IRVING KRISTOL: COLD WAR LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE

by

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Declaration

I, Emily Dorothea Hull, confirm that the work presented in my thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

It seems that no ideology or philosophy has ever been able to encompass all of reality to my satisfaction.

Irving Kristol, *An Autobiographical Memoir* (1995)

Abstract

In 2002 the American public intellectual, Irving Kristol (1920-2009), was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for services to conservative thought. The award solidified his position as the so-called 'Godfather of neoconservatism.' However, Kristol began his political life as a Trotskyist. This thesis asks how, and why, a member of the American left in the 1930s became a committed conservative by the end of his life. In doing so, it uses Kristol as a lens through which to explore the wider political and intellectual transformations of the post-war United States.

Despite an influential career in journalism and a fascinating intellectual trajectory, Kristol's thought has received scant sustained historiographical analysis. Thus far, he has principally received notice in scholarship on the mid-century New York Intellectual group and broader discussions of the neoconservative persuasion. This thesis remedies this oversight by fusing intellectual history and biography to engage seriously with his thought. It investigates several key issues: the role of anti-communist public intellectuals during the Cold War; the conflict between the Old and New Left at mid-century; and the establishment of the neoconservative outlook in the 1970s and 1980s. Additionally, the project asks what Kristol's later works can tell us about the nature of American capitalism.

Ultimately, the thesis argues that Kristol's transition from left to right was not linear. Kristol was an influential figure whose journalism, political connections, and think tank associations were crucial to furthering the rightward turn in late-twentieth century American politics. But this journey was a slow process, with different strands of his thought moving rightwards at different speeds. Moreover, this evolution underscores the essential links between post-war liberalism and conservatism during this era.

Impact Statement

The political landscape of the twenty-first century United States appears deeply fractured. The recent Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v Wade,* the landmark 1973 decision which legalised abortion across the United States, along with Donald Trump's announcement that he will seek the 2024 Republican presidential nomination demonstrate that current polarisation shows no signs of abating. By studying the career and thought of American journalist Irving Kristol, this thesis not only provides the first complete intellectual biography of this important public intellectual, but also acts as a lens through which to view the political transformations within the post-war United States. In doing so, it offers crucial insight into the origins of contemporary American partisanship and polarisation.

During his lifetime Irving Kristol ranged across the political spectrum. In his youth Kristol was an avowed Trotskyist; by mid-life a liberal; and in later life a neoconservative. This ideological journey allows for this thesis to intervene in current historiographies of both conservatism and liberalism. Such scholarship traditionally considered the development of these vital political ideas in twentieth century America in isolation from each other. Alternatively, by using Kristol as a case study this thesis demonstrates the interconnected nature of liberalism and conservatism in the post-war period and responds to more recent calls to analyse the symbiotic relationship of these outlooks. I envisage that future scholarship will increasingly turn to this approach when dealing with these concepts.

In making the case for the entanglement of liberalism and conservatism, this thesis is of great use for United States' political commentators and, arguably, those of many other nations dealing with similar partisan polarisation, such as the United Kingdom. It demonstrates how and when points of tension developed between these two outlooks and the historical context of this friction. Furthermore, it probes the causes behind the rightward turn in American politics in the last quarter of the twentieth century which is so important to

understanding the present intellectual and political climate. An analysis of Kristol's thought shows how he aided this political shift through his career as a journalist, political connections, and his links to think tanks and the academy.

I have used this approach to inform several blog posts, including one for the *United States Intellectual History Blog* and, another for the British Association of American Society's blog *United States Studies Online*. In my article, "Beyond the cultural Cold War: *Encounter* and the emergence of Anglo-American conservatism," published in *The Journal of Transatlantic Studies,* I have further demonstrated the importance of considering the historical roots of contemporary American conservatism.

My PhD research into the intellectual life of Irving Kristol has been highly illuminating, and as I write in my conclusion, I believe that anyone seeking to understand the current political landscape in the United States has much to learn from his thought.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my supervisor, Nick Witham, for his guidance, invaluable feedback, and generous support. Thanks also go to Nadia Hilliard for her helpful thoughts on a draft version of this thesis, and to Iain Stewart for his comments during my upgrade. I am also fortunate to have completed my thesis at the Institute of the Americas where, amongst others, I benefitted from advice from Jonathan Bell, Gareth Davies, Aaron Hiltner, and Joshua Hollands.

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Most of my research was conducted against the backdrop of a global pandemic. Consequently, I would like to extend my thanks to staff at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, the Harry Ransom Centre in Texas, the Tamiment Library in New York, and the University of Chicago Library, who scanned numerous resources for me. During my research trip last year I was supported by staff at Harvard University Archives and the Wisconsin Historical Society too. Thank you also to Gregory Smith who at the height of the pandemic went to the archive when travel bans prohibited me from doing so.

I am also thankful for the community that I have met during the PhD. I enjoyed working with History Lab, the 'Journal of History of Ideas Blog,' and when not in lockdown, the comradery of the Institute of Americas' fourth floor PhD offices. Additionally, discussions of neoconservatism with Graham Ashurst and Sophie Joscelyne were of great assistance, as were biography conversations with Nina Ellis, Nora Lessersohn, and Talia Kwartler. Special thanks go to Connie Thomas and Sophie Wilson, our Facetimes during the endless Covid-19 lockdowns were a vital source of motivation, as were trips to favourite

coffee shops in the times after. Friends from London, Madrid, and Southend all provided necessary breaks from research too.

My deepest thanks goes to my family though. My cat kept me company while adding a number of typos to this thesis. Meanwhile, Phoebe and Alex, kept me laughing throughout my research. Most importantly, without my parents Graham and Sally none of this would have been possible; their love of culture and education has impacted my life hugely, but above all the care they took of me in 2013 enabled me to be healthy enough to undertake a PhD. Finally, my husband Sam has been a source of constant support; I can only hope that one day I will be as interested in Atlético de Madrid as he now is in neoconservatism.

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Introduction: From Alcove Number One to the White House

> Irving Kristol is a wide-ranging thinker whose writings have helped transform America's political landscape. As young men, he and his fellow student radicals in City College's "alcove number one," devoted themselves to solving the ultimate problems of the human race. Today, Irving Kristol is still grappling with ultimate problems, and in thinking them through, he has vastly enlarged the conservative vision.
>
> George W. Bush, 2002[1]

On July 9 2002, President George W. Bush awarded Irving Kristol, the so-called 'godfather of neoconservatism,' with America's highest civilian honour, the Medal of Freedom. This honour saw Kristol join a select few considered to have contributed to peace, culture or other significant endeavours, and marked the culmination of his rise from poverty to intellectual grandeur. Kristol is best known for the establishment of neoconservative thought in the 1970s but, as President Bush's allusion to "alcove number one" highlighted, he also had a radical youth and liberal midlife.[2] So, just how, and why, did a second-generation migrant who spent his formative years involved with the American left go on to become a celebrated conservative thinker, awarded the Medal of Freedom by a Republican President? And, more importantly, what does this trajectory tell us about wider political and intellectual trends in the post-war United States?

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[1] George W. Bush, "Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom," July 9, 2002. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-presenting-the-presidential-medal-freedom-5.

[2] The lunch room at City College was divided by alcoves with competing political groups occupying them. The non-Stalinist left sat in Alcove Number One where they learnt to debate the Stalinists in Alcove Number Two. See: Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 28-42.

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Irving Kristol was born in 1920 in Brooklyn, New York City, to first-generation Eastern European and Russian Jewish migrants Joseph and Bessie Kristol.[3] Excluded from Ivy League universities by poverty and ethnicity, in 1936 he enrolled at City College New York where he joined the Young People's Socialist League (Fourth International) and became an active member of the legendary Alcove Number One alongside figures, including but not limited to, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer and Irving Howe. Here, he became well versed in anti-Stalinist politics, which would go on to shape the remainder of his intellectual life. After graduation in 1940, Kristol's career was put on hold when he moved to Chicago with his soon-to-be wife, historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, and worked as a freight handler whilst awaiting the draft.

In 1944 he was drafted into the United States Army, where he promptly became disillusioned with radical politics and broke with Trotskyism. He returned to New York in 1947 and became an associate editor of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) journal *Commentary*, which secured his position within the loose grouping of influential, largely Jewish, radical-turned-liberal writers centred around *Partisan Review* known as the "New York Intellectuals." This association situated him at the heart of Cold War liberal politics and in 1952 he assumed the position of executive director of liberal anti-communist organisation the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF). A year later in 1953, Kristol, along with the British poet Stephen Spender, became editor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-backed magazine *Encounter* which sought to combat intellectual neutralism in Western Europe. This entanglement created great conflict with the soon-to-emerge student

[3] United States Federal Census, 1940, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (Washington, D.C, 1940).

New Left, who accused those involved with the magazine of "selling out" their left-wing politics.

As the New Left became more radical in the 1960s, Kristol became increasingly disillusioned with liberalism. In 1965 he founded *The Public Interest* with life-long friend the sociologist Daniel Bell, which was instrumental to the formation of his increasingly right-wing thought into a cohesive outlook, later termed neoconservatism. A regular column in the *Wall Street Journal,* the founding of a second conservative journal in 1985, *The National Interest,* and an appointment to the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in 1988 finalised his transition from Trotskyist to neoconservative. From this point on, until his death in 2009, Kristol championed conservative causes in the public sphere, efforts for which he was rewarded with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.[4]

This thesis seeks to understand Kristol's trajectory from left to right, and uses him as a lens through which to explore wider intellectual transformations in twentieth century America.[5] Thus, it explores the role of anti-communist public intellectuals during the Cold War, the conflict between the Old and New Left at mid-century, and the establishment of the neoconservative outlook in the 1970s and 1980s. In probing these issues, it argues that Kristol's transition from left to right was not linear. Instead, it was a slow process, with different strands of his thought moving rightwards at different speeds which demonstrate the interconnected nature of post-war liberalism and conservatism. Furthermore, it suggests that through his journalism, political connections and affiliations with prominent think tanks Kristol was an influential figure in the rightward turn in post-1970s American politics.

[4] For a brief overview of Kristol's life see: Irving Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999);
[5] It should be noted that Kristol's trajectory was not unique several other intellectuals also made the journey from left and right. See: John P. Diggins, *Up From Communism* (New York: Columbia University Press*,* 1994); Christopher P. Loss, "The Making of a Neocon" *Modern American History* 5, No. 3 (2022): 263-287.

Surprisingly, in spite of this influential career, Kristol has received scant sustained historiographical analysis.[6] Instead, his role is reduced to that of a mere cameo figure across a number of different fields. One area in which Kristol has received attention is in literature concerning the New York Intellectuals. Initially this scholarship was authored by the members of the group themselves, who flooded the market with memoirs detailing their intellectual pursuits and downplaying their early radicalism.[7] An outpouring of literature in the 1980s and 1990s on the New York Intellectuals expanded the field beyond these autobiographical accounts to include studies of the circle's publications and biographies of leading members of the group.[8] This literature generally agrees that the radicalism of the

[6] Alan Wald provides a brief overview of Kristol's life in Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 350-354. Jonathan Bronitsky gives detailed discussion of Kristol's early life in his dissertation on the origins of neoconservatism but does not consider his later life too as this thesis does: Jonathan Bronitsky, "The Anglo-American origins of Neoconservatism," (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2013).

[7] Mary McCarthy, *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (London: Vintage Classics, 2000); Mary McCarthy, *Intellectual Memoirs: New York 1936-1938* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1993); Irving Howe, *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982); Alfred Kazin, *New York Jew* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); William Barrett, *The Truants: Adventures Among Intellectuals* (New York: Doubleday, 1983); Sidney Hook, Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20th Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1987); Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of An Idea* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1995); Diana Trilling, *Beginning of the Journey: The Marriage of Diana and Lionel Trilling* (New York: Harvest Books, 1995); Norman Podhoretz, *Ex-Friends: Falling Out With Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Lillian Hellman, Hannah Arendt, and Norman Mailer* (New York: Encounter Books, 2000); Norman Podhoretz, *Making It* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2017); William Philips, *A Partisan View: Five Decades in Politics and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[8] James Buckhart Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans: A History of Literary Radicalism in America* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968); Murray Friedman ed., *Commentary In American Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005). https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bsz18.3; Nathan Abrams, *Commentary Magazine* 1945-59: 'A Journal of Significant Thought and Opinion' (Middlesex: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007); Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine That Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010); Gregory D. Summer, *Dwight Macdonald and the* Politics *Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Doris Grumbach, *The Company She Kept* (London: The Bodley Head, 1967); Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Critical American: The Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (Hamden: Archon Books: 1984); Howard Brick, *Daniel Bell and the Decline of Intellectual Radicalism: Social Theory and Political Reconciliation in the 1940s* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986); Carol Gelderman, *Mary McCarthy: A life* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson,1989); Michael Wreszin, *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Christopher Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook: Marxist and Pragmatist* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Edward Alexander, *Irving Howe: Socialist, Critic, Jew* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998); Frances Kiernan, *Seeing Mary Plain* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2000); Sabrina Fuchs-Abrams, *Mary McCarthy: Gender,*

group was short-lived, but disagrees over the causes of its rightward turn. Several scholars looked to the group's ethnic composition to explain the transition away from radicalism and proposed that the New York Intellectuals' overwhelmingly Jewish identity caused them to assimilate into mainstream society.[9] The most prominent of these studies is Alexander Bloom's *Prodigal Sons*, an encyclopaedic account of the group's rise from obscurity to cultural icons, which posited that a reawakening of Jewish identification after World War Two guided the figures rightwards.[10] However, other historians, including Terry Cooney and Neil Jumonville, saw Jewishness as an insufficient explanation, and instead stressed the commitment to cosmopolitanism and a responsibility to intellectualism as the root cause of the deradicalisation of the New York Intellectuals.[11]

Other scholarship has considered the New York Intellectuals' relationship with wider left-wing politics. Alan Wald emphasised the importance of contextualisation and posited that the creation of the anti-Stalinist Left in the 1930s, as well as its inherent defects, were central to the group's transition away from radicalism.[12] Likewise, Harvey Teres focused on

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Politics, and the Post-war Intellectual (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004); Richard H. King, *Arendt and America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); Natalie Robins, *The Untold Journey: The Life of Diana Trilling* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

[9] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons*; Ronnia A. Grinberg, "Neither 'Sissy' Boy Nor Patrician Man: New York Intellectuals and the Construction of American Jewish Masculinity," *American Jewish History* 98, No.3 (2014): 127-151; Anson Rabinbach, "Eichmann in New York: The New York Intellectuals and the Hannah Arendt Controversy," *October* 108 (Spring 2004): 97-111; Eugene Goodheart, "The Abandoned Legacy of the New York intellectuals," *American Jewish History* 80, No.3 (Spring 1991): 361-376; S.A. Longstaff, "Ivy League Gentiles and Inner-City Jews: Class and Ethnicity Around "Partisan Review" in the Thirties and the Forties," *American Jewish History* 80, No.3 (Spring 1991): 325-343; David A. Hollinger, "A Response to the Essays of Terry A. Cooney, Eugene Goodheart, and S. A. Longstaff," *American Jewish History* 80, No. 3 (Spring 1991): 377-381; Bennett M. Berger, "The New York Intellectuals," *American Jewish History* 80, No.3 (Spring 1991): 382-389; Ethan Goffman, "Introduction," in *The New York Public Intellectuals and Beyond* ed. Ethan Goffman and Daniel Morris (Purdue University Press, 2009), 1-11; Rachel Gordon, "Nathan Glazer's *American Judaism:* Evaluating Post-World War II American Jewish Religion," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 105, No.4 (Fall 2015): 482-506.

[10] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 3-11.

[11] Terry A. Cooney, "New York Intellectuals and the Question of Jewish Identity," *American Jewish History* 80, No.3 (Spring 1991): 344-360; Terry Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle, 1934-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986); Neil Jumonville, *Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1991), xii- xv.

[12] Wald, *The New York Intellectuals,* 3-23.

the wider context of left-wing politics. He identified that the New York Intellectuals' short-lived radicalism meant it was dismissed or overlooked in larger studies of the American left, and urged that their experience of radicalism, however short, be considered as part of wider legacy of left-wing politics.[13] Meanwhile, Hugh Wilford suggests that the group were not "sell outs" but that the attempt to be independent anti-Stalinists within the vanguard left made them vulnerable to co-optation.[14] By providing Kristol with the same attention given to his contemporaries in this abundant literature, this thesis offers fresh insight into debates concerning the institutionalisation of the New York Intellectuals. However, as the 'Godfather of neoconservatism,' Kristol arguably moved the furthest right of all and offers the chance to intervene in a number of additional historiographies: principally neoconservative scholarship as well as histories of both liberalism and conservatism.

Furthermore, Kristol's life helps cast light on the process of assimilation experienced by twentieth-century Jewish-American intellectuals. Notably, Nancy Sinkoff uses her recent biography of Lucy S. Dawidowicz to bridge the gap between the New York Intellectuals and broader scholarship concerned with Jewish assimilation into American society in the twentieth century.[15] Sinkoff's observation builds on the rich field of American Jewish studies, which has investigated the process of cultural and intellectual integration from a variety of perspectives.[16] A frequent theme in this literature is the significance of secularism, which is viewed as the fundamental component to Jewish assimilation into mainstream

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[13] Harvey M. Teres, *Renewing the Left: Politics, Immigration, and the New York Intellectuals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[14] Hugh Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals: from Vanguard to Institution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), vii.
[15] Nancy Sinkoff, *From Left to Right: Lucy S. Dawidowicz, The New York Intellectuals, and the Politics of Jewish History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020).
[16] Kirsten Fermaglich, "Too Long, Too Foreign … Too Jewish": Jewish Name Changing, and Family Mobility in New York City, 1917-1942," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 34, No.3 (Spring 2015): 34-57. For a more general history of Jews in America see: Marc Lee Raphael ed., *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Rebecca Kobrin, "Introduction," in *The Chosen People in the Chosen Land: The Jewish Encounter With American Capitalism,* ed. Rebecca Kobrin (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 1-11.

society.[17] However, the majority of this scholarship is focused on the relationship between Jews and liberal politics.[18] America's Jewish population is widely considered to be the most liberal white-ethno-religious group in the United States, and scholars have sought to understand why.[19] This trend is best seen in the work of Deborah Dash Moore, Beth Wagner and Riv-Ellen Prell who all stressed the centrality of the New Deal State to Jewish integration and the community's subsequent allegiance to liberalism.[20] Through a consideration of Kristol's rupture with liberalism and popularisation of the neoconservative outlook the thesis offers an alternative perspective, highlighting that conservatism and Jewishness are also compatible.

More significantly, Kristol has received scholarly attention in works concerning neoconservatism. A principal debate in this body of scholarship concerns the origins of the outlook. Jonathan Bronitsky's study of the early lives of Kristol, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and future editor of *Commentary* magazine Norman Podhoretz stressed that neoconservatism's

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[17] Laura Levitt, "Impossible Assimilations, American Liberalism, and Jewish Difference: Revisiting Jewish Secularism," *Quarterly* 59, No.3 (September 2007): 807-832; David Biale, "Not in the Heavens: The Premodern Roots of Jewish Secularism," *Religion Compass* 2, No.3 (2008): 340-364; Hollinger, "A Response to the Essays of Terry A. Cooney, Eugene Goodheart, and S. A. Longstaff," 377-381; David Hollinger, *Science, Jews and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Susanne Klingenstein, *Jews in the American Academy, 1900-1940: The Dynamics of Intellectual Assimilation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

[18] Henry Feingold, *American Jewish Political Culture and the Liberal Persuasion* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014); Marc Dollinger, *Quest for Inclusion: Jews and Liberalism in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Kenneth D. Wald, *The Foundations of American Jewish Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Geoffrey Brahm Levey, "Review Article: The Liberalism of Jews – Has It Been Explained?" *British Journal of Political Science* 26, No. 3 (1996): 369-401; Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis in Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[19] Brahm Levey, "Review Article," 370.

[20] Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed A Generation* (Cambridge, Ma.: The Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2004); Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to Become American: Assimilation and the Trouble Between Jewish Women and Jewish Men* (Boson: Beacon Press, 1999); Ari Y. Kelman, Tony Michels and Riv-Ellen Prell, "The Jewish 1968 and its Legacies," *American Jewish History* 102, No.1 (2018):1-4; Beth Wanger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

origins were to be found in post-war England.[21] This echoed Murray Friedman, Mark Gerson, and John Ehrman who likewise concluded that neoconservatism emerged in the late 1940s.[22] However, it disagreed with prominent literature including Peter Steinfels' *The Neoconservatives* (1979) and Justin Vaïsse's *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (2010), both of which attributed the movement to resentment of the increasingly radical left of the 1960s. [23] Similarly, Andrew Hartman's work on the Culture Wars of the 1990s stressed the importance of the New Left in shaping neoconservatism.[24] By considering Kristol's intellectual life, this thesis revisits these chronological debates. It recognises that Kristol's time in England was a crucial element of his conservative education, but it argues that his break with liberalism was fundamentally determined by the political climate of the 1960s.

In addition to intervening in the debate over the origins of neoconservatism, the thesis also engages with the question of how to define the movement. Neoconservatism is a highly contested term and those associated with the movement—although significantly not Kristol—rejected the label. Several studies have conceived of neoconservatism as uniquely Jewish in nature.[25] While others have proposed that neoconservatism was an extension of Straussian

[21] Bronitsky, "The Anglo-American origins of Neoconservatism," 68-103.
[22] Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mark Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision: From the Cold War to the Culture Wars* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1997); Gary Dorrien, The Neoconservative Mind: Culture and the War of Ideology (Philadelphia: Temple University Press,1993); John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs,* 1945-1994 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
[23] Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Ma.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Origins of A Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2013).
[24] Andrew Hartman, *A History of the Culture Wars: A War for the Soul of America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 38-69.
[25] Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution,* 1-10; Nathan Abrams, *Norman Podhoretz and Commentary Magazine: The Rise and Fall of the Neocons* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 317-323.

thought, demonstrating the wide-ranging debate over the defining qualities of the movement.[26]

Particularly important to this thesis are discussions regarding the generational character of neoconservatism. Mark Gerson provided a narrow conception of neoconservatism, suggesting that the outlook only existed in relation to a single generation.[27] Justin Vaïsse disagreed and suggested that there were several variants, each possessing a modified form of the outlook but united by a belief in nationalism.[28] Alternatively, Nathan Abram's biography of Norman Podhoretz concluded that the various strands of neoconservatism were separated by genuineness, not generations. He identified that Podhoretz's neoconservatism was self-serving in comparison to the authentic embodiment of neoconservatism by Kristol, Daniel Bell and Patrick Moynihan.[29] Similarly, Jonathan Bronitsky noted the differences between Kristol and Podhoretz seeing the former as representing domestic neoconservatism and the latter foreign policy neoconservatism.[30]

Given Kristol's acceptance of the label neoconservative and that Peter Steinfels described him as a 'standard-bearer' of the movement, investigating both his contributions to the domestic and foreign policy outlooks of neoconservatism as this thesis does in Chapters Five and Six is critical. Significantly, this analysis reveals that the neoconservative outlook was characterised by support for a limited welfare state; populist tax reductions; the championing of US values in the face of communist threats; the support of Western democracy and civilisation; and, above all, intellectual responsibility.

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[26] Shadia B. Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Grant N. Havers, *Leo Strauss and Anglo-American Democracy: A Conservative Critique* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013) 14-17.
[27] Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision,* 26.
[28] Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism,* 271-279.
[29] Nathan Abrams, *Norman Podhoretz and Commentary Magazine: The Rise and Fall of the Neocons* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 317-323.
[30] Bronitsky, "The Anglo-American origins of Neoconservatism," 28.

Interest in neoconservatism forms part of a wider scholarship on conservatism. In 1994, Alan Brinkley's declaration that conservatism was a scholarly 'orphan' sparked a wave of new historical writing on the topic.[31] Until this point, George Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* had been the authoritative account of early conservatism.[32] Nash traced the roots of post-war conservatism to the 1940s but also stressed the importance of the polarising politics of the 1960s in fuelling the development of right-wing ideology.[33] However, his attention was directly aimed at intellectual elites. The new historiography which followed Brinkley's declaration expanded discussions beyond these select few, and challenged the 'liberal consensus' by demonstrating the multi-faceted nature of conservatism, which encompassed constituencies as varied as libertarians, traditionalists, the religious right, and even suburban housewives. Additionally, this work emphasised the longevity of right-wing thought in American and fought against conceptions that conservatism was primarily a backlash against the liberal 1960s.[34]

At the same time that political historians were becoming re-acquainted with the history of conservatism, economic and intellectual historians were developing a complementary sub-field: the history of capitalism. In contrast to the historiography of

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[31] Alan Brinkley, "The Problem of American Conservatism," *The American Historical Review* 99, No.2 (April 1994): 409-429.

[32] George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Delaware: ISI Books, 2017); Jennifer Burns, "Review: In Retrospect: George Nash's "The Conservative Intellectual in America since 1945,"' *Reviews in American History* 32*,* No.3 (September 2004): 447-462.

[33] Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 1-5.

[34] Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement for the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009); Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 10-19; Donald T. Crtitchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Julian E. Zelizer, "Rethinking the History of American Conservatism," *Reviews in American History* 38, No.2 (June 2010): 367-392; Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); Rebecca E. Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, The New Right and the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

conservatism, which studies a wealth of actors, much scholarship on the history of capitalism has tended to focus on the libertarian movement, especially the scholarship of F.A. Hayek.[35] In her important 2009 biography of Ayn Rand, Jennifer Burns situated Rand's political thought within contemporary discussions of free market economics and the wider libertarian movement.[36] Meanwhile, Angus Burgin's study of the circle of intellectuals surrounding the Mont Pèlerin Society showed the development of pro-free-market arguments in the second half of the twentieth century.[37] Kristol has made several brief appearances in this literature. In Burgin's examination of the conflict between paleoconservatives and neoconservatives he drew attention to the influential work of Kristol in the promotion of supply-side economics.[38] This influence is also noted by John L. Kelley in his 1997 study *Bringing the Market Back In* which provided the first history of post-war American free market economics.[39] The importance of Kristol to this historiography is perhaps most evident in the work of Daniel T. Rodgers, who stressed the role he played in introducing the abstract concept of "the market" into mainstream political ideas in the 1970s and 1980s.[40] The study of Kristol's neglected capitalist thought presents a chance to build further on recent scholarship, and to expand its horizons beyond its current focus on libertarianism to include neoconservative conceptions of capitalism.

As this second wave of conservative historiography came to a close, both Kim Phillips-Fein and Julian E. Zelizer reflected on the achievements and future of the field.

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[35] Bruce Caldwell, *Hayek's Challenge: An Intellectual Biography of F. A. Hayek* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
[36] Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[37] Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets Since the Depression* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2012).
[38] Ibid, 186-213.
[39] John L. Kelley, *Bringing the Market Back In: The Political Revitalization of Market Liberalism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 185-189.
[40] Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Ma.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011), 77-110.

Zelizer noted how liberalism persisted in the face of conservatism and the failure of much second wave historiography to take this into account.[41] As such, he posited that future scholarship needed to focus on 'how conservatism unfolded in a dialectical fashion with liberalism rather than as a replacement *to* liberalism.'[42] Meanwhile, Phillips-Fein's review suggested that intellectual historians were beginning to address this question and pointed to Michael Kimmage's 2009 study *The Conservative Turn*.[43] Kimmage used the careers of Lionel Trilling and Whittaker Chambers to demonstrate how anti-communism allowed for conservatism to develop in conversation with liberalism.[44] Other studies—including Zelizer's edited collection with Bruce J. Schulman *Rightward Bound* (2008) and Donald Critchlow's *The Conservative Ascendency* (2007)—have also attempted to bring liberalism back into discussions of conservatism.[45] This research is especially important to the present study because it has highlighted how liberalism and conservatism have developed over time, defined themselves in contrast to each other, and fundamentally signalled the transmutable nature of these ideological notions; as encapsulated by Kristol's life.

Historian of liberalism, Jennifer Burns made a similar argument in her 2007 essay 'Liberalism and the Conservative Imagination.' Here, Burns stressed that mid-century liberals understood the appeal of conservatism and took it seriously, but as the century progressed and both viewpoints redefined themselves, liberals lost the ability to understand

[41] Zelizer, "Rethinking the History of American Conservatism," 380.
[42] Ibid, 388.
[43] Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism A State of the Field," *The Journal of American History* 98, No.3 (December 2011): 730.
[44] Michael Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers, and the Lessons of Anti-Communism* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[45] Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, "Introduction," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s,* ed. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1-10; Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendency: How the Right Made Political History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Jeffrey Bloodworth, *Losing the Center: The Decline of American Liberalism, 1968-1999* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013).

and connect with conservatives.[46] Burns' work forms part of the broader and vast historiography on post-war United States' liberalism.[47] Such scholarship emphasises the centrality of liberalism to American political thought and how it was increasingly associated with individual democratic rights.[48] A significant portion of this literature considers the case of Cold War Liberalism, a brand of liberalism which emerged following the defeat of Henry Wallace in 1948.[49] This particular mid-century form of liberalism positioned itself against the totalitarian other of Soviet Communism, and found itself in increasing conflict with the American left.[50] Perhaps most important for this thesis is the work of Gary Gerstle. In his essay, "The Protean Character of American Liberalism," Gerstle traces development of twentieth century liberalism, and convincingly argues that liberalism is not a fixed concept, but rather one which is fluid as it attempts to reinterpret itself.[51] It is this interpretation of liberalism, as an ideology committed to progress but in constant flux and re-

[46] Jennifer Burns, "Liberalism and the Conservative Imagination," in *Liberalism for a New Century* ed. Neil Jumonville and Kevin Mattson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 58-72.
[47] Examples of this work include but are not limited to: Jonathan Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial: The Cold War and American Politics in the Truman Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); William H. Chafe, *The Achievement of American Liberalism: The New Deal and Its Legacies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Steven M. Gillon, *Politics and Vision: The ADA and American Liberalism, 1947-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Neil Jumonville and Kevin Mattson eds., *Liberalism for a New Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Kevin Matson, *When America was Great: The Fighting Faith of Postwar Liberalism* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan eds., *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2017); Mary Sperling McAuliffe, *Crisis on the Left: Cold War Politics and American Liberals 1947-1954* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1978).
[48] Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial,* 141-145; Mattson *When America was Great,* 5-6; Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism: From Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 267.
[49] See here: Amanda Anderson, "Character and Ideology: The Case of Cold War Liberalism," *New Literary History* 42, No. 2 (Spring 2011): 209-229; Bell *The Liberal State on Trial;* Iain Stewart, *Raymond Aron And Liberal Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 209-227; Malachi H. Hacohen, "Jacob Talmon between Zionism and Cold War Liberalism," *History of European Ideas* 34, No.2 (2008): 146-157; Jan-Werner Müller ed. *Isiah Berlin's Cold War Liberalism* (Singapore: Springer, 2019); Jan-Werner Müller, "Fear and Freedom: On "Cold War Liberalism"' *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, No.1 (2008): 45–64.
[50] Sperling McAuliffe, *Crisis on the Left,* 22.
[51] Gary Gerstle, "The Protean Character of American Liberalism," *The American Historical Review* 99, No. 4 (October 1994): 1043-1073.

conceptualisation, which is employed in the subsequent chapters.[52] Likewise, conservatism has been similarly fluid in nature, and this thesis suggests that Kristol's intellectual career offers insight into the transmutability not just of liberalism but both sets of political ideas, and demonstrates how much both outlooks have in common with each other.

As this historiographical overview makes clear, despite Kristol's influence on a range of political and intellectual issues in post-war American society, the question of his true impact on the intellectual sphere remains unanswered, as do the implications of his thought on wider American political culture. By providing one of the first comprehensive analyses of Kristol's thought, and the only one to deal with his entire academic life, this thesis remedies this oversight and allows for greater exploration of many of the issues raised in the historiographical fields outlined above. Most importantly of all, a concentrated focus on Kristol's thought will allow for a deeper understanding of the relationship between liberalism and conservatism, something which is crucial to our comprehension of contemporary politics.

