



RELIGION AND SECRECY IN THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

The Gentleman, the Prince, and the Simulacrum

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Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success...Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists... The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.

— George W. Bush, September 23, 2001 [\[1\]](#)

Secrecy lies at the very core of power.

— Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* [\[2\]](#)

When contemplating the figure of George W. Bush, the historian of religion—and really, any thoughtful citizen—is presented with a very strange paradox and apparent contradiction. On the one hand, this is by many accounts the most outspokenly religious president in U.S. history—a man who claims to have been not only saved but called by God to political office, who uses extensive references to scripture throughout his public

speeches (both explicit and subtly double-coded), who has denounced certain nations as part of an insidious "Axis of Evil," and who promises to bring freedom as a "Gift from the Almighty" to benighted regions of the world like the Middle East. Bush's remarkable display of piety has been noted not just by the Religious Right, his strongest base of support,[\[3\]](#) and the mainstream media,[\[4\]](#) but also increasingly by historians of religion.[\[5\]](#) Strong morality and grounding in faith have been the bulwarks of his administration and major reasons for his widespread public appeal; and, according to some estimates, they are among the most important factors in the 2004 elections.[\[6\]](#)

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Yet on the other hand, the Bush administration is also arguably the most secretive in U.S. history, displaying an intense preoccupation with information control. Bush and Cheney have been described by various observers as having an "obsession with secrecy,"[\[7\]](#) even a "secrecy fetish"[\[8\]](#) that is "the most secretive of our lifetime"[\[9\]](#) and "worse than Watergate."[\[10\]](#) From his first days in office, Bush was busy at work trying to conceal his own Texas gubernatorial records and the presidential records of Ronald Reagan (and those of then vice-President, George H.W. Bush); meanwhile, vice-President Cheney was assembling a highly secretive energy task force, while refusing Congress knowledge of its membership or workings. This concern with secrecy has intensified dramatically in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Not only has there been much debate over the question of what the administration knew, did not know, or ignored about possible terrorist attacks prior to 9/11, but more importantly, there has been intense controversy over the administration's use of intelligence to justify its invasion of Iraq in 2003. The accusations of dissimulation do not, however, end with Iraq. In addition, Bush has been charged with concealing many other sensitive matters, such as ties to corporate scandals like Enron, the effects of its environmental policies, and, well, really almost everything. As some critics have suggested, the Bush administration simply dissembles as a matter of policy.[\[11\]](#)

At the same time, ironically, this administration has also displayed a remarkable preoccupation with the surveillance and monitoring of its own citizenry. Particularly in the wake of 9/11 and new measures like the USA Patriot Act, public rights to privacy have been significantly restricted, even as the government's transparency has been radically reduced.[\[12\]](#)

So how, then, are we to reconcile these two seemingly contradictory aspects of the current administration, this intense public display of religiosity and this obsession with concealment? The kind of secrecy being deployed by the Bush administration is clearly very different from the kind familiar to most readers of *Esoterica*. It has little if anything to do with the doctrines of "correspondences" and "living nature," with the use of spiritual "imagination" or "the experience of transmutation" described by Antoine Faivre; nor does it involve the sort of "metaphysical gnosis" and "cosmological gnosis" described by Arthur Versluis.[\[13\]](#) It is, however, no less relevant to our understanding of religion and secrecy, and it forces those of us who are interested in esotericism to deal seriously with other uses of religious secrecy that have more explicit political implications. The Bush administration, we will see, does use many strategies and tactics that have much in common with traditional Western esotericism – strategies of rhetorical double-coding, the art of "writing between the lines" and a skillful use of obscurity.[\[14\]](#) Yet the ends for which these strategies are used are quite different, having less to do with spiritual transformation than with raw political power, in Canetti's sense.

In this article, therefore, I will suggest that we look at the Bush administration through the lenses of three controversial theorists who have had much to say about secrecy in both its religious and political dimensions: the German-born political philosopher, Leo Strauss, the Florentine philosopher, Niccolò Machiavelli, and the French

postmodern theorist, Jean Baudrillard. I have chosen these three, seemingly disparate, theorists because they correspond to and help make sense of three of the most important forces at work in the Bush administration, namely: 1) the Neoconservative movement, which is heavily indebted to Strauss' thought and has a powerful presence in the Bush administration through figures like Paul Wolfowitz (a student of Strauss) and the Project for a New American Century;[\[15\]](#) 2) the manipulations of Bush's pious public image by advisors like Karl Rove (a reader of Machiavelli) and Vice-President Dick Cheney (often compared to Machiavelli), who have used the President's connections with the Christian Right for political advantage; [\[16\]](#) and 3) an astonishingly uncritical mainstream media, whose celebration of Bush's image as a virtuous man of faith and general silence about his less admirable activities is truly "hyperreal," in Baudrillard's sense of the term.

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Bush himself, I will argue, lies at the intersection of these three (and other) forces, and his political persona has in turn been constructed in multiple ways by his advisors and constituents: he is thus at once *the Gentleman, the Prince, and the Simulacrum*. The first of these is Strauss' term for the political figure who serves as the public voice of religion and morality for the wise man or philosopher, who is in fact the one with the real knowledge and power. For Strauss, both secrecy and religion are necessary to the functioning of society: the former protects the "vulgar" public from harsh truths that would endanger them, while the latter gives them faith in the laws that govern society.[\[17\]](#) The second term is of course from Machiavelli, whose work has been taken up by Neoconservative thinkers like Michael Ledeen who call for a neo-Machiavellian use of both religion and deception in American politics.[\[18\]](#) And the third is the term developed by Baudrillard to refer to the new era of simulation and hyper-reality that characterizes much of culture and politics in media-driven, late capitalist consumer society. For Baudrillard, the age of the simulacrum in which we live is one in which "the secret" no longer conceals some hidden truth, but simply conceals the fact that there is no truth or reality beneath the appearance.[\[19\]](#)

After a brief discussion of Bush's self-presentation as a deeply religious individual and "Prodigal Son," I will then look at his administration through the three lenses of the Gentleman, the Prince and the Simulacrum. To conclude, I will suggest that the case of the Bush administration forces us to re-think the political role of the scholar of religion and to take a much more active, outspoken and critical role in relation to the powers that be.

I. THE PRODIGAL SON: Religion and Secrecy in the Bush White House

I know we're all sinners, but I've accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior.

—George W. Bush, when asked what argument he would give to gain entry to heaven[\[20\]](#)

The centrality of religious faith in the life and politics of George W. Bush is surely no secret. The narrative that he and his biographers tell of his life is clearly modeled on that of the prodigal son—the young man who fritters his early life away on alcohol and sin, only to find God and return to his rightful place in his father's

former occupation. As he recounts his own redemption-narrative, Bush had become mired in the world of business and the overuse of alcohol, and so turned in his darker hours to the study of scripture. The beginning of this conversion occurred during a summer weekend in 1985, when evangelist Billy Graham visited George and Laura at their summer house in Kennebunkport, Maine. The Reverend, with his magnetic presence and warmth, planted a "seed of salvation" in his soul that soon blossomed into a new birth:

Reverend Graham planted a mustard seed in my soul, a seed that grew over the next year. He led me to the path, and I began walking. And it was the beginning of a change in my life. ...[T]hat weekend my faith took on a new meaning. It was the beginning of a new walk where I would recommit my heart to Jesus Christ. [\[21\]](#)

In the course of his recommitment to Jesus, George W. began a regular study of scripture using Don Evans' "one year" Bible; he gave up drinking; and he also began working more closely with various members of the Religious Right. According to Doug Wead, an Assemblies of God evangelist and author of the Bush campaign publication, *Man of Integrity*, the Bush family had close relationships not just with Graham but also with several other religious leaders, including "dear friend," Jerry Falwell.[\[22\]](#) The younger Bush would soon put these connections with the Christian Right to good use during his father's campaign, winning the trust of the evangelical audience the senior Bush had failed to reach: "Bush had become so attuned to all the nuances of the evangelical subcultures that virtually no one questioned the sincerity of his acceptance of Christ...Bush had replaced his father's visionless pragmatism with the Manichaeian certitudes of Good and Evil...Dubya's bond with the Christian right was a crucial part of what distinguished him from his father."[\[23\]](#)

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George W.'s religiosity became even more explicit, however, once he decided to run for president himself in the 2000 election. Indeed, as he confided to James Robinson, he believed that he had in been called by God himself to lead the United States:

I feel like God wants me to run for President. I can't explain it, but I sense my country is going to need me. Something is going to happen... I know it won't be easy on me or my family, but God wants me to do it.[\[24\]](#)



As he considered the prospect of his candidacy, Bush met frequently with evangelical leaders. In October 1999, he addressed the Council for National Policy, a "powerful but secretive" group that attracts the "who's who of the evangelical movement," including Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Ralph Reed, Senator Jesse Helms, Congressmen Tom DeLay, Oliver North, and Christian Reconstructionist, Rousas John Rushdoony.[\[25\]](#) The founder of the Council is none other than Tim LaHaye, the author of the best-selling *Left Behind* series of novels, which center around an evangelical interpretation of the Book of Revelation as played out in contemporary global politics. In LaHaye's narrative, the Rapture has taken place, the Antichrist has taken control of the U.N., and the struggle between good against evil is being waged in the Middle East. This narrative, interestingly enough, also happened to fit well with the Neoconservative plans for the Middle East as the center of America's geopolitical struggle:

LaHaye...added a new foreign policy dimension to its agenda, specifically with regard to the Middle East. According to LaHaye, the armies of the Antichrist would soon have their final battle with Christ and 'witness the end of history' after a series of conflicts in the Middle East— not unlike those taking place today. The belief that the events in the Middle East were part of God's plan, that Christ would return only after Israel truly controlled the Holy Land, put the Christian right on course for a low-profile liaison with a highly unlikely political ally—hard-line, pro-Israeli, neoconservative defense policy intellectuals.

[\[26\]](#)



Tim LaHaye, co-author of the *Left Behind* series of books

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As Kevin Phillips observes, many of the Christian leaders with whom Bush has been associating are connected to a large and influential movement known as Christian Reconstructionism or Dominion Theology. For example, at the 2001 Inaugural Prayer Service at the National Cathedral, Bush chose Reverend Jack Hayford to give the benediction. A charismatic preacher involved with the founding of the "Promise Keepers" men's movement, Hayford is also an important supporter of Christian Reconstructionism.^[27] Inspired by Dutch-born theologian Cornelius Van Til and his American student Rousas Rushdoony, Dominion Theology is based on the belief that all human behavior is inherently religious and that Christian law should infuse every aspect of social life. The movement has been controversial for its strong political agenda, which calls for the dominance of the Church in political affairs and the creation of a single kingdom ruled by Christian leaders. According to Rushdoony's institute, the Chalcedon Foundation, "God's law is the divine pattern of sanctification in every area of life... The role of every earthly government—including family government, church government, school government, vocational government, and civil government—is to submit to Biblical law."^[28] As a form of postmillennialism, Dominion Theology teaches that the creation of a Christian society here on earth is necessary before the final return of Christ and the new millennium.



Although not formally associated with Reconstructionism, both Pat Robertson and Billy Graham have expressed ideas similar to Dominion Theology. Robertson's own campaign for president in 1988 is a prime example of the sort of politically-active Christian called for by Dominionists. Graham, meanwhile, has made outspoken appeals to Christians to take control of American politics. On April 29, 1985—shortly before he "planted the seed" in George Bush's heart—Graham told Pat Robertson's audience on the *700 Club* show that

the time has come when evangelicals are going to have to think about getting organized corporately....I'm for evangelicals running for public office and winning if possible and getting control of the Congress, getting control of the bureaucracy, getting control of the executive branch...I would like to see every true believer involved in politics in some way shape or form.[\[29\]](#)

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Not surprisingly, George W.'s use of religious rhetoric became even more intense in the wake of 9/11. Following the attacks, Bush began to cast the global situation as a vast war between Good and Evil, the forces of liberty and democracy against the forces of tyranny and terror: "Our responsibility to history," he declared on September 14, 2001, "is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil." In sum, as Bob Woodward observes, "the president was casting his vision and that of the country in the grand vision of God's master plan."[\[30\]](#) Thus, in a speech before the FBI on September 25, Bush described his mission as a war of goodness and freedom against hateful, mindless destruction:

I see things this way: The people who did this act on America...are evil people. They don't represent an ideology, they don't represent a legitimate political group of people. They're flat evil. That's all they can think about, is evil. And as a nation of good folks, we're going to hunt them down, and we're going to find them, and we will bring them to justice.[\[31\]](#)

At the same time, Bush also invoked the "Power of Prayer" to cover over and safe-guard America from future terrorist attacks: he asked that "Americans pray for 'God's protection" and create "a spiritual shield that protects the country,"[\[32\]](#) almost like a kind of evangelical version of Reagan's SDI plan.



As Bruce Lincoln has argued, Bush's post 9/11 speeches display a powerful and effective strategy of religious "double coding." His statements are laced with specific references to Biblical passages, which are clearly

heard by those steeped in scripture, but are generally overlooked as mere comforting words by those not so well versed in the Bible.^[33] "Speech-writer Mark Gerson, a onetime college theology major, filled George W. Bush's delivery system with phrases that, while inoffensive to secular voters, directed more specific religious messages to the faithful. Examples ...included 'whirlwind' (a medium for the voice of God in the Books of Job and Ezekiel) a 'work of mercy' ...and phrases like 'safely home' and 'wonder working power' taken from hymns and gospel songs."^[34]

Indeed, so impressive was Bush's powerful religious rhetoric that he came soon to be recognized as the new leader of the Christian right in America. On the day before Christmas, 2001, the *Washington Post* reported that "Pat Robertson's resignation this month as President of the Christian Coalition confirmed the ascendancy of a new leader of the religious right in America: George W. Bush."^[35] Apparently, Robertson had stepped down because "the position has already been filled...[T]he president is that leader right now. There was already a great deal of identification with the president before 9-11 in the world of the Christian Right, and the nature of this war is such that it has heightened the sense that a man of God is in the White House."^[36] In the words of Ralph Reed, the Christian Coalition's former President: "God knew something we didn't...He had a knowledge nobody else had: He knew George Bush had the ability to lead in this compelling way."^[37]

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Bush's intense religiosity also helped support his decision to invade Iraq, one of the key links in this Axis of Evil. As he explained to Bob Woodward, this decision did not come from his political or military advisors or even former President H.W. Bush, but from a much higher authority: "He could ...not consult his Secretary of State about going to war and not need to look for strength from his father, the former President, because he was consulting a 'higher father'"^[38] In his January 2003 State of the Union Address, in which he made the strongest case for war against Iraq, Bush made an explicit appeal to God, divine will and Providence to justify the sacrifice of American lives. For they will be dying not just for American people, but for freedom, which is itself "God's gift to humanity."

Sending Americans into battle is the most profound decision a President can make...This nation fights reluctantly, because we know the cost and we dread the days of mourning that always come ... Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity...

