stone in "War for Oil?" suggested that the leaks and articles that considered war in the Middle East seemed to be "part of a deliberate strategy to frighten the Arabs." However, the most important documentation of the neoconservatives' active role in making the subject of military action against oil producing countries a major foreign policy concern was the 111-page long study by the Congress Committee on International Relations under the title *Oil Fields as Military Objectives: A Feasibility Study* (1975). The introduction of the study made a direct reference to Luttwak and Tucker's articles in explaining its rationale. It considered potential military actions to occupy the oil fields of all OPEC members, from Venezuela and Nigeria, through Saudi Arabia and the Gulf sheikhdom, to Algeria, Libya, and Iran. It included strategies and tactics, the risks entailed, and the benefits gained by carrying out such operations. However, while the suggested military options for the rest of OPEC countries were cursorily discussed, the only detailed plan for an active military invasion was offered in the case of Saudi Arabia. For the oil fields in Saudi Arabia alone, the study indicated, "comprise[d] a simple, compact area in a single country," and because Saudi oil facilities were already managed by an American company "Aramco," which would make it easier to reallocate the company and analyze its data (*Oil Fields as Military Objectives* 42). The plan to occupy the Saudi oil fields included an in-depth analysis of the forces and logistical support needed as well as maps for the military routes, the oil facilities, and the potential war theater (*Oil Fields as Military Objectives* 41–73). One of the study's main theses was that sustained sanctions by the Arab states, even if assisted by Iran, would disrupt the US economy and degrade its security; however, "not even a full-scale OPEC oil embargo would threaten U.S. survival, our only vital interest." (5) Hence, the study concludes:

> [M]ilitary operations to rescue the United States (much less its key allies) from an air-tight OPEC embargo would combine high costs with high risks wherever we focused our efforts. This country would so deplete its strategic

> reserves that little would be left for contingencies elsewhere. Prospects would be poor, with plights of far-reaching political, economic, social, psychological, and perhaps military consequence the penalty for failure. (76)

The Feasibility Study, however, left the door open for alternative conclusions if some of the circumstances should change. The importance of this analysis lay in the fact that it gave the war rhetoric an official character that fortified the psychological warfare the neoconservatives had started in their articles, and it reflected the extent to which contingency plan threats were taken seriously by high-level officials. Having demonstrated that the call for invading the oil fields of the Arab countries were largely promoted and rationalized by the neoconservatives, I will continue to discuss the rhetoric used by the neoconservatives to describe the region of the Middle East and its peoples. Analyzing the neoconservative rhetoric creates a better understanding of the ideological underpinning of what we may consider to be the neoconservatives' foreign policy.

The neoconservatives' rhetoric toward the Middle East and its inhabitants

In his acclaimed book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said describes Orientalism as "a Western style [concept] for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). By limiting the Orient to the realm of Orientalist discourse, the Orient, according to Said, was managed and produced "politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively" in a way that would serve the West's political and cultural needs and interests—such as justifying colonialism and affirming Christianity—without providing a nuanced characterization of the Orient (3).This construction of the Orient perpetuated "[s]tereotypes such as primitivism, irrationality, terror, chaos, perversion, sexuality and death," which facilitated the shaping of the Orient as the strange, the East, or "them," in relation to the West characterized as the familiar, Europe, "us" (Mozes 196). Said argues that the "Orient," just like the "Occident," does not exist in itself as a united or coherent subject that can be studied, analyzed, or characterized.[12] With that in mind, it can be said that any produced knowledge about the Orient as a coherent unit is neither sufficient, nor accurate. In the last chapter of his book, titled "Orientalism Now," Said posits that post-enlightenment Orientalism, which provided the moral ground for the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European colonialism and imperialism, dispersed itself in what is now known as Area studies. "[T]raditional

European Orientalism," according to Said, was "if not taken over, then accommodated, normalized, domesticated, and popularized and fed into the postwar efflorescence of Near Eastern studies in the United States" (285, 295–96). Many perceived experts in the field recycled Orientalist narratives about Islam and about the Arab/Muslim "native" being the villain on a perpetual quest to subdue and destroy the Western non-Muslim, non-Arab Other. These new Orientalists constructed narratives that would become the framework according to which the Middle East region is viewed and studied, their views providing a perpetual justification for what would otherwise be considered a blunt display of power and hegemony. The call for military action to seize the Arab oil fields in the 1970s is like the call for war against Iraq, Iran, and Syria following the 9/11 attacks. In this section, I argue that following the 1973 war, neoconservative politicians, academics, policy planners, and journalists represented the new American Orientalist; they were instrumental in pillorying the Arabs as unequivocally responsible for the worldwide economic crisis and the rise of Communist parties in Europe. In the oil crisis, the neoconservatives found an opportunity to discredit the Détente policy, turn the Arab–Israeli conflict into ideological warfare, and unite the American domestic alliance while fragmenting the Western alliance, against which they constructed to be the Western civilization's "cultural other." By analyzing neoconservative accounts, we can see how what Said considered as Orientalist dogmas were on display. These dogmas 1) represent the Middle Eastern "native" as the West's irrational, undeveloped, inhumane, and inferior opposite; 2) recycle and reproduce static and abstract classical Orientalist views and narratives about "Arabs and Muslims" to explain economic and political issues, instead of examining the geopolitical realities of the region and their social and political impacts on people and on decision-makers; 3) present biased ideological Western views as "scientifically objective," while ignoring what the "natives" offer as explanations for their acts. Finally, perhaps the most important dogma of them all is that the only way to deal with the natives of the Middle East is to subdue and control them (Said 300–02). In what follows, I enumerate several essential themes that the neoconservatives employed systematically in their war campaign discourse to justify invading oil producing countries following the 1973 war.