To demonstrate this, the thesis fuses biography and intellectual history. In the 1990s the "New Biography" expanded the realm of biography beyond the study of the rich and urged scholars to think about the wider historical circumstances that a single life can help us comprehend.[53] In their various biographies of prominent mid-century intellectuals, Richard King, Daniel Geary, Christopher Phelps, and Howard Brick have done just this, masterfully analysing the intricacies of their subjects' thought whilst situating it within its contemporary context to build a full picture of their protagonists and the worlds that they inhabited.[54]

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[52] Ibid, 1046.

[53] David Nasaw, "Introduction," *The American Historical Review* 113, No.3 (June 2009): 573-778; Jo Bur Margadant, "Introduction: The New Biography in Historical Practice," *French Historical Studies* 19, No.4 (Autumn 1996): 1057; Lois Banner, "Biography as History," *The American Historical Review* 113, No.3 (June 2009): 580-581; Alice Kessler-Harris, "Why Biography?" *The American Historical Review* 113, No.3 (June 2009): 630; Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Difficult Woman: The Challenging Life and Times of Lillian Hellman* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012).

[54] Brick, *Daniel Bell and the Decline of Intellectual Radicalism*; Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook;* King, *Arendt and America*; Daniel Geary, *Radical Ambition: C. Wright Mills, the Left, and American Social Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

Taking inspiration from these approaches, this thesis probes the ways in which Kristol's life speaks to the wider political transformations taking place in the post-war United States. It prioritises the discussion of his published intellectual thought and professional life, and places these ideas in context by comparing them to contemporary political debates. Thus, personal relationships are only considered where and when they intersect with the development of his political thought.[55] These relationships include friendships with Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer and Sidney Hook, all of which are crucial to understanding Kristol's thought. Undoubtedly the most important relationship here though was his marriage to Gertrude Himmelfarb. Through her work on Victorian Britain Himmelfarb became as significant intellectually to Kristol as she was romantically.

Intellectual history, meanwhile, is dedicated to the practice of uncovering past perspectives and places great importance on ideas as social forces.[56] In the 1970s the field was challenged by the explosive growth of social history following the publication of E.P. Thompson's landmark study *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).[57] However, in recent decades its fortunes have been reversed and the field is now undergoing many innovations such as traversing both disciplinary and national boundaries.[58] In particular, Angus Burgin noted the re-emergence of intellectual biography as a result of what he terms a 'renewed appreciation for both the importance of ideas in the lives of individuals, and for the

[55] For a more personal account of these intellectuals' lives see: David, Laskin, *Partisans: Marriage, Politics, and Betrayal Among the New York Intellectuals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
[56] Richard Whatmore, *What Is Intellectual History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 13-18.
[57] Raymond Haberski Jr. and Andrew Hartman, "Introduction: Intellectual History for Complicated Times," in *American Labyrinth: Intellectual History for Complicated Times,* ed. Raymond Haberski Jr. and Andrew Hartman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 1-7.
[58] Raymond Haberski Jr. and Andrew Hartman eds., *American Labyrinth: Intellectual History for Complicated Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); Joel Isaac, James T. Kloppenberg, Michael O'Brien, Jennifer Ratner- Rosenhagen eds. *The Worlds of American Intellectual History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Sarah E. Igo, "Toward a Free-Range Intellectual History," in *The Worlds of American Intellectual History,* ed. Joel Isaac, James T. Kloppenberg, Michael O'Brien and Jennifer Ratner- Rosenhagen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 324-328.

individuals in the precipitation of social change.'[59] This thesis builds on these innovations to investigate the wider issue of the interconnected nature of post-war liberalism and conservatism in the United States.

Naturally, much intellectual history is inherently interested in the work of intellectuals and their discussions. But, as David Hollinger remarked, 'what then are we to do with the appellation "intellectual"?'[60] The term intellectual is widely regarded as entering Western thought at the end of the nineteenth century as a consequence of the Dreyfus Affair in France.[61] But, there is little agreement on who constitutes an intellectual. Perhaps the most important theorisation of intellectuals comes from the work of Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci who theorised two types of intellectuals: organic, those tied to their working-class social group, and traditional, those who support the dominant social group.[62] In his work on the New York Intellectuals, Nathan Abrams argues that that as a result of their transition from Jewish working-class neighbourhoods to members of the anti-communist apparatus, the group moved from organic intellectual status to that of the traditional intellectual.[63] Another important category is the public intellectual. Studies on the role of this figure in American society have stressed that public intellectuals are generalists who master prose for an educated audience.[64] Employing this definition, it is clear that although a

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[59] Angus Burgin, "New Directions, Then and Now," in *The Worlds of American Intellectual History,* ed. Joel Isaac, James T. Kloppenberg, Michael O'Brien and Jennifer Ratner- Rosenhagen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 357-358.
[60] David Hollinger, *In the American Province: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 145.
[61] Jeremy Jennings and Tony Kemp-Welch, "The Century of the Intellectual: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie," in *Intellectuals in Politics: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie* ed. Jeremy Jennings and Anthony Kemp-Welch (New York: Rutledge, 1997), 1-7.
[62] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 91-112.
[63] Nathan Abrams, '"A Profoundly Hegemonic Moment": Demythologizing the Cold War New York Intellectuals' in *The New York Public Intellectuals and Beyond,* ed. Ethan Goffman and Daniel Morris (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2009), 19-34.
[64] Richard Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2002); Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (New York: Basic Books,

journalist who often repackaged ideas rather than producing highbrow cultural products of his own, Kristol undoubtedly falls into the somewhat imprecise category of intellectual. He was a generalist who used his platform to speak to an educated audience on topics ranging from welfare reform to economics to foreign policy.

In order to engage with Kristol's thought, the bulk of this thesis is preoccupied with examining his numerous published essays in *Partisan Review, Commentary, Encounter, The Public Interest, The Reporter,* and his column in the *Wall Street Journal.* Kristol's limited autobiographical works and those of his contemporaries, including Sidney Hook, Norman Podhoretz and Irving Howe, are also used to supplement this analysis and provide vital contextualisation of Kristol's arguments in these essays. The use of personal papers, mainly in the form of correspondence, from intellectuals' collections, including but not limited to Daniel Bell, Sidney Hook, Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, and Stephen Spender, also helps illuminate Kristol's published thought and enriches our understanding of the motivations behind his work. Used together, these sources create a vibrant picture of Kristol's thought, and clarify his (at times puzzling) political journey.

The thesis is divided into three parts, each dealing in turn with the establishment of Kristol's political and intellectual career, rupture from liberalism, and, finally, the establishment of the neoconservative outlook. This structure follows Kristol's career chronologically and provides a demonstration of the slow nature of his transition from left to right, and how he often held both liberal and conservative views simultaneously.

Chapter One, "An Intellectual Formation," considers Kristol's foray into, and eventual abandonment, of Trotskyism. Using his early writings between 1943 and 1950, this chapter primarily serves as background for his later political transitions and intellectual

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2000), 25-26; Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), ix.

development. In particular, this examination draws attention to Kristol's early experiences of poverty, anti-communism, and the influence of the first generation of New York Intellectuals on his work. Furthermore, it argues that, notwithstanding later protestations, he was a committed Trotskyist during this period, and that his break from Trotskyism in the wake of World War Two left him ideologically bereft.

This first section of the thesis then moves on to consider Kristol's participation in the liberal anti-communist movement and the solidification of his intellectual career. Chapter Two, "Ideas in Flux: Irving Kristol's Politics in the 1950s," studies Kristol's increasingly conservative but still liberal thought. It does this by analysing his role as assistant editor of *Commentary,* with a particular focus on his controversial and career making article, "Civil Liberties,' 1952—A Study in Confusion."[65] It also considers Kristol's embroilment with the CIA through his activities in the CCF and as editor of *Encounter* magazine. In doing so, the chapter suggests that Kristol's anti-communism was rooted in a particular conception of communism and totalitarianism adhered to by the New York Intellectuals. Moreover, it argues that *Encounter* was a crucial point in Kristol's career, not because of his association with the CIA, but because it introduced him to English Conservative thought which would help shape his emerging neoconservative thought.

Dealing with Kristol's break from liberalism, chapters Three and Four make up the middle section of the thesis. In Chapter Three, "Ideological Rupture: Liberalism and the New Left" the dissertation progresses into the 1960s. It traces the establishment of Daniel Bell and Kristol's prominent public policy journal *The Public Interest* and its efforts to critique Lyndon Johnson's Great Society Programmes and efforts to tackle racial inequalities. A discussion of Kristol's interaction with the Student New Left which focuses on the Old and

[65] Irving Kristol, ""Civil Liberties," 1952- A Study in Confusion: Do We Defend Our Rights by Protecting Communists?" *Commentary* 13*,* No.3 (March 1952): 228-236.

New Left's differing conceptions of revolution follows, before the chapter turns to the problem of Kristol's support for the Vietnam war. In doing so, it highlights Kristol's frustration with rising leftism amongst the young and his increasing dissatisfaction with the direction of post-war liberalism.

Continuing with the theme of frustration, Chapter Four, "Ideological Rupture: Democracy and Capitalism," looks at Kristol's final departure from liberalism in the 1970s. Importantly, the 1970s saw the publication of two major collections of Kristol's essays: *On the Democratic Idea in America* (1972) and *Two Cheers for Capitalism* (1978). Thus, the chapter takes the content of these publications as its basis for discussion and analyses Kristol's attitudes towards American democracy and free-market capitalism. Here, it emphasises his concern with decaying American morality which would become a greater theme in his neoconservative thought in the following decades. Furthermore, his decision to vote for Richard Nixon in 1972, along with the departure of Daniel Bell from *Public Interest*, is scrutinised and used as evidence of Kristol's increasing conservatism.

Having broken with liberalism once and for all, Kristol began to make a name for himself as a conservative. The final two chapters of the thesis consider what it meant to be a neoconservative and intervene in the literature explored above. In Chapter Five, "Consolidating Neoconservatism: Developing a Domestic Policy Position," the thesis considers how Kristol carved out his role in the conservative movement during the late-1970s and 1980s. First, it looks at his influence in the public sphere, particularly in relation to the promotion of supply-side economics, and his fundamental role in the ever-growing network of conservative think-tanks in this era. Subsequently, it explores his unique attitude towards the welfare state which, in contrast to other conservatives, advocated limited assistance for those he considered morally deserving. Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates the prominent

role Kristol played in defining neoconservatives' outlook in relation to tax and welfare issues, and positions his views within the wider conservative movement.

The final chapter of the thesis, "Consolidating Neoconservatism: Irving Kristol's Foreign Policy Vision," analyses Kristol's international thought during the 1980s. This chapter demonstrates the importance of Western Judeo-Christian mores not just in the domestic sphere but also internationally for neoconservatives through a discussion of Kristol's frustration with NATO, his antagonistic position towards human rights, and vehement support for Israel. It also highlights the continued importance of anti-Communism throughout his life. Furthermore, the chapter draws attention to the important work of other neoconservatives in shaping Kristol's international outlook such as Jeane Kirkpatrick.

The conclusion provides an overview of the remainder of Kristol's intellectual life in the 1990s following the collapse of communism. Here, his brief foray into the Culture Wars and increasingly hostile attitude towards liberals is analysed. Finally, the thesis examines his decision to retreat from public life in the early-2000s. By providing Kristol with the same attention as his contemporaries for the first time, and spanning some sixty years, this thesis shows how he engaged with both liberal and conservative ideas and emphasises the contributions he made to American political and intellectual life during the twentieth century. Moreover, it demonstrates the wider importance of public intellectuals in the United States, and the significant role ideas have played in the formation of modern America. After all, as Kristol wrote in a 1975 column for the *Wall Street Journal,* 'what rules the world is ideas, because ideas define the way reality is perceived.'[66]

[66] Irving Kristol, "One Conservatism and Capitalism," *Wall Street Journal,* September 11, 1975, 20.

Chapter One: An Intellectual Formation

> *Partisan Review…*was an intimidating presence in Alcove No.1. Even simply to understand it seemed a goal beyond reach. I would read each article at least twice, in a state of awe and exasperation – excited to see such elegance of style and profundity of mind, depressed at the realization that a commoner like myself could never expect to rise into that intellectual aristocracy that included Lionel Trilling, Philip Rahv, William Phillips, Sidney Hook, Mary McCarthy, Paul Goodman, Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg, Meyer Schapiro, and F.W. Dupee.
>
> Irving Kristol, 1977 [1]

In a 1977 autobiographical essay about his experience at City College New York (CCNY) and radical youth, Irving Kristol expressed a quasi-religious reverence for *Partisan Review* and the loose grouping of figures who surrounded the journal—later known as the first generation of New York Intellectuals. Little did Kristol know when reading this journal in 'awe' that, by the end of the 1940s, he too would join this 'intellectual aristocracy.' In 1940, Kristol graduated from CCNY as a Trotskyist and began a crucial decade in his life which would see him move to Chicago, drafted in the United States Army where he rejected radicalism, live in England and, eventually return to New York City where he joined the echelons of America's literary elite as a contributing editor to the newly formed *Commentary* magazine.[2]

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[1] Irving Kristol, "Memoirs of a Trotskyist," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 478.

[2] Ibid, 470; Irving Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999); Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The*

This chapter analyses this foundational period of his life, asking: who influenced his early thought, how this period laid the groundwork for his later political positions, and did his break from radicalism represent a fundamental rupture in belief? In asking these questions the chapter provides important insight into the importance of Kristol's left-wing radicalism and the origins of his later thought on poverty and anti-communism. Furthermore, it highlights the development of his personal networks. As such, the chapter primarily serves as important contextualisation without which his later thought cannot be understood.

Scholarship on the New York intellectuals offers much discussion of the group's break from radicalism. One suggestion is that during the late 1930s and the 1940s the group broke away from radical left-wing politics because of their commitment to cosmopolitanism.[3] Meanwhile, other studies have pinpointed World War Two as the specific point at which the figures rejected radical thought.[4] But that the New York Intellectuals abandoned radicalism by the 1950s is undisputed.[5] Nor were the New York Intellectuals alone in abandoning radical left-wing politics during this era. John Patrick Diggins' study of Max Eastman, John Dos Passos and Will Herberg highlighted a broader shift from left to right amongst intellectuals of this era.[6] Alternatively, Jonathan Bronitsky suggests that Kristol's trajectory should not be considered as part of this wider moment of deradicalisation because his Trotskyism was never really that serious, and that instead the 1940s were the pivotal decade in which neoconservative thought was born.[7] This chapter argues that Kristol's Trotskyism,

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Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 350-354.

[3] Terry Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle, 1934-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986),6-8.

[4] Wald, *The New York Intellectuals,* 193.

[5] Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 99-122; Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals*, 95-119; Neil Jumonville, *Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1991), xii; Gregory D. Summer, *Dwight Macdonald and the* Politics *Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 4-5.

[6] John P. Diggins, *Up From Communism* (New York: Columbia University Press,1994).

[7] Jonathan Bronitsky, "The Anglo-American Origins of Neoconservatism," (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2013), 1-13.

albeit brief, was genuine and this experience underpinned much of his later thinking. As such it suggests that his break from radicalism should be considered as part of this wider moment of political transition amongst American intellectuals. Crucially, it considers that despite the wealth of literature on this broader moment, his disavowal of Trotskyism remains worthy of consideration because his political journey resulted in a different destination from many of these fellow ex-radicals: neoconservatism.

In order to analyse the development of Kristol's thought and career, this chapter draws on his early published work in the 1940s. These are mainly limited to book reviews because, although he had joined the literary elite by the end of the decade, for most of the 1940s he remained on the periphery of New York Intellectual life. However, these texts remain a valuable source of his political views and intellectual interests. His later autobiographical essays are also employed to supplement the understanding of these works, as well as the limited archival material relating to his early life. The chapter begins by providing a brief biographical sketch of Kristol's early life before moving on to discuss his intellectual formation. This discussion traces his early interest in radicalism, his subsequent and abrupt deradicalisation upon entry to the army in 1944 and, finally, examines his search for a new identity in the wake of this departure. In doing so the chapter demonstrates the complexity of Kristol's early thought, its continuity, and indicates where these interests would shape his intellectual progression over the next sixty years.

A Radical Youth

Born in 1920, Kristol was the second child of Joseph and Bessie Kristol, first-generation migrants from Russia and Eastern Europe. Kristol wrote very little about his early life, preferring to discuss his intellectual career in his memoirs, but from what he did discuss it is

clear that, much like his New York Intellectual contemporaries, he had a modest upbringing.[8] The Kristol family were certainly not the poorest migrants to arrive in New York city, as Brooklyn had larger and more expensive apartments than those available on Manhattan's Lower East Side, but nor were they rich: for example, Kristol lacked a bedroom and would sleep in the hall. His mother left education after elementary school. Meanwhile, his father had no formal education but was able to speak, and read, both Yiddish and English. Consequently, his parents chose to raise him and his sister, Lillian Kristol, to speak English at home rather than Yiddish.[9] This decision marked Kristol out from his contemporaries such as Irving Howe and Daniel Bell whose first language was Yiddish.[10] Speaking English as his first language gave Kristol a considerable advantage at school where the immigrant Jewish population was expected to learn in English, not Yiddish. The process of learning English was painful for many children as it separated them from their heritage and disadvantaged them from their Anglo-Saxon peers.[11] The Kristols therefore significantly helped their children to assimilate into American society by taking this decision. Kristol's parents still chose to raise him in the Jewish faith though. Bessie Kristol kept a kosher household, and as a young boy Kristol was sent to the yeshiva to study Judaism. When, aged just sixteen, his mother died, he went to the synagogue every day to pray for her.[12] The impact of these childhood experiences of poverty and assimilation were long-lasting and underpinned his later attitudes towards government anti-poverty initiatives.

More significantly, Kristol's childhood in Brooklyn introduced him to left-wing politics. The Jewish immigrants to New York arrived with few skills and found even fewer

[8] Joseph Dorman, *Arguing the World: The New York Intellectuals in Their Own Words* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 29-30; Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 3-4.
[9] Dorman, *Arguing the World,* 26-30.
[10] Edward Alexander, *Irving Howe: Socialist, Critic, Jew* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 50; Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 12.
[11] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 12.
[12] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 3-4.

opportunities for work. Many Jews joined the garment industry where they promptly organised into labour unions.[13] Like many New York Jews, Joseph Kristol worked as a contractor in the men's clothing trade, and was a member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union.[14] Meanwhile, Lillian Kristol, five years her brother's senior, helped acquaint Kristol with left-wing politics thanks to her subscription to *The New Masses*, which she read as a result of attending evening school at CCNY.[15] This magazine was a crucial communist publication which was concerned with both politics and culture.[16] Kristol's encounter with the publication combined with his father's union membership exposed him to political thinking early on in life. The exposure also showed him the varied nature of left-wing politics encompassing both moderate socialism and radical communism. Given this background it is no wonder that Kristol felt it was inevitable he would become radicalised.

Although Kristol grew up in a world dominated by left-wing politics, it was at CCNY that he was truly introduced to radical left-wing thinking. After graduating from Boy's High (Brooklyn), in 1936 Kristol joined CCNY to study history.[17] CCNY was an intellectually vibrant university which Kristol later described as a '*serious* institution of learning,' but it lacked the prestige of the Ivy League universities which were inaccessible to Jews.[18] Faced with an influx of Jewish students in the late 1910s, the Ivy League schools began to discriminate against them. Institutions such as Harvard openly discriminated against Jews whilst others, like Columbia, looked into family history on application forms and denied access to the children of Eastern European Jews. By the time Kristol was ready to begin his

[13] Dorman, *Arguing the World,* 27.
[14] Ibid, 36.
[15] Ibid, 37; Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 4.
[16] Buckhart Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans,* 8-47.
[17] Irving Kristol to Craig Eisendrath, July 25 1972, box 26 folder 8, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[18] Ibid.

studies, CCNY was one of the few universities willing to accept Jewish students.[19] The university was considered to be a radical institution thanks to the student body's largely sympathetic feelings towards the New Deal and, as Kristol put it, the smaller 'really left-wing groups' and it was here that Kristol became a radical.[20] He recalled, 'If there were any Republicans at City—and there must have been some – I never met them, or even heard of their existence,' indicating the prevalence of left-wing politics on campus and his own total engrossment in these affairs. At CCNY Kristol joined the Young People's Socialist League (Fourth International), a Trotskyist group, and gained entry to the now-legendary Alcove Number One. The alcove was situated on the righthand side of CCNY's dining hall and was home to the non-Stalinist left students, including amongst others the Trotskyists, Social Democrats and various revolutionary socialist splinter groups. He described the alcove as possessing a 'pure intellect' and 'the place you went to if you wanted to be radical *and* have a theory as to the proper kind of radical you should be.'[21] In the alcove the groups debated politics, economics, philosophy and history.[22] It was this experience, rather than his classes, that gave Kristol his true education.

In later life Kristol tried to downplay his radical youth. In 1993 he wrote that radicalism 'was never that important to me.'[23] His other memoirs and early writings suggest that this was false. Even after this comment, in 1995, Kristol wrote that 'I don't really mind when some journalist, even today, a half-century later, casually refers to me as an "ex-Trotskyist." I regard myself as lucky to have been a young Trotskyist and I have not a single

[19] Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 289-290; Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 30.
[20] Kristol, "Memoirs of a Trotskyist," 473.
[21] Ibid, 470-472.
[22] Ibid, 474.
[23] Irving Kristol, "My Cold War," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 483

bitter memory.'[24] Moreover, he described joining the radical movement as 'very much like falling in love when one is young. The girl may turn out to be rotten, but the experience of love is so valuable it can never be entirely undone by the ultimate disenchantment.'[25] Both remarks chafed against his assertion that the experience was inconsequential. The romantic sentiment expressed with this analogy reflected the fact that Kristol met many of his friends such as Daniel Bell and Nathan Glazer through left-wing associations at CCNY. Most importantly of all, he met his wife 'Bea,' the historian of Victorian Britain Gertrude Himmelfarb, whom he married in 1942, through the Trotskyist organisations with which he was involved.[26] The formation of such significant bonds in the radical movement further invalidates the view that the experience was unimportant, at the very least Himmelfarb became one of the strongest influences on Kristol's thought throughout their sixty-plus-year long marriage. Furthermore, the latter comments also referred to the profound intellectual impact the movement had on Kristol, exposing him to high-brow culture in the journals of the *New International* and *Partisan Review* which would play a vital role in the development of his career.[27]

In addition to introducing Kristol to radicalism, CCNY exposed him to anti-communism, specifically anti-Stalinism. On a general level, as a Trotskyist, Kristol was opposed to Stalinism. Indeed, the very reason for the formation of the Trotskyist movement was to oppose the communist model embodied by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and to create a true Marxist movement, and, indeed, they were the first to label the Soviet Union as totalitarian.[28] However, as a member of Alcove Number One Kristol had a

[24] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 13.
[25] Kristol, "Memoirs of a Trotskyist," 470.
[26] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 12.
[27] Kristol, "Memoirs of a Trotskyist," 478.
[28] Richard H. Pells, *Radical Visions & American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 331-332; Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (London: Readers and Writers, 1984), 281.

unique education in anti-Stalinism. The anti-Stalinists he associated with regularly clashed with their rivals in the pro-Stalinist Alcove Number Two. In his memoirs, he recalled that 'members of the congregation of Alcove No.2 were actually forbidden, under pan of ostracism and exile to enter into conversation or even argument with any member of Alcove No.1!'[29] Meanwhile, the disparate leftist groups in Alcove Number One were held together by 'the powerful presence of Alcove No.2, and, beyond that, the looming shadow of Stalinism with its threat of so irrevocably debasing the socialist ideal as to rob humanity of what we were certain was its last, best hope,' which further demonstrated the strength of the hostilities between the two groups and his hatred of Stalinism.[30] As a member of Alcove Number One then, he experienced anti-Stalinism on a personal level which shaped his future hard-line treatment towards communists and fellow-travellers.

Kristol's Trotskyist thought was also present in his contributions to *Enquiry: A Journal of Independent Radical Thought.* The magazine, which he helped form, was founded in 1942 and ran for just two years, publishing a total of eight issues.[31] The journal served as the mouthpiece of the Shermanites, a splinter group of the Worker's Party (WP). In the United States during this period there were two major Trotskyist groups: the first was the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) led by James P. Cannon, and the second was the WP led by Max Shachtman, and briefly, before his disavowal of Marxism in August 1940, James Burnham.[32] Crucially, for Kristol's later understandings of anti-communism in the 1950s, the WP broke away from the SWP in 1939 over a disagreement regarding the nature of the

[29] Kristol, "Memoirs of a Trotskyist," 474-475.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Introduction," in *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays 1942-2009,* ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (New York: Basic Books, 2011), xiii.
[32] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,*135; Paul Le Blanc, "Introduction: The Coming American Revolution," in *US Trotskyism 1928-1965, Part II: Endurance,* ed. Paul Le Blanc, Thomas Bias, and Bryan D. Palmer (Leiden: Brill, 2018); James Burnham, "Letter of Resignation from the Workers Party," *Fourth International* 1, No.4 (August 1940): 106-107. https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/burnham/1940/05/resignation.htm.

USSR. Shachtman and Burnham argued that the USSR could no longer be deemed a workers' state and was now an undemocratic tyranny. The majority of the SWP disagreed, choosing to believe that while Stalin betrayed the Russian Revolution, the USSR was merely a degenerated workers' state, leading to the fracturing of the party into the SWP and WP.[33]

Kristol's analysis of James Burnham's *The Machiavellians* (1943) in *Enquiry* offers insight into how committed his Shermanite politics really were. Burnham's monograph was devoted to an exploration of Machiavellian thinking and focused on the difference between *real* and *formal* meaning of language.[34] In his review Kristol singled out the Soviet Union to explain Burnham's point. He highlighted that 'the Soviet Constitution which guarantees freedom of speech and assembly' actually, '*means* saleable propaganda to the gullible.'[35] The language indicated not only a disdain for the USSR, but also the American Communist Party (CPUSA) and SWP, who bought into the ideas espoused by the Soviet leaders. He furthered this view with his assertion that 'The Bolshevik theory of the dictatorship of the working-class turned out to *mean* the dictatorship of the central committee,' reflecting the WP's view that the Soviet Union was now a tyrannical state.[36]

Moreover, the main argument presented in *The Machiavellians* dealt with the preconditions needed to maintain democracy and, the key point, that the difference between dictatorship and democracy was the plurality of elites in the latter. In a totalitarian state the elites were monolithic because they came from the ruling party and so there was no

[33] Andrew Pollack, "Ruptures, 1939-1940," in *US Trotskyism 1928-1965, Part I: Emergence,* ed. Paul Le Blanc, Thomas Bias, and Bryan D. Palmer (Leiden: Brill, 2017); William King, "Neoconservatives and "Trotskyism,"" *American Communist History* 3, No.2 (2004): 255; John Newsinger, "The American Connection: George Orwell, 'literary Trotskyism' and the New York Intellectuals," *Labour History Review* 64, No.1 (1999): 31; Robert Negin, "Fraternal Dissents on Max Shachtman and American Trotskyism," in *Conversations with Irving Howe,* ed. John Roden and Ethan Goffman (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2010), 271-277.
[34] James Burnham, *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom* (London: Putnam and Company, 1943), 1-20.
[35] William Ferry, "James Burnham's "The Machiavellians,"" *Enquiry: A Journal of Independent Radical Thought* 1, No.6 (1943): 21.
[36] Ibid, 22.

secondary group to hold them to account.[37] Burnham set out to answer the dilemma of moving beyond Marxism and liberalism (beliefs he had rejected in the case of Marxism, and was beginning to reject in relation to liberalism) without returning to the assumptions of freedom from which the ideologies were born.[38] Foreshadowing his own later break from Trotskyism, Kristol seemed vaguely convinced by Burnham's argument, writing, 'Machiavellian theory is an indispensable analytical tool, even on its present abstract and elementary level.' However, Kristol continued that this theory, 'modifies only in small part traditional revolutionary socialist strategy. The problems posed by a declining capitalism may now appear more intricate and complex.'[39] Kristol's assessment that the theory did not modify socialist thought stressed that although he was partially convinced by Burnham, for now he remained committed to radical left-wing politics and that his own journey was some steps behind Burnham's.

The article was written under the name of William Ferry, the pen name Kristol assumed during his time in the Shermanite group. He had chosen the name as a joke in reference to James P. Cannon's mispronunciation of periphery as "perry-ferry" when describing the CCNY crowd as being '"petty-bourgeois students on the perry-ferry of the movement."'[40] Meanwhile, his close friend, Earl Raab, whom he had met at Boy's High and entered CCNY with, took up the name Perry, highlighting the pair's sense of humour.[41] More seriously though, the article and the decision to write under a pen name, showed a steadfast commitment to a specific version of revolutionary Trotskyist politics which saw the USSR as corrupt, but remained unconvinced that democracy and freedom were myths, as presented in

[37] Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 150-190; Iain Stewart, *Raymond Aron And Liberal Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 159-160.
[38] Diggins, *Up From Communism*, 306.
[39] Ferry, "James Burnham's "The Machiavellians,"" 24.
[40] Wald, *The New York Intellectuals,* 350-354; Daniel Bell, "For Bea and Irving's 60th Wedding Anniversary," January 1 2002, box 52 folder 7, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University.
[41] Bell, "For Bea and Irving's 60th Wedding Anniversary."

the ever rightward moving thought of Burnham. Kristol therefore used the article to demonstrate not just humour but the strength of his youthful radicalism and peculiar Trotskyist world view.[42]

Enquiry also revealed Kristol's developing interest in *Partisan Review*. The New York Intellectual's principal organ, *Partisan Review* was created by Philip Rahv and William Phillips during their years in New York's John Reed Clubs.[43] In 1937 the magazine, which was increasingly frustrated with the stifling culture of the CPUSA, broke with the communists and re-launched. The 'new' *Partisan Review* continued to be edited by Rahv and Phillips and saw literary critics Dwight Macdonald and Frederick W. Dupee, novelist Mary McCarthy, and artist George L. K. Morris join the editorial board.[44] The journal had a strong anti-Stalinist line and rejected the proletarian literature of Soviet Realism favoured by the communists, promoting instead avant-garde modernism. In the 1930s its circulation amounted to little more than 5,000 copies a year but by the early 1940s its popularity was growing in strength and by mid-century it would become a culturally significant magazine.[45] The journal was particularly important for the CCNY students in Alcove Number One providing them with a wealth of discussion material, but for a number of them, including Kristol, a future intellectual community too. In 1941 Kristol wrote a review of W. H. Auden's *Double Man* (1941) which indicated his interest in the high modernist writers promoted in the pages of *Partisan Review.*[46] Likewise, his positive review of Ignazio Silone's *The Seed Beneath the Snow* (1942) reflected an attentiveness to the tastes of *Partisan Review* which

[42] Diggins, *Up From Communism,* 11-12.
[43] For a detailed history of the early years of *Partisan Review* see: Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans.*
[44] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 59-73; Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals,* 7-8.
[45] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 84-90.
[46] William Ferry, "Auden: The Quality of Doubt," in *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays 1942-2009,* ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 2-3.

heralded Silone's literature as both radical and anti-Stalinist.[47] However, as tensions grew in Europe and, with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 it would become evident that although Kristol was interested in the literary views of the magazine, he did not agree with its politics.

Kristol at War

As early as 1939, *Partisan Review* attempted to maintain a neutral editorial line towards the Second World War. As anti-Stalinists the intellectuals surrounding the journal remained committed to opposing the Popular Front which they viewed as an attempt by the CPUSA to manipulate New Dealers under the disguise of anti-fascism.[48] However, On 7th December 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and America subsequently entered the war. The neutral position of *Partisan Review* was now fraught with tension and increasingly difficult to maintain.