We Americans have faith in ourselves, but not in ourselves alone. We do not know...all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life, and all of history.^[39]

The fact that Bush succeeded in persuading both Congress and the American public to go along with this war is telling evidence of the power of this sort of religious rhetoric.

No Need for Explanation: Dissimulation and Concealment in the Bush White House

I'm the Commander in Chief, see...I do not need to explain why I say things. That's the interesting thing about being the President...I don't feel like I owe anybody an explanation.

— George W. Bush[\[40\]](#)

While Bush's display of religiosity is surely no secret, a great many other aspects of his administration certainly are. In the words of Larry Klayman, chairman of Judicial Watch, "This administration is the most secretive of our lifetime, even more secretive than the Nixon administration. They don't believe the American people or Congress have any right to information."[\[41\]](#)

It would be difficult to catalogue all the examples of secrecy in this administration in a long book, much less in a short article, so I will simply list a few of the more striking examples here. A member of the most infamous of all college secret societies, Yale's Skull and Bones, Bush knew much

about secrecy and the benefits of a tightly-knit old boys network long before assuming political office. As many critics have charged, there is evidence that suggests he was involved in insider-trading and suspicious accounting at his failed company, Harken Energy.[\[42\]](#) According to *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, "Mr. Bush profited personally from aggressive accounting identical to recent scams that have shocked the nation," such as the Enron and Arthur Anderson scandals.[\[43\]](#) And there are of course many troubling links with Enron and Ken Lay that the Bush family would like to remain beyond public knowledge ("Kenny Boy," as he was known to the family, has a long history with the Bushes going back to 1980; he and his company were also the largest contributors to W.'s presidential campaign[\[44\]](#)).

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However, the truly astonishing acts of concealment really began when he became president—indeed, almost from the moment he assumed that office. According to *U.S. News & World Report*, on Day 1 of this presidency, White House chief of staff Andy Card issued a directive to "wall off records and information previously in the public domain."[\[45\]](#) Bush's own first act as president was not to initiate a new economic strategy or plan to combat terrorism, but to make a concerted effort to conceal his own Texas gubernatorial records. As soon as he received word of the Supreme Court's favorable ruling on his election, W. arranged for his records to be "gathered, placed on sixty large pallets, shrink-wrapped in heavy plastic and, with no announcement, quietly shipped off to his father's presidential library at Texas A & M University."[\[46\]](#) After a year-long battle with the director of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Bush's records were finally returned to their rightful place in the state library (though with the provision that the keys to the filing cabinets containing Bush's records remain in the hands of the new Governor).[\[47\]](#) In sum, "it is difficult to believe one would go to so much trouble to hide his records unless he had something he really did not want someone to know about."[\[48\]](#)

Among his next decisions as President was a similar attempt to restrict access to the presidential records of Ronald Reagan (and of his then vice-President father). According to the Presidential Records Act of 1978, these were to be released in January, 2001. However, after requesting a series of extensions to review the many "legal questions" relating to the documents, Bush issued an executive order in November, 2001 that created an entirely new set of procedures for handling presidential papers and new standards for obtaining information about

former presidents. Although the American Historical Association filed a lawsuit to acquire access to these records, the case has been filed and re-filed repeatedly and remains unresolved, apparently until after the 2004 election. Unless overturned, this newly expanded secrecy could allow presidential papers to remain sealed indefinitely; it would require that access to a former president's papers be approved by both the former president and the incumbent president; and it would allow representatives of former president to invoke executive privilege after a president is dead. It is worth noting here some of the sensitive documents that Bush decided should remain secret: a six-page memo dated December 8, 1986 entitled "Talking Points on Iran/Contra Affairs" and a series of memos dated November 22 and December 1, 1988 entitled, "Pardon for Oliver North, John Poindexter, and Joseph Fernandez," among others.[\[49\]](#)

No less secrecy surrounds the activities of the Bush-Cheney "Energy Task Force," which has been highly controversial ever since its national energy plans were unveiled in May 2001. These plans focused primarily on promoting oil, gas and nuclear power, while largely ignoring alternative energy technologies; they significantly weakened environmental regulations; and they called for opening environmentally sensitive areas like the ANWR to oil drilling. Not surprisingly, all of this alarmed many environmentalists and members of Congress. The General Accounting Office, headed by David Walker, therefore requested that the White House reveal who was consulted by Cheney and what was discussed. Cheney's blunt reply, however, was that the GAO had no authority to seek the information—a move that many see as a bold assertion of the administration's autonomy and its exemption from any sort of congressional oversight.[\[50\]](#) Walker in turn filed a suit to obtain the information, which was dismissed in December, 2002, by Judge John D. Bates (a conservative appointed by Bush).

However, Larry Klayman and Judicial Watch filed a second suit, which did proceed far enough to reveal that Cheney's Task Force had relied for advice exclusively on energy companies, many of them big GOP donors. From January to May 2001, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham met with over 100 representatives of energy companies, eighteen of which contributed more than \$16 million to the party since 1999. These include: ChevronTexaco, ExxonMobil, British Petroleum, the Nuclear Energy Institute, Edison Electric Institute, and Enron. Consumer and environmental groups were barely contacted at all.[\[51\]](#)

Among the most astonishing example of secrecy in the Bush administration has been its environmental policy, which is of course closely tied to its dealings with the energy industries. As Dean observes, "no aspect of the Bush-Cheney hidden agenda is more disturbing than the stealth mistreatment of the environment."[\[52\]](#) The Bush environmental policy has been attacked by a variety of critics, including Robert F. Kennedy Jr., an environmental lawyer who has made a career of pursuing polluters. In Kennedy's view, the White House "has actively hidden its anti-environmental program behind the deceptive rhetoric, telegenic spokespeople, secrecy and the intimidation of scientists and bureaucrats."[\[53\]](#) It would take a very long book to recount all of the ways in which this administration has used strategies of dissimulation to conceal a shocking array of assaults upon the environment. Among the more incredible examples: concealing the fact that the air around Ground Zero was not safe and allowing citizens to return to homes and offices when it was in fact still very dangerous;[\[54\]](#) stifling EPA warnings about the dangers of deadly substances such as vermiculite, which contains lethal levels of asbestos fiber, 16 billion tons of which had been shipped throughout the United States;[\[55\]](#) and declaring that carbon dioxide—which is one of the principal causes of global warming, and of which the U.S. is the world's greatest producer—is not in legally "a pollutant that the EPA can site to regulate emissions from cars and power plants."[\[56\]](#) Finally, not only did the White House largely ignore the E.P.A.'s 2002 "Climate Action Report," which concluded that global warming is a reality and is directly linked to greenhouse gas emissions;[\[57\]](#) it also actively censored the E.P.A.'s 2003 environmental report, by deleting or modifying key sections that provided disturbing

data on global warming.[58]

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If the Bush administration was unusually secretive when it came into office, it became markedly more concerned with the control of information in the wake of 9/11. The new war on terror has been used to justify a whole new wave of official concealment, such as "secret immigration hearings, secret court proceedings, secret detentions, secret wars. Government officials have been prosecuted for sharing 'sensitive' ... information with the press. Guidelines for abiding by the Freedom of Information Act have been tightened so as to virtually gut the intention of the law." [59] On the Friday of Columbus Day weekend after 9/11, Attorney General John Ashcroft quietly issued an order urging all government agencies to deny whenever possible all Freedom of Information Act requests. In what some have called a "full scale assault on public's right to know," secrecy has become "the preferred response." [60]

But surely the most controversial example of the Bush administration's tendency toward dissimulation was its use of intelligence to justify a pre-emptive invasion of Iraq. Between August 2002 and January 2003, Bush and Cheney made repeated claims that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and that Iraq had ties to al Qaeda (and by implication to the 9/11 attacks). Almost all of these claims have since been shown to be mistaken, misleading or simply false. Among many examples we could mention here: On September 7, 2002 Bush spoke of an International Atomic Energy Agency report indicating that Saddam was just "six months away from developing [a nuclear] weapon." Such a report did not exist. [61] On October 7, 2002, Bush gave a televised speech in Cincinnati that was filled with misleading statements, such as a claim that Iraq "has trained Al Qaeda members in bomb making and poisons and deadly gases" – a claim that his own intelligence officials had disputed. [62] Finally, in his State of the Union Address on January 28, 2003, Bush presented eight alarming "facts" about Iraq's WMD, every one of which later turned out to involve exaggerated and misleading information. [63] The most egregious of these was the claim that Saddam had sought "significant quantities of uranium from Africa"—a claim the CIA already knew to be untrue, which had in fact been removed from the October 7 speech because of its unreliability. Only days later, Colin Powell refused to use that claim in his United Nations speech because of its lack of credibility (Powell did, however, use a good deal of other mistaken information in that speech, such as satellite photos of "decontamination trucks" that were actually water trucks and an image of an Iraqi jet spraying "simulated anthrax" that turned out to be a leftover from before the 1991 Gulf War, among many others). [64]

In some ways even more disturbing than this obsession with secrecy, however, is the striking increase of government surveillance and the reduction of rights to privacy for ordinary citizens. Perhaps the clearest example is the "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act," better known by its rather ironic acronym, the USA PATRIOT Act, championed by Attorney General John Ashcroft. Indeed, some critics like Howard Zinn have argued that this Act is in fact "the very opposite of patriotism, if patriotism means love of your country and not the government, love of principles of democracy and not the edicts of authority." [65] Among other things, the PATRIOT Act gives the Attorney General unprecedented power to detain non-citizens indefinitely; it allows the FBI to search citizens' homes or offices and conduct electronic surveillance of phone and internet use, without proving probable cause; and it gives government agencies the authority to conduct so-called Sneak and Peek searches, that is, to search our homes or offices without even letting us know they've been there.



Attorney General John Ashcroft

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In effect, under the PATRIOT Act, "concepts of transparency have been reversed;" government has become increasingly secretive, while the public has become increasingly subject to surveillance.[\[66\]](#) As Elaine Scarry aptly puts it, the PATRIOT Act "inverts the constitutional requirement that people's lives be private and the work of government officials be public. It instead crafts a set of conditions in which our inner lives become transparent and the workings of the government become opaque."[\[67\]](#)

I could, of course, cite many, many other examples of the pervasive secrecy at work throughout the Bush administration. However, even from these few examples, it seems fair to say that secrecy and dissimulation have surrounded nearly every major policy of this administration from its inception. As Walter Cronkite concludes, this obsession with secrecy fundamentally calls into question the larger credibility of this administration and its activities over the last four years:

This administration—the most secretive since Richard Nixon's—already suffers from a deepening credibility problem. It all brings to mind something I've wondered about for some time: Are secrecy and credibility natural enemies?

When you stop to think about it, you keep secrets from people when you don't want them to know the truth. Secrets...are what you might call passive lies....Looking back at the past three years reveals a pattern of secrecy and of dishonesty in the service of secrecy.[\[68\]](#)

But obsessive secrecy does not simply raise serious questions about credibility. It also raises the more fundamental questions of just what the heck are they up to? As former Attorney General (and later Secretary of state), William Rogers, nicely put it, "The public should view excessive secrecy among government officials as parents view sudden quiet when youngsters are playing. It is a sign of trouble."[\[69\]](#) Finally, this also raises the

troubling question of just how this obsessive secrecy could be reconciled with an avowed commitment to a religious faith that values honesty and truth?

II. THE GENTLEMAN: Leo Strauss and the Art of Writing Between the Lines

The gentleman...is the political reflection or imitation of the wise man. Gentlemen...differ from the wise because they have a noble contempt for precision, because they refuse to take cognizance of certain aspects of life, and because, in order to live as gentlemen, they must be well off.

— Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*[\[70\]](#)



Leo Strauss as a young man.

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Just in the last few years, many journalists and scholars have begun to take note of the surprising influence in U.S. foreign policy of the seemingly obscure political philosopher, Leo Strauss. Born in Germany in 1899, Strauss fled his homeland during the Nazi rise to power. He finally settled at the University of Chicago, teaching political philosophy and gathering a small but remarkably influential group of disciples. As Irving Kristol describes the enigmatic Strauss and his following,

Leo Strauss...was from a different planet...Helpless in all practical matters, the author of very difficult and complex texts, studious and meditative, a rationalist who pressed reason to its ultimate limits, he was

no kind of ‘intellectual’— a class he held in, at best, tolerant contempt ...His students – those happy few who sat at his feet – became ‘Straussians,’ though they preferred to be known as ‘political theorists’ ... These students of Strauss, in turn, have produced another generation of political theorists, many of whom have relocated to Washington D.C. since the academic world of... ‘political science’ has become ever more hostile to Strauss.[\[71\]](#)

Strauss is a notoriously difficult author, whose work has given rise to a wide array of interpretations—even among his own students, as we see in the heated debate over his legacy between Harry Jaffa and Thomas Pangle.[\[72\]](#) This is not surprising, however, since Strauss himself wrote in the same kind of cryptic, doubly-coded, almost Kabbalistic “esoteric writing” that he believed characterized the works of the great ancient philosophers. Some authors suggest that he deliberately taught different ideas to different students, believing that there are different levels of knowledge and different levels of capacity.[\[73\]](#) In recent years, Strauss and his connections with the Neoconservatives have also given rise to a wide array of conspiratorial speculations, which have, unfortunately, only obscured his complex influence on contemporary politics. Some neoconservatives like Wolfowitz have recently downplayed Strauss’s influence, dismissing the idea that Strauss has anything to with contemporary foreign policy. Nevertheless, as Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke argue in their recent study of neoconservatism, “by affiliation or derivation, Strauss’s ideas occupied a space in the education of many students and intellectuals who subsequently progressed to the highest levels of Washington’s political elite.”[\[74\]](#)

From Athens to Chicago: Religion and Secrecy in Strauss's Political Philosophy

That literature is addressed, not to all readers, but to trustworthy and intelligent readers only....[A]n author who wishes to address only thoughtful men has but to write in such a way that only a very careful reader can detect the meaning of his book.

— Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*[\[75\]](#)

So what is it about Strauss’s philosophy – which is in fact quite controversial and often dismissed within the field of political philosophy – that has been so appealing to Neoconservatives and others in Washington today? His appeal, I think, centers around four main ideas: 1) his sense that the modern Western world is in a state of intense “crisis,” which is due in large part to the dangerous weaknesses within modern liberal democracy; 2) his emphasis on secrecy and esotericism, or the art of writing and reading between the lines; 3) his belief that religion is necessary for the coherence and stability of society, even though the philosopher or wise man has transcended such “noble lies;” and 4) his description of the “gentleman,” the public figure or politician who embodies the ideals of religious faith and virtue, and so serves as the liaison between the wise men and the common populace.