The "vital interest" rhetoric

There is no denying the fact that the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of the Middle East makes it a region of vital interest for the US. The high concentration of oil fields at cheap extraction cost is normally

highlighted in any discussion of US foreign policy goals in the region. However, by calling for direct military action to seize control of the region's oil fields, the neoconservatives' rhetoric transcended the common American goals of preventing communist expansion and securing the oil flow to West Europe and Japan at reasonable prices. Both of these goals were achieved, to a large extent, if not fully, under the Nixon Doctrine and his Twin Pillars policy, and through the US' political and military aid to Israel and the moderate Arab states.

Nevertheless, the neoconservatives used narratives that convinced the American public that Arab oil can neither be abandoned, nor replaced, and only by force can it be protected from a Soviet takeover or an irrational act by the Arab countries. In his article "Oil: the Issue of American Intervention," Tucker talked about the "impossible alternatives" to Arab oil, while Luttwak, in "Seizing Arab Oil," emphasized (without providing any evidence) the impossibility of expecting "major new [oil] discoveries."[13] Moreover, with an army of experts, the *American Enterprise Institute*, a prominent neoconservative think tank, claimed that the Middle East oil was going to be the primary source of US energy.[14] In its publications, conferences, and round tables, the AEI asserted the impracticality of seeking alternative sources to Middle Eastern oil, citing the following reasons: low chances of finding new oil reservations; the high cost and the long lead time required to put any new sources to work; the environmental problems related to the use of nuclear and coal energy; the cost of developing renewable technologies; and the projection of faster depletion of non-Middle Eastern oil sources. The vitality of oil for Western allies, therefore, justified military action. In "Making the World Safe for Communism," editor Norman Podhoretz of *Commentary* stated: "Middle Eastern oil is a convenience to this country, but it is not a vital necessity . . . [It] is, however, vital to Western Europe and Japan, a matter quite literally of economic life or death." By using such narrative, the neoconservatives aimed to create a sense of urgency, when in reality the claim that the Gulf oil's vitality for the US mounted the risk of suggesting a war in the Middle East was illusive and fraught with dangers; the Middle Eastern oil resources—in contrast to Canada and Mexico, and to a lesser extent Venezuela, Indonesia, and Nigeria—were the most distant from the US and the hardest to secure.[15] For this reason, the US was reluctant to consider the Middle Eastern oil at any time of its history as a main source of energy. Nevertheless, the US was actually dependent on Arab oil. The only hostile act toward the US from the Arab oil producers was the oil embargo, and the experience of 1973 proved the inability of Arab governments to

control the distribution of oil or to prevent it from reaching the American market; hence, its impact could justify a drastic action like war that could cause far greater damage. A similar logic can be applied to the Soviet Union and the exaggerated claim of its interest to take over the oil fields of the Gulf. The USSR was entirely dependent on its own energy resources. Geographically, the Gulf countries were out of the Soviets' direct reach, and, strategically, the region's vital importance to the Atlantic alliance did not justify a drastic Soviet engagement. Moreover, historically, the Soviet Union did not carry out the threats to intervene in the region with actions: not during the Suez crisis, or the 1967 war, or the War of Attrition, not even at the peak of the 1973 war. Hitherto, there was no reason to assume that the Soviet Union was planning to take over the oil fields at a time when negotiations between the conflict's main parties were ongoing, nor was there any indication that the Soviet Union would risk a confrontation with the US over the Arab countries at the time of Détente. In light of these considerations, the neoconservatives understood that it was almost impossible—especially at the time of the Vietnam war—to induce the public to tolerate another military adventure, let alone a military occupation. Tucker asked, "Could the public be induced, in the shadow of Vietnam, to support a military intervention that bore no apparent or tangible relation to the containment of Communism, itself a factor of diminishing importance in determining the public's disposition?" ("Oil"). Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky, the authors of *The Great Détente Disaster* provided an answer:

> Armed force in defense of American national interests in maintaining oil supplies at affordable prices for the domestic economy to fight inflation and battle unemployment might well receive substantial popular support; a long-term occupation of alien land would not. (178)

Framing the war as necessary for self-defense, protection of national interests, or global security as these statements suggested, was used by the neoconservatives to gain public support and to justify the war.