The ex-Marxist and philosopher Sidney Hook's 1943 contributions to "The Failure in Nerve" symposium highlighted the depth of these schisms. Hook had recently abandoned his view that the war was imperialistic and now supported military action against Nazi Germany.[49] The first instalment, "The Failure of Nerve," argued that there was a rise in metaphysics and a decline of faith in the scientific method in intellectual circles. This proved relatively uncontroversial.[50] However, the follow-up article "The Failure of the Left" was explosive. He used charged language such as 'half-sober blusterers,' to castigate those

[47] William Ferry, "A Christian Experiment," *Enquiry: A Journal of Independent Radical Thought* 1, No.2 (January 1943): 19-20; Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals,* 148-150; Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans,* 152.
[48] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 123-140; Wald, *The New York Intellectuals,* 208-217.
[49] For an in-depth discussion of Hook's changing attitudes during this period see: Christopher Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook: Marxist and Pragmatist* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 216-225.
[50] Sidney Hook, "The New Failure of Nerve," *Partisan Review* 10, No.1 (January 1943): 2- 23.

involved in left-wing politics for their neutral positions on the war.[51] In particular, he posited that 'The struggle for democracy, whatever *else* it requires of those who still believe in socialism, at least demands open support of the war against Hitlerism.'[52] The argument took aim at the Trotskyists' position on the war: the SWP sought to fight socialism and fascism simultaneously whilst the WP advocated a socialist revolution before tackling the spread of fascism.[53] Additionally, both Trotskyist factions saw the war primarily as an imperial struggle. Furthermore, Hook accused the Trotskyists of 'not only a failure of nerve but a failure of intelligence and morality' to stress their ethical short-comings.[54] The publication of this inflammatory tirade of accusations in the journal signalled a clear departure from its previous opposition to the Popular Front.

As a close follower of *Partisan Review,* Kristol used the controversy as a chance to make his own voice heard. Kristol's response "Other People's Nerve," showed his allegiance to Trotskyist political positions. Kristol chided Hook for criticising those involved in left-wing politics so vehemently and accused Hook of allowing 'a general theory, guided by sentiment, to *substitute* for an analysis of fact.' He also went on to suggest that 'the actualities of the war situation' had not been dealt with adequately by Hook's analysis.[55] Kristol concluded, 'The war in Asia clarifies brutally the activating war aims of the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands as far as the vital questions of empire and freedom are concerned. Professor Hook busies himself with an abstract war against Hitler rather than handle the less attractive reality of a completely reactionary crusade against "[sic] those yellow b—s."'[56] The statement reproached Hook for his narrow-minded conception of the

[51] Sidney Hook, "The Failure of the Left," *Partisan Review* 10, No.2 (March 1943): 168.
[52] Ibid, 168.
[53] Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 211.
[54] Hook, "The Failure of the Left," 175.
[55] William Ferry, "Other People's Nerve," *Enquiry: A Journal of Independent Radical Thought* 1, No.4 (May 1943): 4-5.
[56] Ibid, 6.

war as solely a struggle against Hitler and, for ignoring the ongoing conflict with Japan. Moreover, the powerful wording of the conclusion was a scathing assessment of the Allied powers' war aims, painting them as racist and imperialistic. Importantly, the strength of Kristol's rebuke brought him to the attention of Sidney Hook for the first time, forming a connection which would become vital in the following decades of his career.[57]

For now though, Kristol's position linked him with figures in the *Partisan Review* crowd who opposed the war. His criticism was reminiscent of art historian Meyer Schapiro's attack on Hook in *Partisan Review.* Writing under the name of David Merian to protect his professorial position at Columbia, Schapiro alleged that Hook 'conceal[ed] the imperialist character of the war' in his critique of the 'Failure of the Left.'[58] Additionally, the criticism was similar to Dwight Macdonald and Harold Greenberg's infamous 1941 '10 Propositions on the War' which argued that a socialist revolution was a necessary pre-condition for a victory against fascism.[59] The sentiments expressed in the article were not new. In 1939, Macdonald advocated revolution as a means of defeating Hitler because 'The Russian masses cannot be defended by tying the American masses to the gunwheels of imperialism.'[60]

However, the rest of *Partisan Review*'s editorial board no longer agreed with Macdonald and Greenberg. Philip Rahv, who was increasingly influenced by Hook's position on the war, responded, 'The fact is that by his swift conquests Hitler has removed one country after another from the area of possible revolutionary action,' which meant that, 'the war has evolved in such a way as to exclude more and more the prospect of a socialist way out from the catastrophe.' He ultimately believed, 'Now we have reached the stage where the

[57] Sidney Hook, "Three Intellectual Troubadours," *The American Spectator,* January 1985, 19.
[58] Sidney Hook and David Merian, "Socialism and the Failure of Nerve—The Controversy Continued," *Partisan Review* 10, No.3 (May 1943): 494-475; Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 210-217.
[59] Clement Greenberg and Dwight Macdonald, "10 Propositions on the War," *Partisan Review* 8, No.4 (July 1941): 271- 278.
[60] Dwight Macdonald, "War and the Intellectuals: Act Two," *Partisan Review* 6, No.3 (Spring 1939): 13.

war will either be won by the combined might of the Anglo-American imperialism and Stalin's Red Army, or else it won't be won at all.'[61] These conclusions were rooted in the grim reality of the global expansion of Nazi forces as evidenced by Hitler's rapid conquest of France, The Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Norway in 1940.[62] Rahv did not ignore the imperialist nature of the Anglo-American alliance; however, unlike Macdonald, he believed that this was now the only way that the war could be won and was a price worth paying for victory.

The exchange between Macdonald, Greenberg and Rahv made the editorial differences untenable and resulted in Macdonald's eventual departure from *Partisan Review*. Macdonald subsequently launched *Politics* in 1943 as an anti-war journal with the aim of keeping the Marxist hope of socialist revolution alive.[63] *Politics* was crucial in introducing young intellectuals to the New York literary world. *Partisan Review* writers were reluctant to contribute to *Politics* because of the journal's anti-war position. Instead, Macdonald sought work from younger, less well-known figures such as Kristol.[64] As a result Kristol became increasingly drawn into the nexus of the New York Intellectuals.

Politics also enabled Kristol to further voice his anxieties about the Second World War. Amongst other pieces, Kristol wrote an insightful review of Saul Bellow's *The Dangling Man* which stressed his personal identification with the novel.[65] He wrote that the story 'operates on the rock bottom of our-war deranged culture, where an honest word is its own sufficient justification. The facts of the case call for a clear humility, and Bellow responds with scarcely a false note.'[66] The title of the novel referred to the Yiddish concept of

[61] Philip Rahv, "10 Propositions and 8 Errors," *Partisan Review* 8, No.6 (November 1941): 499.
[62] John Patrick Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and in Peace 1941-1960* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 7.
[63] Summer, *Dwight Macdonald,* 6.
[64] Ibid,15.
[65] Irving Kristol, "Book review: Dangling Man. By Saul Bellow," *Politics* (June 1944): 156.
[66] Ibid, 156.

luftmensch, a person who is up in the air and holds possibilities in suspense.[67] The protagonist of the novel, Joseph, finds himself in this position having left his job in Chicago to be enlisted into the army, only to find his conscription delayed because of his Canadian nationality. Given this context it is hardly astonishing that Kristol identified with the novel because he too found himself in limbo. Following his graduation from CCNY, in 1942 Kristol and Himmelfarb moved to Chicago so that she could pursue graduate studies. Whilst awaiting the draft in Chicago Kristol worked as a freight handler.[68] Like Joseph, Kristol was a dangling man. Throughout the novel Joseph muses on his position in society and becomes increasingly adrift as he awaits the draft. When he is eventually drafted, Joseph is grateful for the return of meaning to his life and exclaims:

> I am no longer to be held accountable for myself; I am grateful for that. I am in other hands, relieved of self-determination, freedom cancelled.
>
> Hurray for regular hours!
>
> And for the supervision of the spirit!
>
> Long live regimentation![69]

Since Kristol's memoirs merely describe this period of his life as a 'golden haze', his strong identification with the novel suggests the disorientation he experienced waiting for his induction into the army.[70]

In 1944 Kristol's limbo ended when he was drafted into the Seventeenth Armored Infantry Battalion of the Twelfth Armored Division where he became disillusioned with far-left politics.[71] During his time in service, he saw action in France and Germany, the epicentre

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[67] Mark Grief, *The Age of The Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933-1973* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 150.
[68] Kristol, "Memoirs of a Trotskyist," 477-478.
[69] Saul Bellow, *Dangling Man* (London: Penguin, 2007), 191.
[70] Kristol, "Memoirs of a Trotskyist," 478.
[71] Irving Kristol to Joseph Dorman, August 25 1992, box 11 folder 18, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

of the conflict, and was classified a sharpshooter.[72] Although Kristol made only brief remarks about his time in the armed forces, the period had a significant impact on the development of his political thought. Initially, he believed that the army was 'an authoritarian, hierarchical, mean-spirited, mindless machine – as later described by Norman Mailer in the *Naked and the Dead.*' Yet, by the end of the war it caused him to renounce socialism. He wrote, 'The army may have radicalized Norman Mailer; it successfully de-radicalized me.'[73] Mailer's 1948 *The Naked and the Dead* was a deeply political novel which described the American army as a dehumanising, totalitarian force which was loyal to bureaucracy above all else.[74] Kristol's emphasis on his divergence from Mailer demonstrated an identification with the state apparatus and his abandonment of radical beliefs. This sentiment was strengthened by other remarks which claimed his time in Germany had 'the effect of dispelling any remnants of antiauthority sentiments.'[75] Given his previous alignment with the Trotskyists who called for the overthrow of governments, Kristol's newfound respect for the state clearly showed that, by 1945, his brief radical sojourn was concluded. This, as the thesis will later explore, would have profound consequences for his interactions with future leftist and protest movements.

It should be noted that these comments came from the autobiographical essays Kristol published in the 1990s, by which point he had firmly secured his position as the 'Godfather of neoconservatism' and was keen to minimise the radicalism of his youth. However, even in light of this context it is clear that after the war he no longer expounded radical beliefs. Nor was he alone. Irving Howe, a life-long socialist and Kristol's adversarial contemporary,

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[72] Kristol, "My Cold War," 483; Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, April 2 1996, box 10 folder 12, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[73] Kristol, "My Cold War," 483.
[74] Michael K. Glenday, "Norman Mailer," in *A Companion To Twentieth Century United States Fiction,* ed. David Seed (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 377-378; Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1976); Sophie Joscelyne, "Norman Mailer and American Totalitarianism in the 1960s," *Modern Intellectual History* 19, No.1 (2020): 1-27.
[75] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 13.

recalled how the war reduced his radicalism. Howe explained, 'Enforced isolation and steady reading, together, brought about a slow intellectual change,' and that politics became an 'abstract passion' for him during the war.[76] Although he did not undergo a total break in thought like Kristol, Howe too showed that the war caused his political commitments to wane, demonstrating the key role World War Two played in the transition away from radicalism for the broader New York Intellectual group.[77]

In spite of Kristol's later attempts to emphasise his early and clean break from radical politics, his move away from Trotskyism during the war appears more complex. In part, the rupture stemmed from the forging of a new identity in the army. Kristol, like the majority of the New York intellectuals, grew up in a microcosm. New York City was home to the largest Jewish community in America and, indeed, the world. Jewishness extended beyond the home and synagogue to the entire Brooklyn neighbourhood, with Yiddish newspapers, publishers and speakers found throughout district. New York was also exceptionally radical with the largest communist and socialist movements in America based in the city.[78] Consequently, he grew up with a particularly narrow conception of what it meant to be American and with little understanding of his fellow countrymen. The fact that during Kristol's lifetime he never learned to drive was just one example of his exceptionally urban existence.[79] The army made Kristol acutely aware of his metropolitan life, and he later remarked that, 'it turned out that, as a provincial from New York, I knew nothing about the American common man.'[80]

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[76] Irving Howe, *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 95.
[77] Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 10-11; Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals,* 167-1195; Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,*123-140.
[78] Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals,* 10-31; Phillip Deery, *Red Apple: Communism and McCarthyism in Cold War New York* (New York: Empire State Editions, 2014) 1-4; Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed A Generation* (Cambridge, Ma.: The Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2004), 1-21.
[79] Irving Kristol to Richard T. Pratt, July 17 1973, box 9 folder 35, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[80] Kristol, "My Cold War,"483.

Likewise, Howe emphasised his alienation from America, noting that he had 'never been south of Washington D.C.'[81] However, for Kristol, this startling revelation and contact with those from outside of New York caused him to realise that 'The idea of building socialism with the common man who actually existed – as distinct from his idealized version – was sheer fantasy, and therefore the prospects for "democratic socialism" were nil.'[82] Thus, his rejection of socialism was embedded in a new understanding of the realities of the American working-class from which he had been shielded, with the exception of his short time in Chicago, because of the peculiarities of New York. In the army, Kristol was no longer an isolated New Yorker but, an American.

Furthermore, his break from radicalism was rooted in a sense of crisis. Kristol's disparaging views on the common man could be interpreted as nothing more than conservative rhetoric. However, the tone of the statement also implies the disillusionment that he experienced as a result of his newfound conclusions. His use of the words 'idealized' and 'fantasy' evoked the dream-like qualities that socialism had once held for him. With the realisation that the working-class was not how he had imagined; Kristol's utopian hopes had been shattered. As he later reflected, 'I reached this conclusion with some reluctance and regret.'[83]

A consideration of his other work further serves to reinforce the judgement that Kristol underwent a crisis. The clearest example of this sentiment is found in 'Adam and I', his only short story and first contribution to the newly formed *Commentary* magazine.[84] The narrator, 'I', is evidently Kristol given that the story is about a U.S. Army soldier in Marseille, where he was based for a year following the end of the European conflict, making

[81] Howe, *A Margin of Hope,* 98.
[82] Kristol, "My Cold War," 483.
[83] Irving Kristol, "The New York Intellectuals," *Commentary* 47, No.1 (January 1969): 12.
[84] Irving Kristol, "Adam and I," *Commentary* 2*,* No.5 (November 1946): 448-451.

the short story reminiscent of autofiction, a combination of autobiography and fiction in which the author uses real life events with significant modifications.[85] Meanwhile, the other titular character 'Adam' is a Dutch Jew who has recently been liberated from Auschwitz. The choice of the name 'Adam' makes reference to Jews in general given that Adam was the first man on Earth in the Hebrew Bible. The narrator meets Adam 'in the spring of 1945 at the Zionist headquarters in Marseille,' and reflects upon why he does not visit the building more. From this reflection we learn that the narrator did not want 'to play the benevolent American uncle dispensing chocolate and cigarettes' because he wanted 'to be with them in their sorrows' instead.[86] This demonstrated Kristol's new-found identification as an American, as well as his unease as a Jew at having escaped this same fate by a mere accident of geography.

The existential style of the story also allowed for Kristol to grapple with the concept of guilt. His time in Marseille had exposed him to French existentialism in the pages of *Les Temps Modernes, Critiques, L'Espirit* and *les Cahiers du Sud* and its concerns with morality and the human condition were clearly present in 'Adam and I.'[87] The central dilemma of the story revolved around whether the narrator should procure a gun for Adam. Here, the narrator dealt with questions of responsibility. Considering his dilemma, the narrator asserted his reluctance to have blood on his hands and asked, 'isn't it a question of whose blood rather than of blood in general? What responsibility had I for Adam?' and 'Did I have the right to refuse?' The narrator's ultimate conclusion that 'Did I have the right to mistrust the use of this weapon, this seventeen-year-old whose adolescence had been an unbroken nightmare of terror and brutality?' reflected the guilt that pervaded the narrator's mind at having survived the war whilst Adam had suffered horrifically.[88] Since the narrator was based upon Kristol, it

[85] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 13-14.
[86] Kristol, "Adam and I," 448.
[87] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 14.
[88] Kristol, "Adam and I," 451.

can be assumed that he too struggled to come to terms with having survived the war unscathed whilst other Jews had not.

However, it was not just European Jews that he felt sympathy for. He expressed compassion for Germans too. He wrote, 'Observing German women and young girls, living among the rubble and selling their bodies for a few packs of cigarettes – the currency of the day – rid me of any anti-German feeling which, as a Jew, might otherwise have been present in me. Even the subsequent revelation of the Holocaust could not make me feel differently about ordinary Germans.'[89] Given the suffering described by Kristol in "Adam and I" and the heinous crimes the Nazis carried out against Jews across Europe, with whom he so clearly identified, his pity for ordinary Germans was unexpected. The direct reference to 'German women and young girls' was particularly significant. When the Red Army advanced into Eastern Europe they raped and pillaged and, nowhere was the scale of this abuse larger than in Germany. Between 1945 and 1946 some 150,000 to 200,000 'Russian babies' were born in Germany as a result of the horrendous rapes carried out by the Red Army.[90] Kristol also made reference to this in 'Adam and I' when Adam claimed, '*Ils violent des femmes comme on mange du pain.*'[91] The sentence stood out because it was the only time the character spoke French and served to emphasise the brutality of the Red Army.

The Germans did not just suffer at the hands of the Red Army. They were also impoverished. German cities were destroyed by allied bombings, hard currency lost its purchasing power, and Germans lived on just 860 calories a day.[92] Kristol's recognition of this suffering played into a larger sense of the terrible nature of total war which ravaged Europe and he had viewed first hand. Moreover, he continued, 'I was not so convinced that

[89] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 13.
[90] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), 20-21.
[91] Translation: They rape women like we eat bread. Kristol, "Adam and I," 450.
[92] Judt, *Postwar,* 20-21.

the American soldiers I knew were a different breed of humanity from their German counterparts.'[93] Such views were highly provocative given the respective image of the Nazi soldier in comparison with the American G.I.[94] The evaluation did not excuse the crimes carried out by the German soldiers, but rather indicated disillusionment with the destructive capability of humankind which he extended to all soldiers. Thus, the army did not instil conservative views and values in Kristol as suggested by his statements on the war. Instead, Kristol's break with radicalism was brought about by a sense of disenchantment with the state of humanity and a profound questioning of the values he had previously adhered to.

Kristol's disillusionment fits into a wider philosophical narrative which took place during this period, which Mark Greig has called 'the age of the crisis of man.' The crisis of man theory emerged in literature in the 1930s and spread into mainstream culture by the 1950s. It posited that humankind was amid a disaster which impacted intellect, politics and literature as totalitarianism swept across Europe.[95] Kristol engaged in this discourse by contributing to *Commentary*'s series "The Study of Man." His contribution, "What the Nazi Autopsies Show: Totalitarian Myth and the Nihilist Reality," explored what the Nazis stood for and why the Holocaust had taken place.[96] He wrote, 'We expect to find evil men, paragons of wickedness, slobbering maniacal brutes; we are prepared to trace the lineament of *The* Nazi on the face of every individual Nazi in order to define triumphantly the essential features of his character. But the Nazi leaders were not diabolists, they did not worship evil.' He went on, 'The Nazis are human: that is what the psychiatrists tell us. We always knew that

[93] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 13.
[94] On the behaviour of US military personnel see: Juliet Gardiner, "*Overpaid, Oversexed, and Over Here": The American GI in World War II Britain* (New York: Canopy Books, 1992); Aaron Hiltner, *Taking Leave, Taking Liberties: American Troops on the World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2020).
[95] Grief, *The Age of The Crisis of Man*, 3-23.
[96] Irving Kristol, "What the Nazi Autopsies Show: Totalitarian Myth and the Nihilist Reality," *Commentary* 6, No.3 (September 1948): 271-282.

though it does no harm to have it confirmed.'[97] His assessment challenged the concept of the association of evil with monsters and showed the somewhat ordinary nature of the people who had carried out the most terrible atrocity in modern history. Perhaps most frightening of all was that the Nazis were human, a recognition which showed the destructive nature of humankind.

Significantly, Kristol's preoccupation with the ordinary nature of evil prefigured the later influence of Hannah Arendt on his thinking. The banality associated with the Holocaust later came to the fore of discussions following the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961.[98] The philosopher and German-Jewish émigré Hannah Arendt developed this into a theory, and following a series of *New Yorker* articles on "the banality of evil" she published *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963).[99] Arendt proposed that Eichmann, who stood on trial in Israel for his role in orchestrating the deportation of Jews to concentration camps, was not necessarily inherently evil despite having committed atrocious crimes. This work was controversial, splitting the New York Intellectual community, with Arendt's critics deeming it a trivialisation of the suffering of the East European Jewry and representative of German-Jewish arrogance.[100]

However, Kristol's views were more complicated. In the same article, he continued, 'But the Nazis are also non-human: that is what we their wounded fellow-creatures, have to tell the psychiatrists and ourselves, as we point to the incredible horrors, they so calmly

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[97] Kristol, "What the Nazi Autopsies Show," 274.
[98] Anson Rabinbach, "Eichmann in New York: The New York Intellectuals and the Hannah Arendt Controversy," *October* 108 (Spring 2004): 97-111.
[99] Hannah Arendt, "Eichmann in Jerusalem-I" *The New Yorker,* February 9 1963, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1963/02/16/eichmann-in-jerusalem-i; Hannah Arendt, "Eichmann in Jerusalem-II" *The New Yorker,* 23 February, 1963, 40-111; Hannah Arendt, "Eichmann in Jerusalem-III" *The New Yorker,* February 23, 1963, 40-111; Hannah Arendt, "Eichmann in Jerusalem-IV" *The New Yorker,* 9 March, 1963, 48-134; Hannah Arendt, "Eichmann in Jerusalem-V" *The New Yorker,* 16 March, 1963, 58-131; Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).
[100] Richard H. King, *Arendt and America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 189-198; Nancy Sinkoff, *From Left to Right: Lucy S. Dawidowicz, The New York Intellectuals, and the Politics of Jewish History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020), 195.

worked on the body and soul of mankind. And it [is] this very combination of the only-too-human and unimaginably-inhuman that makes that Nazis a persistent and nettling mystery for us.'[101] From this, it becomes clear that Kristol struggled to accept the Nazi crimes as human and his use of 'we' to describe the impact the Holocaust upon society demonstrated the distress he felt as a result of it. Furthermore, the consideration of what amounted to human behaviour and what did not was firmly rooted in the philosophical debates of the nature of humankind associated with the crisis of man literature. The article therefore demonstrated his active engagement with the larger philosophical questions of the era, as well his own world-weariness following the Second World War.

Kristol's views in this moment can also be usefully compared to those of Dwight Macdonald. In 1946 Macdonald published his famed "The Root is Man" essay, a canonical work in the crisis of man literature which sought to come to terms with the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the news of the Nazi concentration camps emerging from Europe.[102] In the essay Macdonald made his final disavowal of Marxism, which, like Kristol, he saw as having failed during the war. Macdonald was disappointed with the working-class and argued that 'the weight Marx attached to the proletariat was excessive *economically* in that the organization of the workers into unions has failed to develop into the broader kind of action Marx expected it to.'[103] Moreover, he was angered by the moral failure of the working-class to hold the government to account over its use of the atomic bomb against Japan. Unlike Kristol, however, Macdonald did not abandon radicalism altogether. Macdonald still believed in the power of individual radicalism even if he no longer believed in socialism, which he claimed the man in the street was '*bored*' of.[104] He proposed that

[101] Kristol, "What the Nazi Autopsies Show," 274.
[102] Dwight Macdonald, *The Root is Man* (New York: Autonomedia, 1995).
[103] Ibid, 62.
[104] Ibid, 136.

'what seems necessary is thus to encourage attitudes of disrespect, scepticism, ridicule towards the State and all authority, rather than to build up a competing authority.'[105] Kristol's deference to authority following his time in the army was therefore in marked contrast to Macdonald's continued anti-establishment attitude. We can therefore see that after the war the influence of more radical New York Intellectuals waned. He remained linked to them only through their shared sense of disillusionment with the world.

As Kristol moved away from more radical influences he found new sources of guidance. One was Lionel Trilling, a professor of English literature at Columbia University and an important figure in his capacity as a leading contributor to *Partisan Review*.[106] In 1944 Kristol wrote "The Moral Critic," which considered the importance of Trilling as a literary critic.[107] More tellingly, Himmelfarb later sought to use the article as an example of her husband's early departure from radicalism.[108] Trilling had long broken with communism, having abandoned the movement following a February 1934 dispute in Madison Square Gardens which saw Stalinists throw chairs at non-Stalinists.[109] In the article Kristol noted Trilling's continued frustration with the left for 'having surrendered its traditional moral vision, and at the very same time accused it of allowing this vision to blind it to the true principles of humanism.' Himmelfarb argued that the reviewer, her husband, shared this critique of radicalism.[110] Taking into account Kristol's high praise for Trilling, and the fact that the article was written under the name Irving Kristol and not under his party pseudonym William Ferry, this seems likely. Furthermore, Kristol's remarks, such as 'The noteworthy

[105] Ibid, 148.
[106] Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals,* 41.
[107] Irving Kristol, "The Moral Critic," *Enquiry: A Journal of Independent Radical Thought* 2, No.1 (April, 1944): 20-24.
[108] Ibid, 20-21.
[109] Michael Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers, and the Lessons of Anti-Communism* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 64-65.
[110] Himmelfarb, "Introduction," xiv.

quality of Eliot,' a favourite poet of Trilling, 'contrasted to Trotsky, is his belief in morality as an end, not simply as tactics,' added weight to Himmelfarb's conclusion.[111] Kristol would later write that Trilling was one of the greatest influences on his intellectual life.[112] The article's preoccupation with Trilling's thought and high praise given to the critics' work confirmed this and pinpointed the origins of the influence to the mid-1940s.

Replacing Radicalism

In the immediate post-war years Kristol's thought displayed a sense of detachment. In 1946 Kristol was discharged as a staff sergeant from the army and returned to Chicago where Himmelfarb was finishing her doctoral studies. Himmelfarb was promptly awarded a scholarship to visit the Lord Acton papers in Cambridge. Consequently, the couple moved to Britain where, with assistance from Daniel Bell, Kristol obtained a position at *The New Leader* as its English correspondent.[113] The handful of articles which he wrote for the publication largely served to inform American readers about the political situation in Britain and were generally focused on the problems of the British Labour Party.[114] His writing was unemotional and indifferent which contrasted with the vivid discussions present in the pages of *Enquiry.* In fact, Kristol later reflected that, 'in the immediate postwar years I wasn't particularly interested in politics,' confirming his disconnect.[115]

Then, in 1947, with help from Himmelfarb's brother, Milton Himmelfarb, Kristol obtained an assistant editorial position at *Commentary* allowing the couple to return to New

[111] Irving Kristol, "The Moral Critic," 21.
[112] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 6.
[113] Ibid, 14-15; Bell, "For Bea and Irving's 60th Wedding Anniversary." For an overview of their time in Cambridge see: Bronitsky, "The Anglo-American Origins of Neoconservatism," 32-67.
[114] Irving Kristol, "British Labor Today," *New Leader* 30, No.7 (15 February 1947): 11; Irving Kristol, "A Labor Minister's Life Is Not a Happy One," *New Leader* 30, No.20 (12 May 1947): 9; Irving Kristol, "The Labor Party and The Problem of Applied Theory," *New Leader* 30, No.24 (14 June 1947): 9.
[115] Kristol, "My Cold War," 483.

York City. The appointment to the journal marked a pivotal point in Kristol's career. Not only did he find himself able to afford a Manhattan apartment with his new income, but he also became firmly associated with the *Partisan Review* writers he so deeply admired during his days at CCNY. Indeed, *Commentary* was to become the second journal of the New York Intellectuals.[116] The magazine, although less highbrow in tone than *Partisan Review,* shared the same attitudes and many of the same contributors.[117] This new position established Kristol as a serious literary figure and marked the true beginnings of his career as a journalist and public intellectual.

There was one crucial difference between *Commentary* and *Partisan Review*: *Commentary* was a Jewish magazine. In his opening editorial statement, Elliot Cohen declared 'As Jews, we are of an ancient tradition that, in a very special sense, keeps a vigil with history', and that the journal would aim to do this too.[118] During the early years of the journal, 1948-1949, Kristol, Nathan Glazer, Milton Himmelfarb, and Daniel Bell met weekly with Rabbi Jacob Taubes to read the *Mishneh Torah* by the Sephardic Jewish philosopher Maimonides.[119] Yet, few of *Commentary's* editors were actually interested in religion. Both Gertrude Himmelfarb and Nathan Glazer remembered that Kristol was the only editor — the others included Glazer himself, Elliot Cohen, Clement Greenberg and Robert Warshow — to pay notice to religion.[120] In particular, Kristol used the book review section of *Commentary* to engage with Jewish texts. In these pages he discussed books such as Rabbi Milton

[116] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 17.
[117] Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 73.
[118] Eliot Cohen, "Editorial Statement," *Commentary* 1, No.1 (November, 1945): 1-3.
[119] Daniel Bell to Jonathan Adler, July 26 1991, box 75 folder 13, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives.
[120] Himmelfarb, "Introduction," xv; Nathan Glazer, "A Memoir of the 1940s: Kristol and the New York Establishment," *The Alternative* (June-September 1972), 7.

Steinberg's *Basic Judaism* (1947) and Joshua Herschel's, *The Earth is the Lord's* (1949).[121] Crucially then, *Commentary* not only brought Kristol to the New York Intellectual scene but, provided him with an opportunity to explore religious thinking and contemplate his own relationship with Judaism.

Further evidence of Kristol's preoccupation with Judaism is found in his examination of Jewish issues, specifically anti-Semitism, in the early editions of *Commentary*. In his review of Roy Eckhardt's *Christianity and the Children of Israel* (1948) he considered whether or not the rising interest in Christian theology would lead to a subsequent increase in anti-Semitism.[122] Meanwhile, Kristol's first full length article, "The Myth of the Supra-Human Jew" investigated the causes of anti-Semitism and traced its development in Western society. More specifically, the article dealt with the idea that the Jews were the 'chosen people' and the subsequent stigma which resulted from this view.[123] In a highly provocative statement he wrote that when Christian cinema audiences were faced with images of concentration camps, 'There is a silence, a silence which whispers. "Urgh! How Horrible … Are they truly eternal? It cannot be, for the world's burden of guilt would be too intolerable. Will they never die off?"'[124] The phrase 'the world's burden,' as opposed to Germany's burden, made refence to the lack of help Jews received from the allied powers. The British government kept restrictions on immigration to Palestine, some sixty percent of the American population did not want to allow Jewish refugees into America, and the isolationist 'America First' position popularised by Charles A. Lindbergh was closely associated with anti-

[121] Irving Kristol, "How Basic is "Basic Judaism"? A Comfortable Religion for an Uncomfortable World," *Commentary* 7*,* No.1 (January 1949): 27-34; Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1947), ix-x; Irving Kristol, "Elegy for a Lost World," *Commentary* 9*,* No.5 (May 1950): 491.
[122] Irving Kristol, "Christian Theology and the Jews," *Commentary* 5*,* No.4 (April, 1948): 385.
[123] Irving Kristol, "The Myth of the Super Human Jew," *Commentary* 4*,* No.3 (September 1947): 228-233.
[124] Ibid, 229.

Semitism.[125] Thus, this new found interest in religion was not limited to his personal faith but extended to a consideration of the broader sufferings of the Jewish community, a concern which would significantly re-emerge in his later foreign policy thinking.