Like many European intellectuals of the mid-20th century, Strauss saw the modern Western world as a radical departure from the social and moral ideals of all past Western civilization, and particularly from the “ancients,” such as Plato, Aristotle, and their successors.[\[76\]](#) As Strauss confided in a letter in 1946, the hierarchically-ordered polity described by Plato and Aristotle is in his opinion the ideal political system, and one that we have now mistakenly abandoned: “I really believe...that the perfect political order, as Plato and Aristotle

have sketched it, is the perfect political order.”[77]

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The increasingly chaotic state of modern Western society, conversely, is one of intense crisis. As Ted McAllister observes, "the modern crisis was the focal point for Strauss's work;" from Strauss's perspective, coming out of pre-Nazi Germany, "the political stability and economic prosperity of postwar America hid...a deeper angst and a fear that the center would not hold. America would take a course similar to the totalitarian states if it could not shore up its moral center." [78] In Strauss's eyes, Weimar Germany fell prey to the delusion of Nazism precisely because of its weak and degenerate brand of liberalism. Modern liberal America, he warned, was in danger of falling prey to the same kind of totalitarian regime. To prevent such a slide in fascism, therefore, we need to "counteract the perverted liberalism which contends 'that just to live, securely and happily, and protected and unregulated, is man's simple but supreme goal' and which forgets quality, excellence or virtue." [79]

One of the key differences between ancient and modern worlds, for Strauss, lies in the role of secrecy. As he argued in his classic but controversial *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, the great ancient philosophers used a special mode of writing, an esoteric writing that was intelligible only to the educated few who were trained in the art of reading between the lines. To the majority of mankind, their works would appear innocuous and generally beneficial to society. But to the trained reader or philosopher, their works contain a deeper and more profound message. The reason for this esoteric mode of writing, Strauss tells us, is that the truths of philosophy are potentially *dangerous*. Society rests upon simple beliefs, conventional opinions and "noble lies" in order to remain stable and coherent. [80] The truths the philosopher knows, however, call those noble lies radically into question. Revealing these truths openly might even place the philosopher's life in danger. Therefore, the wise writer knows how to produce an "exoteric text" that contains an "esoteric" meaning, a text "in which the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines." [81] Such literature is addressed, not to all readers, but only to the trustworthy and intelligent:

Philosophy or science, the highest activity of man, is the attempt to replace opinion about 'all things' with knowledge of 'all things'; but opinion is the element of society; philosophy or science is therefore the attempt to dissolve the element in which society breaths, and thus it *endangers* society. Hence philosophy...must remain the preserve of a small minority, and philosophers...must respect the opinions on which society rests...Philosophers...are driven to employ a peculiar manner of writing which would enable them to reveal what they regard as the truth to the few, without endangering the unqualified commitment of the many to the opinions on which society rests. They will distinguish between the true teaching as the esoteric teaching and the socially useful teaching as the exoteric teaching; whereas the exoteric teaching is meant to be accessible to every reader, the esoteric teaching discloses itself only to the very careful and well-trained readers after long and concentrated study. [82]

Although the philosophers are able to transcend the conventional beliefs and opinions that govern ordinary men, they do also recognize the *importance* of these conventions for the good of society. Perhaps more than anything else, they know that strong religious belief is integral for the health and well-being of a society. Because the higher philosophic ideals of "contemplation and theory" are accessible "only to the few who are wise," special precautions are needed for the guidance and governance of the populace: "civil government... is not in itself sufficient for orderly corporate life within society. Religion is a regulator of order in social life. ...It

is...a code of law prescribed for the many by higher intelligences.”[\[83\]](#) Indeed, Strauss believed that one of the primary reasons that modern liberal society has entered a state of crisis is that it has lost its religious and moral foundation, and is now breeding a generation that is largely nihilistic, hopeless and without any ethical framework: "His great concern was that since 1950 the American commitment to modern natural right, shorn of strong religious counterbalance, has led to a greater emphasis on relativism and a corresponding loss of a moral compass."[\[84\]](#) Without strong religious beliefs such as the immortality of the soul and judgment after death, society lacks a transcendent authority for its laws and values:

[P]olitical atheism is a modern phenomenon which is simply incompatible with a stable and just order. When trust exists in a providential order to which one's conduct conforms, the dignity of moral obligations is enhanced and duty is raised to the level of aspiration. Belief in the immortality of the soul along with eternal awards and punishments acts as a powerful support for morality...No other source of 'modes and orders' could command such a great measure of assent and contribute to the stability of political life.[\[85\]](#)

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Following Plato, Strauss suggests that the ideal society would be one in which the wise men or philosophers would rule over the majority who are less wise. Yet because their unique insight into truth is potentially “dangerous” to the conventional opinions that support society, they are not necessarily the best politicians. Rather, the ideal ruler would be what Strauss refers to as the “gentleman,” a figure who embodies the virtues of religion and virtue that the common populace admires:

The best regime is based on the teaching that human beings are unequal from the point of view of their perfection. The wise are better suited to rule over others. The realization of this regime depends on the 'chance' appearance of princes friendly to philosophy...The best possible regime includes the rule of law under which the state entrusts its administration to 'gentlemen.' The gentleman is sufficiently wealthy...and public-spirited to be involved in noble pursuits.[\[86\]](#)

Yet while the gentleman accepts the comforting narratives and noble values offered by religion, the philosopher knows these to be useful and necessary but ultimately empty illusions:

The esoteric philosophy is about the secret kingship of the philosopher. If the philosopher is identified with the *Imam* or the descendent of the prophet Muhammad, that is only a concession to public opinion; it is a ‘noble lie’, a ‘pious fraud,’ a matter of ‘considering one’s social responsibilities.’ Nor is it altogether false, since the role that the philosopher must occupy in the real city is not unlike that of the prophet who has the ear of the god-fearing king. The difference is that the philosopher is a prophet without a god. But that is *his* secret.[\[87\]](#)

Together, then, the philosopher and the gentleman or ruler represent two different but complementary and ideally mutually-supportive standards of excellence: “the virtue of the citizen best embodied in the moral excellence of

the gentleman (the ruler or founder) and the excellence of the philosopher or the wise man.”[88] As Deutsch suggests in his reflections on Strauss’s impact on American politics, a modern-day gentleman would be most effective serving in the highest offices of government, particularly in the executive branch: “Service in the three branches of government, especially the presidency, would provide opportunities for the 'gentleman' to gain reputations for wisdom, patriotism and the love of justice.”[89] With the striking rise of the Neoconservatives in American foreign policy, followed by the election of George W. Bush, it would seem that Strauss’ ideal of the wise “philosophers” working together with the noble “gentleman” has indeed come to fruition.

From Chicago to Washington: Straussians and the Neoconservative Movement

Strauss’s view...suggests that deception is the norm in political life.

—Gary J. Schmitt and Abram N. Shulsky, “The World of Intelligence” [90]

[T]he secret, the Geheimnis...distinguished the elite, the establishment of the United States...Their possession of the one or more secrets made them into Geheimnisträger, bearers of the secret, rather than Befehlsträger, mere carry-outers of instructions.

— Philip K. Dick, *The Simulacra* (1964)[91]

Despite his relative obscurity and lack of influence within the academy today, Strauss has become remarkably influential among many political circles – and above all in the groups loosely characterized as Neoconservatives.[92] As Irving Kristol – the most famous proponent of the term – suggests, Neoconservatism is not so much a coherent “movement” or political party as it is simply a “persuasion” or a moral, social and political attitude. Over the last several decades, this "persuasion" has had a growing presence in American political thought, first through the influence of think-tanks like the American Enterprise Institute and the related Project for a New American Century (founded in 1997 by Irving's son, William), and second, through publications such as the *Weekly Standard*. Kristol is very clear about the formative impact of Strauss on his own intellectual development and his concept of Neoconservatism. Reading Strauss was a kind of transformative experience or intellectual awakening that changed his entire way of thinking: "Encountering Strauss’s work produced the kind of intellectual shock that is a once-in-a lifetime experience. He turned one’s intellectual universe upside down.”[93] As Kristol observes, much of the Neoconservative persuasion is indebted to Strauss, and particularly to his critique of modern liberal society and its loss of moral compass:

[I]n the United States...the writings of Leo Strauss have been extraordinarily influential. Strauss’ critique of the destructive elements within modern liberalism, an analysis that was popularized by his students... has altered the very tone of public discourse in the United states...To bring contemporary liberalism into

disrepute...is no small achievement.[\[94\]](#)



Irving Kristol

Bush himself was of course never a reader of Strauss and at first had little in common with the Neoconservatives' aggressive foreign policy. However, as Halper and Clarke argue, Bush's relatively unformed foreign agenda enabled the Neoconservatives to root themselves firmly in his administration and, particularly after 9/11, to take command of American foreign policy.[\[95\]](#)

Although the various characters lumped under the label of Neoconservative are a diverse and eclectic group, they do share a few key points in common.[\[96\]](#) One of the most important is their sense that, as Strauss had warned, modern liberal democracy is in a dangerous state of "crisis." "It is not an exaggeration," Kristol warns, "to apply the term 'crisis' to the events of recent decades."[\[97\]](#) Since the 1960s, and particularly during the Clinton era, American society has lost its moral compass and become increasingly licentious, corrupt and self-indulgent. As Kristol suggests, one of the beliefs that unites them with traditional conservatives is a shared concern about "the steady decline in our democratic culture, sinking to new levels of vulgarity."[\[98\]](#) One of the goals the Neoconservatives, therefore, has been to bring about a moral reform or "conversion" within politics and American society as a whole, in a word, "to convert the Republican party, and American conservatism in general, against their respective wills, into a new kind of conservative politics suitable to governing a modern democracy." As Kristol observes, George W. Bush has been a fortuitous gift to the Neoconservatives and has done much to advance this moral and political conversion: "by one of those accidents historians ponder, our current president and his administration turn out to be quite at home in this new political environment, although it is clear they did not anticipate this role any more than their party as a whole did."[\[99\]](#)

One of the ideas that most attracted Kristol and others to Strauss's work is the esoteric and "aristocratic" nature of his philosophy. True philosophy, according to Strauss, is not meant for the masses. Indeed, it would even be dangerous to the multitudes, who would only misunderstand and "vulgarize it." Philosophy is intended for a kind of "intellectual aristocracy" who possesses the skill, knowledge and courage to handle such potentially threatening ideas:

What made him so controversial within the academic community was his disbelief in the Enlightenment dogma that 'the truth will make men free'. He was an intellectual aristocrat who thought that the truth could make *some* minds free, but he was convinced that there was an inherent conflict between philosophic truth and the political order, and that the popularization and vulgarization of these truths might import unease, turmoil and the release of popular passions hitherto held in check by tradition and religion.[\[100\]](#)

With Strauss, Kristol therefore agrees that a just society is one that is ordered and hierarchical, one in which the wise few lead the many, and in which the inequalities of wealth and power are understood by all to be for the benefit of society as a whole: "A just and legitimate society, according to Aristotle, is one in which inequalities – of property, or station, or power – are generally perceived by the citizenry as necessary for the common good. I do not see that this definition has ever been improved upon."[\[101\]](#) And capitalism, at least in its original American forms, represents the ideal economic system for this sort of orderly, hierarchical society based on merit and the acceptance that those who are superior to oneself in the social order deserve to be so because of their own hard work and virtue: "What is distinctive about neoconservatism is not so much its celebration of bourgeois economics but of corporate capitalism. The latter is compatible with a hierarchical vision of life in which one prosaically submits to one's station and its duties."[\[102\]](#)



William Kristol

Like Strauss, many Neoconservatives are also quite clear about the basic need for secrecy and dissimulation in politics. Certain truths, certain information, certain knowledge should not be publicly available but should be restricted only to those who have the wisdom and skills to use that knowledge responsibly. This is one of the basic points of a seminal article written by Gary J. Schmitt (President of the Project for a New American Century) and Abram N. Shulsky (Director of the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans) entitled "The World of Intelligence." Following Strauss, they suggest that secrecy and lying are not just part of, but integral to, all political life. The idea of transparency is instead an unrealistic delusion:

Strauss's view certainly alerts one to the possibility that political life may be closely linked to deception. Indeed, it suggests that deception is the norm in political life, and the hope, to say nothing of the expectation, of establishing a politics that dispense with it is the exception.[\[103\]](#)

Finally, also in keeping with Strauss, the Neoconservatives are committed to the promotion of religion in the public sphere. According to Kristol, religion is the most important pillar of conservatism and the basis of a strong capitalist economy: "The three pillars of modern conservatism are religion, nationalism and economic growth. Of these, religion is easily the most important because it is the only power that...can shape people's characters and regulate their motivation."[\[104\]](#) Religious faith is crucial to the health of a country. For it provides the spiritual basis of a national "civil religion" in which the populace is taught to revere its leaders and withstand the mundanity of existence: "Moral codes evolve from the moral experience of communities, and can claim

authority over behavior to the degree that individuals are reared to look respectfully, even reverentially, on the moral traditions of their forefathers. It is the function of religion to instill such respect and reverence."[\[105\]](#) Like Strauss, Kristol blames the loss of strong faith for the crisis, relativism and immorality of modern liberal society:

It is crucial to the lives of all our citizens, as of all human beings at all times, that they encounter a world that possesses a transcendent meaning, in which the human experience makes sense. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is more dehumanizing, more certain to generate a crisis, than experiencing one's life as a meaningless event in a meaningless world.[\[106\]](#)

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Thus, in 1995, Kristol argued that the Republican party needed to reach out and embrace the strong religious core of the population – despite its tendency toward un-democratic attitudes— if it was to triumph over the contemporary liberal malaise of Clinton's America: "conservatives and the Republican party must embrace the religious if they are to survive. Religious people always create problems since their ardor tends to outrun the limits of politics in a constitutional democracy. But if the Republican part is to survive, it must work on accommodating these people."[\[107\]](#)

As Kristol observed, many students of Strauss began to make a powerful entrée into Washington during the 1980s. Foremost among them was Paul Wolfowitz, who studied with Strauss at Chicago, received his PhD under Strauss's protégé Albert Wohlstetter in 1972 and went on to become the undersecretary of defense under then-secretary of defense, Dick Cheney (1989-93). Cheney, we should note, is also a former Senior Fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, where his wife, Lynne, is currently a Fellow. Together, Wolfowitz and Cheney came up with a bold new plan to entirely rethink U.S. military policy, which was circulated in 1992 in the top-secret Defense Policy Guidance report. So disturbing was this report that it was leaked by a Pentagon official, who believed this strategy debate should be carried out in the public domain. Indeed, it was described by some as nothing less than a plan for the U.S. to "rule the world," without acting through U.N. and by using pre-emptive attacks: "It says not that the United States must be more powerful, or most powerful, but...all powerful."[\[108\]](#)



Paul Wolfowitz

Although this rather disturbing plan was quickly shot down after its leak, it resurfaced in a new form in 1997,

with the founding of the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) by Irving Kristol's son, William. As William Kristol and Robert Kagan had already argued in *Foreign Affairs* in 1996, America now has an opportunity to exercise a "benevolent hegemony" over the world while promoting democracy and free markets—an opportunity it would be foolish to let slip away.[\[109\]](#) Yet like Strauss, they warn that America is today in a state of crisis, in which our "foreign and defense policy is adrift" in large part due to the incoherent policies of the Clinton Administration.[\[110\]](#) Kristol and Kagan's PNAC soon emerged as the leading think-tank and a "who's who of the neoconservative establishment."[\[111\]](#) According to its own self-description, the PNAC is "dedicated to a few fundamental propositions: that American leadership is good both for America and for the world: that such leadership requires military strength, diplomatic energy, and commitment to moral principle; and that too few political leaders today are making the case for global leadership."[\[112\]](#)