"The Arab oil" narrative

As stated earlier, almost all of the invasion scenarios were written by the neoconservatives after—and not before—the oil embargo was lifted. These scenarios were evoked not just by the deterioration of the economic situation in Europe and the fear of another price increase, but by the fear of the power and wealth brought by oil to the Middle East, the "other" of the

West. The rhetoric used—mainly but not exclusively—by the neoconservatives reflected a tendency to equate the price increase with the use of oil as a political tool even though the price increase was a pure economic matter. Moreover, the rhetoric reflected an insistence on using expressions such as "Arab oil prices," "Arab oil extortion," "Arab oil regime," and "Arab curtail," regardless of the fact that non-OPEC oil producers also increased the price of their oil—Canada was charging the US a price slightly higher than the OPEC price at the time (McCracken et al. 39). The leading voices for price increase in OPEC were mainly non-Arab members (Iran and Venezuela), whereas the key to lowering oil prices were Iran and Saudi Arabia. While Iran held the leadership of OPEC and constantly called for a price increase, Saudi Arabia, along with the small Gulf countries (with the exception of Kuwait), repeatedly pronounced support for lowering the prices. Moreover, oil revenues benefited Western oil companies and a fraction of the Arab elite, whereas the majority of Arab countries imported their energy needs and were strongly affected by the economic crisis and the inflation due to the increase of the price of oil, food, and other commodities in the 1970s.[16]

The use of the term "Arab oil" reflected a calculated effort to pin Arabs as solely and unequivocally responsible for the worldwide economic crisis.[17] Neoconservatives, as I argue, understood the "Arab oil" policies within a civilizational framework. Arab oil policies were not motivated by economic or even political calculations, rather, they were ideologically motivated by the desire to defeat the Western other. Daniel Pipes, in "Oil Wealth Confers New Dignity on Islam" provides an example for this:

> The many defeats and humiliations that Muslims have endured since the 18th century have been severely trying. European technology, political ideals, military organization, economic structures, and cultural forms have overturned their traditional ways. . . . Then in the 1970s came the oil boom. Suddenly, Muslims could stand up to their Christian nemesis.

Oil policies, hence, became entangled with questions of Persian/Arab/Muslim identity. Oil, the neoconservatives argued, cannot be extensively controlled by "them," nor can it be negotiated outside the realm of confrontation between two cultures: the civilized, rational, democratic West versus the irrational, greedy, uncivilized non-Western Middle East. What was at stake then was not just the few extra dollars the West had to add to its energy bill, but the "fate of civilization" (Friedland, Seabury, and

Wildavsky 71). According to this narrative, the "natives" are not to be trusted with the oil wealth (or any other source of wealth for that matter) for its grave danger makes them a persistent threat, and they as well as humanity will be better off so long as they are kept at bay.

The immoral right of oil producing countries to their oil

In order to rationalize their call for war, it was important for the neoconservatives to use a language that would strip the Arab oil producing countries of their rights to sovereignty and natural resources. The neoconservatives presented the oil producing countries as countries that have no "skills, culture or work of their own." Pipes commented that the mere geographic coincidence of having oil in their otherwise "empty" deserts was what provided them with the power, wealth, influence, and prestige that allowed them to blackmail Western countries. He claimed that if it had not been for Western technology, these countries would have been a barren desert ("Iran's Good Fortune").[18] In contrast, Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky in *The Great Détente Disaster* protested against the Arab states being called "oil-producing states," for, they argued, these countries "do not produce oil; rather, they remove it from the ground. Western industry provides all the technology, the refineries, the shipping facilities, to see that the product moves properly to its ultimate destinations" (78–79). In a similar manner, Luttwak contends: "Men whose only claim to importance was that they had successfully cartelized a natural resource found and developed by Western money and Western talent were thus taught the personal lesson that the way to fame and power was more extortion" ("Review of *The Great Détente Disaster*").

What the neoconservatives were saying in effect was that the central role of the Western companies in finding oil and developing the technology that allowed it to be extracted and refined granted the West a rightful share in the oil producing countries' wealth. Only the West was capable of finding and investing the Arab wealth. What this rhetoric ignores is that the only reason Western companies were able to find oil in the Middle East were conditions related to the fact that the region was colonized by Western powers. It disregards the fact that Western talent is not what allowed the West to extract and process the oil in the region, rather, it was the region's weakness that allowed its resources to be exploited and taken advantage of. The agreements and contracts which allowed Western companies to explore oil prior to the oil crisis were not consensual, for these countries had no authority to reject, modify, or imply their own conditions when signing these

agreements. In addition, Western companies and governments had not only benefited—for decades—from Middle Eastern cheap oil, but, even as the oil crisis unfolded, they also benefited from the oil money—as the prices paid by consumers for oil included the profits of oil companies as well as the taxes imposed by governments.[19] Moreover, the claim of Western talent and technology is absurd for science and technology is an accumulated process and what we now consider to be Western technology cannot be stripped of the scientific contributions of non-Westerners.