The immediate post-war period also highlights Kristol's burgeoning anti-communist outlook. In "Nightmare Come True" he reviewed three Holocaust survivor's accounts of their experiences in the concentration camps.[126] The stories of these individuals told of the horrific degradation and torture they faced such as being presented with a Christmas tree, 'which they were compelled to admire, standing half-naked in the snow and biting cold for hours on end,' and fighting over scraps of meat left by dogs.[127] Yet, even amongst the descriptions of these terrible conditions, Kristol devoted a considerable section of the review to criticising the communists instead of the Nazis. The Schutzstaffel (SS) originally put criminals in charge of the camps but quickly replaced them with communists. Regarding this, Kristol wrote that, 'Murder and terrorism were used by both criminal and Communist alike. By 1942, the Communists controlled the camp apparatus with Buchenwald.' Moreover, he went on, 'The Communists were in a position to give their adherents necessities (food, water, clothing, etc.)' and 'They could, within limits decide the all-important question of who was to live and who was not; the blockleaders helped to draw up the lists of those destined for "transportation."'[128] These comments demonstrated Kristol's deep hatred for communists: not only did he compare them to criminals, he accused them of being complicit in the monstrous crimes of the SS and bearing responsibility for the deaths of millions of other prisoners. In many ways, the argument's lack of consideration for the complicated reality of

[125] Diggins, *The Proud Decades*, 46; Charles A. Lindbergh, "America First," September 11, 1941. https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/24-world-war-ii/charles-a-lindbergh-america-first-1941/; Brooke L. Blower, "From Isolationism to Neutrality: A New Framework for Understanding American Political Culture, 1919–1941," *Diplomatic History* 38, No.2 (April 2014): 345–376.
[126] Irving Kristol, "Nightmare Come True," *Commentary* 4*,* No.4 (October 1947): 390-393.
[127] Ibid, 390-391.
[128] Ibid, 392.

being a prisoner inside the concentration camps reflected the limited domestic and international discussion of the Holocaust in the immediate post-war years. Victim testimony played a very minor role in the war crimes proceedings at Nuremberg, and groups such as the French *Commission Internationale contre le Régime Concentrationnaire* (CICRC) preferred to frame survivors as resistors rather than focus on their ethnic identities.[129] However, the lack of wider consideration for the complexity of concertation camps did not diminish the strength of Kristol's negative depiction of communists, his anti-communism quickly coloured his thinking.

His growing criticism of communists was also evident in his article "The Anti-Semitism of the Communists" in *The New Leader*.[130] As the title suggested, the article dealt with rising anti-Semitism in Europe. In particular Kristol singled out the French Communist Party and the journalist Pierre Hervé for stirring up anti-Jewish sentiment at a time when 'anti-Semitism is rapidly growing in France.'[131] This referred to the problem that although French law now prohibited anti-Semitism, the pre-war rhetoric against the Jews had not subsided in France.[132] Kristol quoted examples of Hervé's clear anti-Semitism such as his question '"Is it sacrilege to demand what social and political reasons are behind the fact that a certain Party can have in its leadership a much greater proportion of Jews than another Party? Is it sacrilege to ask why 80 percent or more of the Trotskyist agitators are of Jewish origin?"'[133] Furthermore, the article went on to note the increase of anti-Semitism in Central and Eastern Europe. Again, the remarks were not without foundation: by 1951 Czechoslovakia had purged all of its Jewish communist leaders and, by 1952 some 90,000

[129] For an overview of literature on concentration camps in the post-war period see: Emma Kurby, *Political Survivors: The Resistance, the Cold War, and the Fight against Concentration Camps after 1945* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2019).
[130] Irving Kristol, "The Anti-Semitism of the Communists," *New Leader* 30, No.21 (24 May 1947): 4.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Judt, *Postwar,* 806-807.
[133] Kristol, 'The Anti-Semitism of the Communists,' 4.

Jews had chosen to leave Romania.[134] However, what was telling was Kristol's apparent attempt to increase anti-communist feeling amongst his audience by specifically targeting the communists as the sole culprits of such crimes.

It is important to note that these anti-communist views were not necessarily new, nor specifically rooted in his Jewish identity. As we have previously seen, in the early 1940s as a Trotskyist at CCNY Kristol opposed the pro-Stalinist members of Alcove Number Two and was highly critical of the Soviet Union. Given that the European communists he singled out in 'The Anti-Semitism of the Communists,' were part of parties strongly influenced by the Soviet Union, his criticism represented a resurfacing of his earlier anti-communist rhetoric and showed how his thought was rooted not in religion but rather these previous experiences. Moreover, these initial expressions of hostility towards the radical left would grow only stronger in the decades to come. Consequently, he displayed much continuity of thought.

Conclusion: 'Making it'

Reflecting upon his entry into the New York Intellectual circle, Kristol wrote in his memoirs that, 'My position at *Commentary* brought me to the margin of the world of *Partisan Review*,' and described how at one of William Phillip's cocktail parties:

> I had piled my plate with food and sat down in the middle of a couch, assuming Bea would join me there. Instead, what happened was this: Mary McCarthy sat down on my right, Hannah Arendt on my left, and then Diana Trilling pulled up a chair and sat directly opposite me. I was trapped, and I remember thinking, as I sank into a terrified paralysis of body and mind, that this was an event to remember.

[134] Judt, *Postwar,* 184-185.

No longer was Kristol reading *Partisan Review* in 'awe' in the dingey Alcove Number One at CCNY. Instead, he was mixing with the foremost contributors to the journal. To borrow from the words of third generation New York Intellectual Norman Podhoretz, he had 'made it.'[135]

As the child of migrants, his early life provided him with first-hand knowledge of economic hardship. Moreover, coming of age in the microcosm of Jewish Brooklyn embedded him within the worlds of left-wing radicalism. At CCNY, as a member of the Young People's Socialist League, and later its Shermanite splinter group, he was introduced to anti-Stalinist politics. This political background was instrumental in fostering a growing hostility towards communism throughout this period and which would mature in the Cold War era.

Furthermore, the exploration of his participation in Trotskyism shows that it was not a dalliance, nor was it inevitable that he would break with radicalism. As such this chapter rejects suggestions by some scholars that Kristol's Trotskyism was insincere and he was never really a radical.[136] Instead, it highlights that he broke with radical left-wing politics less because of a specific disillusionment with it and more because of the traumatic experiences he faced as a consequence of World War Two. Consequently, his break from Trotskyism was profoundly shaped by the historical and social contexts of the 1930s and 1940s.[137]

Additionally, in this period he began to establish important future networks. It was during his time in the Trotskyist movement that he met life-long friends such as Daniel Bell and Nathan Glazer, and most significantly his wife Gertrude Himmelfarb. Meanwhile, a number of New York Intellectuals including Dwight Macdonald, Sidney Hook, and Lionel Trilling influenced Kristol's writings in this period. The 1930s and 1940s, then, were a

[135] Norman Podhoretz, *Making It* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2017).
[136] Jumonville, *Critical Crossings,* xii; Kristol, "My Cold War"; Bronitsky, "The Anglo-American Origins of Neoconservatism," 32-67.
[137] Wald, *The New York Intellectuals,* 10-11.

foundational period for Kristol in which his intellectual tastes emerged, political ideas developed, and fundamental relationships were formed. This underlined much of his later thought and career which this thesis is principally concerned and will explore in detail in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two: Ideas in Flux: Irving Kristol's Politics in the 1950s

> I was a creature of the 1940s and 1950s, an anticommunist liberal, a political organism that is deemed to have suffered permanent damage from the subzero climate of the Cold War.
>
> Irving Kristol, 1968[1]

The 1950s marked the apogee of anti-communist hysteria in America. In 1949 the Chinese Communist Party secured power in China, the USSR exploded its first atomic bomb, and by 1950, America was at war in Korea.[2] The New York Intellectuals, who had long warned of the dangers of Stalinism, now found themselves aptly placed to comment on the pressing communist threat.[3] It was against this backdrop that Kristol dipped his toe into the political waters once more and became, in his own words, 'an anticommunist liberal.'[4] His role within the anti-communist movement was critical to the development of his career: it secured him the position of executive director of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF), and later co-editor of the newly created Anglo-American journal *Encounter* in London where, crucially, he was introduced to conservative thinking.

This chapter examines Kristol's political commitments during the 1950s. It argues that Kristol remained politically attached to liberalism but expressed increasingly

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[1] Irving Kristol, "Memoirs of a "Cold Warrior," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 457.
[2] Stephen Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938,* Seventh Revised Edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 52-157.
[3] Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 71.
[4] Terry Nardin, "Introduction Michael Oakeshott's Cold War Liberalism," in *Michael Oakeshott's Cold War Liberalism,* ed. Terry Nardin (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2015), 1-20; Jan-Werner Müller, "Fear and Freedom: On 'Cold War Liberalism,'" *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, No.2 (2008): 47–48.

hard-line anti-communist rhetoric, as well as a developing an interest in conservative ideas. Furthermore, it begins to trace the impact of Kristol's wife, the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, on his political thought, contributing to the thesis' larger suggestion that the couple's political positions developed in tandem.

Much of the scholarship on the New York Intellectuals views the 1950s as a crucial decade in which the group's transformation from radicalism to membership of the so-called liberal anti-communist 'establishment' was completed.[5] While debates exist over the usefulness of claiming the group 'sold out' their earlier left wing politics, the adoption of liberal anti-communism by the New York Intellectuals was widely criticised as a betrayal.[6] For example, historian of anti-communism Ellen Schrecker charged that the New York Intellectuals were guilty of contributing to the political repression of the McCarthy years thanks to their endorsement of anti-communism.[7] Furthermore, histories of the anti-communist enterprise the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) accused the New York Intellectuals involved in the organisation, including Kristol, of colluding with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).[8]

More significantly, several studies have stressed that liberal anti-communism laid the political groundwork for neoconservatism in the last quarter of the twentieth

[5] James Buckhart Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans: A History of Literary Radicalism in America* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968), 23-281; Hugh Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals: from Vanguard to Institution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 20-24; Ann Douglas, "The Failure of the New York Intellectuals," *Raritan* 17*,* No.4 (Spring 1998): 1-23; Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, 71-77; Neil Jumonville, *Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1991), 151; Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 209-244.

[6] Jenifer Delton, "Rethinking Post-World War II Anticommunism," *The Journal of the Historical Society* 10, No.1 (March 2010):15; Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals,* 1.

[7] Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 79.

[8] Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid The Piper? The CIA and The Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999); Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973), 100.

century.[9] In particular, Alan Wald has argued that Kristol's conservatism 'went back several decades and he [Kristol] personally embodied neoconservatism's continuity with Cold War liberalism.'[10] However, Peter Steinfels has urged caution in drawing direct lines between anti-communism and conservatism, positing that, 'we should not exaggerate how much these Cold War commitments, including those with CIA strings, tell us about the future neoconservatives; in all this they were not distinguished from many other liberals.'[11] Meanwhile, Jonathan Bronitsky downplays the experiences of anti-communism and emphasises the impact of post-war England on neoconservatism.[12] An analysis of Kristol's thought as both the 'Godfather of neoconservatism' and an activate participant in anti-communist activities is important for reflecting on these debates, and recognises that both anti-communism and English conservatism helped to shape his thought during the 1950s.

To explore these issues, the chapter first deals with Kristol's political writings for *Commentary,* where a focus on perhaps the most controversial essay of his career, "'Civil Liberties,' 1952—A Study in Confusion" highlights his hard-line anti-communism. A discussion of his role within the liberal anti-communist apparatus by studying his position in the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF) and his editorship of *Encounter* follows. Finally, an examination of his burgeoning curiosity in

[9] Mark Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision: From the Cold War to the Culture Wars* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1997), 31; Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 77; Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism A State of the Field," *The Journal of American History* 98, No.3 (December 2011): 726; George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Delaware: ISI Books, 2017), 531; Michael Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers, and the Lessons of Anti-Communism* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 12.

[10] Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals,* 350-354.

[11] Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Origins of a Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 33.

[12] Jonathan Bronitsky, "The Anglo-American Origins of Neoconservatism," (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2013), 190-234.

conservatism is provided. Together this analysis demonstrates that in the 1950s Kristol's politics were in flux as he remained committed to liberal anticommunism but grew interested in conservatism.

To analyse this political position it is first necessary to define what is meant by Cold War liberalism and conservatism. As Alan Brinkley explains, Cold War liberalism, the dominant political ideology in 1950s America, 'was the set of political ideas that had descended from the New Deal and that had shaped the steady postwar expansion of federal social and economic responsibilities.'[13] Meanwhile, conservative thought in this period was centrally concerned with anti-communism, laissez-faire economics, a commitment to traditional mores, and often a Burkean sense of liberty.[14] However, as noted in the introduction, the two concepts were transmutable, and, in this era especially so. A consensus emerged in which many conservatives accepted the economic and domestic reforms of the New Deal, and Cold War liberals agreed with foreign policy based on anti-communism.[15] Especially important to this outlook was the work of historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., whose *Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (1949) called for moderate liberal democratic thought to defend the United States from the totalitarian threats of fascism on the right, and communism on the left.[16] It was within these conceptions of liberalism and conservatism that Kristol's mid-century thought was situated and the intellectual battles considered by this chapter were waged.

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[13] Alan Brinkley, *Liberalism and Its Discontents* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1998), ix.
[14] Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism A State of the Field," 727; Drew Maciag, *Edmund Burke in America: The Contested Career of the Father of Modern Conservatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).
[14] Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Political Economy of American Hegemony, 1945-1955* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 88.
[15] Iwan Morgan and Robert Mason, "Introduction: Reconsidering the Liberal Consensus," in *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era,* ed. Iwan Morgan and Robert Mason (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2017).
[16] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1988).

Anti-Communism Revisited

In the early-1950s Kristol's writing became increasingly preoccupied with anti-communism. In 1951, he wrote, "Flying off the Broomstick," a review of Carey McWilliams' anti-anti-communist monograph, *Witch Hunt: A Revival of Heresy* (1950).[17] The review dealt with the rising anti-communist hysteria sweeping across America in response to a number of prominent espionage revelations and Senator Joseph McCarthy's infamous charges that communists were working for the State Department.[18] Unlike his limited previous writings on communism, which took aim at Stalinists, Kristol's criticism now expanded to liberals. He lamented that liberalism, previously based on 'sobriety,' 'consecutive thought,' and 'rational judgement,' had now become the ally of Marxism.[19] Furthermore, the depiction of communists as victims angered Kristol. He wrote, 'It is a fundamental article of faith with him [McWilliams] that "without a witch hunt there would be no witches," and that these figments produced by the fevered imagination of a loyalty "inquisition" into which America has now organized itself.'[20] This referred to the growing power of the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the committee tasked with investigating domestic subversion and disloyalty.[21] Kristol held no such qualms about the loyalty investigations and questioned, 'why should it be so difficult for a public figure, whose opinions and utterances have been faithfully reported for years to show that he is not a Communist or Communist sympathizer?'[22]

[17] Irving Kristol, "Flying off the Broomstick," *Commentary* 11*,* No.4 (April 1951): 400-401.
[18] For an overview of the Red Scare see: Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*; Jennifer A. Delton, *Rethinking the 1950s: How Anticommunism and the Cold War Made America Liberal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Lori Clune, *Executing the Rosenberg: Death and Diplomacy in a Cold War World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Joseph McCarthy, "Enemies from Within," February 9 1950.
[19] Kristol, "Flying off the Broomstick," 400.
[20] Ibid, 401.
[21] Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes,* 91.
[22] Kristol, "Flying off the Broomstick," 401.

Additionally, Kristol downplayed the consequences of anti-communist policies. On the introduction of the Truman Administration's Loyalty-Security Programme in 1947, McWilliams noted '"setting up a federal loyalty program marks the beginning of an American obsession with loyalty that, in broad outline, parallels a similar Russian obsession dating from the 'all-out campaign' against the Leningrad Literary Group in August 1946."'[23] Kristol disagreed and instead emphasised the brutality of the Soviet regime when he sniped back, 'The difference between losing one's job and losing one's head does not evidently fall within this "broad outline."'[24] Consequently, he laid bare his differences from anti-anti-communist liberals such as McWilliams.

His position better echoed the emerging Cold War liberal stance on communism. Firstly, it fit *Commentary*'s editorial line which was set by Robert Bendiner in 1951. Bendiner argued that injustices on both the left and the right needed to be tackled in order to defend liberty, and that 'This cannot be done by crying "Hysteria!" every time a Communist is exposed, on the ground that his political beliefs are private.'[25] Furthermore, it chimed with the stance of groups such as Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). In 1947 a number of prominent liberals including Arthur Schlesinger Jr., theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, and politician Hubert Humphrey, formed the group. During the 1948 election ADA opposed the presidential candidacy of Henry Wallace, the former Secretary of Agriculture (1933-1940), Vice President (1941-1945), and Secretary of Commerce (1945-1946) under Roosevelt, for

[23] Ibid. Following the testimonies of ex-communists Elizabeth Bentley and Whittaker Chambers which claimed that communist spies had infiltrated the government, the Truman Administration introduced loyalty oaths with the aim of weeding out communists and fellow-travellers in government. For a detailed discussion of this policy see: Jenifer Delton, "Rethinking Post-World War II Anticommunism," 1-41.
[24] Kristol, "Flying off the Broomstick," 401.
[25] Robert Bendiner, "Has Anti-Communism Wrecked Our Liberties? The Liberals' Role in the Fight Against Subversion," *Commentary* 12, No.1 (July 1951): 10-16; Nathan Abrams, *Commentary Magazine 1945-59: 'A Journal of Significant Thought and Opinion'* (Middlesex: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), 114.

his connections to the CPUSA.[26] This opposition was unsurprising given that ADA was born out of the Union for Democratic Action, the only liberal group in the US during World War Two to deny communists membership. However, the ADA's attack on Wallace and his subsequent defeat by Truman was a foundational moment for Cold War liberalism and the anti-communist outlook which would define it during the 1950s.[27] In this way, then, Kristol's review showed his thought was situated within a broader moment of anti-communism.

However, in many respects his views were more hard-line than his contemporaries. The review foreshadowed the most controversial essay of his career. A year later, he published "'Civil Liberties,' 1952 – A Study in Confusion." Here, he infamously charged, 'For there is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy: he, like them, is unequivocally anti-communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing.'[28] This provocative statement would haunt Kristol for the rest of his career, with critics branding the article rabidly anti-communist and even pro-McCarthy, despite the fact that Kristol termed the Senator a 'vulgar demagogue.'[29]

The reception of the article demonstrated the strength of Kristol's anti-communism. *Commentary*'s reader's letters section contained nine-pages worth of largely unfavourable responses. For example, Norman Thomas, the former presidential candidate for the Socialist Party of America, argued that whilst *Commentary* had 'performed a magnificent service' in printing it, he hoped 'in future issues you will help us to meet a vigorous and documented criticism of McCarthy and McCarthyism.'[30] Other commentators were more explicitly critical

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[26] Mary Sperling McAuliffe, *Crisis on the Left: Cold War Politics and American Liberals* 1947-1954 (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1978), 5-7; Steven M. Gillon, *Politics and Vision: The ADA and American Liberalism, 1947-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
[27] On the ways in which the Cold War liberals reshaped American liberalism see: Jonathan Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial: The Cold War and American Politics in the Truman Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
[28] Irving Kristol, "'Civil Liberties,' 1952- A Study in Confusion," *Commentary* 13*,* No.3 (March 1952): 229.
[29] Ibid, 228.
[30] Norman Thomas, "Letters From Readers: "Civil Liberties":1952," *Commentary* 13, No.5 (May 1952): 492-493.

of Kristol. Journalist Richard Rovere, who went on to write an unflattering biography of the Senator, wrote in *Partisan Review* that while he found Kristol's reasoning 'admirable,' when he 'gets around to characterizing Senator McCarthy, who is as contemptuous of the truth as any Communist, he does not call McCarthy what in fact McCarthy is – a liar and a bully – but speaks of him instead as "a man with a preference for arguing in the large."'[31] In highlighting Kristol's failure to address the brutish tactics employed by HUAC, Rovere suggested Kristol's tacit approval of the Senator. Meanwhile, in *Dissent* Irving Howe expressly attacked Kristol for 'minimizing the threat to civil liberties.'[32] This criticism caused Kristol to reflect that 'My unforgivable sin, I subsequently realized, was in *not* being hysterical about McCarthy, whom I assumed to be a transient, ugly phenomenon with no political future. That I had no use for "witch-hunting" I assumed the readers of *Commentary* would take for granted.'[33] But it was too late, the article branded Kristol as an uncompromising anti-communist.

His critics were not entirely wrong. The article made plain his anti-communist credentials on several fronts. Firstly, he crudely labelled those who defended freedom of speech as protecting communists. Amongst others, he singled out Henry Steele Commager, a historian who had recently contributed to *Civil Liberties Under Attack* (1951).[34] Kristol suggested Commager was 'seduced by the insidious myth according to which Communism is a political trend continuous with liberalism and democratic socialism, only more impatient and inclined to the fanatical, only more "radical" than its companions who are not quite so

[31] Richard H. Rovere, "Communists in a Free Society," *Partisan Review* 19, No.3 (May-June 1952): 340; Richard H. Rovere, *Senator Joe McCarthy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
[32] Irving Howe, "This Age of Conformity," *Dissent,* 1 January, 1954. https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/irving-howe-voice-still-heard-this-age-of-conformity.
[33] Irving Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 19.
[34] Henry Steele Commager, Robert k. Carr, Zechariah Chaffe, Jr., Walter Gellhorn, Curtis Bok, James P. Baxter, III, *Civil Liberties Under Attack* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951).

"left.""[35] Words such as 'insidious myth' and 'fanatical,' showed his extreme unease with the linkage of communism and liberalism. He went on, 'It is a myth that Senator McCarthy, for his own ends, is happy to accept since it allows him to tag a New Dealer as being by nature an embryonic Communist.'[36] With this, he accused liberals who defended communists of being complicit in the crimes of the Wisconsin Senator.

Next, he took aim at East Asian affairs commentator Owen Lattimore. Lattimore was a leading commentator on East Asian Affairs who worked for Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) and during the Second World War served as a liaison to Chiang Kai-Shek. In 1950, following charges by Senator McCarthy that Lattimore was a top Soviet spy, he was brought before the Tidings Committee. Then in 1951 Lattimore became embroiled in Pat McCarran's investigation into the IPR. Lattimore was charged with perjury but, unlike other high-profile investigations such as the Alger Hiss case, the charges were dropped.[37] Against the cries that Lattimore was a victim of McCarthyism, Kristol wrote, 'Is it really no legitimate concern of Congress that such a man was appointed advisor to Chiang Kai-shek, that he accompanied Vice-President Wallace during his tour of Asia, that he was admired and listened to by important people in the State Department?' Given that many New Deal loyalists deplored the treatment of Lattimore, Kristol's brusque handling of this high-profile anti-communist case positioned himself further against many anti-anti-communist liberals.

Finally, he minimised the threat of loyalty oaths. Again, Kristol attacked Commager, who argued against loyalty oaths in his essay and claimed that university departments were

[35] Kristol, ""Civil Liberties," 230.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes,* 174-177. In 1948, State Department employee Alger Hiss was accused of passing state secrets to the Soviets by ex-communist Whittaker Chambers. Hiss testified before HUAC denying the claims but following a sensational trial, during which Chambers produced incriminating microfilm documents from a pumpkin on his farm in Maryland, he was convicted of perjury. The case shocked the liberal establishment who remained convinced of Hiss' innocence. For a detailed account of the Hiss case see: Delton, "Rethinking Post-World War II Anticommunism,"; Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

purging their faculties.[38] In response Kristol charged, 'there is not a single university in the United States that can be said to have been, in any meaningful sense of the word, "purged."' He continued, 'Perhaps Professor Commager had in mind the University of California, where several dozen (out of a total of more than a thousand) teachers found the idea of a special loyalty oath – the content of which was irrelevant to their action – so offensive and intolerable that they exercised their constitutional right to refuse to swear it and consequently had to seek other employment.'[39] Here, Kristol made reference to the 1949 decision by the University of California to instate loyalty oaths in order to avoid intrusions by the State Legislature. Thirty-one professors ultimately refused to sign and in August 1950 they lost their jobs.[40] He tritely remarked 'One swallow does not make a spring, or one injustice an apocalypse' glossing over the professors' loss of income and freedom.[41] This, combined with his earlier unsympathetic discussion of redbaiting, indicates how "Civil Liberties" cemented Kristol's reputation as a hard-line anti-communist.

But the article revealed more than just Kristol's hardening attitude to communism; it also evidenced the impact of his educational background. In his memoirs he claimed that the very reason he had written "Flying off the Broomstick" was because 'My Trotskyist background as well as my reading, made it easy for me to dissect his [McWilliams'] rhetoric and reveal its underlying purpose.'[42] This statement was equally applicable to '"Civil Liberties"' which he argued was 'not at all offensive to an authentic liberalism.'[43] With reference to the legacy of the Popular Front, which Trotskyist groups opposed due to their fears of Stalinist-style

[38] Henry Steele Commager, "The Pragmatic Necessity for Freedom," in *Civil Liberties Under Attack,* ed., Henry Steele Commager, Robert K. Carr, Zechariah Chaffe, Jr., Walter Gellhorn, Curtis Bok, James P. Baxter, III (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951), 9.
[39] Kristol, ""Civil Liberties," 233.
[40] Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes,*102.
[41] Kristol, ""Civil Liberties," 233.
[42] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 18.
[43] Ibid, 20.

communism, he criticised the liberals who 'refuse to admit: that a generation of earnest reformers who helped give this country a New Deal should find themselves in retrospect strained with the guilt of having lent aid and comfort the Stalinist tyranny.'[44] He furthered this criticism in his rejoinder to *Commentary* readers' letters: 'There are still people whose memories are good enough to recall the imposing list of 400 names signed to a public letter vigorously defending the Soviet regime – published in the *Nation* in the very same issue that announced the Stalin-Hitler pact!'[45] The language was couched in the rhetoric of *Partisan Review*. The magazine, which Kristol grew up reading, presented Stalin as morally degenerate and strongly opposed the Popular Front which the anti-Stalinist left viewed as undemocratic even before the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact.[46] Moreover, as a Trotskyist, Kristol was further schooled to distrust Stalinists and the CPUSA.[47] His anti-communist sentiments were rooted in experiences in the anti-Stalinist left of the 1930s.

Likewise, Kristol's conflation of Nazism and communism emphasised how his youth informed his anti-communism. For example, Kristol wrote, 'If a Nazi had, in 1938, addressed a high-school audience in this country, extolling the accomplishments of Hitler's regime, presenting a thoroughly fictitious account of life in Nazi Germany, never once mentioning the existence of concentration camps – would Professor Commager find in such a speech "nothing that any normal person could find objectionable?" It is doubtless an injustice to him to even conceive of this opportunity.'[48] This hypothetical example inferred that not only were communists lying about the reality of the Soviet Union but emphasised the evil nature of the regime by comparing communists to Nazis. He furthered this comparison in his rejoinder to

[44] Kristol, ""Civil Liberties," 234.
[45] Irving Kristol, "Mr. Kristol Comments," *Commentary* 13, No.5 (May 1952): 500.
[46] Harvey M. Teres, *Renewing the Left: Politics, Immigration, and the New York Intellectuals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 62-64; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 143-194.
[47] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 107-120.
[48] Kristol, ""Civil Liberties," 230.

Commentary's reader letters, when he wrote, 'A university has, in my opinion, the right to establish a policy of not hiring Communists (or Nazis) or Communist (or Nazi) sympathizers.'[49] Consequently, it was clear that Kristol conceived of communism as equally abhorrent as Nazism.

In his study of *Commentary*, historian Nathan Abrams argued that Kristol 'slyly suggested that defending the civil liberties of Communists was the same as defending those of Nazis.'[50] Rather than acting as proof of Kristol's cunning manipulation of the evidence at hand, the comparison further highlighted his schooling as a New York Intellectual and their specific understanding of totalitarianism. Despite its association with the Cold War, the term totalitarianism, or *Sistema totalitarian* was coined in 1926 by the Italian liberal democrat Giovanni Amendola in response to the rise of fascism in Italy under Mussolini.[51] Consequently, it was initially regarded as a description of right-wing states. However, it became increasingly associated with communism as those on the anti-Stalinist left sought to equate Stalin with Hitler.[52] This conception of totalitarianism became particularly prominent in 1951 with the publication of Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* a highly influential book amongst American intellectuals and the New York group in particular. She argued that together, the ideologue, fellow traveller, bureaucrat, and the leader were responsible for the creation of the totalitarian state. Arendt suggested that the use of terror and concentration camps linked the USSR and Nazi Germany. Whilst doubts have been raised as to its

[49] Kristol, "Mr. Kristol Comments," 499.
[50] Abrams, *Commentary Magazine 1945-59*, 117.
[51] Anson Rabinach, "Moments of Totalitarianism," *History and Theory* 45 (2006): 88-91; Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 272; Herbert J. Spiro and Benjamin R. Barber, "Counter-Ideological Uses of Totalitarianism," *Politics and Society* (November 1970): 3-21.
[52] Rabinach, "Moments of Totalitarianism," 91-94; Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (London: Readers and Writers, 1984), 281.

applicability to the USSR, for the New York Intellectuals it affirmed their belief in the similarities between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.[53] Consequently, the defence of democracy from the totalitarian communist system became an important component of the Cold War liberal outlook.[54] Kristol's assessment was therefore not underhand, but a reflection of the influence of theories of totalitarianism, as conceptualised by Arendt, and the New York Intellectual's specific brand of anti-communism.

Likewise, in his contribution to *The Twentieth Century* later that year, he made his anti-Stalinist politics clear. Here, he wrote a review of Owen Lattimore's account of his experience of McCarthyism, *Ordeal by Slander*.[55] Kristol admitted that McCarthy's charges were trumped up but refused to believe in Lattimore's innocence.[56] He wrote, 'It is too bad that the Lattimores did not have the task of finding pro-Stalinist quotations; they would have had a much easier time of it.'[57] He went on, citing Lattimore who claimed that, 'The accounts of the most widely read Moscow correspondents all emphasize that since the close scrutiny of every person in a responsible position, following the trials, a great many abuses have been discovered or rectified,' and that, 'A lot depends on whether you emphasize the discovery of the abuse or the rectification of it; but habitual rectification can hardly do anything but give the ordinary citizen more courage to protest.' This, Lattimore argued, 'sounds like democracy to me.'[58] The statements referred to the Moscow Show Trials (1936-7), in which several leaders and

[53] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2017); Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age,* 83-96, Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 217-219; Benjamin L. Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy, & American Public Culture: Envisioning the Totalitarian Enemy, 1920s-1950s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 250-301; Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 108-115.
[54] Malachi H. Hacohen, "Jacob Talmon between Zionism and Cold War Liberalism, *History of European Ideas* 34, No.2 (2008): 146-157; Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial,* 153.
[55] Irving Kristol, "Ordeal by Mendacity," *The Twentieth Century* 152, No. 908 (October 1952): 315-323; Owen Lattimore, *Ordeal by Slander* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950), vii.
[56] Kristol, "Ordeal by Mendacity," 321.
[57] Ibid, 316.
[58] Ibid.

heroes of the Russian Revolution such as Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, and Pyatakov were charged with conspiracy and executed. There was widespread doubt as to the legitimacy of the charges, and for the first-generation New York Intellectuals it marked a significant moment of departure from the CPUSA and the formation of the anti-Stalinist left.[59] Lattimore's positive remarks seemed to absolve the USSR of these crimes. Kristol's lengthy analysis of Lattimore's own words highlighted Lattimore's guilt for imagining a just Soviet Union, in which as an ex-Trotskyist, Kristol did not believe. Thus, Lattimore's main crime was his failure to critique the USSR. Kristol was not just riding the anti-communist wave; his anticommunism was rooted in his long-held attitudes towards Soviet-style communism.

Kristol's anti-communist views also reflected the growing influence of ex-Marxist philosopher Sidney Hook on his thinking. In fact, Kristol would later tell Hook that he considered him to be his 'intellectual daddy,' while Hook termed his relationship to Kristol as 'avuncular.'[60] As a young man and student of John Dewey, Hook wrestled with his interests in both Pragmatism and Marxism. In 1933 he published *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx: A Revolutionary Interpretation* solidifying both his credentials as a philosopher and as a Marxist.[61] In the 1940s Hook abandoned Marxism, and adopted an interventionist attitude to World War II.[62] However, in the late 1940s and

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[59] Teres, *Renewing the Left,* 63; Terry Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle, 1934-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 137-139; Wald, *The New York Intellectuals,* 128-161.

[60] Irving Kristol to Sidney Hook, 25 July 1961, box 18 folder 14, Sidney Hook Papers, Hoover Institution; Sidney Hook, "Three Intellectual Troubadours," *The American Spectator,* January 1985, box 80 folder 23, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives. Interestingly, despite the seemingly important nature of this mentorship for Kristol, there is little reference to it in Hook's memoirs: Sidney Hook, *Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20th Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 421.

[61] Sidney Hook, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx: A Revolutionary Interpretation* (New York: J. Day Co, 1933).