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The ousting of Saddam Hussein and the rebuilding of Iraq (and by implication, the Middle East) was a key part of this program for American leadership. In 1998 eighteen associates of the PNAC—including Richard L. Armitage, William J. Bennett, Francis Fukuyama, Robert Kagan, William Kristol, Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz—wrote a letter to President Clinton. In it, they warned of the need to secure the "significant portion of the world's oil supply" in Iraq, advising the President that "the only acceptable strategy... is to undertake military action" and remove "Saddam Hussein and his regime from power."[\[113\]](#)

Although Clinton chose not to take their advice, the PNAC did not give up on its bold vision for America's benevolent global hegemony. In September 2000, the PNAC issued a report entitled "Rebuilding America's defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century." Its authors lament the lack of effort to "preserve American military preeminence in the coming decades" and criticize Clinton for squandering his opportunity to make the U.S. the sole, indomitable global super-power. The removal of Saddam and the U.S. occupation of Iraq would provide both the crucial justification and the ideal precondition for this much larger global agenda: "While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein."[\[114\]](#) Achieving this goal of undeniable U.S. power, the authors suggest, would require a radical transformation in public opinion and government policy. But they also caution that "the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a New Pearl Harbor."[\[115\]](#)

The attacks of 9/11 appear to have handed the advocates of the New American Century their "catastrophic and catalyzing" event on a silver platter (a fact that has given rise to no end of conspiracy theories). Indeed, as George W. wrote in his diary before going to bed on the night of Sept. 11, "The Pearl Harbor of the 21st century took place today."[\[116\]](#)

As David Harvey observes, 9/11 did indeed provide the catalyzing event for the forceful imposition of the Neoconservative agenda on both the international and the national fronts. Internationally, it gave them the justification for an extremely aggressive and militaristic foreign policy, of which the invasion of Iraq is the clearest example. On the domestic front, it also gave an excuse to impose extremely invasive new measures like the PATRIOT Act championed by Attorney General John Ashcroft (who is also an active Pentecostal Christian).[\[117\]](#) In both cases, these policies fit well with the conservative values of Bush's largest popular base in the Christian Right:

The fortuitous election of George W. Bush, a born-again Christian, to the US presidency brought a

neoconservative group of thinkers close to power. ...Its primary objective is the establishment of and respect for order, both internally and upon the world stage. This implies strong leadership at the top and unwavering loyalty at the base, coupled with the construction of a hierarchy of power that is both secure and clear...adherence to moral principle is also crucial. In this it finds its moral backbone and electoral base with fundamentalist Christians.[\[118\]](#)

Yet this aggressive foreign policy also has behind a much larger and, to many, more disturbing global agenda. With Iraq as its base of operation, and Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran close at hand, the U.S. will be in a position to control the flow of oil from the Middle East and, by extension, the flow of capital throughout the planet in an age still dominated by oil and petro-dollars:

Lurking behind all of this appears to be a certain geopolitical vision. With the occupation of Iraq and the possible reform of Saudi Arabia and some sort of submission on the part of Syria and Iran to superior American military power and presence, the US will have secured a vital strategic bridgehead...on the Eurasian land mass that just happens to be the centre of production of oil that currently runs...not only the global economy but also every large military machine...The US will then be in a military and geostrategic position to control the whole globe militarily and, through oil, economically...The neoconservatives are, it seems, committed to nothing short of a plan for total domination of the globe.
[\[119\]](#)

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In this bold Neoconservative bid for global power, religion plays a complex but integral role. It is no accident, as various critics have observed, that the central spiritual conflict that preoccupies the Christian readers of Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* series takes place in the same geographic region as the economic and political conflict that preoccupies the Neoconservatives. For the Christian evangelicals, Christ's triumph in the Middle East is the necessary condition for the Last Judgment and the New Millennium where the just will reign forever more. For the Neoconservatives, control of the Middle East and its resources is the necessary condition for a "New Century" of American hegemony where our own version of just rule will prevail, at least as long as the world remains tied to an oil-based economy.

On one of the most watched current affairs programs on American television, Falwell declared that Muhammad was the first great terrorist, while others expressed support for Zionism and for Sharon's violence towards the Palestinians since this would lead to Armageddon and the Second Coming... It is hard for Europeans to understand that around a third of the US population holds firmly to such beliefs ... which imply acceptance of the horrors of war (particularly in the Middle East) as a prelude to the achievement of God's will on earth.[\[120\]](#)

There is, however, a profound irony in this Neoconservative push toward global hegemony via oil dominance. Indeed, the irony is twofold. On the one hand, in its desire to be, as Powell put it, "the bully on the block", the US is now pursuing the very politics for which the "evil empire" (the Soviet Union) was condemned and opposed. The second and far more distressing irony, however, is that the U.S. drive toward imperial power and militaristic over-expenditure could very well end in the same economic collapse that brought down the Soviet

empire: "if the Soviet empire was really brought down by excessive strain on its economy through the arms race, then will the US, in its blind pursuit of military dominance, undermine the economic foundations of its own power?"[\[121\]](#)

III. THE PRINCE: Machiavelli and the Political Expedience of Faith

To those seeing and hearing him, [the Prince] should appear a man of compassion, a man of good faith, a man of integrity, a kind and a religious man. And there is nothing so important as to seem to have this last quality. Men in general judge by their eyes rather than their hands...Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are...The common people are always impressed by appearances and results.

— Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapter XVIII [\[122\]](#)

The winning formula is threefold: good laws, good arms, good religion.

— Michael Ledeen, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership* [\[123\]](#)



Niccolo Machiavelli

The second lens through which I suggest we examine the role of religion and secrecy in the Bush administration is work of the Florentine political philosopher, Niccolò Machiavelli, and specifically his concept of the Prince. From the outset, of course, the Bush administration has been accused by its critics of acting in

"Machiavellian" fashion. His chief advisor in the 2000 campaign, Karl Rove, is reportedly a regular reader of *The Prince* and used remarkably aggressive campaign tactics. Vice-President Cheney, too, has been compared to a Machiavellian adviser working behind the scenes and secretly manipulating his ignorant young "Prince." However, I would argue that the ties between Machiavelli – and specifically, a kind of fusion of Machiavelli and Strauss or a Machiavellian reading of Strauss—are more complex and significant than most of the popular literature suggests.

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Leo Strauss was himself an important scholar of Machiavelli, who wrote one of the most difficult, confusing and widely-debated interpretations of Machiavelli's work. As various authors have observed, Strauss' work on Machiavelli appears to be written in the same sort of esoteric, deliberately misleading code that he believes characterizes all the great ancient philosophers. Although Strauss begins his book by declaring the seemingly "obvious" fact that Machiavelli was a philosopher of evil who marks the end of the ancient philosophic tradition, it is by no means entirely clear what he means by this. Some have suggested that what Strauss finds most objectionable in Machiavelli is not so much *what* he says, but rather the fact that he says it *openly*, in clear, straightforward prose, without the esoteric strategies deployed by the ancients; and his criticism of Machiavelli's "evil" is coupled with a "deep admiration for his genius."[\[124\]](#) As Strauss put it,

Machiavelli proclaims openly and triumphantly a corrupting doctrine which ancient writers had taught covertly... He says in his own name shocking things which ancient writers had said through the mouths of their characters. Machiavelli alone has dared to utter the evil doctrine in a book and in his own name.
[\[125\]](#)

In any case, regardless of Strauss' own interpretation of his work, Machiavelli has clearly had an impact on much of the Neoconservative movement now powerful in Washington (thus, Irving Kristol also wrote an influential essay on Machiavelli, in which he compared him to a "strong medicine" and recognized that "Machiavelli *can* be a dangerous teacher; but...he may be a useful one"[\[126\]](#)).

Born in the Republic of Florence in 1469, Machiavelli spent his political career in the service of Piero Soderini's government until it was destroyed by the Medici in 1512. Suspected of conspiracy against the Medici, Machiavelli was arrested and tortured, and then retired to his farm in the country. Still tormented by a desire to return to the metropolis and to politics, he drafted *The Prince* in 1513.[\[127\]](#)

Like Strauss, Machiavelli has been subjected to a vast array of conflicting interpretations in modern scholarship. Indeed, he has been attacked as an "Antichrist" who preached a cynical doctrine of self-serving manipulation, and defended as a tortured humanist who candidly described the realities of life and politics.[\[128\]](#) Without engaging in any of this long history of philosophic debate, I simply want to focus on three of Machiavelli's most important and influential ideas: the necessity of deception, the political expedience of religion, and the reality of war.

Machiavelli made no bones about the importance of deceptions and false appearances in politics. It is absolutely necessary that a Prince *appear* to be virtuous, just, honest and compassionate; without such an appearance the populace would not trust or be loyal to him. But it is no less critical that he be able to *act* in ways that are cruel, dishonest, and vicious. If he has a strong reputation for compassion, he can retain the loyalty

of his citizens even when he is committing the cruelest of deeds:

[A] prince must want to have a reputation for compassion rather than for cruelty; none the less, he must be careful that he does not make bad use of compassion. . . So a prince must not worry if he incurs reproach for his cruelty so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal. [\[129\]](#)

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Therefore, an ability to lie is a great asset to the Prince. He must understand the ease with which most people are duped and the ways in which the simple-minded can be misled by the one who is clever: "one must know how to colour one's actions and to be a great liar and deceiver. Men are so simple, and so much creatures of circumstance, that the deceiver will always find someone ready to be deceived." [\[130\]](#)

Interestingly enough, Machiavelli suggests that of all the virtues the Prince should appear to have, the one that is of most political expedience is the virtue of religious faith. The appearance of piety inspires the greatest devotion in his populace. Yet it is only the appearance of religion that is helpful. To always act in a religious way would in fact be quite damaging to the Prince, whose station more often demands that he act in ways that are contrary to religion:

A prince, therefore, need not necessarily have all the good qualities I mentioned above, but he should certainly appear to have them. I would even go so far as to say that if he has these qualities and always behaves accordingly he will find them harmful; if he only appears to have them they will render him service. He should appear to be compassionate, faithful to his word, kind, guileless, and devout...But his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite, he knows how...[A] prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things which give men a reputation for virtue, because in order to maintain his state, he is often forced to act in defiance of good faith, of charity, of kindness, of religion. [\[131\]](#)

Religion, deception, and politics all come together in the harsh reality of war. For war is the single most important fact for a ruler: to rule means to wage war, and the test of the strength and ability of ruler lies in his ability to wage war successfully. Thus, the prince "must have no other object or thought, nor acquire skill in anything, except war, its organization, and its discipline. The art of war is all that is expected of a ruler; and it is so useful that besides enabling hereditary princes to maintain their rule it frequently enables ordinary citizens to become rulers." [\[132\]](#) Both deception and religion are critical in times of war. The former is the key to strategy and the means to outwit one's enemies; the latter is the key to generating troop loyalty and persuading one's citizens to die for a higher cause:

Religion, too, and the oath soldiers took when they were enlisted, greatly contributed to making them do their duty in ancient times; for upon any default, they were threatened not only with human punishments, but the vengeance of the gods. They also had several other religious ceremonies that had a very good effect on all their enterprises, and would have still in any place where religion is held in due reverence. [\[133\]](#)

Perhaps even more so than Strauss's thought, Machiavelli's observations on secrecy, deception, religion and war seem to have had a significant influence on Neoconservative policies of the last decade.

Cheney, Rove and the Christian Right: The Prince in a Postmodern Era

If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?

— Quotation on Dick and Lynne Cheney's Christmas card, 2003 [\[134\]](#)

A]long with good soldiers and good laws, the best state...requires good religion. ...fear of God underlies respect for men. ...He considers the Roman Catholic Church too corrupt and too soft. He wants a tougher, more virile version of the faith, which will inspire men to fight for the glory of their country ...

— Michael Ledeen, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership* [\[135\]](#)



Vice-president Richard Cheney

It is not difficult to see the imprint of Machiavelli in the activities of the current Bush administration and in the Neoconervative movement. As various observers have suggested, Bush's campaign advisor, Karl Rove, is not only an admirer of Machiavelli, but one of the great Machiavellian strategists of all time, who took a thrice-failed businessman and transformed him into a remarkably popular presidential candidate: "Bush is the product. Rove is the marketer. One cannot succeed without the other." [\[136\]](#) A key part of Rove's marketing was to repackaging Bush for several different audiences—as a pro-corporate, big business advocate on the one hand, and as a devout Christian and liaison to the powerful evangelical Right, on the other. Rove helped present him, in short, as a kind of ambiguous ink-blot, whose message of "compassionate conservatism" could be read in a variety of different ways according to various corporate and religious interests:

The task of reinventing and marketing [Bush] fell to Karl Rove, Bush's longtime friend, confidant and handler who had earned the sobriquet Bush's Brain. His solution was to create a Rorschach test candidate so that moderates, conservatives, and independents would see in Bush exactly what they wanted to see. Bush's theme of "compassionate conservatism" meant whatever one wanted it to mean. To Wall Street Republicans... Bush was his father's son, a... moderate who would be good for business. To the powerful cadres of the radical Christian right, Bush's vow to restore honor and integrity

to the White House, his promise that his deepest commitment was to his faith and family, meant that he was unmistakably one of them.[\[137\]](#)

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Rove's political strategies could in fact be quite ruthless, perhaps in ways that would make even Machiavelli think twice. Rove was known for the kind of "sour mash tactics of Lee Atwater days, a hard, negative assault on the opponent, sometimes directly and sometimes undercover"[\[138\]](#) Thus he recruited Ralph Reed, formerly of the Christian coalition, to help bring out religious conservatives. Meanwhile, a professor from the evangelical Bob Jones University sent out an e-mail claiming that McCain had fathered illegitimate children. In sum, "the practice of negative campaigning, the old Sun Tzu,...was something Rove not only practiced but taught at the University of Texas."[\[139\]](#)

By many accounts, however, the far more Machiavellian (and more powerful) figure in Bush administration is vice-President Dick Cheney. In an interview with *USA Today*, Cheney was in fact asked directly whether the comparisons of his behind-the-scenes politics with Machiavelli troubled him at all. His half-joking response to the question is telling: "Cheney told *USA Today* he was not worried about his image as the administration's Machiavelli, skilled in the quiet arts of persuading his 'Prince' to pursue questionable policies, adding, surprisingly unselfconsciously, 'Am I the evil genius in the corner that nobody ever sees come out of his hole? It's a nice way to operate, actually.'"[\[140\]](#)



Going still further, some have compared Cheney, whose "persuasiveness behind closed doors is legendary," to a kind of Svengali or a Rasputin.[\[141\]](#) Others have compared Cheney to Richelieu, the French Cardinal and Duke who served as France's Secretary of State for foreign affairs and later as Prime Minister—serving as the "hand behind the throne," who was known for his "horrible overspending on war he fostered."[\[142\]](#) In a cover story for the *American Conservative*, Georgie Anne Geyer observes that the Bush administration has less in common with egalitarian democracy than with a royal court, complete with its back-scenes intrigue and secret societies:

George W. most resembles the many French dauphins come suddenly to the throne - the young inexperienced prince, with a defense chief who has definite Napoleonic tendencies and a flowing group of courtiers with their own agendas and loyalties, some to foreign countries and some to secret societies outside the realm. With this court, Dick Cheney has become George Bush's Cardinal Richelieu.[\[143\]](#)

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As various critics have suggested, Cheney's role in the administration is so powerful as to represent a kind of "co-presidency" or "shadow presidency."[\[144\]](#) Not only did he assemble the highly secretive energy task force, but Cheney also set up his own national security team. Rather than relying on the National Security Council, he formed his own group of fifteen experienced national security experts, most with advanced degrees and sympathetic to Neoconservative thinking. According to Bush's own National Security Council Staff, Cheney's group constitutes a "shadow" government, while according to others, it represents a kind of "secret government" that lies "beyond the reach of Congress and everyone else as well."[\[145\]](#) Meanwhile, he has played the role of a kind of "Regent" in taking care of the inexperienced boy-king while making most of the important decisions himself:

He loathes...[the] retail kind of politics, the gripping and grinning, baby-kissing...politics. Cheney flourishes in a different political arena. It is the one that few outsiders see, the one in which, particularly in this administration, all decisions are made. It is the politics of governance at the highest level...where the art of guiding the decision-making process is practiced by some of the most skilled inside-the-room players in Washington. And it is the politics at which Cheney is unrivaled.[\[146\]](#)

In sum, if Rove was the ruthless strategist who helped forge the Bush image and its ties to the Religious Right, Cheney has played the role of the Machiavellian minister, who has used the pious image of the young Prince to promote the Neoconservatives' geopolitical strategy.