The medieval and the democratic "native"

The neoconservatives also argued that the West had a right to the Gulf countries' oil, based on the fact that oil producing countries could only survive due to Western protection and support. In all of their narratives, oil producing countries were described as "reactionary," "feudal regimes," "military dictatorships," and "royal despotisms," and the like (Tucker, "Oil"; Luttwak, "Seizing Arab Oil"; Laqueur, "The Gathering" and *Confrontation* 47). To give an example, the following passage from Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky's *The Great Détente Disaster* well illustrates such sentiments:

> [T]hese feudal regimes—out of pace with modern political developments, either Communist or Western—rest on a precarious base. They have no tradition of democratic civility and are not based upon the consent of the governed. They are the remnants of a late-blooming feudalism which, elsewhere in the Middle East, has been overthrown in favor of revolutionary movements and parties. Ironically, in the recent past the survival of these feudal remnants has been due in great measure to Western aid, particularly that of the United States. (80)[20]

Such rhetoric imposed originally Western notions (democracy and modernity) on non-Western communities without a basic understanding or acknowledgment of the traditions, history, or culture of these communities. For instance, feudalism as a medieval European concept did not exist in the Arab tribes of the Gulf, which were not agricultural communities (*Gulf to Gulf Relations* 23). Similarly, "consent," known as the *Al-baiaa* (allegiance) system is the equivalent of democracy in the Arabic/Islamic context; it was a basic rule in the tribal political system that had prevailed in the Arab sheikdoms of the Gulf before British colonialism. Even after the British empire subdued the locals, it chose to sign the so-called "friendship agreements" with local representatives that had enough credentials to be accepted as rulers by their

people.[21] The fact that the political units that existed in the Gulf did not fall under the banner of "democracy" as understood in the West—itself a complex and conflicted concept—was used by the neoconservatives to question the legitimacy of Arab political systems and the moral qualification that permitted the Arabs to be in charge of such a vital commodity, and as a consequence, allowed them to threaten the civilized, free, democratic, and morally superior West. From the political and moral delegitimization of the Middle East, the neoconservatives drew the conclusion that military action to seize the oil fields could be morally justified.

Additionally, if we take the above quote at face value, the "feudal regimes" in the Gulf survived revolutionary movements and parties due "in a great measure to Western aid, particularly that of the United States." The right question then is not whether these countries are undeserving of their oil due to their undemocratic nature. Instead, what should be asked is whether these "feudal remnants" would have a better chance to turn into democracies if it was not for Western aid that granted them survival. And, what are the chances for countries to turn into democracies without revolutionary movements and parties, which in the case of these countries, with the authors' admission, were hindered by Western aid? If anything, this question proves that the US was complicit in the historical development of these repressive regimes. Be that as it may, ascribing features like backwardness, feudalism, authoritarianism, or totalitarianism to countries in the Middle East at the time was impetuous and flat; not even the slightest attempt was made to acknowledge that the entire region was undergoing massive political changes and, consequently, it was in the process of developing its own political culture, evidenced by various political movements and trends that marked the development of a political consensus beyond what was established by colonialism (Pan-Arabism, the Gulf solidarity movements, anti-imperialism movements, Arab Renaissance, Pan-Islamism, and so forth).[22]

The rhetoric of moral superiority aimed to disguise the ideological ground of the neoconservatives' war campaign, which had more interest in achieving hegemony and dominance, and in controlling these countries resources than it had in bringing them democracy and enlightenment. In other words, the neoconservatives in the 1970s turned to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Orientalism for justifying colonialism under the banner of civilizing missions and used such rhetoric to appropriate Middle Eastern oil as rightfully belonging to the West (Herbstreuth 137). Despite their criticism of the political regimes in the region, none of the neoconservatives' accounts provided even the slightest indication as to the form of government

that would be imposed on the countries after the presumed invasion. This was not only because there was no way that a free and fair election would have brought a pro-occupation government to power anywhere in the world, but also because the neoconservatives had no issue with supporting and advocating aid to authoritarian regimes so long as those regimes allied themselves with the US (Velasco 90–93; Vaïsse 117–25). Needless to say, none of the neoconservatives' accounts of the oil crisis offered any acknowledgement of the inhabitants in the Middle East countries beyond their leaders, except to refer to their numbers. Luttwak talked about the "very few men," and "the population in the main zone of operations" (Luttwak, "SeizingArab Oil). Tucker, Laqueur, and the authors of *The Great Détente Disaster,* respectively, described the oil producing countries in the Gulf and Libya as being "vast desert areas," "sparsely populated areas," "mini-mini-states," "nice little oligarchies," and areas that lacked "substantial centers of population" (Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky, *The Great* 190; Tucker, "Oil; Laqueur, *Confrontation* 43). In contrast, neoconservative talk about Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Iran always included a reference to their "large" populations or armies, as if the people of these countries were but mere statistical figures. The only threat posed by the inhabitants was related to their numbers.