[62] For a detailed analysis of Hook's early thought see: Christopher Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook: Marxist and Pragmatist* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). See also: Laurence R. Jurdem, "James Burnham, Sidney Hook and the Search for Intellectual Truth: From Communism to the Cold War, 1933-1956," *American Communist History* 13, No.2-3 (2014): 153-177.

early 1950s Hook wrote a series of articles on the issues of civil liberties and the communist threat.[63] The subsequent influence on Kristol was undeniable. The most famous of these articles, 'Heresy, Yes – Conspiracy, No,' which made Hook a leading figure in the fight to censor higher education, depicted communism as monolithic and a threat to democracy in the USA. In familiar language it argued that 'Ritualistic liberals legitimately criticize the dangerous nonsense of those who proscribe heresy. But they carry their criticism to a point where they give the impression that the country is in the grip of a reign of terror or hysteria much more dangerous than Communist expansion from without and infiltration within.'[64] Furthermore, Hook suggested that liberals should be wary of defending communists, writing that 'Liberalism must also defend freedom of ideas against those agents and apologists of Communist totalitarianism who, instead of honestly defending their heresies resort to conspiratorial methods of anonymity and other techniques of fifth columnists.'[65] The striking similarity of Kristol's political writing to Hook's demonstrated just how hard-line his views were. Hook was the leading liberal anti-communist figure in the New York intellectual community following his organisation of the 1949 counter conference to the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.[66]

Hook's influence on Kristol did not go unnoticed. By 1952, Kristol's position as assistant editor of *Commentary* was untenable. Elliot Cohen was in the midst of a mental health crisis which resulted in his suicide five years later. Kristol recalled, 'I didn't

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[63] Sidney Hook, "Does the Smith Act Threaten Our Civil Liberties?" *Commentary* 15, No.1 (January 1953): 63-73; Sidney Hook, "Academic Integrity and Academic Freedom: How to Deal with the Fellow-Travelling Professor," *Commentary* 8, No.4 (October 1949): 329-339; Sidney Hook, "Heresy, Yes – Conspiracy, No," *The New York Times,* July 9, 1950, 12,38.
[64] Hook, "Heresy, Yes – Conspiracy, No," 38. See: Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook,* 225-233.
[65] Ibid.
[66] For more on Hook's involvement in this event see: Neil Jumonville, *Critical Crossings,* 1-48; Hook, *Out of Step,* 342-392.

understand the tragedy that was happening; all I knew was that his editorial interventions had become more capricious and arbitrary.'[67] Things were so bad that Kristol resigned. Hook, impressed by Kristol's latest work, offered him the position of executive director of the ACCF, a move which would institutionalise Kristol's anti-communism.[68]

Institutional Anti-Communism

The ACCF, not to be confused with its international affiliate the CCF, was born out of Hook's 1949 counter-conference. The committee was formed by a variety of intellectuals who opposed totalitarianism, including Elliot Cohen, Nicolas Nabokov, William Phillips, Sol Levitas, Richard Rovere, James Burnham, Diana Trilling, Daniel Bell and Arthur Schlesinger Jr.[69] Together these thinkers produced press statements and organised conferences in an attempt to discourage fellow-travelling amongst intellectuals. As evident by the names associated with the organisation, a central problem facing the ACCF was its diverse range of views, and its members struggled over how best to fight communists and fellow travellers. Members fell into roughly three camps. Daniel Bell, Sidney Hook, William Phillips and Diana Trilling felt it was the role of the ACCF to be both anti-McCarthy and anti-CPUSA. Meanwhile, Kristol, Elliot Cohen, Bert Wolfe and Sol Stein were also anti-McCarthy but wanted to direct their attention to the intellectual community because they believed it was the sector of American society most influenced by the Communist Party. Third, and finally, figures such as Burnham preferred a far harder form of anti-communism as embodied by McCarthy.[70] As Executive Director of the ACCF, it fell to Kristol to mediate these different positions, something which he described as 'tedium interspersed with crises.'[71]

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[67] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 20.
[68] Ibid, 20-21.
[69] Hook, *Out of Step,* 421; Michael Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn,* 280.
[70] Daniel Bell, "Irving Kristol's "famous" article," June 6 1992, box 24 folder 21, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives.
[71] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 21; Irving Kristol to Sol Stein, 15 December 1953, box 4 folder 3, American Committee for Cultural Freedom Papers, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

A consideration of Kristol's review of James Burnham's *The Web of Subversion: Underground Networks in U.S Government* reflects the inherent tensions within the ACCF. Burnham wrote *The Web of Subversion* after his departure from the ACCF due to his support of Senator McCarthy.[72] For Kristol, particularly problematic was Burnham's accusation that communists had infiltrated the armed forces. In a mocking tone, he wrote, 'So the Communists who, like everyone else, were drafted into the armed forces were really engaged in mass infiltration …'[73] Furthermore, he drew on his own experiences to undermine Burnham, writing that, 'Mr. Burnham has a most innocent vision of military life,' believing that, 'soldiers talk politics in their idle moments.' Kristol admitted that, 'after the war a few dozen Communists got important positions in military government in Germany and Japan and were able to do some very useful work, from their point of view,' but complained that no further information on them was provided because, 'Mr. Burnham is too hypnotized by the spectacle of Mr. Browder's 13,000 subversive stalwarts sweeping their barracks, peeling potatoes, rotting away in reinforcement depots, or actually daring to shoot at (enemy) non-Communists.'[74] Kristol, who became disillusioned with radicalism during his military service, knew that soldiers did not discuss politics and his description of army life highlighted the absurdity of Burnham's claims.

Despite his disillusionment, Kristol's anti-communism had limits. The review was full of jibing remarks. For example, he concluded in sarcastic language: 'A final word on an unpalatable but urgent issue: McCarthy. In a passing reference, Mr. Burnham, asserts that the Senator has "uncovered" a secret espionage cell that "has operated, and may still be operating" at Fort Monmouth. He gives no evidence for this claim leaving one to assume that

[72] John P. Diggins, *Up From Communism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 326-328.
[73] Irving Kristol, "The Web of Realism," *Commentary* 17, No.6 (June 1954): 610.
[74] Ibid.

he has deduced it from – if one may say so – underground premises.'[75] The mocking tone was likely informed by Kristol's dealings with Burnham at the ACCF, where the pair clashed over a resolution submitted by Kristol and Daniel Bell in 1952 which condemned both communism and certain forms of anti-communism. The review, like the resolution, showed that, despite the suggestions of his critics, Kristol was only willing to take his anti-communism so far. He opposed the wild exaggerations of right-wing anti-communists such as Burnham and was more at ease with the liberal anti-communism of figures like Hook.

Kristol's brief spell at the ACCF was an important step towards the next stage of his career as an executive editor. Whilst working at the ACCF, Hook informed Kristol that the CCF was 'interested in starting an English-language cultural-intellectual-political magazine in Paris to counteract the predominate influence of anti-American and often Communist fellow-travelling magazines in all of the democracies, not only of Western Europe but in Asia as well.'[76] This magazine would later become *Encounter*, one of the most influential Anglo-American journals of the twentieth century and a major platform for Kristol to increase his prominence as a public intellectual.[77]

Based on the successful French journal *Preuves*, *Encounter* launched in October 1953.[78] At initial meetings it was decided that the magazine would be based in London, and that Kristol and the British poet Stephen Spender would serve as editors, with Kristol managing the journal's political side and Spender the literary

[75] Ibid.
[76] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 21.
[77] For an overview of the history of *Encounter* see: Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1989); Hugh Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals: from Vanguard to Institution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 216-236; Hugh Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War: Calling the Tune?* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 262-290; Jason Harding, "'Our greatest Asset': Encounter Magazine and the Congress for Cultural Freedom," in *Campaigning Culture and the Global Cold War: The Journals of the Congress for Cultural Freedom,* ed., Giles Scott-Smith and Charlotte Lerg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 107-125.
[78] Michael Josselson to Stephen Spender, 5 March 1953, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Spender 70.

content.[79] The names 'Outlook' and 'Symposium' were suggested before *Encounter* was settled upon.[80] With sister publications including, but not limited to, *Der Monat* (German), *Tempo Presente* (Italian), *Cuadernos* (Spanish), and *Ḥiwār* (Arabic), *Encounter* was principally focused on cultural issues in the Anglophone world.[81] However, this did not stop the magazine using British influence in Asia to target neutralism amongst preeminent intellectuals in India, publishing for example, a number of articles on colonialism, as well as considering events in the Eastern Bloc which expanded the limited international outlook of the publication somewhat.[82]

Most importantly the journal was embroiled in a funding scandal which directly implicated Kristol. The opening editorial of the magazine declared that, '*Encounter* seeks to promote no "line," though its editors have opinions they will not hesitate to express.'[83] This declaration became noteworthy when a series of explosive articles in *The New York Times* and radical journal *Ramparts*, published between 1966 and 1967, revealed that the CIA secretly channelled money to *Encounter* via the CCF, and that the CCF's director Michael Josselson was a CIA employee.[84] The exposé rocked the intellectual community surrounding the Congress and those involved with its activities were branded traitors by the emergent New Left. Kristol had long since left the publication, having been replaced by fellow American Melvin Lasky in 1958,

[79] Michael Josselson to Stephen Spender, 5 March 1953, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Spender 70.
[80] Michael Josselson to Stephen Spender, 19 March 1953, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Spender 70.
[81] For an account of the histories of these see: *Campaigning Culture and the Global Cold War: The Journals of the Congress for Cultural Freedom,* ed., Giles Scott-Smith and Charlotte Lerg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). On the role of *Cuadernos* in Latin America see: Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2015), 174-210.
[82] Nirad Chaudhuri, "A Passage To and From India," *Encounter* 6, No.2 (1954): 19-24; Eric da Costa, "Letter from New Delhi: After Nehru …?" *Encounter* 2, No. 2 (1954): 60-62; Hugh Seton-Watson, "Asian Nationalism," *Encounter* 1, No.1 (1953): 73-79; G.N.S. Raghavan, "Letter from New Delhi: Predicament in Goa," *Encounter* 1, No.6 (1956): 62-64; J.A. Jelenski, "Eastern Variations: The Polish "Earthquake,"" *Encounter* 2, No.7 (1956): 31- 38; Hugh Seton-Watson, "The Fate of Imre Nagy," *Encounter* 2, No. 11 (1958): 73-74.
[83] Irving Kristol and Stephen Spender, "After the Apocalypse," *Encounter* 1, No.1 (October 1953): 1.
[84] Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy,* 219-234.

but he nonetheless remained tainted.[85] Worse still, in 1967, ex-CIA staff member Tom Braden revealed that a CIA agent had become an editor of *Encounter.*[86] It seems more likely that Lasky, not Kristol, was the CIA agent.[87] However, with Lasky and Kristol the only Americans to serve as editors of the publication, naturally suspicion fell upon Kristol too.

Kristol sought to distance himself from the scandal and wrote little about it. He later claimed in his memoirs that it was 'not a particularly interesting story' and that 'The history of *Encounter* – including the CIA connection – has now been well told by Peter Coleman in *The Liberal Conspiracy,* and told less well by others, so I shall say little about it.'[88] Where he wrote about the affair, he downplayed the charges of conspiracy. He reminded readers that this was not his first experience of working for a sponsored magazine; the American Jewish Committee ran *Commentary*. He explained that 'The relations of the editors of *Encounter* to the Congress were in all respects comparable to those of the editors of *Commentary* to the Committee.'[89]

Moreover, where he did discuss the affair, he drew attention to his lack of influence in the 1950s. He may have established himself as a New York Intellectual, but he was quick to point out the limited influence of the group, describing their universe as 'hermetic' and noting that, 'they wrote mainly for one another, not out of cliquishness but because no one else seemed much interested.'[90] Additionally, he had never spoken at a conference, received a

[85] Prominent examples of historiography which chastised those associated with the CCF include: Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid The Piper?*; Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left*.
[86] Tom Braden, "I'm Glad the CIA is Immoral," *The Saturday Post,* 20 May, 1967, 13.
[87] Josselson explained that it was only he who was aware of CIA involvement in the magazine. This did little to colour Kristol's good opinion of Josselson. Michael Josselson to Irving Kristol, 7 July 1967, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Spender 71; Irving Kristol to Mike Josselson, March 25 1969, box 29 folder 4, Michael Josselson Papers, Harry Ransom Center. Later background checks on Kristol by the FBI also make no reference to CIA connections, see: https://www.gawker.com/5704972/irving-kristols-fbi-file.
[88] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 23.
[89] Kristol, "Memoirs of a "Cold Warrior,"" 460.
[90] Ibid, 462.

foundation grant, nor written for national publications.[91] Indeed, even Irving Howe's condemnation recognised Kristol's limited audience. Evidently referring to Kristol with mentions of the City College New York (CCNY) alcoves; Howe charged, 'I suppose the leading editor of *Encounter* sincerely believed he was helping defend democracy when he established his surreptitious ties with the CIA; but was there not also a thrill of sorts for a not-very-famous editor – only yesterday a student arguing in the CCNY alcoves – to negotiate with men in power, secret figures who could overthrow governments, command private armies, and arrange the disappearance of irksome opponents?'[92]

Furthermore, even if Kristol was suspicious of CIA involvement in the magazine, the reputation of the CIA in the 1950s was not what it would later become. Thanks to revelations about its involvement in the 1954 overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz and the botched invasion of the Bay of Pigs in 1961, the CIA, especially in Latin America, would become associated with anti-democratic interventions. But, in the mid-1950s few intellectuals knew of this behaviour. For example, Diana Trilling explained how she did not protest about financial assistance for the ACCF which she believed came from the CIA because during this period, 'When the CIA was regarded at all, it was by and large associated with the highly respected wartime OSS [Office of Strategic Services] and accepted as a necessary adjunct to our national security.' It was not, she emphasised, associated with 'dangerous usurpation of authority.'[93] With such limited personal influence and the more benign reputation of the CIA amongst intellectuals in this period, why then should Kristol have been suspicious?

Nevertheless, that Kristol was suspected of being a CIA employee reveals much about the institutionalised nature of his anti-communism. For example, in the

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[91] Ibid.
[92] Irving Howe, *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 219.
[93] Diana Trilling, "Liberal Anti-Communism Revisited," in *We Must March My Darlings* ed., Diana Trilling (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 61.

first issue of *Encounter* in October 1953*,* Kristol published Leslie Fiedler's "A Postscript to the Rosenberg Case." Fiedler, a former fellow member of the Trotskyist Young People's Socialist League, argued that there had been two versions of the explosive espionage case: the actual trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1951, and the subsequent mythologised version of events.[94] Despite ultimately concluding that the Rosenbergs should not be executed, Fiedler disparaged the couple throughout the article and never wavered from his belief in their guilt. The polemic resulted in much anger and CCF Secretary General Nicolas Nabokov wrote to Spender asking him to quell the fury.[95] Meanwhile, the *Times Literary Supplement* criticised the article in its review of the magazine.[96] Kristol's decision to publish the piece was therefore incongruous with the mood of a sizable number of European intellectuals.[97] His anti-communism instead echoed that of State Department which remained committed to the couple's execution.

Further evidence of this establishment style anti-communism is found in Kristol's dispute with the *Times Literary Supplement*. In 1953 the literary review argued that the political content of *Encounter* was 'characterized by a negative liberalism, or by a liberalism whose main positive feature, at least, appears to be a hatred and fear of Communism.'[98] As political editor, this criticism was directed towards Kristol. He fought back in the subsequent editorial of *Encounter,* positing that, 'liberals ought not to be *exclusively* concerned with Communism: only lunatics

[94] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 109; Leslie Fiedler, "A Postscript to the Rosenberg Case," *Encounter* 1, No.1 (October 1953): 12-21.
[95] Nicolas Nabokov to Editors, 8 June 1954, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Spender 70; Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy,* 68-69.
[96] Editors, "Negative Liberalism," *Times Literary Supplement,* Friday 9, October 1953, 645.
[97] An excellent account of the European reaction to the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg is found in: Clune, *Executing the Rosenbergs*.
[98] "Negative Liberalism," 645.

are exclusively concerned with any single thing. Liberals ought to be concerned with all "changes and reforms tending in the direction of democracy."' Yet, he argued, 'the fact that Communism today rules one third of the human race, and may soon rule more; and that it is the most powerful existing institution which opposes such changes and reforms as liberalism proposes. Why, then, should not liberals, and liberals especially, hate it?'[99] The comment reinforced Kristol's liberal self-identity and legitimised his particular conception of Cold War liberalism, centred on a distrust of communism and a genuine belief that it threatened international politics. His views had become increasingly moulded by the anti-communist infrastructure which surrounded him.

Throughout, he emphasised the totalitarian nature of communism. In the same rebuttal, he wrote, 'Communists have managed to pass themselves off as, in some sense, "positive"" with the result that "a Tsarist or Nazi *pogrom* could outrage the world; but anyone who gets excited about mass murder in the Soviet Union reveals a lack of a sense of balance.'[100] His justification of the liberal campaign against communism and the comparison between Nazis and Communists harked back to his writings at *Commentary*, and signalled just how cemented his views became in this decade.

Throughout the following five years at *Encounter,* Kristol continued to express this institutionalised version of anti-communist thought. In one article, he suggested that French intellectuals revered the Marquis de Sade, an infamous philosopher known for his violent and sexually explicit writing, for the same reasons they admired communism. Kristol proposed that, 'One suspects that the attitude of so

[99] Irving Kristol, "On "Negative Liberalism,"" *Encounter* 2, No.1 (January 1954): 2.
[100] Ibid, 3.

many French intellectuals toward Sade has some connection with attitude toward Communism. In both cases, they find themselves apologising for hideous cruelty as being, in some dialectical way, liberating.'[101] Given that the statement followed a description of Sade as a man who 'defended infanticide, rape and allied activities' Kristol's strong hatred of communism and communist sympathisers was plain.[102] Such rhetoric casts doubt over his later claim that, 'by the time I came to *Encounter,* anticommunism or anti-Marxism or anti-Marxist- Leninism or antitotalitarianism had pretty much ceased to interest me as an intellectual project.'[103] Evidently, he still adhered to the same hard-line views which secured his position as a 'Cold Warrior' within the liberal anti-communist apparatus in the first instance.

Encountering Conservatism

In London, Kristol began to expand his interests to include conservatism. As his wife, Gertrude Himmelfarb, later noted, *Encounter* 'was an education for Kristol, introducing him to a culture and polity different from but wonderfully congruent with that of America.'[104] In addition to mixing with a number of British Labour Party Members of Parliament during his time in London, he also became friendly with young conservative journalists. In particular, he befriended *Punch* editor Malcom Muggeridge, the *Spectator* political columnist Henry Fairlie, *Daily Telegraph* contributor Colin Welch, and Peregrine Worsthorne, an upper-class Tory who moved from the *Times* to the *Daily Telegraph* over his provocative views on

[101] Irving Kristol, "The Shadow of the Marquis: Notes on Some Possibly Related Matters," *Encounter* 8, No.2 (February 1957): 4.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Irving Kristol, "My Cold War," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 482.
[104] Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Introduction," in *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays 1942-2009,* ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (New York: Basic Books, 2011), xvi.

McCarthyism.[105] Kristol also became familiar with the British philosopher Michael Oakeshott, whose anti-foundational stance led to his association with conservatism.[106]

Significantly, Kristol gave these new conservative acquaintances a voice in *Encounter.* In January 1956 the magazine's editorial, "The "New Conservatism,"" noted the revival of conservative politics – both Britain and America had recently elected conservative administrations to power – and discussed the varying strands of right-wing thought which existed.[107] The editorial indicated the publication's commitment to including conservative spokesmen in its pages and Kristol's own willingness to engage with them.

Kristol was also influenced by the views of his new Tory acquaintances. In his review of Paul Bloomfield's *Uncommon People: A Study of England's Elite* (1955)*,* a genealogy of several prominent upper-class families in Britain, he remarked upon the peculiarities of the English class system and, despite increasing egalitarianism, its continuing importance.[108] He wrote that, 'the time is fast approaching when there will be only one great name and one great family – call it Demos.' He suggested as 'an American,' this was, not necessarily a 'catastrophe,' but that, 'as an American, reared in a profoundly disestablished country, I am perhaps more aware than some of what will be lost in the way of continuity, stability, and graciousness.'[109] The use of words such as 'lost' was melancholy and suggested that the breakdown of the British class system was something to mourn which was unexpected from a man who fifteen years earlier sought the destruction of class through his involvement with Trotskyism. However, it reflected the attitudes of his friends, such as Worsthorne, who

[105] Peregrine Worsthorne, *Tricks of Memory: An Autobiography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson,1993); Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 24; Fred Siegel, "Tory in America: A Timely Reissue of the Great Essayist Henry Fairlie's Work," *City Journal,* July 24, 2009. https://www.city-journal.org/html/tory-america-9577.html; Ian Hunter, *Malcolm Muggeridge: A Life* (London: Collins, 1980).
[106] Terry Nardin, "Michael Oakeshott: Neither Liberal nor Conservative," in *Michael Oakeshott's Cold War Liberalism,* ed. Terry Nardin (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2015), 23-38.
[107] Irving Kristol, "The "New Conservatism,"" *Encounter* 6, No.1 (January 1956): 2-3.
[108] Paul Bloomfield, *Uncommon People: A Study of England's Elite* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955).
[109] Irving Kristol, "The Family Way," *Encounter* 5, No.6 (December 1955): 81.

thought that a 'classless society is not a good but an evil' and, 'precludes natural integration.'[110] It was less that 'Irving, who had been in Britain for only a few months, had already been struck by the cohesiveness of the political and cultural elites,' as Worsthorne suggested, and more a reflection of the new circles in which he was mixing.[111] Indeed, so persuaded was Kristol by these new conservative friends, in 1961 he admitted to Sidney Hook that whilst he was too old to be an angry young Tory, 'Tory radicalism does fairly describe my present state of mind.'[112]

His interest in English conservatism also revealed the impact of his wife Gertrude Himmelfarb on his intellectual development. Himmelfarb, an expert on Victorian England, was also interested in conservatism. Her first book, based on her doctoral thesis, was entitled *Lord Acton: A Study in Conscience and Politics* (1952), and received great acclaim in Britain.[113] Despite its primary concern with Lord Acton's attitudes towards liberalism, given he was a member of the Liberal Party, the chapter 'Political Conservatism and Liberal Politics' considered the impact of Edmund Burke on Acton's thinking.[114] This analysis demonstrated her interest in conservatism and knowledge of its history in Britain. Her second book, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution* (1959), also demonstrated this expertise and emphasised the conservative elements of the so-called revolution.[115]

Meanwhile, in her contribution to *Encounter's* 'Men and Ideas' series, Himmelfarb discussed the career of Thomas Malthus, the English economist and demographer who

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[110] Peregrine Worsthorne, "The New Inequality: More Dangerous than the Old?" *Encounter* 7, No.5 (1956): 22-34.
[111] Peregrine Worsthorne, "Irving Kristol in London," in *The Neoconservative Imagination: Essays in Honor of Irving Kristol,* eds. Christopher DeMuth and William Kristol (Washington D.C.: The AEI Press, 1995), 28.
[112] Irving Kristol to Sidney Hook, 25 July 1961, box 18 folder 14, Sidney Hook Papers, Hoover Institution.
[113] Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Lord Acton: A Study in Conscience and Politics* (Acton Institute: 2015) iBook; Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 23.
[114] Himmelfarb, *Lord Acton,* 66-70.
[115] Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1966); Gertrude Himmelfarb to Daniel Bell, June 1958, box 8 folder 2, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives.

argued that population growth would outpace food supplies. Here, she suggested Malthus was primarily a moralist, and, although she ultimately saw Malthus as a fraud, displayed her admiration of Victorian values.[116] Himmelfarb's gratitude to Kristol in the prefaces of her books provide evidence of his direct engagement in her work, as does private correspondence between Daniel Bell and Kristol, in which Kristol boasted that the book 'will establish her academic reputation for ever and ever without her having to write another word.'[117] However, his review of *The Spare Chancellor: The Life of Walter Bagehot* (1959) demonstrated the clearest indication of her influence on him.[118] He wrote that 'Bagehot, like so many of his contemporaries, displayed a powerful detachment from the democracy which he was committed to. And it is precisely this combination of detached-attachment that makes Victorian thought on the problems of liberty and democracy – despite all conflicting emphases and variation in specific opinion – so supremely sane.'[119] The appreciation of Victorian values and their rationality clearly stemmed from his wife's important scholarship on the topic and, moreover, showed the couple's developing intellectual affinity.

Nonetheless, we must be careful not to brand Kristol a conservative at this point. Much of his work continued to express liberal sentiments. The clearest example of this work was his analysis of Vance Packer's best-selling book, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957). The book posited that Americans were the most manipulated people outside of the Iron Curtain and focused on the subliminal methods of the advertising industry.[120] Despite recognising that many American's choices were 'the consequence of being worked upon,' Kristol remained unconvinced by Packer's 'apocalyptic vision' and believed that 'The American

[116] Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Men and Ideas: Malthus," *Encounter* 5, No.2 (August 1955): 53-60; Gertrude Himmelfarb to Daniel Bell, 7 April 1955, box 8 folder 7, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives.
[117] Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, 15 November 1955, box 8 folder 2, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University, Archives.
[118] Irving Kristol, "The Masculine Mode," *Encounter* 13, No.6 (December 1959): 70-71.
[119] Ibid, 71.
[120] Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: IG Publishing, 2007).

consumer is, by all signs, a willing partner in the transactions that occur between the advertising agencies and himself.'[121] He further emphasised this liberty, stating that 'One is free to move any which way' under the system.[122] This recognition reflected a key component of the so called "liberal consensus" which believed capitalism to be the best economic system in the world, and that capitalism and democracy went hand in hand. This conception was particularly important in the Cold War context as, since the Truman Doctrine, capitalism represented freedom in contrast to the totalitarian nature of Soviet communism.[123]

Nor had he entirely rejected socialism. In "Socialism without the Socialists" (1956) he wrote that the ideology was 'no longer "utopian"' and that it was 'a prisoner of the world it sought to save.'[124] But, he found it 'a pleasant surprise to discover that there are, after all, socialists who have survived the socialist movement, and that their ideas are thought to be of sufficiently general interest to be distributed in the form of a Penguin book.'[125] This was hardly the hostile attitude towards socialism expected from a conservative. He also praised the authors for stressing that society was a network and that citizens had responsibility towards each other which demonstrated a continued acceptance in the liberal state's commitment to redistributing privilege.[126] He concluded that a socialist world 'needn't be a bad world: but neither is there any reason to think it will be a better one.'[127] This, although not a resounding endorsement of socialism showed a lingering commitment to the ideology.

At this point, his interest in conservatism remained primarily anthropological. Worsthorne wrote that Kristol was 'concerned less to condone and condemn than to

[121] Irving Kristol, "I Dreamed I Stopped Traffic …," *Encounter* 9, No.6 (December 1957): 73.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 182; Delton, *Rethinking the 1950s,* 89; Gleason, *Totalitarianism,* 72-87.
[124] Irving Kristol, "Socialism without Socialists," *Encounter* 7, No.2, (August 1956): 83.
[125] Ibid, 81.
[126] Delton, *Rethinking the 1950s,* 1-11.
[127] Ibid, 83.

understand.'[128] Kristol's memoirs also suggest a sense of detachment from the right in this moment. He recalled that 'I hadn't known any conservatives – as distinct from ex-radicals with budding right-wing opinions – in New York,' and that he was, 'fascinated by the fact that they [English conservatives] felt perfectly at ease with themselves as conservatives.'[129] The term 'fascinated' confirmed his interest in these conservatives but also implied his observation of the group rather than active participation in these circles.

The interest in English conservatism stemmed from the idea that America lacked a similar political tradition. Kristol was intrigued by this group because 'They were, after all, heirs to a long tradition of conservative politics and conservative thought in Britain, whereas there was no such tradition in the United States.'[130] This attitude echoed the growing authority of Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* (1949). The collection of Trilling's literary criticism dealt with literature's relationship with liberalism and argued that in the absence of conservative thought it was liberals' responsibility to criticise themselves.[131] Trilling famously wrote that, 'In the United States at this time liberalism is not only the dominant tradition but the sole intellectual tradition.' He acknowledged that, 'this does not mean, of course, that there is no impulse to conservatism or to reaction,' but suggested that, 'the conservative impulse and the reactionary impulse do not, with some isolated and ecclesiastical exceptions, express themselves in ideas but only in action or in irritable mental features which seek to resemble ideas.'[132] This view was largely based on the fact that Britain was seen as having a consistent two-hundred-year old conservative tradition thanks to its

[128] Worsthorne, "Irving Kristol in London," 30.
[129] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 25.
[130] Ibid, 25.
[131] Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970).
[132] Ibid, 9.

Conservative Party.[133] Of course, conservative thought existed in the American past too but, unlike in Britain, there was no Conservative Party to embody or organise these views.[134] In the post-war years, as Trilling made reference to, there was some effort to engage with conservatism. Historians such as Russell Kirk and Peter Viereck traced a heritage for American conservative thought. Additionally, in 1955 William F. Buckley launched *National Review* with the aim of creating a national conservative movement.[135] However, self-confessed conservatives were still novel in America. Conversely, although at first seen as European because of its initial association with the French Revolution, liberalism in the early-twentieth century quickly became an American creed. This view was further cemented by the Roosevelt presidency in which his New Deal policies associated the Democratic Party with liberal values, a focus on the greater public good, and individual rights in a democracy.[136] Trilling's conviction that liberalism was America's 'sole' intellectual heritage was clear inspiration for Kristol's own belief that the United States lacked a conservative tradition in America, and explains his concern with conservatism in Britain.[137]

Nor was his curiosity unique. The Kristols' close friends remained 'older Jewish ex-radicals,' and they regularly hosted Daniel Bell, the Trillings, the Hooks and the Glazers in London.[138] Worsthorne recalled being invited to meet these figures in his biography. He wrote that he found himself completely out of his depth amongst them 'But this did not seem

[133] Reba Soffer, *History, Historians, and Conservatism in Britain and America: From the Great War to Thatcher and Reagan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 289.
[134] Patrick Allit, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 158-173.
[135] Soffer, *History, Historians, and Conservatism,* 232-269.
[136] Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism: From Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). On America's relationship with liberalism see: 245-268.
[137] For an overview of American conservatism in this period see: Soffer, *History, Historians, and Conservatism;* Allit, *The Conservatives*; Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn*; Peter Viereck, *Conservatism: From John Adams to Churchill* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1956); Clinton Rossiter, *Conservatism in America: The Thankless Persuasion* (New York: Knopf, 1962); Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2001).
[138] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 24.

to matter. Having previously only read about English conservatism in their history books they were delighted to meet someone who embodied it rather more colourfully than most of the gloomy American conservative academics, such as Russell Kirk, then portentously rediscovering Edmund Burke.'[139] Ever engrossed in ideas, the New York Intellectuals were captivated by the novelty of the English conservatism represented by Kristol's new friends in London. In this way, not only was his new interest important to his own intellectual trajectory but it also enabled him to serve as an important facilitator in the exchange of ideas across the Atlantic.

Unfortunately, this beneficial exchange did not extend to the editors themselves. In his autobiographical essay, Kristol stated that, 'I do feel compelled to say, however, that my relations with Stephen Spender were against all the odds, quite good, all things considered.'[140] Archival records suggest otherwise. In 1954, Michael Josselson wrote to Spender urging that 'The artificial fence between you and Irving must be broken down.'[141] It was not. By 1955, Spender was in regular correspondence with Josselson to complain about his co-editor. On one occasion he wrote that 'it would be quite dishonest to go on working with Irving because there simply is no basis for collaboration' and that 'he is so intensely competitive that he regards every decision as a kind of conflict in which he has to score a victory, either by keeping a decision to himself or by sabotaging it if it is made by his colleague.'[142] Meanwhile, Kristol complained to Daniel Bell, of Stephen's 'incredible ineptness' and credited himself with the magazine's success.[143] The letters were hardly suggestive of congenial editorial relations and expressed the fractured nature of the pair's relationship.