Michael Ledeen, or Machiavelli Meets the Religious Right

[Moses] knows that somewhere in the shards of the shattered tablets it says 'Thou shalt not murder.' He readily admits that the means are evil, but he insists that they are the only ones that work *in such dire circumstances*.

— Ledeen, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership*[\[147\]](#)



Michael Ledeen

However, the most explicit appeal to Machiavelli as a model of modern governance has come from Michael Ledeen, one of the most influential figures in the Neoconservative movement, who also has significant ties to the Religious Right. A former Senior Fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, an advisor to the National Security Council, and a special counselor to former Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, Ledeen is currently a scholar at the Neocon think-tank, American Enterprise Institute. According to William O. Beeman of the Pacific News Service, "Ledeen has become the driving philosophical force behind the neoconservative movement and the military actions it has spawned;" indeed, "Ledeen's ideas are repeated daily by such figures as Richard Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz...He basically believes that violence in the service of the spread of democracy is America's manifest destiny. Consequently, he has become the philosophical legitimator of the American occupation of Iraq." [\[148\]](#) According to the BBC, *The Washington Post* and other sources, Ledeen has been regularly consulted by Karl Rove. At the same time, Ledeen also has a relationship with Pat Robertson going back to the early 1980s, and made a number of appearances on the *700 Club*. [\[149\]](#)

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In 1999 Ledeen published *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership; Why Machiavelli's Iron Rules are as Timely and Important Today as Five Centuries Ago*, which was then circulated among Members of Congress attending a political strategy meeting shortly after its release. [\[150\]](#) Ledeen makes an unapologetic call for a return to Machiavelli's harsh but realistic advice, which he sees as the only means to save the United States from its own decline into moral malaise and political ruin. The Clinton administration in particular, he thinks, represents the decay of strong American values and the surest sign that we need to return to Machiavelli's harsh political realism:

Some fear that the seeming indifference of the American public to the revelations of the Clinton administration...is evidence that the corruption has spread far and wide...If that is the case, we will soon find ourselves in the same desperate crisis that drove Machiavelli to call for anew dictator to set things aright...[W]e need Machiavellian wisdom and leadership [\[151\]](#)

It is time, he thinks, to admit the basic truths about human nature and history that Machiavelli stated so bluntly: that human beings are power-driven, violent, deceitful creatures, that war rather than peace is the ordinary state

of human affairs, and that evil acts are often necessary to preserve a higher good. "In Machiavelli's world—the real world as described in the truthful history books—treason and deceit are commonplace;" thus Machiavelli "is simply stating the facts: if you lead, there will be occasions when you will have to do unpleasant, even evil, things or be destroyed."[\[152\]](#) And the times when leaders must enter into evil are precisely those times when the higher good of the nation is threatened, or when some sort of revolutionary change is needed to bring society to a higher level:

There are several circumstances in which good leaders are likely to have to enter into evil; whenever the very existence of the nation is threatened; when the state is first created or revolutionary change is to be accomplished...and when the society becomes corrupt and must be restored to virtue.[\[153\]](#)

War, according to Ledeen, is not an aberration or unusual occurrence in human history. On the contrary, war is the natural state of human affairs: "Peace is *not* the normal condition of mankind. War and the preparation for war are the themes of human history...Bloody conflicts are history's leitmotif."[\[154\]](#) Strong leadership means recognizing this fact and fighting ruthlessly to win the inevitable conflicts that structure human relations: "If you're going to lead, you've got to fight. Whether you're on the way up, are striving to acquire greater power or are at the top...you're involved in struggle...The bloody-mindedness derives from ambition, and human ambition is unlimited." It is only through violent conflict, even revolutionary turmoil, that history moves forward: "Change—above all, violent change—is the essence of human history...the origins of political systems [are] all about constant turmoil."[\[155\]](#)

One of the things Ledeen most admires about Machiavelli, however, is his recognition of the importance of religion in governance. Indeed, strong religious faith is as important to a healthy nation as a strong army. One need not be religious oneself, moreover, to see the value of religion for promoting the social good and political stability. Religion is, after all, primarily utilitarian from Machiavelli's point of view, a means to achieving the greater good of national loyalty and political strength:

[A]lthough not a regular church-goer himself, he knows that a good state must rest on a religious foundation. To remain good, a state must 'above every other thing keep the ceremonies of their religion incorrupt and keep them always in their veneration, because one can have no greater indicator of the wreck of a land than to see the divine cult scorned.'[\[156\]](#)

Following Machiavelli, however, Ledeen contrasts two very different kinds of religious leaders: the "unarmed prophet", who knows the good but cannot fight to save it, and the "armed prophet" who knows the good and knows how to preserve it, even if necessary by "evil" means. The prime example of the former is Girolamo Savonarola, the Dominican reformer who was executed in Florence in 1498. Conversely, "Machiavelli's favorite example of the armed prophet and his greatest hero" is Moses. For it was Moses who first brought God's Law in the Ten Commandments and then—in a part of Biblical history most Christians would rather forget—ordered the slaughter of all those idolaters who worshipped the golden calf instead:

[H]e said unto them, 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion and every man his neighbor'...and there fell of the people that day about three thousand.

Thus Machiavelli concluded that "Whoever reads the Bible sensibly will see that Moses was forced, were his laws and institutions to go forward, to kill numberless men."[\[158\]](#) Continuing Machiavelli's argument, Ledeen concludes that the armed prophet, the religious leader who is willing to kill to uphold the law, is the most effective model for leadership. For the realist knows that "leaders will sometimes have to violate religious strictures to prevail against merciless enemies and competitors."[\[159\]](#)

Ledeen's Neo-Machiavellian teachings have had a notable influence, not just in Neoconservative circles, but more broadly through his appearances in Christian venues like the *700 Club*. In the 1980s, Ledeen made numerous appearances on the *700 Club*, where he offered bold political advice to his audience. On April 30, 1985, Robertson asked him, "What would you recommend if you were going to advise the President [Ronald Reagan] as to foreign policy?" to which Ledeen responded: "The United States has to make clear to the world and above all to its own citizens, what our vital interests are. And then we must make it clear to everyone that we are prepared to...fight fiercely to defend those interests, so that people will not cross the lines that are likely to kick off a trip wire."[\[160\]](#)

There is much evidence to suggest that Ledeen's advice and his aggressive vision of foreign policy has been followed by the Neoconservatives in the Bush administration, particularly in its preemptive invasion of Iraq. [\[161\]](#) A more disturbing fact, however, is that Ledeen has also been urging the administration to go further still, by taking the next step in asserting its power in the Middle East and using military force in Iran, as well. As he stated in a 2004 interview with the *700 Club*,

Iran is the most pro-American population in the world today—I mean much more pro-American than, California, say, and we should be helping them. It just comes naturally to normal Americans, to want to help democratic freedom-fighters being oppressed by nasty tyrannies...Then you add in the fact that Iran is the center of the terror network...it's the most dangerous of the all the terror countries, and you really marvel that it's taken us this long to get on board with what the president has wanted to do all along. [\[162\]](#)

Whether or not the current Prince decides to pursue this more ambitious Middle East policy, however, remains to be seen.

IV. THE SIMULACRUM: The Mass Media and the Projection of the Bush Image

Since Machiavelli politicians have...known that the mastery of *simulated* space is the source of power, that the political is not a *real* activity but a simulation model, whose manifestations are simply achieved effects.

— Jean Baudrillard, *On Seduction*[\[163\]](#)

[T]here's just the TV image after all, the illusion of the media, and behind it...another group entirely rules. A corporate body of some kind. But who are they and how did they get power? ... We came so far; we almost seem to know what's really going on. The actuality behind the illusion, the secrets kept from us all our lives.

—Philip K. Dick, *The Simulacra* (1964)[\[164\]](#)

You know, I could run for governor but I'm basically a media creation. I've never done anything. I've worked for my dad. I worked in the oil business. But that's not the kind of profile you have to have to get elected to public office.

— George W. Bush, to Roland Betts[\[165\]](#)



Jean Baudrillard

It seems difficult to believe that the aggressive strategies of the Neoconservatives could have succeeded as well as they have without the help of one other important cultural force: the American media, which has for the most part helped to project Bush's image as a man of religious faith and integrity, while at the same time ignoring most of his less admirable activities. As Bush himself admitted at one point before beginning his political career, he is not so much a politician as a "media creation." This would seem only the next logical step after the election of a former movie-star to office: in an age of digitally-enhanced movies, when films like *The Matrix* can conjure not just characters, but entire worlds through the magic of digital simulation, why not a digitally-enhanced president?

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Here I would suggest that we use, but also seriously critique, some of the insights of postmodern theorist, Jean Baudrillard, and particularly his concepts of simulation and hyperreality. The late capitalist consumer society in which we now live, Baudrillard argues, represents a new kind of culture, very different from early modern culture. We have now moved from a modern society based on industrial production to a postmodern society driven by information, media, and digital technology – in sum, "from a metallurgic into a semiurgic society."[\[166\]](#) In media-driven postmodern society, the very boundary between the real and the simulation, the original and the model, begins to dissolve as we can now produce digitally-enhanced images that appear more intense, more perfect, "more real" than the already lost and forgotten original object. We have entered a state of hyperreality:

Hyperreality points to a blurring of distinctions between the real and the unreal in which the prefix 'hyper' signifies more real than real whereby the real is produced according to a model ... The hyperreal... is a condition whereby models replace the real, as exemplified in such phenomena as the ideal home in women's or lifestyle magazines, ideal as sex as portrayed in sex manuals... ideal fashion as exemplified in ads... [T]he model becomes a determinant of the real, and the boundary between hyperreality and everyday life is erased. With the advent of hyperreality, ..simulations come to constitute reality itself.[\[167\]](#)

In postmodern hyperreal culture, the simulated image no longer covers over some hidden reality or truth beneath the representation. Rather, it conceals the real secret, which is that there no longer is any reality or truth beneath the simulated image.

The transition from signs which dissimulate something to signs which dissimulate that there is nothing marks the decisive turning point. The first implies a theology of truth and secrecy... The second inaugurates an age of simulacra and simulation, in which there is no longer any God to recognize his own, nor any last judgment to separate true from false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and risen in advance.[\[168\]](#)

One need not look far to see the hyperreal quality of contemporary American culture: since the 1980s, we have been fascinated by television shows that simulate real-life, from *The Peoples' Court* to the current wave of Reality TV shows (one of the most explicitly hyperreal of these is the "American Candidate," in which "real" individuals compete to see which one can become the best simulated presidential candidate). For Baudrillard, however, the hyperreal quality of postmodern life saturates not just television and advertising, but all aspects of culture, including news and politics, which have themselves become indistinguishable from other forms of info-tainment. Today, the media no longer simply reports the world in which we live; instead, as we see on Fox News Channel, the media increasingly *generates* the world: "the TV newscast... creates the news if only to be able to narrate it."[\[169\]](#) In short, in the postmodern mediascape, "boundaries between information and entertainment, images and politics, implode... TV news and documentary assume more and more the form of entertainment... [I]n recent political campaigns... image is more important than substance, and political campaigns become increasingly dependent on media advisors, public relations experts and pollsters who have transformed politics into image contests."[\[170\]](#) For Baudrillard, American politics is one of the most hyperreal of all arenas of culture, where our presidents are now largely simulacra, whose media-generated appearances "conceal that they [are] nothing other than mannequins of power."[\[171\]](#)

There is indeed much about the Bush administration that seems scripted, simulated, and often quite hyper-real. One need only think of Bush's staged landing on an aircraft carrier to declare "mission accomplished" and the "end" of the apparently endless Iraq war, which is itself a weird sequel to the first, already hyper-real and media-constructed Gulf War under the first Bush. Such an event is the epitome of Baudrillard's hyperreality: a display of "models or simulacra which have no referent or ground in any reality except their own."[\[172\]](#) This sort of hyperreality characterizes much of this administration. At various times, this administration has actually conducted public relations, press conferences, and major political events according to scripts:

Bush has a White House that works constantly on projecting the image it wants to put out. At times his presidency is literally scripted. Before Bush took office, Karl Rove studied previous presidential debuts,

looking for what had worked...Rove developed and tested a detailed plan for the first seven days...The first week launch went off like a successful Broadway opening. Andy Card later acknowledged that it was 'like a screenplay. I had a script.'[\[173\]](#)

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Still more remarkable than its public presentation, however, is the fact that even cabinet meetings are "scripted." As former National Security Council member Paul O'Neill has revealed, cabinet meetings work according to virtual screen-plays, "where everyone but Bush has speaking parts. Bush's role is merely to nod or listen expressionlessly, aside from his occasional cryptic remarks."[\[174\]](#) As O'Neill's wife observed, "Paul just seemed to leave meetings the President and shake his head. It was like, 'I'm not sure this guy's got what it takes to pull this off.'[\[175\]](#)

Among the more hyperreal of the Bush administration's plans is the proposal to time the Republican National Convention in New York City to coincide with the ceremony for laying the cornerstone at Ground Zero. As one observer notes, this is one of the clearest signs that we have entered a new era of virtual culture in which the televised image takes precedence over any sort of "reality," in which the worst disaster in American history becomes yet another political advertisement:

Something very strange has happened to a culture in which a plan like this can be bruited and elicit no outrage at all...The result is an unchallenged flood of 9/11-inspired symbolism in which the image gets around the world before the reality can even get its pants on...Bush declares victory and touches down on an aircraft carrier, while the U.S. has suffered nearly half as many fatalities since the war "ended" as it did during the shooting. And now they are permitted to contemplate using their convention to appropriate an event that broke the heart of every American...and turn it into an endlessly looped campaign commercial.[\[176\]](#)

Meanwhile, the mainstream media has largely played into the image that the administration wants to project. Many observers have pointed out the bizarre irony that the media seemed eager to attack President Clinton for his paltry sex scandals, even as it largely ignored Bush's unprecedented history of secrecy, dissimulation and dealings with the most unsavory characters:

One of the oddest aspects of the Bush presidency has been how reluctant journalists are to report that Bush lies. Reporters who jumped on Bill Clinton for disingenuous hair-splitting and piled on Al Gore for harmless exaggerations have given George W. Bush pass after pass after pass.[\[177\]](#)

One of the most astonishing "passes" that the media has given Bush is their inability to point out the fact that he repeatedly misled both Congress and the American people about Iraq's alleged WMD and ties to Al Qaeda. Although various alternative publications have explicitly pointed out the "lies of George W. Bush," the mainstream outlets have chosen to use far more ambiguous terms such as "dubious" statements, "embroidering of key assertions, " or "flights of fancy"—but never "Bush lied."[\[178\]](#)

As John F. Stacks observes, this unwillingness on the part of the media to criticize the Bush

administration is the result of several factors. The first is simply the administration's intense secrecy and unwillingness to share any information with the press: "Today the doors of the government in Washington are being slammed in the reporters' faces. The job of the press secretary is now to shut out the press." As *New Yorker* reporter, Seymour Hersh, commented, "This is scary. I have never had less of a pulse [of what's going on in government]." [\[179\]](#) A second factor, however, is the media's own unwillingness to do the hard work of investigative journalism or allow its ratings to drop by giving its audience disturbing news. The shock of 9/11 in turn aroused a new spirit of hyper-patriotic civil religiosity throughout the country, including the media, in which criticism of the president was tantamount to sacrilege. As Dan Rather put it, "George Bush is president, he makes the decisions, and you know, as just one American, if he wants me to line up, just tell me where;" or as Cokie Roberts admitted: "Look, I am...a total sucker for the guys who stand up with all the ribbons on and stuff, and they say it's true and I'm ready to believe it." [\[180\]](#) The result of all this is a media that is largely afraid to criticize the administration and instead reinforces its image of strong morality, integrity and faith:

This constant quest for a large audience breeds a real timidity on the part of...the press, even in the face of a virtual information lockout by the Bush administration. Bush is popular, or least has been since September 11, and the press is following the polls. It voiced only mild criticism of the president's policies, even as he prepared a military adventure unlike any in the nation's history. [\[181\]](#)

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Finally and perhaps most importantly, there is the disturbing fact of the progressive and seemingly relentless corporate consolidation of the media. [\[182\]](#) Already in 1983, Ben H. Bagdikian had raised alarms about the disturbing level of media consolidation, warning that 50 corporations then dominated most of the mass media. Twenty years later, his numbers look practically utopian when compared to our own generation, where basically six conglomerates now control most of the mass media: Time Warner, Disney, Bertelsmann, Fox, Viacom, and General Electric. This number may rise to nine or ten if one includes other corporate media outlets like Sony, Seagram, and AT&T. Yet even these nine or ten are inter-locked in complex and homogenizing ways that tend to promote a uniformity of public discourse: "They are intertwined: they own stock in each other, they cooperate in joint media ventures and among themselves they divide profits." [\[183\]](#) In sum, as Alterman concludes, the combined forces of audience- and sponsor-driven corporate media and the Bush administration's obsessive secrecy have created an increasingly superficial, vapid, and almost "virtual" or simulated brand of journalism:

The current historical moment in journalism is hardly a happy one. ...Corporate conglomerates increasingly view journalism as 'soft ware' valuable only insofar as it contributes to the bottom line. In the mad pursuit for audience and advertisers, the quality of the news itself becomes degraded...Meanwhile, they face an administration with a commitment to secrecy unmatched in modern American history. [\[184\]](#)

One of the most important media conglomerates for the dissemination of the Bush's administration's desired image has been the Fox media empire, owned by Rupert Murdoch. As Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke observe, Murdoch and the neoconservatives share many common political interests and have a relationship going back to the 1990s. Through the vast network of Fox media outlets in television, magazines and books, neoconservative ideas and their version of issues like Iraq and al-Qaeda have been able to reach a remarkably large audience: "With Murdoch's financial assistance, the modern neoconservative voice came to be heard in magazines, newspapers and TV news networks...As a neoconservative ally, projecting and conveying

its perspectives through the lens of US media [Murdoch] added a critical dimension to the neoconservative effort.”[\[185\]](#)

The Neoconservative influence is particularly clear in the case of the Fox News Channel, whose brand of ratings-driven, antagonistic and right-leaning journalism fits nicely with the Neocon's aggressive foreign policies: "when the neoconservatives advanced their carefully crafted political discourse, designed to meld the War on Terrorism into a case for war against Iraq, this media culture was invaluable.”[\[186\]](#) At one point during the Iraq war, William Kristol was even moved to thank Fox News and Murdoch for their support of Bush's policies: “many people at Fox news have been supportive of Bush’s foreign policy. They deserve a bit of mention. And Murdoch personally.”[\[187\]](#) It would seem there was good reason for the Neoconservatives to be grateful to Fox. According to a study done by the Program on International Policy Attitudes between January and September, 2003, Americans who relied on Fox News as their main source of information tended to have a disturbing number of misperceptions about Iraq and the war on terror. Fox viewers were far more likely than viewers of any other news source to believe that Saddam had ties to al-Qaeda and that the US had in fact found WMD in Iraq:

In testing the frequency of three specific mistaken impressions – that evidence of links between Iraq and al Qaeda had been found, that weapons of mass destruction had been discovered in Iraq, and that world public opinion approved of America’s going to war – results showed that Fox News watchers were three times more likely to hold all three. The audiences of NPR/ PBS, however, consistently demonstrated a majority who did not hold any of the three views. Some 80 percent of Fox viewers... held one or more of the three perceptions.[\[188\]](#)

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Fox is not of course the only media conglomerate sympathetic to neoconservative views. In addition, there is the omnipresent Clear Channel network with over 1200 stations, as well as conservative talk radio icons like Rush Limbaugh and Christian televangelists like Robertson and Falwell. As Halper and Clarke conclude, "the cable networks, the conservative talk radio shows, and the conservative print outlets were all in place to carry the abstract war into the governing philosophy of American foreign policy by inundating people with the discursive reality created by neoconservatives.”[\[189\]](#)

In sum, there is a great deal about this administration and its representation in the corporate media that seems remarkably hyper-real, in Baudrillard's sense of the word. Bush himself does in many ways seem to be a largely vacuous media construction, a man with little going on in his own head, who has been constructed, digitally-enhanced and deployed by various others working off-camera and behind the scenes. What makes Bush so effective in conjoining these overlapping interests is precisely his own status as a kind of "floating signifier"—or perhaps what Roland Barthes calls a "degree zero signifier"[\[190\]](#)—that can be manipulated by various factions for their own political interests.

Yet in the end, while I find Baudrillard’s concepts of simulation and hyperreality generally useful, I would not follow the postmodern theorist to his final conclusions. For Baudrillard, the simulated image today no longer conceals some hidden truth; rather, it now only conceals the secret that there no longer is any truth or reality behind the simulation: “The secret is never revealed, never communicated, never even ‘secreted;’” for it is, in the end, “meaningless.”[\[191\]](#) In contrast to Baudrillard’s empty simulacra, these individuals—Bush, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, and company—have committed real acts that have had real consequences and often devastating effects on real human beings: U.S. citizens suffering toxic environmental hazards, U.S. soldiers dying

for a false cause, Iraqi civilians killed by the thousands for no apparent reason other than American imperial hubris. There are real secrets hidden beneath the simulacra, and they should be brought to light.

CONCLUSIONS: The Political Role of the Historian of Religions Today

As Bachelard neatly put it, 'there is no science but of the hidden.' The sociologist is better or worse equipped to discover what is hidden depending on...the degree of interest he has in uncovering what is censored and repressed in the social world.

— Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question* [\[192\]](#)

Nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest.

— *Luke* 8:17

So after looking at the Bush administration through these three lenses—the Straussian gentleman, the Machiavellian Prince and the Baudrillardian Simulacrum—what then are we to conclude about George W. Bush and his administration? Is he best described as embodying one of these models, none of them, really, or all of them simultaneously?

What I would suggest is that the role of secrecy and religion in this administration—like the image of Bush himself—is far too complex to be reduced to any one of these models. Rather, it represents the confluence of several different but complementary and overlapping influences, the most important of which are: the Christian Right, the Neoconservative movement, the energy industries and the corporate media. Together, they have created an image that combines intense religious faith with an equally intense concern with secrecy. This is a kind of secrecy, to be sure, that is very different from the kind usually encountered in Western esoteric traditions; it is concerned not with spiritual transmutation and visionary gnosis but with political dissimulation and material power. Yet it is no less important for our broader understanding of religion and secrecy, particularly in the present context of global violence and terror.

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Perhaps most importantly, we might say that there is a kind of "elective affinity" or "fit" between the Dominion Theology preached by Bush's friends on the Religious Right and the hard-ball foreign policies asserted by Cheney, Wolfowitz and the Necons. Both, after all, focus on the imposition of strong order on both American society and the world; and both see the Middle East as the crucial battleground for a much larger (even eschatological) battle for global dominance. Bush is in many ways the ideal candidate because his relatively vacuous image can accommodate these several overlapping elective affinities. He can serve as a gentleman, a prince and/or a simulacrum in different contexts in accordance with the different interests of his various constituents. The fact that at least half the American people and most of the media seemed to go along with his aggressive foreign and domestic policies indicates that this image works surprisingly well.

In all of this, however, there is a profound double irony. The first is that, in their efforts to combat the “crisis” of modernity and reform a degenerate liberal society, the Neoconservatives and the Christian Right are in danger of creating the same sort of oppressive society that they so hated in the Soviet Union. In their desire to respond to the weaknesses of liberalism with their own version of strong morality, they risk creating the new totalitarian regime that Strauss had warned might take hold in liberal America. The second and closely related irony, which Harvey points out, is that this aggressive militarism and mind-boggling pattern of deficit spending is likely to bankrupt the U.S. in much the same way that the Soviet Union was bankrupted by the Cold War arms race.[\[193\]](#)

To close, I would like to offer a few comments regarding the political role of the scholar of religion in the world today. There was a time when I, like most scholars of religion, believed that the best I could do was to remain as neutral as possible about the political implications of my research while at the same remaining as self-conscious as possible about the ways in which my work might be affected by my own political opinions. Well, I must say that I no longer believe in this sort of comfortable pretense of neutrality. When one's government is committing acts as disturbing as those of the Bush administration, and concealing them under layers of obsessive secrecy, no thinking citizen, can pretend to remain comfortably neutral. As Bruce Lincoln observes, “there is a political dimension to all religious discourse,” including scholarship.[\[194\]](#) Our study of religion is no more neutral or disinterested than the religious objects that we study. The key difference, however, is that as scholars of religion we cannot appeal to divine “authority,” a gift from the Almighty or a calling from God; rather, we can rely only on our own human and fallible methods of “persuasion,” by which we marshal evidence and argue our case, while at the same time remaining open to the critical objections of others.[\[195\]](#)

Here I would also agree with Pierre Bourdieu, who suggests that the task of the scholar is, among other things, to unmask and demystify relations of power that have been masked and mystified in the social order. By unmasking the subtle forms of misrecognition and symbolic violence at work in society, the scholar is exercising a fundamentally political power: “There is a political dimension to...what sociology should do in the modern world...Acts of research...are acts of struggle, conquest and victory over taken for granted assumptions about social life: scientific research is a struggle against all forms of symbolic domination.”[\[196\]](#) For the scholar of religion, that means unmasking relations of power and oppression that have been mystified by appeals to divine authority, wars of Good against Evil, and coded references to scriptures. That is how we can exert our, admittedly limited, political effect within the academy, among our students and within our communities.

It is surely high time that we began doing so.

NOTES

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[\[1\]](#) Bush, Presidential Address to a Joint Session of Congress, September 23, 2001, in “*We Will Prevail: President George W. Bush on War, Terrorism, and Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2003), pp.15, 17.

[2] Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Viking Press. 1962), p.290.

[3] There are many books now by Christian authors on Bush's religiosity: See Stephen Mansfield, *The Faith of George W. Bush* (Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2003); David Aikman, *A Man of Faith: The Spiritual Journey of George W. Bush* (W. Publishing Group, 2004).

[4] Both *Newsweek* and *Time* have done cover-stories on Bush's religiosity: "Bush and God," *Newsweek*, March 10, 2003; "Faith, God and the Oval Office," *Time*, June 21, 2004.

[5] See especially, Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[6] "The Faith Factor," *Time*, June 21, 2004.

[7] Russ Baker, "What Are They Hiding?" *The Nation*, February 7, 2002, www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20020225&s=baker.

[8] Jim Hightower, "Bush's Fetish for Secrecy," *The Seattle Press*, April 22, 2003, www.seattlepress.com/article-10186.html.

[9] Larry Klayman, chairman of Judicial Watch, quoted in Alan Elsner, "Bush Expands Government Secrecy, Arouses Critics," Reuters, September 3, 2002, www.fas.org/sgp/news/2002/09/re090302.html.

[10] John W. Dean, *Worse than Watergate: The Secret Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2004).

[11] Ibid., p.ix. See also Dana Milbank, "Under Bush, Expanding Secrecy," *The Washington Post*, December 23, 2003, p.19; David Corn, *The Lies of George W. Bush: Mastering the Politics of Deception* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2003).

[12] See Elaine Scarry, "Resolving to Resist: Local Governments are Refusing to Comply with the Patriot Act," *Boston Review*, March 8, 2004, www.bostonreview.net/BR29.1/scarry.html; David Cole and James X. Dempsey, *Terrorism and the Constitution: Sacrificing Civil Liberties in the Name of National Security* (New York: The New Press, 2002); Richard C. Leone and Greg Anrig, Jr., eds. *The War on our Freedoms: Civil Liberties in an Age of Terrorism* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003).

[13] Faivre, ed., *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp.xv-xx; Versluis, "What is Esoteric? Methods in the Study of Western Esotericism," *Esoterica* 6 (2004), <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIV/Methods.htm>. See also Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (New York: SUNY, 1998).