Arabs and Muslims are irrational beings

A common theme in neoconservative narratives was the Orientalist portrayal of the Middle East as a place in which irrationality is not an undercurrent, but rather the normal state of mind. By deeming the political and economic choices made by the Arab countries irrational without any attempt to understand their motives and the logic behind them, an imperial power can find it easier to plan strategies, predict events, and take actions to support their strategic interests without replacing assumptions with facts. In the case of the oil crisis, for instance, the neoconservative narrative explained the oil embargo by claiming that it was motivated by the Arab desire to destroy Israel—not by Israeli occupation, nor by the US airlift to Israel. Conversely, the oil price increase was not instigated by economic reasons but rather by the Arabs' hatred of the West and their desire to destroy it economically. The irrationality of Arabs ruled out the possibility of reaching a political solution, a peace settlement, or an economic agreement, leaving the military option as the only way to deal with "them." The neoconservatives' military experts, strategists, and political scientists provided not one but several potential scenarios for the war and rationalized them. "Why should men be 'reasonable,' according to Western lights, when they have come so

far and so fast by being unreasonable?" asked Tucker ("Oil"). In the meantime, Laqueur described the Arabs as people who live in an "unreal world" and are willing to sacrifice millions of their people in their desire to destroy Israel:

> [A]t the most the Arabs could destroy Israel at the price of their own suicide. In the unreal world in which they live, it seems not to have occurred to them that, if faced with the destruction of their state and the annihilation of their people, the Israelis, like Samson, would probably prefer to die with the Philistines, bringing down with them more than the "ten million" which some of the Arab Maoists are willing to sacrifice. Today these are apocalyptic visions, fairly soon they may be reality. (*Confrontation* 233)

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

> [I]t is wishful thinking to expect, in our lifetime, that the Arabs are going to be "reasonable" vis-à-vis Israel, or foreign oil companies, or anything else which they regard as an infringement of their historic rights over the areas settled by the Arab people (or assimilated, by conquest or conversion, into the Arab world). Their idea of "reasonableness" is utterly different from ours. They are less interested in making money or in the world's good opinion than in reviving a lost grandeur.
>
> (Kristol, *The Neoconservative Persuasion* 202)

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

> In the oil game, no Israel, no America, because without Israel America has no cards to play with the Arab members of OPEC. The elimination of Israel, in fact, could easily confirm the Arab OPEC nations' confidence in their capacities to persist in their enrichment, and would display to a watching world an enfeebled West the more vulnerable to further contrived depredations originating elsewhere.
>
> (Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky 183)

Whether or not the Middle East is ruled by US allies, its oil cannot be secured so long as the oil is not fully under the dominance of the West. Constructing a narrative in which the Middle Eastern person is an "enemy by default" justifies policies that would be unjustifiable anywhere else because they are imperial in their nature. Hence, in service of the imperial project, neoconservatives played the role of experts, in other words, the same role previously played by their Orientalist predecessors.[23] For instance, during the 1976 Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Hearing "Prospects for Peace in the Middle East," Luttwak, upon delivering his testimony, was introduced to Congress members as a professor in the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. There was no mention of his—then current—work as advisor for the Pentagon, nor of his previous work as a military strategist for the Israeli army. He provided what was perceived to be an "expert" opinion, where he stated, among other things, that

> [i]t is absolutely preposterous to suggest that in the long term the entire energy basis of the Western economy can be predicated upon developing a relationship with Saudi Arabia. It is preposterous because of the *nature* of Saudi Arabia as a country, the *nature* of its society, the *nature* of its politics and the fact that it exists in the Middle East.
>
> (*Prospects for Peace in the Middle East, 1976* 204–24; emphasis added)[24]

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

applied to any and all of the other countries in the Middle East—with the obvious exception of Israel.