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[139] Worsthorne, *Tricks of Memory,* 165.
[140] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 23.
[141] Michael Josselson to Stephen Spender, 30 January 1954, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Spender 70.
[142] Stephen Spender to Michael Josselson, 10 July 1955, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Spender 70.
[143] Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, 4 June 1955, box 8 folder 8, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives.

Kristol's American identity seemed a particular point of tension. In February 1955 Kristol wrote to Spender that 'I cannot help but feel that behind your reaction there lies a terrible, silly snobbishness. You can't help but think of me as an American vulgarian, from whom you must protect the magazine.'[144] Spender's letters to Josselson confirm this suspicion. He wrote that Kristol, 'has not the slightest interest in the arts or in culture (being tone deaf and colour blind), his attitude to almost all good writing is to dislike it.'[145] Furthermore, he continued, 'I know the English have an unfailing malice about certain faults, whilst they are forgiving about others. What really annoys them is 'cockiness' and assertiveness, both of which Irving has in the highest degree.'[146] The complaints were couched in anti-American sentiment and inferred that Spender, as a European, possessed cultural superiority. [147] Kristol's strong beliefs and argumentative style, which earnt him acceptance in New York, did not have the same impact in London and resulted in editorial tensions.

Kristol's American identity also caused him to feel uneasy in his new European environment. Spender complained that 'As far as I know he sees very few English people and makes no effort to understand the mood of the county.'[148] In spite of his new friendships, Kristol wrote that at Spender's cocktail parties he 'never felt more solemnly New York-Jewish.'[149] Unlike the *Partisan Review* gatherings, which were filled with 'serious intellectual' conversation, there was only 'gossip' at Spender's parties. Simply put, these 'were not [his] kind of people.'[150] His remarks demonstrated his comfort with the New York

[144] Irving Kristol to Stephen Spender, 28 February 1955, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Spender 70.
[145] Stephen Spender to Michael Josselson, No Date, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Spender 70.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Michael John Law, *Not Like Home: American Visitors to Britain in the 1950s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 21-30.
[148] Stephen Spender to Michael Josselson, No Date, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Spender 70.
[149] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 23.
[150] Ibid.

Intellectuals and suggested his alienation amongst Spender's English upper-class friends. In fact, Kristol and Himmelfarb felt more American the longer they spent in Britain. They chose to send their son, William, to the French lycée, lest he become 'an imitation Brit' and immediately registered their daughter Elizabeth's birth at the American embassy.[151] Indeed, Kristol was at pains to point out to Daniel Bell that his new born daughter was named after his mother, not the Queen of England.[152] Despite his intense curiosity with English conservatism, then, Kristol remained an outsider. It was therefore not surprising that in 1958, following a series of editorial disputes and Spender's repeated attempts to replace him, Kristol resigned from *Encounter* and returned to New York.

Back home, Kristol continued to share his new found interest in conservatism. In the *Yale Review* he explored the differences between liberal and conservative thought, arguing that they were 'ever more difficult to perceive.'[153] Meanwhile, he reviewed William F. Buckley's *Up from Liberalism*, which sought to 'to discredit doctrinaire Liberalism and plead the viability of enlightened conservatism.'[154] Given Buckley's prominence in the American conservative movement, Kristol's decision to review the book demonstrated that his interest in conservatism sparked in London continued after his return to the U.S. Additionally, and despite his dislike of the monograph, which he described as a 'baffling potpourri,' his description of Buckley as 'gay, witty, candid, intelligent and unassuming' signalled his ability to get along with conservatives, and granted respect towards them.[155] By affording conservative thought with these sympathetic treatments, he helped begin its legitimation as a serious intellectual enterprise, as well as foreshadowing his later friendship with Buckley.

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[151] Ibid, 25.
[152] Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, 30 April 1956, box 8 folder 7, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives.
[153] Irving Kristol, "Old Truths and New Conservatism," *Yale Review* 47, No. 3 (March 1958): 371.
[154] William F. Buckley Jr., *Up From Liberalism* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2016), xiv.
[155] Irving Kristol, "On the Burning Deck," *The Reporter,* November 26, 1959, 46-47.

Conclusion: A Liberal with Conservative interests

In 1968, reflecting on his participation in the cultural Cold War, Kristol wrote, 'One frequently hears it said these days, in a completely matter-of-fact way, that liberal anticommunists were "obsessed" by the specter of communism.'[156] Kristol's thought during the 1950s was undeniably preoccupied with communism. His rupture from radicalism in the 1940s left him politically bereft and anti-communism appeared a natural replacement. The publication of "Civil Liberties" in 1951 marked a departure from the political side-lines. It signalled the return of Kristol's political voice and demonstrated his hard-line attitude towards liberals who defended communists.

However, to label Kristol merely an anti-communist is to misunderstand the complexity of his thought. His views were rooted in his anti-Stalinist education and the specific brand of anti-communism represented by the New York Intellectuals, which strengthens the argument that the radical experience was important to the formation of their anti-communism.[157] It was this unique conception of anti-communism which secured Kristol's position within the liberal anti-communist apparatus, first as the executive director of the ACCF and later as editor of *Encounter.* Here, he expressed views so much in line with the government that he was later accused of being a CIA agent. But, more importantly, it was here that he was exposed to a community beyond the New York Intellectuals and new intellectual traditions, sparking a deep curiosity in conservatism which he shared with fellow Americans through personal connections and writings. It was this interest and the resulting exchange of ideas which helped Kristol develop his own important contributions to

[156] Kristol, "My Cold War,"485.
[157] Wald, 367; Delton, 15.

neoconservatism in his later career, which, in turn, would have a profound impact on the national political scene.

The 1950s, therefore, saw the creation of Kristol's political voice as a hard-line anti-communist with an interest in conservatism. Nevertheless, caution must be taken not to overemphasise the connection between this conservatism and anti-communism.[158] Kristol remained a liberal, albeit a liberal with an interest in conservatism and who despised other liberals for defending communists, but he was a liberal nonetheless. It would take at least another decade for Kristol's conservatism to crystallise into a coherent political outlook. For now, his political thought remained in a state of flux.

[158] Steinfels, 33.

Chapter Three: Ideological Rupture: Liberalism and the New Left

> The spectrum of opinion within our group was very narrow … We considered ourselves to be realistic meliorists, skeptical of government programs that ignored history and experience in favour of then-fashionable left-wing ideas spawned by the academy. This was the original idea of the magazine [*The Public Interest*], but events soon overtook us.
>
> Irving Kristol, 1999[1]

By the 1960s Irving Kristol was mixing with a new crowd. At the end of the previous decade, national recognition, university appointments, and diverging politics caused the New York Intellectual circle to splinter. In place of this scene he began to associate with those surrounding his newly formed magazine *The Public Interest.* The central components of this group included Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, James Q. Wilson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The magazine intended to provide impartial academic analysis of contemporary socio-economic issues but this was short-lived. As Kristol remarked, 'events soon overtook us.' The late 1960s and early 1970s were characterised by increasing socio-political division within U.S. society as student radicalism spread throughout the country, the civil rights movement transformed into the Black power movement, second-wave feminism developed, and America became entangled in an increasingly unwinnable war in Vietnam.[2]

This chapter is the first of two which engages with Kristol's thought in this tumultuous period. Crucially, it investigates the ways in which he remained attached to

[1] Irving Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 31.
[2] For an overview of this period see: Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture In the 1960s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Edward D. Berkowitz, *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2007).

liberal values and the ways in which he did not. In doing so, it seeks to understand whether or not the emerging New Left was the cause of his shift rightwards, and to locate the impetus behind what became his neoconservative persuasion. It argues that Kristol was a dissident liberal who slowly moved rightwards as liberalism fractured in the polarised climate of the 1960s and 1970s.

This argument intervenes in the extant literature concerning the so-called Old and New Lefts.[3] During this period, the Old Left was comprised of ex-communists who were reconciled with the power structure of the United States.[4] Meanwhile, the New Left was generally composed of those involved with campus-based movements associated with the rising left-wing politics of the 1960s.[5] This scholarship has highlighted how inter-generational tensions are important for understanding the historical development of liberalism in the mid-century period.[6] Importantly, Daniel Geary's study of David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* and the sociologist's reaction to the emergence of the New Left urges a new approach to understanding this moment. Geary argues that "qualitive" liberals, post-war liberals who were interested in quality of life rather than economic growth, varied in their responses to the emergence of 1960s' radicalism, and dismisses standard accounts that liberalism broke down as a result of challenges from both the left and right. Instead, he

[3] Maurice Isserman, *If I had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Rebecca E. Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, The New Right and the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (Middlesex: Penguin Books,1973); Neil Jumonville, *Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1991), 186-229; Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 337-364.

[4] Isserman, *If I had a Hammer,* xi-xx; Howard Brick, *Daniel Bell and the Decline of Intellectual Radicalism: Social Theory and Political Reconciliation in the 1940s* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), ix-xi.

[5] Daniel Geary, "Children of *The Lonely Crowd*: David Riesman, The Young Radicals, And the Splitting of Liberalism in the 1960s," *Modern Intellectual History* 10, No.3 (2013): 606.

[6] Kevin Matteson, *Intellectuals in Action: The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 4-42; Bruce Miroff, "From Friends to Foes: George McGovern, Hubert Humphrey, and the Fracture in American Liberalism," in *Making Sense of American Liberalism* eds. Jonathan Bell and Timothy Stanley (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 90-109.

suggests that to comprehend the splitting of liberalism in this key moment we need to understand what happened to qualitive liberalism itself, and to do this we must consider the diversity of opinions held by post-war liberal intellectuals.[7]

Moreover, Geary uses this intervention to make a second and, arguably for the purpose of this chapter, more important point: that neoconservatism in this period is best understood not as, what he terms, 'incipient Reaganism,' but rather the splintering of liberalism itself.[8] This argument builds on the wealth of literature which sees the rise of the neoconservative outlook as a product of the 1960s. In particular, Peter Steinfels, Justin Vaïsse, and Andrew Hartman have suggested that neoconservatism developed in reaction to the social upheaval of the 1960s brought about by the birth of the New Left.[9] Other scholarship by Murray Friedman, Mark Gerson, Gary Dorrien, and Jonathan Bronitsky sees the origins of neoconservatism as lying in the 1940s. However, most agree that the emergence of the New Left in this era was significant to the trajectory of neoconservatism. In particular scholars highlight the importance of divergent views on Vietnam, social policy, and anti-Semitism as crucial for understanding neoconservative contempt for the New Left in the decades which followed.[10]

An analysis of Kristol's thought in this period highlights the impact 1960s' had on the development of neoconservatism whilst challenging the view that neoconservatism was merely a knee-jerk reaction to the politics of the New Left. Alternatively, it highlights the

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[7] Geary, "Children of *The Lonely Crowd,*" 603-633.
[8] Ibid, 632-633.
[9] Andrew Hartman, *A History of the Culture Wars: A War for the Soul of America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 38-69; Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Origins of A Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2013), 310; Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 6-7.
[10] Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mark Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision: From the Cold War to the Culture Wars* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1997); Gary Dorrien, The Neoconservative Mind: Culture and the War of Ideology (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Jonathan Bronitsky, "The Anglo-American Origins of Neoconservatism," (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2013).

importance of individual experiences in this period and stresses the importance of liberal politics themselves as well as the emergence of the New Left in the creation of neoconservative thought. Accordingly, it demonstrates the slow emergence of Kristol's neoconservative outlook over the decade.

The use of editorial correspondence from *The Public Interest* archive, Kristol's personal correspondence, and his wealth of writings all help to uncover his thought process in these years. The chapter first looks at a fundamental moment in his career, the founding of *The Public Interest*, and pays special attention to his work on public policy. It then examines his criticisms of the New Left, before, finally, turning to his controversial position on the Vietnam War. Consequently, the chapter reveals how and why his liberalism began to break apart in this critical period of his life.

Public Policy and *The Public Interest*

Before leaving his editorial position at *Encounter* Kristol secured a job at *The Reporter* working for Max Ascoli, an anti-fascist émigré. This position allowed Kristol to move his family back to New York and rent an apartment on Riverside Drive in Manhattan.[11] However, Kristol was unable to play a 'significant editorial role' and was limited to writing book reviews for the publication which left him intellectually frustrated.[12] He promptly found other employment as a publisher at Basic Books, where he stayed for the next ten years. He wrote of the job that 'it did not take me long to realize that though publishing was a business I could be passably good at, I lacked the kind of patience, passion, and commitment that is

[11] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 27.
[12] Ibid, 27; Irving Kristol, "The Shadow of War," *The Reporter*, 5 February, 1959, 40-42; Irving Kristol, "Toward Pre-emptive War?" *The Reporter*, 14 May, 1959, 39-41; Irving Kristol, "The Conquistadors' Conscience," *The Reporter,* 17 September, 1959, 58-60; Irving Kristol, "On the Burning Deck," *The Reporter*, 26 November, 1959, 46-48; Irving Kristol, "Guernica to Hiroshima," *The Reporter,* (March 19 1959): 43-44; Irving Kristol, "Strange Gods on Capitol Hill," *The Reporter*, 12 November, 1959, 38-40; Irving Kristol, "A Cool Sociological Eye (Review)," *The Reporter*, 4 February, 1960, 40-42.

the mark of an authentic editor-publisher.'[13] However, it provided him with the stability he needed to pursue other, less financially rewarding, projects.

Kristol dreamed of the creation of his own magazine. As early as 1955 he expressed this desire to Daniel Bell. Kristol jokingly wrote to his friend, 'When you're next in Las Vegas, try to win a million dollars and we'll set up shop – I don't mind working on a shoestring.'[14] On a more serious note, he envisaged the imaginary magazine having 'a political orientation similar to that of the *Economist* – conservative in its attitude, liberal in its values, rational in its tone.'[15] In fact, luck was closer to home than Las Vegas. At a dinner party in 1965 hosted by Sidney Hook, Harvard graduate and Wall Street banker Warren D. Manshel agreed to back Kristol and Bell's magazine. Manshel provided $10,000. With Kristol and Bell providing editorial services for free, the use of Basic Books' offices, and the help of Kristol's secretary Vivian Gornick, later a prominent feminist reporter at *The Village Voice,* this was sufficient to finance the first four issues of the publication, and *The Public Interest* was born.[16]

Kristol drew on his previous experience at *Encounter* and designed the publication by 'borrowing from the formatting of existing or previous magazines and changing things around a bit.'[17] But, the editorial line was unique. The opening editorial stated that 'The aim of *The Public Interest* is at one modest and presumptuous. It is to help all of us, when we discuss issues of public policy, to know a little better what we are talking about – and preferably in time to make such knowledge effective.'[18] Early archival correspondence elaborates the editorial aims envisaged by the pair further. A lengthy memo circulated by

[13] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 28.
[14] Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, 17 June 1955, box 8 folder 7, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 29.
[17] Ibid, 30.
[18] Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol, "Editorial: What is the Public Interest?" *The Public Interest*, No. 1 (Fall 1965): 3-5.

Kristol to advertise the forthcoming journal explained that, 'The magazine will concern itself with the problems of American democracy: problems of public policy especially, but also problems of democratic theory as related to the American experience.'[19] It also stressed the non-partisan nature of *The Public Interest* claiming that 'We do not care whether an author writes from a "liberal" or a "conservative" point of view, so long as his article is enlightening or provocative.'[20] This demonstrated not only Kristol's tolerance of conservative outlooks, but the magazine's initial desire to place intellectual analysis at its heart rather than politics. Bell echoed these sentiments in his own correspondence, describing the enterprise as 'a serious intellectual journal which will discuss public policy problems in a serious but non-technical way.'[21] Additionally, the emphasis on public policy indicated the magazine's attempt to avoid foreign policy debate, something Kristol would later claim was to prevent *The Public Interest* becoming consumed by the Vietnam War.[22] Thus, the formation of *The Public Interest* with its domestic public policy focus marked the beginning of new interests for Kristol.

It also coincided with a renewed interest in poverty in America. Michael Harrington's *The Other America* (1962) challenged the view of John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* and undermined the belief that America had conquered poverty.[23] Harrington was a prominent socialist and writer for *Dissent* magazine, who despite later conflict with the New Left over anti-communism, was present at the founding meeting of Students for Democratic

[19] Memo from Irving Kristol to Who It May Concern, 31 December 1964, box 20 folder 38, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Daniel Bell to Professor W. J. Baumol, 7 June 1966, box 18 folder 20, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[22] Irving Kristol, "Forty Good Years," in *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays 1942-2009,* ed., Gertrude Himmelfarb (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 351.
[23] Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Scribner, 2012), 1-17; John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society: Fortieth Anniversary Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Company: 1998); Brick, *Age of Contradiction,* 4; K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 175.

Society (SDS) in 1962.[24] In his landmark study of poverty in America, Harrington claimed that the welfare state did not help the poor, but instead was designed to help the middle third of American society. Consequently, he argued for an overhaul of the welfare system which attacked the root causes of poverty in America and ended its invisibility in political debates.[25]

The book's success piqued the interest of President Lyndon Johnson who began to build his electoral campaign around anti-poverty measures, later known as The Great Society.[26] On 22nd May 1964 at the University of Michigan, Johnson outlined his vision to 'elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization,' by building a Great Society which demanded 'an end to poverty and racial injustice,' the opportunity to 'renew contact with nature,' and improve education.[27] Thanks to *The Public Interest*'s public policy focus, The Great Society initiative quickly became its principal discussion point. Kristol actively solicited a number of articles on policies associated with it and, in particular, on the urban problems America faced during this period.[28] It is for this reason that much scholarship has considered the publication, and therefore Kristol, as instrumental in undermining public confidence in governmental capacity to solve social problems.[29] However, the reality was more complicated.

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[24] Robert A. Gorman, *Michael Harrington: Speaking American* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Daniel Geary, "The New Left and Liberalism Reconsidered: The Committee of Correspondence and the Port Huron Statement," in *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto,* ed., Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2015), 83; Gary Dorrien, *American Democratic Socialism: History, Politics, Religion, and Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 362-371.

[25] Harrington, *The Other America,* 1-17.

[26] Irving Bernstein, *Guns or Butter: The Presidency of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 95.

[27] Lyndon Baines Johnson, "Remarks at the University of Michigan," 22 May, 1964. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-university-michigan#:~:text=The.

[28] Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, 27 February 1967, box 20 folder 39, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to James Wilson, November 9 1965, box 23 folder 44, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; James Q. Wilson to Irving Kristol, January 2 1966, box 23 folder 44, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[29] Andrew Hartman, *A History of the Culture Wars: A War for the Soul of America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 41; Daniel Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights: The Moynihan Report and Its Legacy* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015),187; Brick, *Age of Contradiction,* 189.

In 1966, Kristol wrote, 'Though I approve, on the whole of the various programs for a Great Society, I too am full of doubt about their potentialities for a good life in a good society.'[30] Rather than dismissing outright government intervention in poverty, education, healthcare, the environment and consumer protection – the areas covered by the umbrella term The Great Society – Kristol signalled, at the very least, hesitant support of these programmes.[31] Thus, he initially appeared ambivalent towards The Great Society.

This ambivalence was further evident in *The New Leader.* Here, Kristol demonstrated his changed views on big business. He wrote, 'I never could understand the bitterness with which the business community excoriated "red tape," "big government," and the like' but, that now he had 'changed [his] mind somewhat.'[32] However, he clarified this point, stressing that, 'I still believe that a democratic government has inherent responsibilities and powers far greater than the Chamber of Commerce has ever been willing to concede.'[33] In the early 1960s then, Kristol still advocated government intervention. This reflected that his mid-life was a period of 'ever more skeptical and self-critical liberalism,' and Bell's belief that initially the phrase '"neoconservative" was a misnomer.'[34]

As part of this critical liberalism, Kristol voiced concern over the effectiveness of the Welfare State. This was clearest in his article "The Lower Fifth," which considered the persistence of poverty in America, and controversially concluded that, 'if the Administration really wanted to, it could win its "unconditional war against poverty" with hardly any campaigns at all.' Instead, Kristol suggested that, 'if the Administration forgot about cutting

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[30] Irving Kristol, "Comment: New Right, New Left" *The Public Interest*, No.4 (Summer 1966): 7.
[31] For detailed accounts of The Great Society see: Bernstein, *Guns or Butter;* Irwin Unger, *The Best of Intentions: The Triumph and failure of the Great Society under Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon* (New York: Doubleday, 1996); Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberation* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996).
[32] Irving Kristol, "Big Government and Little Men," *New Leader* 45, No.24 (November 26, 1962): 13.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Irving Kristol, "Preface," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), ix; Daniel Bell, "The Cultural Wars: American Intellectual Life," *The Wilson Quarterly* 16, No.3 (Summer, 1992): 83.

the income tax and handed over that money to the poor – perhaps in the form of a "negative income tax" as advocated by Milton Friedman (a Goldwaterite!) – this particular war against poverty would be won at a single stroke.'[35] His reference to Milton Friedman indicated that his new-found interest in conservatism had spread to economics. Friedman was a prominent economist from the Chicago School who had recently published *Freedom and Capitalism* (1962), where he proposed that those with low incomes should receive a subsidy from the government in the form of a negative income tax in place of anti-poverty programmes.[36] Thus, Kristol's support for this measure was a far cry from many other liberals at this time who supported 'handups' rather than 'handouts' in the form of programmes such as the Job Corps or the Community Action Program (CAP).[37] However, he was not yet ready to decry all government intervention. His reference to Friedman as 'a Goldwaterite!' was tongue-in-cheek and showed his distaste for the 1964 anti-big government, uncompromisingly anti-communist Republican Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater who was widely considered to be an extremist.[38] In this sense, he remained a dissident liberal.

Kristol's conclusions received a number of complaints, which is unsurprising given the liberal credentials of *The New Leader*. One reader suggested that he 'drive off the turnpikes the next time he takes a trip,' to discover what poverty was.[39] Another complained that he reduced the poor to a 'statistical segment.'[40] Kristol was angered by, in his view, the misinterpretation of the article and responded at length in the following issue, arguing that what he meant was that, 'the American poor are a heterogenous group; that they are not a

[35] Irving Kristol, "The Lower Fifth," *New Leader* 47, No.4 (February 17, 1964): 10.
[36] Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 191-192.
[37] Bernstein, *Guns or Butter,* 82-1123.
[38] See: Mary C. Brenan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).
[39] Walter R. Storey, "Dear Editor," *New Leader* 47, No.6 (March 16, 1964): 32.
[40] Sidney Koretz, "Dear Editors" *New Leader* 47, No.6 (March 16, 1964): 33.

permeant body, but one which is constantly recruiting new members and losing old ones; that the cause of their poverty are both diverse and complicated; that there is no single, radical "solution" to their difficulties; and that this is the kind of problem that does not automatically succumb to a sweeping declaration of war by politicians and publicists.'[41] Kristol was not opposed to fighting poverty; rather, he possessed a nuanced view of poverty which he felt was not shared by governmental experts.

His attack on Harrington made this further clear. He wrote, 'I do not doubt the genuineness of Mike Harrington's hatred of poverty. I only wish he were a little more respectful to the poor – the undeserving poor as well as the deserving, re-educable and retrainable, rehabitatable poor.'[42] The Great Society placed an overwhelming emphasis on aiding those who the government and middle-classes felt were deserving of help.[43] Consequently, schemes such as Johnson's Job Corps, a training programme for young men to find work, were prioritised as means to combat poverty.[44] However, in rhetoric which was similar to New Left criticisms of the War on Poverty, Kristol stressed that he wanted the 'undeserving poor' to receive aid too.[45] Thus, Kristol was less against government intervention than he was dubious about the methods used to tackle poverty. Given this ambivalence, his proclamation that he 'would be alarmed at the prospect of a backlash that could sink the Great Society without trace' was likely true.[46]

In particular, Kristol's criticisms were rooted in his own personal experience of poverty. He reflected that 'All of us at the core of *The Public Interest* had grown up in lower-middle-class or working-class-households – unlike the academics who had authored the War

[41] Irving Kristol, "Poverty and Pecksniff," *New Leader* 47, No.7 (March 30, 1964): 21-22.
[42] Ibid, 23.
[43] Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement.*
[44] Bernstein, *Guns and Butter,* 103.
[45] Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement.*
[46] Irving Kristol, "The Pauper Problem," *New Leader* 49, No.24 (December 5 1966): 11.

on Poverty – and we knew that becoming politically militant was no way for poor people to lift themselves out of poverty. This, it seemed to us, was just a sociological echo of an older socialist idea that a "Great Society" could only come about as a consequence of class struggle.'[47] Moreover, he wrote that, 'One of the curses for public policy over these past fifteen years has been the influence of upper-middle-class people, particularly young people, who feel so compassionate toward poor people, working-class people, and particularly poor blacks, who don't understand what's really going on and don't understand people in general.' Alternatively, as shown in Chapter One, Kristol's upbringing in Brooklyn during the Great Depression was modest, and equipped him with first-hand experience of poverty. Daniel Bell and Nathan Glazer also knew what it meant to be poor: Bell, for example, had shared a single room with his mother and brother for most of his early life.[48] Considering this life experience, and his middle age success in journalism, it was unsurprising that Kristol believed he was better equipped to fight poverty than Ivy League-educated government advisors, and explains some of his sceptical views towards The Great Society.

Kristol's background also strongly influenced his conception of race relations. In particular, he used his Jewish experience of integration to offer advice to Black communities. In the provocatively entitled, "A Few Kind Words for Uncle Tom," he compared the black civil rights struggle to Jewish nationalism in Europe. He highlighted how, 'There was even a movement to replace "Gentile" surnames with invented Hebrew ones – for just as the family names of American Negroes are taken over from their former masters, so the Jews received theirs from the Gentile authorities, who wished to keep the census and police register accurate.'[49] This attempted to demonstrate shared experiences between the two communities,

[47] Kristol, "Autobiographical Memoir," 29-30.
[48] For a detailed account of these figures childhoods in New York see: Joseph Dorman, *Arguing the World: The New York Intellectuals in Their Own Words* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 1-40.
[49] Irving Kristol, "A Few Kind Words for Uncle Tom," *Harper's*, 1 February, 1965, 97.

as Black nationalists tried to reclaim their ancestral names and shed the ones associated with slavery, and positioned Kristol as an expert in overcoming discrimination.[50] He further posited that, 'by concentrating exclusive attention on the proposition that all the ills of the Negro condition derive from white wickedness (a proposition that is, historically, defensible enough) it weakens the instinct for self-help and mutual aid *within* the Negro community.' Kristol saw this as a contrast to American Jews who he claimed 'prefer to think of themselves as something more than the sum of their disabilities.' [51] In making this comparison, he stressed that, unlike Jews, African Americans failed to help themselves. He furthered the idea that Jewish integration was exemplary in a second article, where he boldly claimed that 'No one can doubt that, of all immigrants, it is the Jews who have been the most successful in exploiting the possibilities that America offered them.'[52] It therefore appeared that he believed that not only as an immigrant, but an immigrant from the 'most successful' minority group in America, he was speaking with authority on matters of integration.

This judgement was influenced by popular contemporary liberal conceptions of race. The view that all immigrants faced discrimination which they overcame through the process of assimilation was posed as a common solution for Black discrimination, and few liberals in sociological circles questioned its logic between 1930 and 1965.[53] The clearest influence of these studies on Kristol appeared to be the work of Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, both of whom he described as a part of the 'intellectual nucleus' of *The Public Interest.*[54] In 1963 the pair co-authored *Beyond The Melting Pot,* a study of four different

[50] Edward Onaci, "Revolutionary Identities: New Afrikaans and Name Choices in Black Power Movement," *Souls* 17, No.1-2 (2015): 67-89.
[51] Ibid, 98.
[52] Irving Kristol, "The Negro Today Is Like the Immigrant Yesterday," *New York Times Magazine,* 11 September, 1966, 124.
[53] Daryll Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche 1880-1996* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 140-161.
[54] Memo from Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Daniel P. Moynihan and James Q. Wilson, November 2 1965, box 20 folder 38, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

ethnic groups in New York: African Americans, Irish, Jews and Puerto Ricans.[55] Here, they argued that ethnic labels had yet to be erased in America. The pair used their backgrounds as a Jew and Irishman to inform their understanding of ethnicity in America. As Daniel Geary has highlighted, in Moynihan's case this was especially dubious because it meant playing down his German heritage and exploiting the view of his "broken home" and Irish background.[56] Most importantly though, in Glazer's work on African Americans he suggested that, unlike Jews, Black New Yorkers lacked community self-assistance which limited their progress.[57] Kristol's conflation of the Jewish and African American experiences was thus deeply embedded within popular conceptions of race during the 1960s.

That he viewed civil rights through a white ethnic lens was made further clear in his comparison between Irish and Black families. Kristol declared that 'Alcoholism wreaked far greater havoc among the immigrant Irish than all drugs and stimulants do today among the Negroes. The "matrifocal family" – with the male head intermittently or permanently absent – was not all uncommon among the Irish.'[58] This was a direct reference to the work of Daniel Patrick Moynihan in his capacity as a government advisor. In 1965, Moynihan published his infamous report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,* more commonly known as the Moynihan Report. It controversially argued that, 'At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time.'[59] Moreover, according to Moynihan the source of this problem was a matriarchal family structure which he claimed was 'out of line with the rest of society' and 'seriously retards the progress of the group as

[55] Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, Ma.: The MIT Press, 1970).
[56] Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights,* 14.
[57] Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot,* 24-85.
[58] Kristol, "The Negro Today," 128.
[59] Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family – The Case for National Action* (New York: Cosimo Reports, 2018), 5.

whole.'[60] The report was polarising. Initially many liberals praised it for promising new initiatives for alleviating poverty. However, critics such as William Ryan and Theodore White were appalled by the negative stereotypes presented in the report and believed Moynihan was guilty of victim blaming.[61] By making such clear reference to the Moynihan Report it was clear that while Kristol did not eschew government intervention, he also subscribed to the view that African Americans should take responsibility for improving their own condition.

Likewise, Daniel Bell emphasised the European immigrant experience in his work on civil rights. He wrote in *The Public Interest* that 'What took the Irish three generations, the Italian two, and the Jews one to achieve – the security of middle class status – is something blacks want immediately. They have been here the longest, and have been held down the most.'[62] The article echoed Bell's private sentiments. He told Kristol that, 'I think that the old Tocquevillian point holds true: that when the promise of social change is possible, the chains that bind one become more unbearable and there are increasing demands for speed.'[63] However, he seemed hesitant about the demand for rapid change. With reference to rising Black militancy, he argued that 'a group of "new men" have come into the political system,' who were 'angry; and felt 'deprived.' He believed that, 'Their goal, in many instances is not integration or the sharing power but the control of their "own" institutions and enclaves.'[64]

Kristol also opposed the rising militancy. In his study of New York with *The Public Interest* editorial assistant Paul Weaver, he argued that African Americans 'seemed until recently, well on their way toward following the traditional immigrant route to a secure and

[60] Ibid, 29.
[61] Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights*, 96-109.
[62] Daniel Bell, "The Community Revolution," *The Public Interest* 16 (Summer, 1969): 147.
[63] Daniel Bell to Irving Kristol, October 1965, box 20 folder 38, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[64] Bell, "The Community Revolution," 174.

honorable position American society. Not necessarily toward "integration," whatever that can mean in a city like New York where ethnic identity is still so important. But certainly toward – well, let's say "incorporation."'[65] However, he lamented that 'this journey has been rudely interrupted. The reason is an upsurge of black nationalism of such intensity as to be obsessive in character, and immensely self-destructive in effect.'[66] The mention of the 'traditional immigrant route' and his disappointment that it was 'interrupted,' once again stressed his adherence to slow assimilation as the best means of achieving middle-class status, as opposed to radicalism.