[14] For discussion of these sorts of esoteric strategies, see Hugh B. Urban, *The Economics of Ecstasy: Tantra, Secrecy and Power in Colonial Bengal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Paul Christopher Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[15] The highly influential American Enterprise Institute and the related think-tank, the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), include many avowed Straussians in their ranks, starting with Irving Kristol and his son William Kristol, Paul Wolfowitz, Abram Shulsky and many others. See Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: Free Press, 1995), p.7; Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The neoconservatives and the Global Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[16] The connections between Strauss and the Neocons and Rove and Machiavelli have been observed by others. But they have hitherto not been taken seriously, or dismissed as conspiracy theories, in part because most of the authors making these connections have not bothered to read Strauss or Machiavelli and assume a superficial caricature of their philosophies. Among the more informed discussions of Strauss and the Neocons are Shadia Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1999); Kenneth L. Deutsch and John A. Murley, eds., *Leo Strauss, the Straussians the American Regime* (Roman & Littlefield, 1999); Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, pp.64-67

[17] See Deutsch, *Leo Strauss, the Straussians and the American Regime*, p.54-5; Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (New York: MacMillan, 1988), pp.194-95.

[18] Ledeen is a scholar at the Neocon think tank, the American Enterprise Institute, and also closely associated with the Religious Right. See his *Why Machiavelli's Iron Rules are as Timely and Important Today as Five Centuries Ago* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[19] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[20] Joan Didion, "Mr. Bush and the Divine," *New York Review of Books*, November 2, 2003, www.nybooks.com/articles/article-preview?article_id=16749.

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[21] Bush, *A Charge to Keep* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999), p.136.

[22] Kevin Phillips, *American Dynasty: Aristocracy, Fortune and the Politics of Deceit in the House of Bush* (New York: Viking, 2004), p.214; see George H.W. Bush and Doug Wead, *Man of Integrity* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1988).

[23] Craig Unger, *House of Bush, House of Saud; The Secret Relationship Between the World's Two Most Powerful Dynasties* (New York: Scribner, 2004), p.192-93. See Joan Didion, "Mr. Bush and the Divine."

[24] Paul Harris, "Bush says God chose him to lead his Nation," *The Observer*, November 2, 2003, <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1075950,00.html>. According to Anthony Evans, a preacher from whom Bush often sought spiritual guidance, "one of the impetuses for his considering running for president was biblical teaching. He feels God is talking to him" ("The President Rides Out," *London Observer*, January 26 2003, p.6).

[25] Unger, *House of Bush*, p.193. John Ashcroft is also a former member. See Marc J. Ambider, "Vast, Right-Wing Cabal? The Most Powerful Conservative Group You've Never Heard Of," ABCNews.com, May 2, 2002, http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/DailyNews/council_020501.html.

[26] Unger, *House of Bush*, p.193-94. The *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins is in twelve volumes (Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1995-2004), culminating in *Glorious Appearing*.

[27] Phillips, *American Dynasty*, p.232.

[28] "Chalcedon Vision Statement" from the Chalcedon.edu web-site: www.chalcedon.edu/vision.php. See also Rousas Rushdoony, *Christianity and the State* (Vallecito, CA: Ross Hts, 1988); According to Gary North and Gary DeMar, "Politics is a ministry of God...The civil magistrate brings God's negative sanctions in history" (*Christian Reconstructionism: What It Is, What It Isn't* [Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1984], p.44).

[29] Graham, on the 700 Club, March 29, 1985, transcribed by Katherine Yurica, "The Despoiling of America," www.yuricareport.com/Dominionism/TheDespoilingOfAmerica.htm#_edn14.

[30] Woodward, *Bush at War*, p.67. For more "evildoers" language see Bush's Speech to Employees at the Federal Bureau of Investigations, September 25, 2001, in *We Will Prevail*, p.22.

[31] Speech at the Federal Bureau of Investigations, September 25, 2001, in *We Will Prevail*, p.22.

[32] Paul Kengor, "God & W. at Pennsylvania Avenue," *National Review Online*, March 5, 2003, www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-kengor030503.asp.

[33] "[B]iblical allusions are plainly audible to portions of his audience who are attentive to such phrasing but are likely to go unheard by those without the requisite textual knowledge" (Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, p.30).

[34] Phillips, *American Dynasty*, p.225.

[35] "Religious Right finds its Center in Oval Office," *Washington Post*, December 24, 2001, p.A-02.

[36] Gary Bauer, in *ibid*.

[37] *Ibid*.

[38] Bush to Bob Woodward, in Nancy Gibbs, "The Faith Factor," *Time*, June 21, 2004, p.30.

[39] State of the Union Address, January 28, 2003, in *We Will Prevail*, pp.220-21.

[40] Bob Woodward, interview with 60 Minutes, "A Rare Glimpse Inside Bush's Cabinet," November 17, 2002, CBSNEWS.com, www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/11/17/60minutes/main529657.shtml. See Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p.344

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[41] Klayman, quoted in Elsner, "Bush Expands Government Secrecy."

[42] Bush has frequently been accused of insider-trading at Harken. In June of 1990, even after he had been given a nine-page memo entitled "Liability for Insider Trading and Short-Term Swing Profits," Bush sold 212,140 shares of stock for \$848,560. Just two months later, Harken announced devastating losses of \$23 million. Although investigated by the SEC, Bush was able to avoid charges—as some argue, by deciding not to submit certain key information, such as the June memo (Unger, *House of Bush*, pp.123-4).

[43] Krugman, "Succeeding in Business," *New York Times*, July 7, 2002. According to Krugman, Harken created a front company that seemed independent but was actually under Harken's control, primarily in order to conduct phony transactions and buy the firm's assets at high prices.

[44] See Robert Bryce, *Pipe Dreams Greed, Ego and the Death of Enron* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002).

W.'s ties to Lay date to 1986, when his failing company Spectrum 7 went into business with Enron Oil and Gas. When W. ran for governor of Texas in 1993 he asked Lay to be his finance chairman; although Lay didn't take the job he gave him \$12500 and offered his second command, Rich Kinder, for the job. During the 2000 presidential campaign, Enron contributed \$2 million, while Lay was one of Bush's first "Pioneers," each of whom pledged to raise \$100,000. Lay also made Enron's fleet of airplanes available to the Bush campaign. When the outcome of the election was in doubt in November 2000, Lay and his wife gave \$10,000 to help finance Bush's Florida operation during the recount. He then gave \$100,000 for the inaugural gala. In return for these favors, the Bush White House provided Lay and Enron with "unprecedented access" (p.273)

[45] Christopher H. Schmitt and Edward T. Pound, "Keeping Secrets: The Bush Administration Is Doing the Public's Business Out of the Public Eye. Here's How—and Why," *U.S. News & World Report*, December 22,

2003, pp.18-22, 24, 27-29.

[46] Dean, *Worse than Watergate*, p.56.

[47] Lucius Lomax, "Closing Texas' Open Records: What Bush Doesn't Want You to Know," *Austin Chronicle*, November 8, 2003; Allison Leigh Cowan, "Father's Library Can Hold Bush Papers, If Door is Ajar," *New York Times*, May 4, 2002, p.A-8.

[48] Dean, *Worse than Watergate*, p.58.

[49] "Archive, Historians Ask Judge to Rethink Dismissal: Presidential Records Act Still Not Resolved," *The National Security Archive*, April 30, 2004.

[50] See Dean, *Worse than Watergate*, pp.75-83; Carl Pope and Paul Rauber, *Strategic Ignorance: Why the Bush Administration is Recklessly Destroying a Century of Environmental Progress* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2004), pp.108-11.

[51] See Pope and Rauber, *Strategic Ignorance*, pp. 109-10; Danielle Knight, "USA: Documents Shows Bush Energy Plan Fuelled by Industry," Corpwatch.org, March, 28, 2002, www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=2173; Don Van Natta, Jr., "A Company's Gain from Energy Reports Recommendation," *New York Times*, March 24, 2002.

[52] Dean, *Worse than Watergate*, p.160.

[53] Kennedy, "Crimes Against Nature," *Rolling Stone*, December 11, 2003.

[54] Elizabeth Shogren, "EPA's 9/11 Air Rating Distorted, Report Says," *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 2003, p.A-1. The E.P.A. had cautioned that homes and businesses would need professional clean-up to remove asbestos and other contaminants; but the White House objected, fearing it would hamper a "return to normalcy" and suggested that tests showed it was safe to return to the area. Later it became clear that schools

and other buildings in the area contained very dangerous levels of asbestos and other hazardous materials (Pope and Rauber, *Strategic Ignorance*, pp.143-45).

[55] Andrew Schneider, "White House Budget Office Thwarts EPA Warning on Asbestos-Laced Insulation," *St. Louis Dispatch* (December 29, 2002).

[56] Seth Bornstein, "Bush Giving Business a Boost; Environmental Rule Changes Fulfill Corporate Wish List," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 21, 2003, p. A-11.

[57] Pope and Rauber, *Strategic Ignorance*, p.163-64. Bush had originally committed himself to addressing climate change and even planned to put it in his first State of the Union Address. Immediately, however, conservative activists sprang into action. Soon Bush reversed his decision, concluding that the science on global warming was "incomplete," and then formally rejected Kyoto Protocol (ibid.).

[58] Pope and Rauber, *Strategic Ignorance*, p.164-5. The editing eliminated references to many studies concluding that warming is at least partly caused by rising concentrations of smokestack and tail-pipe emissions and could threaten health and ecosystems" (Andrew C. Revkin with Katherine Q. Seelye, "Report by the EPA leaves out Date on Climate Change," *New York Times* June 19, 2003).

[59] John F. Stacks, "Watchdogs on a Leash: Closing Doors on the Media," in Richard C. Leone and Greg Anrig, Jr., eds. *The War on our Freedoms: Civil Liberties in an Age of Terrorism* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003), p.237.

[60] Pope and Rauber, *Strategic Ignorance*, p. 169. See Editorial, "The Day Ashcroft Censored Freedom of Information," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 6, 2002.

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[61] Dana Milbank, "For Bush, Facts are Malleable," *Washington Post*, October 22, 2002, p.A-1. For a thorough analysis of the WMD claims and their errors, see Joseph Cirincione, Jessica T. Mathews and George Perkovich, *WMD in Iraq: Evidence and Implications* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004).

[62] See Louis Fisher, "Deciding on War Against Iraq," *Perspectives on Political Science* 32 (2003): 135. At the same time, Bush also met with congressional leaders several times in late 2002, where he is reported to have

warned them of the immanent threat posed by Iraq's WMD; at one classified briefing he is said to have told senators that Saddam not only had biological and chemical weapons, but he had the ability to use them against the East Coast of the U.S. via unmanned drone aircraft (John McCarthy, "Senators Were Told Iraqi Weapons Could Hit U.S." *Florida Today*, December 17, 2003).

[63] See Dean, *Worse than Watergate*, pp.141-43, and Appendix I, which systematically analyzes each of these eight "facts." See also Cirincione et al, *WMD in Iraq*.

[64] See Charles J. Hadley, "Powell's Case for Iraq War Falls Apart 6 Months Later," Associated Press, August 10, 2003, www.fortwayne.com/mld/fortwayne/news/local/6502258.htm?

[65] Zinn, Foreward to Nancy Chang, *Silencing Political Dissent: How Post-September 11 Anti-Terrorism Measures Threaten our Civil Liberties* (New York: Seven Stories Press 2002), p.11-12.

[66] Michael Barkun, "Sacred Secrets: Religious Privacy and National Security," paper presented at "Religion, Secrecy and Security: An Interdisciplinary Conference on Religious Freedom and Privacy in a Global Context," Ohio State University, April 16-18, 2004.

[67] Scarry, "Resolving to Resist."

[68] Cronkite, "Secrecy, Lies And Credibility," King Features Syndicate, April 1, 2004.
www.yankton.net/stories/040104/opE_20040401035.shtml. As Dean comments, "George W. Bush and Richard B. Cheney have created the most secretive presidency of my lifetime. Their secrecy is far worse than during Watergate, and it bodes even more serious consequences...To protect their secrets Bush and Cheney dissemble as a matter of policy" (*Worse than Watergate*, p.ix)

[69] William Rogers, in Everett Edward Mann, Jr., "The Public Right to Know Government Information: Its Affirmation and Abridgement," Ph.D. Dissertation (Claremont Graduate School, 1984), p.216.

[70] Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p.142.

[71] Kristol, *Neoconservatism*, p.7.

[72] See Harry F. Jaffa, "The Legacy of Leo Strauss," *Claremont Review*, 3, no.3 (1984): 14-21 and Pangle's response in *Claremont Review* 4, no1 (1985): 18-20.

[73] Drury calls Strauss' writing-style "Kabbalism revisited" (*Leo Strauss and the American Right*, p.59). She also notes that "[teaching different students different things is an integral part of Strauss' political thought" (*The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*, p.188).

[74] Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, p.67. See Wolfowitz, interview in *Vanity Fair*, May 15, 2003.

[75] Strauss, *Persecution*, p.25.

[76] Kristol, *Neoconservatism*, p.7-8. This sense of the crisis of modernity was common among many European intellectuals of the early 20th century; see Ted V. McAllister, *Revolt Against Modernity: Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin and the Search for a Postliberal Order* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996); Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[77] Strauss, letter to Karl Löwith 18 August 1946, in "Correspondence Concerning Modernity: Karl Löwith and Leo Strauss," *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 4 (1983): 107. "The best regime is that in which the best men habitually rule, or aristocracy" (Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p.140).

[78] McAllister, *Revolt Against Modernity*: p.33. As Drury comments, "Strauss considers our present political predicament to one of 'crisis'...[M]odernity is the revolution against the wisdom of antiquity; a revolution that Strauss undoubtedly believes to be...disastrous for the continued survival of Western civilization" (*The Political Ideas of Leo-Strauss*, p.114).

[79] Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp.22, 64. "Strauss considered modern liberal democracy to have abandoned the classical meaning of the good life and good society...[C]ontemporary liberal American democracy was losing its original sense of purpose and entering a modern condition of crisis" (Deutsch, "Leo Strauss," p.51).

[80] Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), p.222.

[81] Strauss, *Persecution*, p. 25. "The exoteric teaching was needed for protecting philosophy. It was the armor in which philosophy had to appear. It was needed for political reasons. It was the form in which philosophy became visible to the political community" (Ibid., pp.17-18).

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[82] Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?*, p.221-22, my italics.

[83] Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p.47. Religion "is the glue that holds society together" (Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right*, pp. 11-13).

[84] Deutsch, "Leo Strauss, Straussians and the American Regime," p.52.

[85] Deutsch, "Leo Strauss, Straussians and the American Regime," p.59. See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p.142-44. As Drury comments, "a viable political order requires religion as well as philosophy, a code of the heart and a code of the mind. But because these two foundations are not in harmony with one another, what are needed are two different types of men: the gentleman and the philosopher...the good regime consists of the rule of gentlemen who are friendly to philosophers and...willing to listen to their advice" (*The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*, p.190).