The "clash of civilizations" narrative

Not surprisingly, the neoconservative narrative of the Middle Eastern "native's" thirst for vengeance on the West already existed and was circulated well before the oil embargo. For instance, a year before the oil embargo and the oil price increase, Eugen Rostow argued that

> the US allies in the Middle East] realize that the idea of revenge against Israel is sterile and self-destructive and that its true purpose is not the destruction of Israel but the radicalization of Arab politics in Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and the Persian Gulf area. But few can publicly oppose the dream of a holy war when opinion is inflamed by the call to battle. (252)

According to Rostow, the desire for a "holy war" is so prevalent among the "native" subjects that only a "few" of them have the power to publicly oppose it. The theme of the holy war/ Jihad was also used by Laqueur when he referred to the embargo as being used by oil producing countries to heed to the outcry of Jihad: "Had war not broken out, the Arab oil producers might not have made such effective use of the oil weapon; in the general climate engendered by the Jihad they could do no less" (*Confrontation* 106, 225–26). The use of terms such as "the holy war" and "Jihad" presented the conflict as religious, not political, which makes it unsolvable. It evokes an old fear of Muslims taking over the world, possessing the oil power, and thus posing a deadly danger to the West. As such, in the hands of the Middle Eastern "natives," the wealth brought by oil is a threat because their desire to prevail over the West overrides their desire for peace and prosperity. This makes them incompetent to handle wealth brought by oil or other resources. If these resources and all the wealth were in Western hands, the world would be better off. Once this analogy is constructed, the conflict turns into one in which only one side can prevail; the two sides cannot coexist peacefully. The alternative to seizing Arab oil would be to live in a world in which the West was at the "mercy of the Arabs" (Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky 72–73; Luttwak, "Seizing Arab Oil"; Tucker, "Oil"). In "Notes on the Yom Kippur War," Kristol indicated the "profound conviction" among Arabs that their newly found power would soon revive the glory of their past and the desire to defeat the West:

> The Arabs, in contrast [to Jewish people] believe that it is *unnatural* for them to be politically or militarily inferior to any other people. Centuries of subordination, even of foreign occupation, have made only a small impression on this profound conviction. For Arabs, the glories of medieval empire are like yesterday; the intervening centuries are a lamentable hiatus, of no intrinsic significance or even of much interest, and "soon" to be annulled by foredestined triumph.
>
> (Kristol, *The Neoconservatives* 202; (emphasis added)[25]

Kristol's "foredestined triumph" is the newly found power of their oil or what Pipes referred to as the "oil boom" that would allow Muslims "to stand up to their Christian nemesis" ("Oil Wealth"). If evoking the menace of Jihad was not enough, Luttwak in "Seizing Arab Oil" drew a gloomy picture of a world in which oil remains in the hands of the Arabs and Muslims:

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

For the neoconservatives, no manifestation of opposition to what Tibor Glant aptly labeled as "the rise of the US as European colonizer" is viewed as a response to US hegemony or as a result of political and economic circumstances that are subject to development and transformation. Instead, it is perceived as a reflection of the monolithic, regressive, irrational, and unstable nature of Muslims (507). Consequently, the clash between Muslims and non-Muslims (the clash of civilizations) is inevitable, and the use of force is the only way for the West to prevail. These hypotheses about the Arab/Muslim hatred of the West were presented by the neoconservatives as an objective reality. Their rhetoric transformed an entire region with its mixture of cultures and traditions into a potential enemy that has nothing in mind but to seek the destruction of Western civilization. There are several problems with this rhetorical framework, the least of which is that it is very simplistic; for neither the Middle East nor the West is monolithic, mono-ethnic, mono-religious, or mono-ideological, and such massive generalizations about the "Muslim East" versus the "Judeo-Christian West" are unrealistic. They cannot but lead to persistent conflict and antipathy

toward one another. Moreover, if we speak of the West as a "Judeo-Christian" civilization, then we should also speak of a Judeo-Christian-Islamic and "otherwise" Middle East, as all these religious and cultural traditions play an integral part in the region's history.[26] It remains to say that the assertion of Muslim "hatred" toward the West is a grave and dangerous call for there are close to two billion believers of Islam, including many Westerners, practicing its teachings and rituals in almost every corner of the World. Additionally, the fact that in pre-colonial times the region enjoyed long extended periods of peace—even when conflicts appeared, they never reached the extent of full-blown wars similar to those between European countries—and various ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities have coexisted in harmony for centuries, refutes the claim that Islam is in a constant state of conflict or that peace is incongruent with the mentality of the region's "natives."

Ironically enough, neoconservatives share the same view about Muslims being in a permanent state of war with non-Muslims, with Muslim radicals, and fundamentalists, who charge that peace and coexistence cannot endure in a world that antagonizes Islam and unceasingly seeks its destruction. Fundamentalists use the same narratives utilized by neoconservatives about the clash of civilizations to justify their resorting to violence against other Muslims. With its claim that Islam is in a state of war with the West and those who do not share the radicals' views are not Muslim enough, this narrative is precisely what leads to a great number of terrorist acts in Muslim-majority countries, often perpetrated against Muslim communities.[27]