Yet, Kristol did not practice what he preached. In a rare article for *Encounter,* he declared, 'I am pleased that the schools in my city are "integrated."' However, he admitted in the same article that he, 'all of my friends who can afford it,' and a number of African Americans in New York sent their children to private schools. He claimed this was because, 'the "integrated" public schools, while they may be "a living image of democracy in action," are no place to get a good education.' He argued this not because African American children were 'less intelligent,' but that in his opinion, 'they often come from homes and environments where the importance of education is inadequately realised, where the culture level is low, where habits of work and discipline are lax or non-existent, where the emphasis is not on deferred gratifications but immediate satisfactions.'[67] With this comment, he inferred that Black families were less cultured, poorly disciplined and unsuitable colleagues for his children. The tone sounded more like a disgruntled Republican than a New York liberal.

[65] Irving Kristol and Paul Weaver "Who Knows New York? – and other notes on a mixed-up City," *The Public Interest* 16 (Summer 1969): 47.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Irving Kristol, "Dead-End Streets," *Encounter* 89 (February 1961): 64.

However, the language was still couched in liberal conceptions of pathology.[68] Franklin E. Frazier's study *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939), which incidentally informed much of the Moynihan Report, was instrumental in helping promote this view. Central to Frazier's argument was that Black matriarchy was characteristic of lower-class culture and poverty.[69] However, Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944) crystallised the idea of Black lower class as a cultural pathology. Myrdal argued that because of racism African Americans were prevented from assimilating into American society, the result being high family instability and crime rates. Despite reservations about the content of the study, the absence of major criticism of it meant that it became the leading text on race for the next twenty years, and was clearly an influence of Kristol's own conception of race.[70]

Crucially, in the mid-1960s this thinking was increasingly challenged. For example, Black author James Baldwin highlighted the problem with the conflation of the white ethnic experience with African American suffering and discrimination. In a roundtable on race, alongside Sidney Hook, Gunnar Myrdal, Nathan Glazer, and chaired by Norman Podhoretz, Baldwin noted the differences between white ethnic and Black communities.[71] Baldwin criticised Hook for likening the two these two groups arguing that, 'all the other immigrants who have come to these shores and who have gotten or not gotten preferential treatment were nevertheless looked on by the bulk of the American community as white people, and they never served – at least not in the memory of any living man – the same function that

[68] See: Scott, *Contempt and Pity*; Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights*; Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938 -1987* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990).
[69] O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge,* 94-95.
[70] Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal,* 261.
[71] James Baldwin, Nathan Glazer, Sidney Hook, Gunnar Myrdal, "Liberalism and the Negro: A Round-Table Discussion," *Commentary* 37 No.3 (1964): 25-42.

American Negros have served.'[72] Here, Baldwin reminded his fellow intellectuals that whatever the discrimination they may have faced, it was not comparable to Black experiences of racism. He further highlighted the misunderstanding of these intellectuals in equating their own experiences with Black communities when he commented that:

> I did not one day decide to leave my farm and come to America. I was brought here. I did not want to come. And when I got here, I did not, like the Irish and the Jews and the Russians and the Poles and the Czechs and the Italians, immediately find myself in a slum and then by hard work and saving my pennies rise out of the slum into a position of relative economic security so that my idea of reality changed.[73]

In conflating the two experiences, Baldwin argued, these intellectuals were guilty of diminishing the historic and contemporary suffering of African Americans, and ignored the legacy of chattel slavery in the United States.[74] In doing so, white ethnic intellectuals failed to understand the source of radical frustration with mainstream racial liberalism.

Furthermore, Kristol's views on race should be situated within the developing tensions between African American and Jewish communities in this period. As Norman Podhoretz's extremely contentious essay, "My Negro Problem – And Ours," showed, conflict between the two communities had long existed.[75] However, the Six-Day War of 1967, resulting in the Israeli occupation of majority-Arab lands, saw Black Power activists denounce Israel as imperialist and exacerbated these strains.[76] Having initially supported the

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[72] Ibid, 27.
[73] Ibid, 32.
[74] On the mid-century Black urban experience see: Daniel Matlin, *On the Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2013).
[75] Norman Podhoretz, "My Negro Problem – And Ours," *Commentary* 35, No.2 (1963): 93.
[76] Marc Dollinger, *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s* (Waltham: Brandeis University, 2018), 157-160; Nathan Abrams*, Norman Podhoretz and Commentary Magazine: The Rise and Fall of the Neocons* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 71-76.

civil rights movement, many Jewish intellectuals, increasingly concerned about the survival of Israel, now feared that anti-Semitism was becoming embedded within the New Left and Black Power movements.[77] In particular, Nathan Glazer argued at length in *Commentary* that Jews needed to stop supporting anti-Semitic civil rights groups.[78] This feeling was further heightened in 1968, when African Americans took control of the school board at Ocean Hill-Brownsville and dismissed the white, largely Jewish, teaching staff.[79] Thus, Kristol's dismissals of Black radicalism and unwarranted advice on assimilation were part of wider frictions between the two communities in this moment.

The New Left

However, for Kristol the greatest source of tension with the emerging radical groups of the decade was not with Black radicals, but with the Student New Left. The early student movement, angered by racial injustice and the omnipresent Cold War, emerged in the early-1960s primarily as a campus-based movement. In 1962 Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) published the Port Huron Statement, largely drafted by its President and University of Michigan student Tom Hayden, and established itself as one of the leading radical New Left campus movements.[80] The Port Huron Statement, written in summer 1962 at a United Auto Workers educational camp in Port Huron, Michigan, argued that students were compelled from 'silence to activism' by the contemporary injustices in the United States and argued for a 'new left' which would be imbued with intellectualism, formed of younger people, start controversy, spread across the country, and urged community activism. Surprisingly it also

[77] Richard H. King, *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals 1940-1970* (Woodrow Wilson Center: Washington, D.C., 2004), 165-172; Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 193-209.
[78] Nathan Glazer, "Blacks, Jews and the Intellectuals," *Commentary* 47, No.4 (April 1969): 33-39.
[79] Hartman, *A History of the Culture Wars,* 58-60; Abrams, Norman Podhoretz, 78.
[80] Isserman, *If I had a Hammer,* 202-215.

called for the incorporation of liberals and socialists.[81] However, as the 1960s progressed and the United States became further embroiled in Vietnam, relations between liberals and the New Left broke down. In particular, the 1964 Free Speech Movement (FSM) led by Mario Savio at the University of California, Berkeley sparked a wave of campus unrest across the country based on the argument that campus liberals and the universities that housed them were serving the interests of corporations. Instead, the FSM called on universities to allow political activism on campus.[82] The New York Intellectuals considered university values to be under threat and took the lead in creating an anti-student position.[83]

Kristol was particularly worried by this campus unrest, which, he claimed in 1999, drove him from liberal dissidence towards 'a barely disguised hostility' towards the left. [84] Unsurprisingly, then, *The Public Interest* spilt much ink on the issue. So great were the number of articles on the movement that in 1969 Kristol turned down an article by Paul Weaver on students claiming that the journal had published too much on the matter, and that new articles needed to be of 'extraordinary interest or importance' to be included.[85] Kristol and Bell collated a sample of these essays in the collection, *Confrontation: The Student Rebellion and the Universities* (1968). They posited that the essays provided a 'fairly comprehensive picture of the student movement, one of the most significant sociological movements of the 1960's; and together they also provide material for an analysis of one of the most troublesome areas that will confront the United States in the 1970's, the definition

[81] SDS, "Port Huron Statement," in *The Radical Reader* ed. Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John McMillian (New York: The New Press, 2003), 468-476; See also: Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein ed. *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto Book* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).
[82] Geary, "Children of *The Lonely Crowd*," 617-620.
[83] Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 342-343.
[84] Kristol, "Preface," x.
[85] Irving Kristol to Paul Weaver, November 26 1969, box 23 folder 37, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

of the idea of the university.'[86] In addition to Bell and Kristol, influential sociologists such as Seymour Martin Lipset and Talcott Parsons contributed to the volume. Meanwhile, the essays included ranged over protests at Berkeley, Columbia and the structure of the university itself which demonstrated the breadth of the analysis provided by *The Public Interest.*

For Kristol, the heart of the problem was the student New Left's interest in communism. He admitted that, 'there is no reason why a university student shouldn't be radical.'[87] However, he disliked the type of radicalism that interested campus students. In a 1965 article for *The Atlantic,* he reflected on contemporary university unrest, writing that, 'What they seek is a pure and self-perpetuating popular revolution, not a "planned economy" or anything like that. And this is why they are so attracted to Castro's Cuba and Mao's China, countries where the popular revolution has not yet become "bourgeoisified."'[88] Furthermore, in the same article he claimed that, 'As for mass terror in Cuba and China – well, this actually may be taken as a kind of testimony to the ardour and authenticity of the regime's revolutionary fervor,' by the New Left.[89] He reinforced such criticism a few years later in 1968, when he wrote that, 'I consider Maoism as detestable as fascism and not easily distinguishable from it.'[90] This familiar rhetoric of oppression and comparison of communism with fascism harked back to his criticism of Stalinists in the 1940s and 1950s. Once again, he seemed concerned by the rising tide of support for repressive foreign governments held up as utopias. His complaints against the New Left were therefore consistent with his earlier Cold War liberal thought.

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[86] Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol, *Confrontation: The Student Rebellion and the Universities* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).
[87] Irving Kristol, "A Different Way to Restructure the University," *New York Times Magazine,* December 8, 1968, 170.
[88] Irving Kristol, "What's Bugging the Students," in *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays 1942-2008,* ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 122.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Irving Kristol, "Memoirs of a "Cold Warrior," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 468.

This concern was also reflected in the work of other New York Intellectuals. In 1968 student protests broke out at Columbia University. With the university on the doorstep of many of the group, they naturally turned much of their attention to these events.[91] Writing on the protests Bell argued that 'In the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] elections, the old administration of Ted Kaptchuk had been attacked violently by a group of young Turks—or, rather, young Maos and young Ché Guevaras—for having conducted only peaceful demonstrations and for having limited its activity to "building a base" on campus.'[92] Bell, like Kristol, took issue with the admiration of revolutionary figures and the violent tactics they stood for. Meanwhile, in her essay on Columbia, Diana Trilling also disapproved of the idolisation of communist revolutionaries. She wrote that, at 'Columbia as in France, the student revolution had its mysterious intangible reference to the superiority of the Communist system but it had no reference at all to the programmatic doctrine of Marx and Lenin or even of Mao, only vaguely, to what is regarded as the more directly human and certainly more romantic Communism of Castro, particularly of Che Guevara.' She went on to note that, in Columbia, 'as abroad the red flag hung along with the black flag of anarchism; the commonest decoration of disorder was, however, pictures of Che.'[93] Again, Trilling's critique was explicitly anti-communist. Moreover, she demonstrated a particular distaste for the new communist heroes such as Castro and Guevara who did not even represent the pragmatism of Marx, but were, instead, romantics.

Likewise, Irving Howe expressed fear over the students' attitude to revolutionaries. In 1962, Kristol's CCNY contemporary and the editor of *Dissent*, along with the rest of the

[91] In 1968 students occupied Columbia University over a number of issues, most importantly the what they considered the University's exploitative power as a property owner in black and Latino districts. See: Brick, *Age of Contradiction,* 168-190.
[92] Daniel Bell, "Columbia and the New Left," *Public Interest* 13 (1968): 65.
[93] Diana Trilling, "On the Steps of the Low Library," in *We Must March My Darlings: A Critical Decade* ed. Diana Trilling (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 92-93.

magazine's editorial board, met with SDS. The meeting is widely known to have been a disaster.[94] In hindsight, Howe recognised that 'we [the editorial board] mishandled the meeting badly,' and that the older intellectuals, much like Kristol, were 'unable to contain our impatience with SDS susceptibility to charismatic dictators like Castro.'[95] Despite this breakdown in communications Howe remained hopeful about the future and wrote of the Port Huron statement that it was 'a fresh American democratic radicalism.'[96] Because of this optimism, Howe, as opposed to Kristol and many other New York Intellectuals, continued to try to engage with the New Left. However, what was clear, was that the distaste for the 'heroes' of the New Left was not unique to Kristol, but widely shared by the Old Left and a key source of friction between the two generations.

A consideration of Kristol's work on the Bicentennial of the American Revolution suggests that his rejection of this radicalism was also rooted in his conception of what constituted a 'true' revolution, and demonstrates that his engagement with the New Left was not limited to antagonistic journalistic coverage, but also connected to more serious political thought. Governmental preparations for the Bicentennial began in 1966, but it was not until the 1970s that efforts to celebrate the event really took hold.[97] In 1972 the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a conservative public policy think-tank with which Kristol was associated, invited him to take part in a lecture series celebrating the Revolution. The AEI envisaged that Hannah Arendt would deliver the opening lecture, but when she declined,

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[94] For a detailed account see: Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer,* 77-124.
[95] Irving Howe, *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 292.
[96] Ibid, 293.
[97] For a historical overview of the celebrations see: Tammy S. Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976: Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); M. J. Rymsza-Pawlowska, *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Christopher Capozzo, ""It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country": Celebrating the Bicentennial in an Age of Limits," in *America in the Seventies*, ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004): 29-49.

Kristol took her place. He presented "The American Revolution as A Successful Revolution," at St. John's Church, Lafayette Square, Washington D.C. on 12th October 1973.[98]

The lecture drew heavily on Arendt's thinking and acknowledged Kristol's debt to her work *On Revolution* (1963).[99] Here, Arendt compared the French and American Revolutions, and claimed that 'The sad truth of the matter is that the French Revolution, which ended in disaster, has made world history, while the American Revolution, so triumphantly successful, has remained an event of little more than local importance.'[100] Arendt's biographer Richard King, has argued that the book marked her out as a modern day republican who believed this important aspect of the American political tradition was ignored by contemporary liberals.[101] Furthermore, she suggested that the real difference between a true revolution and a rebellion was that the former created the 'foundation of freedom,' and the latter merely 'liberation.'[102] However, she lamented that Marxism fundamentally altered the meaning of revolution so that it ignored politics to focus on the social question of liberating citizens from poverty.[103]

Like Arendt, Kristol argued that the American Revolution was one of the few successful revolutions in recent history, and in particular used this understanding of revolution to make sense of the contemporary domestic political unrest. He identified that many found it 'hard to take George Washington seriously as a successful revolutionary,' because 'He just does not fit our conception of what a revolutionary leader is supposed to be like. It is a conception that easily encompasses Robespierre, Lenin, Mao Tse-Tung, or Fidel

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[98] Hannah Arendt to Irving Kristol, November 20 1972, box 24 folder 1, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to William J. Baroody, December 20 1972, box 24 folder 1, Irving Kristol Papers; Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to William J. Baroody, June 19 1973, box 24 folder, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol, "The American Revolution as A Successful Revolution," in *America's Continuing Revolution: An Act of Conservation* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975), 3.

[99] Kristol, "The American Revolution as A Successful Revolution," 5.

[100] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Faber &Faber, 2016), 49.

[101] Ibid, 242; Richard King, *Arendt and America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 219-238.

[102] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 140.

[103] King, *Arendt and America*, 245-270.

Castro.' But, he asked, 'can one stretch it to include a gentleman (and a gentleman he most certainly was) like George Washington?' For Kristol, the answer to this question was yes. He argued that, 'The idea of revolution as the world understands it today, is what Dr. Arendt calls "rebellion." It involves passionate rejection of the status quo—its institutions and the way of life associated with these institutions. It rejects everything that exists because it wishes to create everything anew.'[104] With this he demonstrated a rejection of contemporary understandings of revolution and the revolutionary figures associated with them who were so clearly cherished by the New Left. Given this understanding, his 1968 conclusions that 'I am certain Castro is no good model for Latin American progress; I consider Maoism as detestable as fascism and easily distinguishable from it; I do not see that the underdeveloped countries of the Third World represent any kind of wave of the future, and Che Guevara is not my idea of Robin Hood,' were more than merely anti-communist, they were rooted in a diametrically opposed conception of revolution to the New Left.[105]

This understanding helps shed light on his frustrations with the New Left movements. For him, unlike the New Left, revolution was not based on 'radical dissatisfaction with the human condition as experienced by the mass of the people, demanding instant "liberation" from this condition, an immediate transformation of all social and economic circumstance, a prompt achievement of an altogether "better life" in an altogether "better world."'[106] Instead, 'Our [America's] revolutionary message—which is a message of the Revolution itself but of the American political tradition from the *Mayflower* to the Declaration of Independence to the Constitution—is that a self-disciplined people *can* create a political community in which an ordered liberty will promote both economic prosperity and political participation.'[107] The

[104] Kristol, "The American Revolution as A Successful Revolution," 14-15.
[105] Kristol, "Memoirs of a "Cold Warrior," 468.
[106] Kristol, "The American Revolution as A Successful Revolution," 10.
[107] Ibid, 16.

issue was less that the New Left were rebellious per se, and rather that they did not look to their own revolutionary heritage. In essence they were un-American.

In some ways, this perception was mistaken. The founding document of the New Left, *The Port Huron Statement*, drew heavily upon the thinking of sociologist C. Wright Mills. As Kevin Matteson demonstrated, Mills' *The Power Elite* (1956) proposed a radical new form of democracy which paved the way for the New Left's participatory democracy. However, this conception of democracy was not new, Mills championed the thought of the Founding Fathers, the return to the eighteenth and nineteenth century idea of civic organising, and the work of philosopher John Dewey.[108] Indeed, and as we have already seen, Irving Howe viewed *The Port Huron Statement* as a fundamentally American piece of political writing.[109] But, in the mid-1960s, as sympathies with post-colonial revolutions Vietnam, Cuba, and China grew amongst the New Left, and the international influence of student movements abroad from across the Atlantic increasingly came into contact with their American counterparts, the movement took on a more internationalist approach to revolutionary politics. It was to this version of student radicalism which Kristol responded so critically, and by understanding this perspective, we can better appreciate the origins of Kristol's 'barely disguised hostility' to the politics of the New Left as the 1960s progressed.[110]

Comprehending this viewpoint is even more important in light of the fact that Kristol used his work on the American Revolution to advise President Ford on the content of his Bicentennial speeches. In a letter to Presidential Adviser Robert T. Hartmann, Kristol suggested that the President took a look at the AEI lectures, especially those of Kristol, Martin Diamond and Daniel Boorstin, because 'you might find them useful in ways which

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[108] Matteson, *Intellectuals in Action,* 71-96; C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Daniel Geary, *Radical Ambition: C. Wright Mills, the Left, and American Social Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 143-176.
[109] Howe, *A Margin of Hope,* 293.
[110] Kristol, "Preface," x.

even I cannot foresee.' Furthermore, he urged that the President 'make the point that both Diamond and I make, to the effect that American Revolution was a "law-and-order" revolution.'[111] Significantly, in Ford's Fourth of July remarks at Independence Hall the President proclaimed that 'The American Revolution was unique and remains unique in that in was fought in the name of the law as well as liberty.'[112] Furthermore, at Kristol's suggestion, the speech contained the same Lincoln quote with which Diamond began his AEI lecture on the American Revolution.[113] Kristol's viewpoint that rebellious behaviour was not the key to revolutionary change reached and influenced the highest levels of government and was therefore all the more important to understand.

Vietnam

A second point of tension between Kristol and the New Left was the Vietnam War. By the mid-1960s the escalation of American intervention in Vietnam was an explosive topic amongst the New Left and beyond.[114] *The Public Interest* may have successfully avoided getting bogged down in debates surrounding the conflict, but Kristol did not. In particular, his reaction to the Cuban Revolution foreshadowed his later hawkish credentials, as evident from the title for a 1962 article, "The Case for Intervention in Cuba." In the article, he suggested that 'any great power has the obligation – or, if you wish, is constrained by necessity – to see it, so far as its power allows and the dictates of prudence permit, that its smaller neighbours have relatively stable governments.'[115] This imperialistic viewpoint made clear that America,

[111] Irving Kristol to Robert T. Hartmann, 7 June 1976, box 67 folder "Fourth of July (1976) - Bicentennial Speeches: General (2)," John Marsh Files, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.
[112] Gerald R. Ford, "Remarks in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," 4 July, 1976. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-philadelphia-pennsylvania.
[113] Ibid; Irving Kristol to Robert T. Hartmann, 7 June 1976.
[114] Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture In the 1960s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 124-154.
[115] Irving Kristol, "The Case for Intervention in Cuba," *New Leader* 45, No. 21 (1962): 11.

as the 'great power,' was permitted, indeed even had a just right, to intervene in events taking place in Cuba. He went on, explaining that if America had 'no intention of allowing a Soviet Cuba to endure over the longer term, then the case for prompt intervention would appear to be irrefutable.'[116] With the phrase 'Soviet Cuba,' he framed the events in Cuba through the Cold War, and overlooked the local factors which contributed to Fulgencio Batista's overthrow by Fidel Castro in 1959. This Cold War lens would be fundamental to shaping his commentary on Vietnam.

As early as 1957, he recognised that the Cold War was shifting East. He wrote that, 'The Communist myth may be discredited in the West, or even inside the Soviet Union itself (as I think it is). But a different species of this myth continues to flourish unaffected in the "underdeveloped" countries. There it is no utopian political metaphysic but a crude quasi-religion.'[117] Yet it was not until the 1960s that he began to voice support for American actions there. In a letter for *Encounter* on Vietnam*,* he defended the President, writing that, 'I know that there are people, especially abroad, who believe that Lyndon Johnson is committed to the idea of an American imperial destiny, and that his commitment – deriving, presumably, from the economic or political compulsions of American society – is fixed beyond amendment. They could not be more wrong, both about Lyndon Johnson and about America.'[118] This statement suggested his implicit support of continued American intervention in Vietnam.

Other articles showed this view more explicitly. In "Facing the Facts in Vietnam," he noted that 'we are stuck with South Vietnam – and with a South Vietnam which, regardless of any change in leadership, will be a weak and troublesome ally.' However, he wrote, 'We are not however, stuck with the ideology of containment. Having created that ideology, we

[116] Ibid.
[117] Irving Kristol, "Bandung Powers—Danger Zone for US Policy," *The New Republic,* January 14, 1957, 15.
[118] Irving Kristol, "A New Isolationism?" *Encounter* 166 (June 1966): 49.

are free to revise it to meet any set of particular circumstances. As concerns Vietnam, it would seem that such a revision cannot wait much longer.'[119] Yet despite these problems he did not advocate withdrawal, as he argued that to, 'Simply to pull out of Vietnam would be an unthinkable admission of defeat.'[120]

His article in support of 1968 Democratic Presidential nominee Hubert Humphrey solidified Kristol's support of the conflict. Humphrey, with his background as a founding member of Americans for Democratic Action, was deeply embedded in post-war liberal politics. However, as Lyndon Johnson's Vice-President (1965-1969) and a pre-eminent foreign policy Hawk, the now infamous 1968 Chicago Democratic convention was reluctant to endorse his candidacy.[121] Kristol opposed claims that Humphrey had '"prostituted himself"' by supporting Johnson's foreign policy and suggested on Vietnam, that 'To attempt an abrupt reversal would be to risk a dangerous reaction whose political consequences could be disastrous for the future of American liberalism.'[122] In light of his advocacy for US intervention in Cuba, and early recognition that the Cold War was shifting East, such support of the Vietnam War was surely of little surprise to his contemporaries, but did signal a growing move away from much contemporary left-wing thinking.

This distancing was particularly apparent at an event held in February 1966 where a number of intellectuals gathered in the home of dancer Shirley Broughton for a discussion of the war, the transcript of which was subsequently published in the *New York Times*. When asked why America was in Vietnam, Kristol controversially replied that, 'to put it in political terms, one can say that the United States is in South Vietnam in order to defend the principles

[119] Irving Kristol, "Facing the Facts in Vietnam," *New Leader* 46, No. 20 (1963): 8.
[120] Ibid, 7.
[121] See here: Miroff, "From Friends to Foes: George McGovern, Hubert Humphrey, and the Fracture in American Liberalism," 90-109; Bernstein, *Guns or Butter* 508-518.
[122] Irving Kristol, "Why I am For Humphrey," *The New Republic,* 8 June, 1968. https://newrepublic.com/article/69463/why-i-am-humphrey.

of coexistence as these principles have emerged out of the cold war.'[123] He carried on, 'Though this is a very precarious equilibrium, the Soviet Union and the United States seem to have worked out principles of coexistence which do at least minimize the chances of a world war and even the chances of a local conflict. We have not yet worked out such an equilibrium vis-á-vis Communist China, which is the reason for the present situation in Southeast Asia.'[124] Such explanations did not satisfy his fellow panellists, including the left-wing philosopher and writer for *Dissent* magazine, Michael Walzer, who responded that, 'I don't believe anyone in Washington has ever seriously believed, as Mr. Kristol has suggested, that there has been Chinese aggression in Vietnam or a Chinese effort to shake an equilibrium which had somehow been previously established.'[125]

Therefore, much like his analysis of the Cuban situation, Kristol overlooked the local context of the conflict, and saw it through the prism of the Cold War, which was out of line with left-wing thinking. Journalist Susan Sontag signalled just how far-removed Kristol was from his left-leaning liberal contemporaries, when she remarked that, 'I'm very concerned that Mr. Kristol – whose views I don't share and I doubt a majority of the people in this audience share them – that he not be submerged in a kind of general left-wing consensus.'[126] Not only did he differ in opinion from much of the left then, they did not even want to be associated with this line of thought.

A symposium on Vietnam also published in the *New York Times Magazine* further exposed Kristol's increasingly conservative position on foreign policy. The symposium asked participants whether they agreed with the use of civil disobedience as a means to oppose the Vietnam War. Kristol answered no. He sarcastically asked, 'Has there ever been, in this

[123] Irving Kristol, "A Talk-in on Vietnam," *New York Times Magazine,* February 6, 1966, 12.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Michael Walzer, "A Talk-in on Vietnam," *New York Times Magazine,* February 6, 1966, 72.
[126] Susan Sontag, "A Talk-in on Vietnam," *New York Times Magazine,* February 6, 1966, 75.

country, a movement of protest so unreflective about its principles of action as the present anti-Vietnam "crusade"?'[127] Furthermore, in his conclusion he wrote, 'I realize that there are some good people who feel strongly that civil disobedience is the only honorable course open to them.' However, he went on, 'I would only ask of these individuals that they distinguish themselves from those who, talking bombastically of "resistance," mindlessly flirt with revolution-making. You can emulate Thoreau when confronted with the Mexican war, or Lenin when confronted with World War I. But the idea of a Leninist Thoreau is an intellectual and moral absurdity,' which further solidified his expression of contempt towards the New Left.[128]

This disdain was shared by other contributors. Sidney Hook declared that, 'I do not believe that civil disobedience with respect to American Vietnam policy, if one is opposed to Vietnam, is justified.'[129] Meanwhile, the novelist James T. Farrell called out the hypocrisy of the protestors writing that, 'I support the policy of the United States in its present commitment. And for my political views, I have been insulted by mail and by students during lectures. All of whom are terribly concerned about the freedom of people all over the world – unless they have another view, obviously.'[130] Kristol's alignment with these two thinkers was expected given their previous involvement in similar political organisations such as the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF).[131] More surprising was the similar position he took to the conservative founder of *National Review* and prominent conservative, William F. Buckley. Buckley concurred that civil disobedience was not justified and claimed

[127] Irving Kristol, "A baker's dozen of writers comment: On Civil Disobedience, 1967," *The New York Times,* November 26, 1967, 128.
[128] Ibid, 129-130.
[129] Sidney Hook, "A baker's dozen of writers comment: On Civil Disobedience, 1967," *The New York Times,* November 26, 1967, 125.
[130] James T. Farrell, "A baker's dozen of writers comment: On Civil Disobedience, 1967," *The New York Times,* November 26, 1967, 29.
[131] Jumonville, *Critical Crossings,* 33; Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 273.

that 'those others who ask to retain a personal veto over every activity of their Government, whether it is a war in Vietnam or the social or educational policies of a municipal administration, are asking for the kind of latitude which breaks the bond of civil society.'[132] For these intellectuals, the tactics of the New Left were not to be celebrated.

Moreover, this view situated Kristol against the more radical left-wing contributors to the symposium, such as his one-time mentor, Dwight Macdonald. Macdonald thought that, 'civil disobedience is justified,' according to the criteria that the individual believed, one, 'in enforcing a specific law, the authorities are themselves violating the spirit of the lawful order in general;' two, 'protests within the limits of legality are no longer tactically effective, have become inadequate as a response to the situation;' and three, 'the actions of the Government have become so obnoxious to one's own personal ethics that one would feel oneself a coward and a hypocrite in continuing to submit a law which enforces these actions.' He explained that, 'Sometime last summer I concluded – as did others, who like myself, had not hitherto gone beyond the legal limits in opposing the Vietnam war – that all three conditions had been fulfilled.[133] Macdonald's view highlighted the fractious nature of the debate. Additionally, Kristol's contrasting opinion, which was closer in kind to that of Buckley, laid bare his increasingly unstable liberal position.

However, the clearest attack on Kristol's defence of the government's actions in Vietnam came from Noam Chomsky in his *New York Review of Books* article "The Responsibility of Intellectuals."[134] Chomsky attacked figures such as Kristol, Bell, and the

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[132] William F. Buckley, "A baker's dozen of writers comment: On Civil Disobedience, 1967," *The New York Times,* November 26, 1967, 27.
[133] Dwight Macdonald, **"**A baker's dozen of writers comment: On Civil Disobedience, 1967," *The New York Times,* November 26, 1967, 130.
[134] Noam Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," *The New York Review of Books,* February 23, 1967. https://www-nybooks-com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/articles/1967/02/23/a-special-supplement-the-responsibility-of-intelle/. See also: Nicholas Allott, Chris Knight, and Neil Smith, eds., *The Responsibility of Intellectuals: Reflections by Noam Chomsky and Others After 50 Years* (London: University College London Press, 2019).

prominent liberal historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. for creating a post-war climate which directly contributed to the situation in Vietnam.[135] Chomsky charged, 'A striking feature of the recent debate on Southeast Asia has been the distinction that is commonly drawn between "responsible criticism," on the one hand, and "sentimental," or "emotional," or "hysterical" criticism, on the other.'[136] Singling out Kristol, he went on, 'I am not interested here in whether Kristol's characterization of protest and dissent is accurate, but rather in the assumptions on which it rests.' Of these assumptions he sarcastically asked, 'Is the purity of American motives a matter that is beyond discussion, or that is irrelevant to discussion?' and, 'Should decisions be left to "experts" with Washington contacts – even if we assume that they command the necessary knowledge and principles to make the "best" decision, will they invariably do so?' He furthered this criticism, 'Although Kristol does not examine these questions directly, his attitude presupposes answers, answers which are wrong in all cases.'[137] This condemnation was doubly important. Firstly, it indicated the growing importance of Kristol's voice in the national political scene and his developing role as a public intellectual. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, it revealed the fractured nature of liberal politics in this period.

In particular, Chomsky took issue with Kristol's assumptions on what caused the radicalisation of the left. Chomsky wrote, 'Since these young people are well-off, have good fortunes, etc., their protest must be irrational. It must be the result of boredom, of too much security, or something of this sort.'[138] Here, Chomsky referenced Kristol's article, "What's Bugging the Students?" where Kristol concluded that, 'So many college students "go left" for

[135] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons*, 338-339; Brick, *Age of Contradiction,* 32; Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals."
[136] Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals."
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.

the same reason that so many high school students "go delinquent." They are bored.'[139] Chomsky proposed that perhaps student radicalism came about for other reasons: 'It may be, for example, that as honest men students and junior faculty are attempting to find out the truth for themselves rather than ceding the responsibility to "experts" or to government; and it may be that they react with indignation to what they discover. These possibilities Kristol does not reject. They are simply unthinkable, unworthy of consideration.'[140] With this then, Chomsky made plain Kristol's disdain for the New Left and his patronising stance towards radical movements in this period.