[86] Deutsch, "Leo Strauss, Straussians and the American Regime," pp.54-5. "Farabi's Plato identifies the philosopher with the king...[P]hilosophy is not simply identical with the royal art: philosophy is the highest theoretical art, and the royal art is the highest practical art...philosophy and the royal art together are required for producing happiness" (Strauss, *Persecution*, p.15).

[87] Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*, p.31. "Farabi's Plato eventually replaces the philosopher-king who rules openly in the virtuous city, by the secret kingship of the philosopher who, being 'a perfect man' precisely because he is an 'investigator,' lives privately as a member of an imperfect society which he tries to humanize within the limits of the possible" (Strauss, *Persecution*, p.17).

[88] Deutsch, "Leo Strauss, Straussians and the American Regime," p.55.

[89] Ibid., " p.55.

[90] Gary J. Schmitt and Abram N. Shulsky, "The World of Intelligence (By Which We Do not Mean *Nous*)," in *Leo Strauss, the Straussians and the American Regime*, p.411.

[91] Dick, *The Simulacra* (1964. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 2002), p.34.

[92] The term *Neoconservatism* was first used by Michael Harrington and members of the editorial staff at the journal *Dissent* to refer to a new breed of conservatives who began influence on American politics after 1945. The label was later adopted by Irving Kristol to describe his own point of view and of other conservatives who shared his political outlook. See Kristol, *Reflections of a Neoconservative* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p.ix; Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right*, p.137.

[93] Kristol, *Neoconservatism*, p.7.

[94] Ibid., p.379-80.

[95] "Before long, a dozen or so neoconservatives had found their way from think tanks...to Washington's halls of power, taking key positions in the Pentagon, the Vice President's Office and the National Security Council... when the opportunity presented itself in the wake of September 11, they were better prepared than anyone in the administration to... 'rally the country around their vision of the world'" (Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, p.113).

[96] Halper and Clarke identify three common themes among Neocons: "A belief deriving from religious conviction that the human condition is defined as a choice between good and evil and that the true measure of political character is to found in the willingness by the former (themselves) to confront the latter. 2. An assertion that the fundamental determinant of the relationship between states rests on military power and the willingness to use it. 3. A primary focus on the Middle East and global Islam as the principal theater for American overseas power" (*America Alone*, p.11).

[97] Kristol, *Neoconservatism*, p.259.

[98] Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion: What it Was and What It Is," *Weekly Standard*, August 25, 2003. www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/003/000tznlw.asp.

[99] Ibid. As Halper and Clarke argue, Bush was not at first inclined to the Neoconservative agenda; but his emphasis on rebuilding America's military strength fit nicely with Neoconservative ideals and allowed them to eventually persuade him of their agenda after 9/11 (*America Alone*, p.113).

[100] Kristol, *Neoconservatism*, p.8.

[101] Ibid., p.267.

[102] Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right*, p.144. As Kristol writes, "The United States is the capitalist nation par excellence...[T]he Founding Fathers *intended* this nation to be capitalist and regarded it as the *only* set of economic arrangements consistent with the liberal democracy they had established" (*Neoconservatism*, p.211).

[103] Gary J. Schmitt and Abram N. Shulsky, "The World of Intelligence (By Which We Do not Mean *Nous*)," in *Leo Strauss, the Straussians and the American Regime*, p.411.

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[104] Kristol, *Neoconservatism*, p.365. "All people everywhere at all times, are 'theotropic beings' who cannot long abide the absence of a transcendental dimension to their lives" (ibid., p.143).

[105] Kristol, "The Future of American Jewery," *Commentary* (August 1991), in Christopher DeMuth and William Kristol, eds., *The Neoconservative Imagination: Essays in Honors of Irving Kristol* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1995), p.201. "Religion provides 'comforting rituals that help human beings withstand the drudgery and mundanity of existence... When this life on earth is all there is, people are inclined to demand more of politics than orthodoxy can offer" (Drury, *Leo Strauss*, p.144).

[106] Kristol, "The Capitalist Future," American Enterprise Institute, December 4, 1991, in *The Neoconservative Imagination*, p.201. See Deutsch, "Leo Strauss," p.52.

[107] Kristol, *Neoconservatism*, p.368. See Drury, "Leo Strauss," p.60.

[108] David Armstrong, "Dick Cheney's Song of America: Drafting a Plan for Global Dominance," *Harper's* (Oct. 2002): 76-83. In the Cheney-Wolfowitz doctrine, "Fixed alliances (like NATO) are to be abandoned (they are too constraining)...The US reserves the right to go it alone if necessary with overwhelming military firepower. It overtly claims to right of pre-emptive strike" (David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). pp.79-80).

[109] Kristol and Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reagnite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, 1996, www.foreignaffairs.org/19960701faessay4210/william-kristol-robert-kagan/toward-a-neo-reaganite-foreign-policy.html.

[110] "Statement of Principles," on the Project for a New American Century web-site, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm>.

[111] Dean, *Worse the Watergate*, p.99.

[112] William Kristol, Project for a New American Century web-site (<http://www.newamericancentury.org>).

[113] The letter to Clinton of January 26, 1998 was signed, among others, by Elliott Abrams, Richard L. Armitage, Francis Fukuyama, William Kristol, Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz. It is available on the PNAC web-site: www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm .

This call to remove Saddam had been made in other Neocon publications, for example: "There is a way to deal with Saddam that can work, and we've outlined it in these pages over the past year: It's time to complete the unfinished business of the 1991 Gulf War and get rid of Saddam (Editorial, "How to Attack Iraq," *The Weekly Standard*, November 16, 1998, p.18).

[114] "Rebuilding America's defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century," available on the PNAC web-site: www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf.

[115] "Rebuilding America's defenses," p.51, my emphasis.

[116] Woodward, *Bush at War*, p.37.

[117] Ashcroft was a lay activist in the Pentecostal Assemblies of God. Before being sworn in he was anointed with cooking oil in the biblical manner of King David (Phillips, *American Dynasty*, p.226).

[118] Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, p.190. "[T]he new Bush administration looks to its defense experts—Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Powell—to shape international policy, relies on a Christian conservative—Ashcroft as Attorney General to enforce order at home" (ibid., p.192).

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[119] Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, pp.198-9. As Paul Roberts aptly comments on the Iraq war, "though the war was 'about oil,' that was true in a way that most of Bush's critics failed to grasp. It wasn't simply that an Iraq without Saddam would enrich Bush's energy industry allies...Nor was the connection merely that war in Iraq would bolster America's military and economic presence in the region—or keep Iraqi oil from falling into the hands of the Chinese, Russian, and French oil companies—although this too was an intended effect. Rather, it was that liberating Iraq and its oil was key to the neoconservatives' vision for the future of American power—and for the new geopolitics of oil" (*The End of Oil: On the Edge of a Perilous New World* [New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004], pp.111-12).

[120] Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, p.191.

[121] Ibid., p. 80-1.

[122] George Bull, trans. *The Prince* (New York: Penguin, 2003), p.58.

[123] Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p.111. "[T]he proper mission of great leaders is to achieve the *common* good, to fashion good laws and enforce them with good arms and good religion (ibid., p.106).

[124] Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*, p.115.

[125] Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p.10.

[126] Kristol, *Neoconservatism*, p.157. "Nothing that Machiavelli said about affairs of state was really novel to his readers. They knew...that politics is a dirty business; that a ruler may better secure his power by slaughtering innocents, breaking his solemn oaths, betraying his friends than by not doing so. But they also...thought...that such a ruler would suffer the torments of hell for eternity. Where Machiavelli was original was first, in brazenly announcing these things, and second, in implying ...that wicked princes did not rot in hell for the sufficient reason that no such place existed" (ibid., p.155).

[127] Anthony Grafton, Introduction to *The Prince*, p.xx.

[128] For a fair assessment of Machiavelli and his legacy, see Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[129] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin, 2003), chapter XVII, p. 53.

[130] Ibid, p.57.

[131] *The Prince*, chapter XVIII, p.57.

[132] Ibid., chapter XIV, p.47.

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[133] Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, Ellis Farnesworth, trans. (1521. Reprint, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), Book IV, p.128. He also notes the importance of nationalist sentiment in war: "the love of country...is natural to all men. There are various ways of forcing men to fight, but that is the strongest and most operative; it leaves men no other alternative but to conquer or die (p.129).

[134] Dan Froomkin, "Bush Mocks Kerry, Dean," *WashingtonPost.com*, January 26, 2004.
www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&contentId=A48703-2004Jan26¬Found=true.

[135] Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p. xx.

[136] James Moore and Wayne Slater, *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove made George W. Bush Presidential* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), p. 12.

[137] Craig Unger, *House of Bush, House of Saud: The Secret Relationship between the World's Two Most Powerful Dynasties* (New York: Scribner, 2004), p. 192.

[138] Unger, *House of Bush*, p. 256.

[139] *Ibid.*, p. 257; see Moore and Slater, *Bush's Brain*, p. 258.

[140] Tom Engelhardt, "Flushing Cheney," MotherJones.com, February 2, 2004.
http://www.motherjones.com/news/dailymojo/2004/02/02_500.html.

[141] Dean, *Worse than Watergate*, p. 96.

[142] Geyer, "Dick Cheney: American Richelieu," *American Conservative*, February 2, 2004,
www.amconmag.com/2004_02_02/index1.html.

[143] *Ibid.*

[144] Dean, *Worse than Watergate*, p. 11.

[145] David Rennie, "Neocons gone Wild: Hawks Tell Bush How to Win War on Terror," *London Daily Telegraph*, December 31, 2003; cf. Dean, *Worse than Watergate*, p. 102.

[146] Perry Bacon Jr., et al., "7 Clues to Understanding Cheney," *Time*, January 6, 2003, p.98.

[147] Ledeen, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership*, p.93.

[148] Beeman, "Who Is Michael Ledeen?" May 8, 2003, available at Alternet.org:
www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=15860.

[149] "Michael Ledeen" BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/3031803.stm>. See Jim Lobe, "Veteran neo-con advisor moves on Iran," *Asia Times*, June 6, 2003, www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EF26Ak03.html; John Laughland, "Flirting with Fascism: Neocon theorist Michael Ledeen draws more from Italian fascism than from the American Right," *The American Conservative*, June 30, 2003, www.amconmag.com/06_30_03/print/featureprint.html;

[150] Paul, "We've been Neo-Conned."

[151] Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p.188.

[152] Ibid., pp.61, 106.

[153] Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p.101-2. "In order to achieve the most noble accomplishments, the leader may have to 'enter into evil.' This is the chilling insight that has made Machiavelli so feared, admired, and challenging. It is why we are drawn to him still..." (Ibid, p. 91)

[154] Ibid., pp.15-6.

[155] Ibid., pp.1, 3-4. "Leaders must constantly be on war footing...weapons loaded (ibid., p.24).

[156] Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p.109-10, quoting *Discourses* I, 12.

[157] *Exodus* 32-26-28, quoted in Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p.92.

[158] Machiavelli, *Discourses*, III, 30.

[159] *Ibid.*, p.xxi.

[160] Ledeen, transcript recorded by Katherine Yurica, "The Despoiling of America."

[161] See Beeman, "Who is Michael Ledeen?" and Laughland, "Flirting with Fascism."

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[162] Ledeen, interview with Pat Robertson: cbn.com/CBNNews/News/030623e.asp?option=print. Elsewhere Ledeen argued that "Iraq is just one battle in a larger war, bringing down the regime in Iran is the central act, because Iran is the world's most dangerous terrorist country" ("Michael Ledeen," <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/3031803.stm>). See also Ledeen, "The Discovery of Iran," *National Review Online*, July 19, 2004, www.aei.org/news/newsID.20913.filter/news_detail.asp.

[163] Mark Poster, ed., *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings* (Stanford University Press, 1988), p.158.

[164] Dick, *The Simulacra* (1964. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 2002), p.160-1.

[165] Quoted in J.H. Hatfield, *Fortunate Son: George W. Bush and the Making of an American President* (Brooklyn: Soft Skull Press, 2002), p.95.

[166] Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), p.185.

[167] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991), pp.119-20. See Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*.

[168] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, in Poster, ed., *Jean Baudrillard*, pp.170-71.

[169] Poster, Introduction to *Jean Baudrillard*, p.6.

[170] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, p.120.

[171] Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, in Poster, ed., *Jean Baudrillard*, p.177.

[172] Poster, Introduction, p.6. On the hyper-reality of the first Gulf war, see Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1995).

[173] Dean, *Worse than Watergate*, p.73. See Bob Davis, "Presidential Perceptions: Early Opinions Often Turn Out Wrong," *Wall Street Journal*, February 9, 2001, p. A-12.

[174] Dean, *Worse than Watergate*, p.73n. See Ron Suskind, *The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House and the Education of Paul O'Neill* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), pp.147, 160.

[175] Suskind, *The Price of Loyalty*, p.188.

[176] Michael Tomasky, "Anything Goes," *New York Magazine*, July 14, 2003, www.newyorkmetro.com/nymetro/news/politics/columns/citypolitic/n_8937/.

"The convention, to be held in New York City, will be the latest since the Republican Party was founded in 1856, and Mr. Bush's advisers said they chose the date so the event would flow into the commemorations of the third anniversary of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. The back-to-back events would complete the framework for a general election campaign that is being built around ... Mr. Bush's role in combating terrorism" ("Bush Advisers Admit 2004 GOP Convention Was Chosen To Coincide With Anniversary Of September 11 Attacks" *New York Times*, April 22, 2003).

[177] Molly Ivins, on the web-site "The Lies of George W. Bush," www.bushlies.com/.

[178] Alterman, *What Liberal Media?*, p.198-9, quoting Dana Milbank, "For Bush, facts are Malleable: Presidential Tradition of Embroidering Key Assertions Continues," *Washington Post*, October 22, 2002.

[179] Stacks, "Watchdogs on a Leash: Closing Doors on the Media," p.240-1.

[180] *ibid.*, p.251.

[181] *Ibid.*, p.250.

[182] See Herbert I. Schiller, *Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression* (Oxford University Press, 1989); Noam Chomsky, *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda* (Seven Stories Press, 2002); Dean Alger *Megamedia: How Giant Corporations Dominate Mass Media, Distort Competition, and Endanger Democracy* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

[183] See Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

[184] Alterman, *What Liberal Media?*, p.262.

[185] Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, p.187.

[186] *Ibid.*, p.186.

[187] Joe Hagan, "Spawned in New York," *New York Observer*, April 28, 2003, p.6.

[188] Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, p.193, summarizing the survey "Misperceptions, the Media and the Iraq War, conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes and Knowledge Networks Poll, October 2, 2003.

[189] Ibid., p.199.

[190] Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977).

[191] Baudrillard, *On Seduction*, in *Jean Baudrillard*, p.159.

[192] Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage, 1993), p.10.

[193] Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, p. 80-1.

[194] Lincoln, *Dear, War and Sacrifice: Studies in Ideology and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp.244, xvi-xvii.

[195] Lincoln, *Authority: Construction and Corrosion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.5.

[196] Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p.261. See Bourdieu, "Intellectual Field and Creative Project," in M.F.D. Young, ed., *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education* (London: Collier MacMillan, 1971), p.121.