Conclusion

The neoconservatives' war machine targeted the Arab oil-producing countries in the 1970s. The immorality and illegality of invading sovereign nations on economic bases were dismissed for being misguided and the fear of public opposition was discounted, for oil from the Middle East was the lifeblood of the West. This essay demonstrates how the neoconservatives' response to the oil crisis of 1973 was neither economic nor political, but ideological; this response spoke more of neoconservatives as intellectuals in the service of the American imperial project rather than as objective experts. Contrary to their perceptions, an overwhelming majority of the American people rejected the idea of fighting a war for oil (Herbstreuth 169).[28] No bipartisan consensus for war was achieved, as both the Democrats and the Republicans were more involved in domestic issues—Watergate and the anti-

Vietnam war movement—than in foreign policy debate. The allies and the oil companies opposed the idea of war on the basis that it could only worsen the economic situation and increase the volatility of the oil market. However, the neoconservatives' war campaign evidently had a political and psychological impact on the attitudes and decisions of the countries in the region. It drove the regional powers to increase their arms spending and expand their military buildup, which on the one hand impacted the power dynamics between these countries, and on the other hand, affected these countries' development and economic growth plans—especially those of Iraq and Iran. Additionally, this war campaign created a state of ambivalence, cynicism, and suspicion among these countries, as well as in their attitudes toward the US. Finally, it prolonged the Arab–Israeli conflict, fueled anti-Americanism, and empowered repressive regimes and radical movements in the Middle East and beyond. This paper has also demonstrated that it was the neoconservatives who rationalized and made respectable the concept of war for oil; they reemployed the old Orientalist tradition of transforming the Middle East and its "natives" into an irrational, unstable, and untrustworthy "other"; an opponent to democracy, modernity, and liberalism that can only be dealt with through the use of force—a narrative that continued to be used as a way to justify the political interventions in the region.

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Notes

I want to express my sincere thanks to Éva Mathey and Dorottya Mózes from the University of Debrecen, as well as the blind reviewers, and the copy editor, for their invaluable assistance in proofreading the manuscript and contributing to the enhancement of its overall quality.

1 Figures I refer to as neoconservatives were considered as such by seminal works on neoconservative historiography or were self-proclaimed neoconservatives.

2 For more on Edward N. Luttwak's service and work with the IDF, see Edward N. Luttwak and Daniel Horowitz, *The Israeli Army 1948–1973* (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books, 1983). On Luttwak's role in neoconservatism see Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs 1945–1994* (178, 204); Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (110,119, 161,197); Velasco, *Neoconservatives in US Foreign Policy Under Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush* (66).

3 The unwavering support of neoconservatives for Israel can be explained by a combination of different factors. These include religious influence, especially among Zionist Jews and evangelical neoconservatives who view Israel as a key player in biblical prophecy. Additionally, geostrategic considerations play a role, as many neoconservatives perceive Israel as an embodiment of Western capitalism, democracy, and individual freedom in the crucial Middle East region. On a moral level, the neoconservatives often see Israel as a symbol of liberalism's triumph over Nazism and fascism and view any criticism about Israel as a manifestation of anti-Semitism. For more on Israel and the neoconservatives see Adam L. Fuller, *Israel and the Neoconservatives: Zionism and American Interests* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020); Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005); Stephen J. Sniegoski, *The Transparent Cabal: The Neoconservative Agenda, War in the Middle East, and the National Interest of Israel* (Virginia: Enigma editions, 2008); Muhammad Idrees Ahmad, *The Road to Iraq: The Making of a Neoconservative War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014); John J Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

4 For the purpose of avoiding controversy between "Persian Gulf" and "Arabian Gulf," I used the term "Gulf" to refer to the body of water positioned between the Arabian Peninsula and Iran, spanning approximately 600 miles in length and varying in width.

5 The global increase of oil prices led to an increase in the prices of other businesses and goods.

6 The description of oil as the world's greatest prize was used by the US Department of State during Truman's presidency, see Perkins, Goodwin, Evans, and Prescott, eds., *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, The Near East and Africa, Volume IV*.

7 See also "American Notes: Remember Gunboat Diplomacy?"

8 Walter Laqueur spoke of his time in the Israeli Army in his collective biography *Generation Exodus: The Fate of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004). See also Laqueur, "Détente: What's Left of It?"

9 See, Paust, "Use of Armed Force Against Terrorists in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond," *International Law Journal* 35.3 (Winter 2002): 533–58; and Paust, "Armed Attacks

and Imputation: Would a Nuclear Weaponized Iran Trigger Permissible Israeli and U.S. Measures of Self-Defense?" *Georgetown Journal of International Law* (Feb. 27, 2014): 411–43.

10 Senator Jackson did not refer to Paust and Blaustein's paper; however, the date and the arguments the senator used matched those used by Paust and Blaustein in their analysis.

11 See also Hibbeln and Howard, eds., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E-9, Part 2, Documents on the Middle East Region, 1973–1976*.

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

13 Similar arguments can be found in Laqueur, *Confrontation: The Middle-East War and World Politics* (199).

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

15 While Venezuelan oil transitions to the US were secured by the American forces in the Caribbean, and oil from Indonesia and Nigeria was protected by the US fleets in the Atlantic and Pacific, the US had no active power in the Indian Ocean up until 1995 when its fifth fleet was reactivated.

16 The Saudi minister of Foreign Affairs reported his objection to the use of "Arab oil prices" by American officials and in the US press. See Belmonte and Keefer, eds., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XXVII, Iran; Iraq, 1973–1976*. The bread riots in Egypt in 1977 and the working-class upheavals in Tunisia (1976–1978) are but two of the examples of the impact of the economic crisis on the non-oil producer Arab countries.

17 In many cases OPEC was used as a synonym of "Arab." On Iran and Venezuela's role in the OPEC price increase, see, among others, Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky, *The Great Détente Disaster* (183) and Feith, "The Oil Weapon Demystified" (24).

18 The same narrative was repeated in almost all of the articles and books written by neoconservatives regarding the oil crisis, the 1973 war, and the second oil crisis in 1979. To give but one recent example, David Frum, President George W. Bush's speech writer stated in his *How We Got Here: The 70s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life—For Better or Worse* that "[t]he oil companies . . . found the oil, the oil companies . . . invented the technology . . . [and] brought the oil to the surface, oil companies . . . preserved and extended the useful lives of the fields, the oil companies . . . built the pipelines, refineries, and docks that brought the oil to market. The only contribution of the locals was to have had the good luck to have parked their tents atop a raw material that Western ingenuity had found uses for" (167).

19 Oil companies were complicit in the oil embargo because they preferred a higher oil price and did not want to risk antagonizing oil producing governments. See US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, The Permanent Subcommittee on

Investigations, *Current Energy Shortages Oversight Series, Cutoff of Petroleum Products to U.S. Military Forces* 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., Apr. 22, 1974. Part 8 (885–89).

20 See also Friedland, Seabury, and Wildavsky, *The Great Détente Disaster* (22, 43, 73, 77).

21 Oil companies and colonial powers did not invest in developing the oil producing countries, nor did they enhance the living standards of the locals. For instance, up until 1969, there was only one hospital in Qatar, very few schools and not a single university in the entire Gulf region. See Sampson, *History of Persian Gulf States*. On the Arab Gulf countries' resistance to European colonialism, see Saleem Taha Altakriti, *The Arabic Resistance in the Arabian Gulf* [سليم طه التكريتي. المقاومة العربية في الخليج العربي. (بغداد: دار الرشيد، ١٩٨٢] (Baghdad: AL-Rasheed, 1982).

22 These movements include the Popular Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, established in 1974; the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf, established in 1969 in Oman; the National Unity Front, established in 1963 in Qatar; the People's Democratic Party, and the Arab Socialist Action, established in 1970 and 1972 in Saudi Arabia, respectively. For more examples, see Sampson, *History of Persian Gulf States.*

23 Oil producing countries, Arab countries, and different points of views and narratives are also presented in these congressional hearings. In the case of the oil price increase, for instance, we find testimonies from Middle Eastern economists and scholars as well as officials, including Professor Hisham Sharabi and Professor Fouad Ajami, Saudi Arabia Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, and the Iranian Ambassador to the United States Ardeshir Fazlollah Zahedi. However, the difference between the testimonies of the neoconservatives and those of the others is that the views of the latter can be taken as political, that is, favoring their countries' interests as opposed to those of the US. In contrast, the neoconservatives present themselves as neutral experts and their notions as scientific, objective, and favoring US interests even when it is evident that they are ideological in nature.

24 For the full statement see US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, "Prospects for Peace in the Middle East" 1976. 94th Cong., 2nd sess., June 30, 1976 (204–24).

25 Kristol uses the word "Arab," although he is clearly talking about Muslims, for there is no such thing as an Arab medieval empire. The Islamic Empire, on the other hand, controlled the Middle East, North Africa, parts of Asia and India, and parts of Europe as far as Spain; in its history it was often led by non-Arabs.

26 It is worth noting here that Christian Arabs played an important part in the movement of Pan-Arabism and in the struggle against imperialism, especially in Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon. In fact, all the major communist parties in the region were established by Christian Arabs.

27 The US Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2011" stated that "In cases where the religious affiliation of terrorism casualties could be determined, Muslims suffered between 82 and 97% of terrorism-related fatalities over the past five years." See Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2011," *U.S. Department of State*, July 2012.

28 The calls for war in 1974–1975 provoked the first "national conversation about blood and oil in the United States," and polls at the time indicated that the overwhelming majority —to be precise, more than 80% percent—of American people rejected the idea of using military force for oil. See Herbstreuth, *Oil and American* Identity (169).

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