However, Kristol was not alone in making such condescending judgements. Irving Howe, despite his socialist politics, also critiqued the New Left for their middle-class credentials. In his assessment of the new radical impulses, "New Styles in Leftism," he wrote that, 'Often, especially if white, the son of the middle-class – and sometimes the son of middle-class parents nursing radical memories – he asserts his rebellion against the deceit and hollowness of American society. Very good; there is plenty to rebel against.' However, Howe argued that, 'in the course of his rebellion he [the middle-class son] tends to reject not merely the middle-class ethos but a good many things he too hastily associates with it.'[141] Howe's comparison makes clear the wider gulf between the New and Old Left in the 1960s rather than Kristol's own particular peculiarities in relation to radicalism on campuses.[142]

This tension in part resulted from the Cold War liberal conviction that ideology was diminishing in importance. Chomsky himself noted this. He argued, 'When we consider the responsibility of intellectuals, our basic concern must be their role in the creation and analysis

[139] Kristol, "What's Bugging the Students," 120.
[140] Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals."
[141] Irving Howe, "New Styles in Leftism," in *A Voice Still Heard: Selected Essays of Irving Howe,* ed. Nina Howe (Yale University Press, 2014), 57.
[142] For more on the split between the Old and New Left see: Kevin, *Intellectuals in Action*; Isserman, *If I had a Hammer.*

of ideology. And, in fact, Kristol's contrast between the unreasonable ideological types and responsible experts is formulated in terms that immediately bring to mind Daniel Bell's interesting and influential "The End of Ideology," an essay which is as important for what it leaves unsaid as for its actual content.'[143] In this essay, which concluded a collected volume of the same name, Bell famously argued that 'For ideology, which once was a road to action, has come to a dead end.'[144] The 'end of ideology' concept was not unique to Bell's thinking. Indeed he believed that the first person to use the term was French intellectual Albert Camus in 1946.[145] However, Bell along with fellow American sociologists Seymour Martin Lipset and Edward Shils, and French thinker Raymond Aron, popularised the term to describe the contemporary success of Western Europe's and America's success in maintaining liberal market capitalism despite Marxist predictions of failure.[146] Given Kristol and Bell's close friendship and intellectual relationship, as well as his involvement in the transatlantic intellectual network of the CCF, it seems likely that Kristol too believed that at the turn of the decade, and in the face of capitalism's success, ideology was redundant. Chomsky was therefore correct to locate Kristol's views in this framework, and it perhaps helps to shed light on why he was so surprised and hostile to the radicalism on campuses.

Considering Chomsky's condemnation of Kristol in "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," it was not shocking that Kristol would later reflect that 'As the New Left and the counterculture began to reshape liberalism – as can be seen by a perusal of *The New York Review of Books* and even *The New Yorker* – and eventually to reshape the Democratic Party,

[143] Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals."
[144] Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 393.
[145] Giles Scott Smith, "The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the End of Ideology, and the 1955 Milan Conference: 'Defining the Parameters of Discourse,'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, No.3 (July 2002): 441.
[146] Ibid; Iain Stewart, *Raymond Aron and Liberal Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 120-141.

disenchanted liberals began to find themselves harboring all kinds of conservative instincts and ideas.'[147] Indeed, as Alexander Bloom's study of the New York Intellectuals has shown, this article helped drive the final wedge between the various segments of the intellectual crowd.[148] The increased radicalism of the New Left in this period forced liberals to deepen their social critique, or defend the post-war order, and Kristol's defence of Vietnam meant he had clearly chosen the latter.[149] Thus, during the 1960s, in the realm of foreign policy at least, he was beginning his rightward trajectory.

Conclusion: Liberal Irresponsibility

Given Kristol's ambivalence towards, but not outright dismissal of, the Great Society, his ascription of mid-century liberal ideas on race, his anti-radical beliefs, and his position on Vietnam, it was foreseeable that in 1968 he would endorse Hubert Humphrey for president, and even that he would provide Humphrey with advice on his unsuccessful campaign to secure the Democratic Party presidential nomination in 1971.[150] Kristol explained, 'someone like Hubert Humphrey, whose pragmatic liberalism represents the only vital and enduring tradition of American government since 1932, and who will best be able to enlarge this tradition to encompass the strange new world toward which we are stumbling.'[151] Importantly, then, the 'pragmatic liberalism' of Humphrey and its connection to Roosevelt's New Deal appealed to Kristol and was America's best hope of tackling its problems. He elaborated that, 'I personally see, the election of Mr. Humphrey as being not only desirable, but in some sense necessary.'[152] However, when the anti-war and New Left candidate George

[147] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 31.
[148] Bloom, *Prodigal Sons,* 366.
[149] Geary, "Children of *The Lonely Crowd*," 631.
[150] Irving Kristol to Hubert Humphrey, December 30 1971, box 12 folder 14, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[151] Irving Kristol, "Why I am For Humphrey."
[152] Ibid.

McGovern secured the Democratic Presidential Nomination in 1972, Kristol, still a registered Democrat, cast his vote for the Republican candidate, Richard Nixon.[153] This was a pivotal moment in his political journey. Discussing the matter in the *Wall Street Journal*, he wrote, 'The destiny of the Democratic Party is in the hands of a movement committed to what, by yesterday's standards, would be called the politics of irresponsibility.'[154]

The political landscape was transforming before Kristol's eyes, and while it would take until the end of the 1970s for this transformation to be completed, as his views discussed in this chapter show, his ideological rupture from liberalism was well under way. The next chapter's exploration of his developing thought on democracy and capitalism in late-1960s and early 1970s will demonstrate how these emerging interests combined with the fractured political climate discussed in this chapter to form the consistent political outlook now termed neoconservatism.

[153] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 32; Anon, "Irving Kristol (William)," *Current Biography,* September 1974, box 1 folder 1, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society. For the difference between Humphrey and McGovern see: Miroff, "From Friends to Foes."
[154] Irving Kristol, "The New Road for Democrats," *Wall Street Journal,* 13 October, 1972, 8.

Chapter Four: Ideological Rupture: Democracy and Capitalism

> Do these essays add up to anything that can be called a "political position"? The candid answer is, alas, an equivocal one. It is fairly clear, I would hope, that I am not comfortable with what passes for either liberalism or conservatism in the United States today.
>
> Irving Kristol, 1972[1]

With these words, Irving Kristol not only introduced his first book, *On the Democratic Idea in America* (1972), but also demonstrated the highly ambiguous nature of his politics during the 1960s and 1970s. The volume was a collection of essays, largely published in *The Public Interest,* and which was concerned with the state of twentieth-century American democracy. *On the Democratic Idea in America* was published against the continuing turmoil of the student movements of the 1960s, but events were to become even more turbulent as the decade continued.[2] The 1970s were marked by rising inflation caused by both the Vietnam War and soaring oil prices in the wake of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Companies (OPEC) crisis of 1973, and declining trust in government as a result of Watergate.[3] It was within this political landscape that Kristol struggled to place himself in the early 1970s. However, by the decade's end the birth of neoconservatism, and his subsequent

[1] Irving Kristol, *On the Democratic Idea in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), viii.
[2] Mary C. Brenan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture In the 1960s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).
[3] For an overview of the era see: Edward D. Berkowitz, *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) 53-68; Mark Blyth, *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 126-139; J. Hoeveler, *The Postmodernist Turn: American Thought and Culture in the 1970s* (New York: Twayne, 1996).

embrace of the label, clearly marked the death of his attachment to liberalism. If this shift began in the previous decade, it was in the 1970s that it came to fruition.

This chapter builds on the previous chapter's examination of Kristol's disillusionment with liberalism to understand the ways in which he drew ever-closer to conservatism. It does so through a focus on his prolific writing on the concepts of democracy and capitalism. In addition to analysing Kristol's conservatism, it also seeks to explore the new networks which he was beginning to create in order to express his new positions, and how he began to develop a national voice, something which would be crucial in cementing the popularity of the neoconservative persuasion in the 1980s. In doing so, it argues that Kristol's reconciliation with American democracy and capitalism finalised his personal journey from Trotskyist to neoconservative, and were vital to the development of neoconservatism as a political persuasion.

In particular, Kristol's work on democracy and capitalism also offers a chance to reflect on recent historiographical interest in these concepts. Since the early 2000s scholars of American political history have begun to focus on democracy as an area deserving of attention.[4] Such studies have rejected the concept of America as liberal, and alternatively posited that it is better understood as a nation in which the meaning and practice of democracy is continually contested.[5] As part of these efforts, intellectual historian James T.

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[4] For a sample of this work see: Byron E. Shafer and Anthony J. Badger eds., *Contesting Democracy: Substance and Structure in American Political History, 1775-2000* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001); Samuel P. Hays, "The Welfare State and Democratic Practice in the United States since the Second World War," in *The Social Construction of Democracy 1870-1990* ed., George Reid Andrews and Herrick Chapman (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1995), 267-290; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: Norton, 2005); Meg Jacobs, William. J. Novak and Julian E. Zelizer eds. *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Robert Wiebe, "Framing U.S. History: Democracy, Nationalism, and Socialism," in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 236-249.

[5] Meg Jacobs, and Julian E. Zelizer, "The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History" in *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* ed., Meg Jacobs, William. J. Novak and Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 6-7. For an earlier consideration of the concept see: Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics Since Independence* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

Kloppenberg has studied the history and development of American democracy from the founding.[6] Kloppenberg traces debates regarding democracy throughout the course of United States' history. Furthermore, he directs attention to how the contributions of individual thinkers to these debates at various moments across time shaped the continuing development of the intellectual concept of democracy.[7] In particular, in this work he has urged for greater engagement with the concept of democracy because, he argues, historians can help to 'reawaken, and to sharpen, the sense of democracy' by demonstrating past conflicts over the concept and its shifting meanings.[8] An examination of Kristol's abundant publications on the topic of democracy offers a chance to respond to this call to better engage with democracy, and in doing so, it provides insight into the neoconservative struggle to define the American democratic tradition in the 1970s. This is especially important since these contributions created a new strand of political thought in America during this period.[9]

Furthermore, in recent years interest in American capitalism has flourished.[10] Such scholarship includes studies of the role of business in American capitalism as well as public

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[6] James T. Kloppenberg, "Intellectual History, Democracy, and the Culture of Irony," in *The State of U.S. History* ed. Melvyn Stokes (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 199-216; James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism In European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); James T. Kloppenberg, "Tocqueville, Mill, and the American Gentry," *The Tocqueville Review* 27, No.2 (2006): 351-379; James T. Kloppenberg, "From Hartz to Tocqueville: Shifting the Focus from Liberalism to Democracy in America," in *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* ed., Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak and Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 350-380; James T. Kloppenberg, *Towards Democracy: The Struggle for Self-rule in European and American Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[7] See especially, Kloppenberg, "Tocqueville, Mill, and the American Gentry"; Kloppenberg, "From Hartz to Tocqueville: Shifting the Focus from Liberalism to Democracy in America"; Kloppenberg, *Towards Democracy.*

[8] Kloppenberg, "Intellectual History, Democracy, and the Culture of Irony," 211-216; James T. Kloppenberg, "The Virtues of Liberalism" in *The Social Construction of Democracy 1870-1990* ed. George Reid Andrews and Herrick Chapman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 350-351.

[9] See: Philip Abbot, "The Character of Recent American Political Thought," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 14, No.2 (1981): 377-396.

[10] Sven Beckett, "History of American Capitalism," in *American History Now* ed., Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 314-355; Sven Beckert and Christine Desan ed., *American Capitalism: New Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in Modern American Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006);

interest in the market.[11] Within this field much focus is placed upon neoliberal and libertarian thought. In particular, Angus Burgin's study of the Mont Pèlerin Society has highlighted the role the statesmen and thinkers who founded the organisation played in shaping understandings of capitalism.[12] Likewise, figures such as Ayn Rand, Milton Friedman, and F.A. Hayek have all been singled out for attention.[13] However, less scholarship focuses on the role of neoconservatism in the development of capitalist thought. Notable exceptions are provided by Peter Kolozi, and Jacob Hamburger and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins who have also emphasised how neoconservative economic thought shaped national policy making.[14] Thus, this chapter's engagement with Kristol's democratic and economic thought in this period not only shows the final stage of his intellectual trajectory towards neoconservatism, but also allows for an expansion of intellectual histories of capitalism to fully encompass neoconservative thought.

The majority of the chapter draws upon Kristol's published anthologies, *On The Democratic Idea in America* (1972) and *Two Cheers for Capitalism* (1978) to analyse his

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Nelson Lichtenstein ed., *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

[11] Richard R. John and Kim Phillips-Fein ed., *Business and Politics in Twentieth-Century America* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Kim Phillips-Fein and Julian E. Zelizer eds., *What's Good for Business: Business and American Politics Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement for the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009); John L. Kelley, *Bringing the Market Back In: The Political Revitalization of Market Liberalism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997); Monica Prasad, *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[12] Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free markets since the Depression* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[13] Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Juliet Williams, "The Road Less Travelled: Reconsidering the Political Writings of Friedrich von Hayek," in *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century,* ed., Nelson Lichtenstein (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 213-227; Bruce Caldwell, *Hayek's Challenge: An Intellectual Biography of F. A. Hayek* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[14] Peter Kolozi, *Conservatives Against Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Jacob Hamburger & Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, "Why Did Neoconservatives Join Forces with Neoliberals? Irving Kristol from Critic to Ally of Free-Market Economics," *Global Intellectual History* 3, No.1 (2018): 215-230.

most comprehensive thinking on these topics. This analysis is supplemented with lesser-known articles, and the copious weekly columns he published in the *Wall Street Journal.* Meanwhile, *The Public Interest* archival holdings help position Kristol within his intellectual circle and demonstrate the extent of the influence of certain key interlocutors, such as Daniel Bell, on his thought during these years. The chapter follows Kristol's work chronologically to better demonstrate the shifts taking place in his thought. Thus, the first part of the chapter considers Kristol's attitudes towards American democracy and the ways in which this helped grow his national prestige. It then examines his reservations and eventual acceptance of capitalism, before turning to Kristol's preoccupation with the so-called new class and the corporation. Finally, the chapter concludes with a focus on the fracturing friendships which marked the culmination of his journey towards neoconservatism.

Democracy

Democracy had long been an interest of Kristol's. Indeed, *The Public Interest* did not just aim to discuss public policy but also 'the problems of American democracy.' He had even previously attempted to write a book on the subject but was not successful in this endeavour.[15] Instead, in 1972 he collected his essays on the subject into a single volume. In the preface he explained, 'This theme and this problem imposed themselves upon my thinking gradually,' indicating his long-held fascination with the topic.[16]

However, these essays were not the whole-hearted championing of democratic values that might be expected of a figure who was widely considered to be at the forefront of the ideological battles against the Soviet Union and communist beliefs. His thought was marked

[15] Irving Kristol to Mike Josselson, March 25 1969, box 29 folder 4, Michael Josselson Papers, Harry Ransom Center; Irving Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 28.
[16] Kristol, *On the Democratic Idea,* vii.

by a concern for the health of American democracy. He wrote that the essays were linked by a common theme, 'the tendency of democratic republics to depart from—to "progress" away from, one might say—their original animating principles, and as a consequence to precipitate gave crises in the moral and political order.'[17] Thus, it was obvious that, in his mind at least, American democracy was in a perilous position. Additionally, this belief that American democracy was in trouble helps us to understand why the defence of democracy was a central component of neoconservatism as Peter Steinfels has argued.[18]

Kristol's concern for the state of democracy was built directly on his interest in public policy. In the opening essay in *The Democratic Idea in America*, "Urban Civilization & Its Discontents," taken from *Commentary*, he wrote that the urban crisis stemmed from the fact that, 'we are creating a democratic, urban civilization while stubbornly refusing to think clearly about the relation of urbanity to democracy.'[19] He explained that 'the founding fathers did not in their sum, amount to an agrarian *bias* so much as an anti-urban *philosophy.*'[20] Thus, the root of the urban crisis, which he devoted so much energy to, was in American democracy's inability to adapt to the increasingly urban make-up of the country. He concluded that 'the challenge to our urban democracy is to evolve a set of values and a conception of democracy that can function as the equivalent of the "republican morality" of yesteryear. This is our fundamental urban problem.'[21]

He infused this concern into his teaching at New York University where he had recently been appointed Henry Luce Professor of Urban Values.[22] Here Kristol taught two

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[17] Ibid, vii.
[18] Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Origins of A Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2013), 261-287.
[19] Irving Kristol, "Urban Civilization & Its Discontents," *Commentary* 50, No.1 (July 1970): 29.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid, 31.
[22] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 32; Geo. Winchester Stone, Jr. to Irving Kristol, 16 June 1969, box 26 folder 14, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

modules, one to undergraduates and the second a graduate course. He explained that the graduate module although called "The Urban Intellectual" was in reality an intellectual history course.[23] However, his undergraduate course, "Cultures of Cities," was described as 'An analysis of the intuitions and ideologies that shape urban cultures. Among the topics to be considered are: images of the ideal city, anti-urban political philosophies, the nature of "literary establishments," varieties of urban intellectual life, etc.' and it sought to understand 'why American cities were not centres of culture like their European counterparts.'[24] The suggested topics for discussion in his course outline also included questions such as, 'In what sense is an intellectual always a critic of his society,' 'What is the difference between premodern and modern utopianism?' and, 'What is the basic distinction between premodern and modern thinkers with regard to the responsibilities of the intellectual vis-à-vis his society?' Meanwhile, required readings on the course ranged from Niccolò Machiavelli and Edmund Burke to Lionel Trilling and Susan Sontag showing the broad influences on Kristol's urban thought.[25]

More revealing still of Kristol's fears were his examination questions. In spring 1974 he asked students to respond the question, 'Why do so many of our efforts to solve this "urban crisis" either fail or actually make things worse?' reinforcing his critical opinions of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society project.[26] Later questions included the following assessments: 'In what ways do the American political tradition and basic American values create a problematic environment for the American city—as compared with, for instance, the European city?' and 'Explore the relation between "bourgeois society" and its "anti-

[23] Irving Kristol to Robert E.C. Wegner, May 26 1971, box 26 folder 14, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[24] Irving Kristol, "Course Description," box 26 folder 23, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[25] Irving Kristol to Leslie C. Tuttleton, August 2 1977, box 26 folder 23, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[26] Irving Kristol, "Exam—"Cultures of Cities,"" Spring, 1974, box 26 folder 22, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

bourgeois culture" in terms of its relevance to the "crisis in urban civilization" we are now said to be experiencing.'[27] With these prompts, Kristol encouraged students to think about how democracy could function in the urban environment, and showed the importance he placed on the contemporary urban crisis and its impact on American democracy.

However, his concerns for democracy were not limited to the increasing urbanisation of American society. He was also concerned with the nation's morality. In a scathing attack on the moral decline of the United States published in the *New York Times*, he argued that, 'There is no inherent right to self-government if it means such government is vicious, mean, squalid and debased.'[28] Furthermore, he posited that 'I think that the settlement we are living under now, in which obscenity and democracy are regarded as equals, is wrong; I believe it is inherently unstable; I think it will, in the long run, be incompatible with any authentic concern for the quality of life in our democracy.'[29] The 'obscenity' to which he referred was pornography, as discussed in the article, and the rising drug use on which he had written much in other essays.[30] From this impassioned statement and these other writings, it was clear that Kristol objected to the changing social mores instigated by the radical movements of the 1960s.

An essay dealing with what he saw as the historical profession's infatuation with the idea of democracy in the United States, questioned whether the solution to America's present woes was even democracy itself. He wrote, 'I believe that all of us are well aware that the areas of American life that are becoming unstable and problematic are increasing in numbers

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[27] Irving Kristol, "Exam—"Cultures of Cities,"" Fall, 1974, box 26 folder 22, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol, "Exam—"Cultures of Cities,"" Spring 1976, box 26 folder 22, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[28] Irving Kristol, "Pornography, Obscenity and the Case for Censorship," *New York Times,* March 28, 1971, 112.

[29] Ibid, 116

[30] Irving Kristol, "Vice and Virtue in Las Vegas," *The Wall Street Journal,* September 13, 1973, 16; Kristol, "Urban Civilization & Its Discontents."

and size every day. Yet our initial responses—and it usually remains our final response—is to echo Al Smith: "All the ills of democracy can be cured by more democracy."' However, he questioned whether this was true, asking, 'Is it not possible that many of the ills of our democracy can be traced to this democracy itself—or, more exactly, to this democracy's conception of itself? And how are we even to contemplate this possibility if our historians seem so unaware of it?'[31] This was hardly a resounding endorsement of American democracy, and at first glance was perhaps surprising. However, it was likely that the statement referred to the increasing demand by emerging grassroots movements for participatory democracy in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[32]

If he did not support more democracy in the form of participatory democracy, though he did believe in the democratic idea as envisaged by the Founding Fathers; that is, a limited form which sought to mitigate its dangers.[33] In the same essay, he concluded that 'I do not see that the condition of American democracy is such as automatically to call forth my love and honor, although I respect it enough to offer it my obedience.'[34] Thus, Kristol supported democracy, but only hesitantly and soberly.

This attitude seemed to be influenced by Martin Diamond. Before his untimely death at the age of fifty-eight in 1977, Diamond and Kristol were close friends. Diamond was a constitutional expert who earned his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in 1956 where he was

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[31] Irving Kristol, "American Historians and the Democratic Idea," *The American Scholar* 39, No.1 (Winter 1969-1970): 103.

[32] In 1962 Students for Democratic Action (SDS) published *The Port Huron Statement* in which they argued for a democratic system which would allow greater individual participation at all levels of democracy. This idea was widely taken up by the New Left and became termed participatory democracy. *The Port Huron Statement* (New York: Students for Democratic Action, 1964). https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C462034. For detailed discussion of the statement see: Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein eds., *Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Howard Brick and Christopher Phelps, *Radicals in America: The U.S. Left Since the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 88-120.

[33] Ibid, 93.

[34] Ibid, 104.

influenced by the work and methodology of the German émigré and philosopher Leo Strauss.[35] Strauss' scholarship, widely considered to be important to the development of right-wing thinking in America, focused on the importance of religion, nationalism, respect for the past, and a dislike of liberalism.[36] Diamond was Strauss' first student to publish on the American founding and throughout Diamond's life he claimed to be indebted to his teacher.[37]

In his work, Diamond rejected the view of the 'undemocratic Constitution' and argued that the Constitution represented a 'thoroughgoing effort to *constitute democracy.*'[38] But, it was his work on the excesses of democracy which seemed to guide Kristol's thought the most. In an essay written for Nathan Glazer and Kristol's edited volume on the American Revolution's bi-centennial, Diamond argued that the Founders 'regarded *every* form of government as problematic,' including democracy, and when comprehended, 'the extent and intensity of the founding generation's concern for the defects and dangers of the democratic form, far from indicating their rejection of democracy, is proof of their acceptance of it and of their determination—copiously expressed, if only one will listen to them—to cope with it.'[39]

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[35] Joshua Tait Albury, "Making Conservatism: Conservative Intellectuals and American Political Tradition" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 2020), 379-386, https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/downloads/th83m4796; Alan Gibson, "America's Better Self: Martin Diamond, James Madison, and the Foundations of the American Regime" *The Political Science Reviewer* 28 (1999): 102-120.

[36] Shadia Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 138-178; Shadia B. Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss, Updated Edition: With a New Introduction by the Author* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2012); Catherine Zucker and Michael Zuckert, *The Truth About Leo Strauss: Political Philosophy and American Democracy* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2006).

[37] For an overview of the influence of Strauss on Diamond see: Zucker and Zuckert, *The Truth About Leo Strauss:* 209-217.

[38] Martin Diamond, *The Founding of the Democratic Republic* (Itasca: F.E.: Peacock Publishers, 1981), 8-9. For a representative sample of Diamond's work on the Constitution, see also: Martin Diamond, *The Electoral College and the American Idea of Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1977); Martin Diamond, ""The Federalist" on Federalism: "Neither a National nor a Federal Constitution, but a Composition of Both,"" *The Yale Law Journal* 86, No. 6 (May, 1977): 1273-1285; Martin Diamond, "The Revolution of Sober Expectations," in *America's Continuing Revolution: An Act of Conservation* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975), 25-41; Martin Diamond, "The Declaration and the Constitution: Liberty, Democracy, and the Founders," in *The American Commonwealth 1976,* ed., Nathan Glazer and Irving Kristol (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 39-55.

[39] Diamond, "The Declaration and the Constitution," 51-52.

It was likely this fear of democratic excess which led Diamond to champion the electoral college voting system, which was under threat after a 1967 suggestion to use a popular vote to elect the President by the American Bar Association was endorsed by Jimmy Carter, then a Georgia State Senator. Indeed, on the morning of 22nd July 1977, the day of his death, Diamond testified before a Senate subcommittee on the merits of the electoral college.[40] In one essay on the matter, he wrote that, the electoral college was not 'archaic.'[41] He elaborated that, the debate around the electoral college was not framed around the question of 'democratic reform versus the retention of an undemocratic system but rather a matter of which kind of democratic reasoning is to prevail in presidential elections—the traditional American idea that channels and constrains democracy or a rival idea that wishes democracy to be its entirely untrammelled and undifferentiated national self.'[42]

Moreover, he saw the American political system as 'seeking to reconcile the advantages of democracy with the sobering qualities of republicanism.'[43] In a letter to Kristol he explained that:

> *Liberal* democracy means a special kind of democracy, a democracy distinguished from other kinds, especially those which are egalitarian or totalitarian. The term liberal democracy expresses two important considerations in the minds of those who formulated the principles of liberal democracy. First, liberty enjoys a priority relative to, or at least parity with, the principle of democracy. Second, the term implies that liberty may be imperilled by democracy and is therefore in need of safeguards; the democracy must not be untrammelled. Both these massive implications of the

[40] Daniel J. Elazar. "In Memory of Martin Diamond," *Publius* 7, No.4 (1977), 1.
[41] Diamond, *The Electoral College and the American Idea of Democracy,* 2.
[42] Ibid, 11.
[43] Diamond, *The Founding of the Democratic Republic,* 8-9.

> original understanding of liberal democracy have been rendered dubious or, at least, difficult to defend in the last decades.[44]

This serious tone indicated the gravity with which Diamond discussed democracy and the importance of placing limitations of its excesses.

The impact of such thinking on Kristol can been seen in his article, "Republican Virtue vs. Servile Institutions," in which he emphasised how in twentieth-century America the idea of the republic had given way to democracy. [45] This was problematic because the two notions understood self-government differently. As he explained, the republican conception of self-government was built around a 'high-minded' and 'inherently a self-improving' democratic subject. Meanwhile, 'the democratic idea of self-government is based on the premise that one's natural self is the best of all selves.' Consequently, 'The first results in people making moral demands upon themselves; the second results in people making moral demands upon social reality.'[46] This idea of 'moral demands' was not limited to Kristol's conceptions of democracy, but as we will see below, also linked to his developing critique of capitalism which made the influence of Diamond's republican thought even more significant.

Kristol's direct reference to Diamond in his own work also provides evidence of this intellectual debt. In the preface to *On the Democratic Idea in America* he acknowledged Diamond alongside Gertrude Himmelfarb and Daniel Bell as having influenced the book.[47] Indeed, he thought so highly of Diamond that he even asked his friend to teach some of his classes at New York University.[48] But it was in the obituary he wrote for his friend that the

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[44] Martin Diamond to Irving Kristol, March 17 1977, box 11 folder 16, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[45] Irving Kristol, "Republican Virtue vs. Servile Institutions," *The Alternative: An American Spectator* 8, No. 5 (February 1975): 5-9.
[46] Ibid, 9.
[47] Kristol, *On the Democratic Idea,* ix.
[48] Irving Kristol to Martin Diamond, February 12 1974, box 11 folder 16, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

true weight of Diamond's work on Kristol can be seen. He noted that, 'All of us here were moved by Martin Diamond toward an understanding of the Founding Fathers, and of the American idea of democracy as expounded by the Founders, that was not otherwise—and never would have been otherwise—available to us.' But on a more personal level he identified that, 'Martin's reflections on this matter were a decisive intellectual influence on my influence [sic], but a moral influence as well. For Martin taught me—taught us, I dare say—not only how to understand the American democracy, but how to appreciate it as well.' He carried on, 'No; that's not strong enough. I should say: how to revere the institutions of our democratic republic, and the wisdom incarnate in them.'[49] Thus, for all his doubts regarding democracy, Kristol did ultimately support it, and he had Diamond to thank for this. Crucially, this support would also be fundamental in underpinning his support of Western civilisation in the next decade.

Furthermore, while the anthology was not without criticism, Kristol's work on democracy brought him national attention for arguably the first sustained time in his career.[50] Robert Bartley, the soon-to-be editorial and op-ed editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, thought highly of *On the Democratic Idea in America.* In Bartley's article "Irving Kristol and Friends," he wrote that the book was, 'a brilliant and incisive commentary on our times.' This praise quickly led to the establishment of Kristol's own regular column in the *Wall Street Journal*, which provided him with his first national audience.[51] It also became known that the book was required reading in the Nixon White House with papers such as *The Washington*

[49] Irving Kristol, "In Memory of Martin Diamond," *The Alternative: An American Spectator* 10, No.12 (October 1977): 9-10.
[50] Edith Donohue to Irving Kristol, June 13 1972, box 11 folder 44, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Josiah Lee Auspitz, "On the Democratic Idea in America," *Commentary* 55, No.5 (1973): 87-89; Yosal Rogat, "I'm All Right, Dick," *New York Review of Books,* September 21, 1972. https://www-nybooks-com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/articles/1972/09/21/im-all-right-dick/.
[51] Robert Bartley, "Irving Kristol and Friends," *Wall Street Journal,* May 3, 1972, 20; Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 32.

Post running features on Kristol and his book.[52] Moreover, records from the Nixon White House Tapes show that the quality of Kristol's thinking and writing was praised by officials in the many occasions in which *On the Democratic Idea in America* was discussed in the Oval Office. Indeed, the Administration liked *On the Democratic Idea in America* and his work on censorship and welfare so much they even considering appointing Kristol as a domestic policy adviser in Nixon's second term. Ultimately, the appointment did not occur, but the fact that the position was even floated as an idea showed the widespread diffusion of his views to the highest echelons of power, and crucially their appeal to a right-wing audience.[53]

However, in a sign of things to come, this association was a point of tension with Daniel Bell, who remained steadfastly attached to socialism.[54] In an internal *Public Interest* memo from 1973, Bell complained that 'A number of our noted contributors and editors were identified with Nixon in 1972 – Kristol, Paul Weaver, Pat Moynihan, Robert Nisbet. Some persons thought that *The Public Interest* as a magazine was pro-Nixon. We have to rethink

[52] James R. Dickenson, "Nixon's Man in the Middle," box 1 folder 5, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; William Chapman, "The White House Discovers an Intellectual to Its Liking," *The Washington Post,* Sunday April 15 1973, box 1 folder 5, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[53] OVAL 732-11, June 13, 1972; White House Tapes; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California; OVAL 733-10, June 14, 1972, White House Tapes; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California; OVAL 736-2, June 15, 1972, White House Tapes; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California; OVAL 739-10, June 21, 1972, White House Tapes; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; OVAL 740-7, June 22, 1972; White House Tapes; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California; OVAL 741-3, June 23, 1972; White House Tapes; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California; Albury, "Making Conservatism: Conservative Intellectuals and American Political Tradition," 365; Tevi Troy, *Intellectuals and the American Presidency: Philosophers, Jesters, or Technicians?* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 111.
[54] Famously Daniel Bell described himself as a socialist in economics, "a liberal in politics, and a conservative in culture," something which Kristol found problematic. Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, January 2 1978, box 21 folder 4, Irving Kristol Papers, Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society; Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism,* xi-xii.

the question in order to see what went wrong.'[55] Evidently, Bell wanted the publication to remain apolitical.

Moreover, in the wake of Watergate this once beneficial association was problematic on a national scale.[56] Kristol acknowledged the issue in his column, writing that his students were being 'gentle' with him because, 'They know that I publicly supported President Nixon in 1972. They know, because it has been reported in the press, that the President has made some flattering remarks about my writings and that I have been an occasional visitor to the White House.' Moreover, he stressed that because of these connections, 'I and a handful of others—most notably my good friend, Daniel Patrick Moynihan—have been classified by the liberal journals as "Nixon intellectuals."'[57] Consequently, he set about disassociating himself from Nixon and the political scandal associated with him.

In a second column on Watergate he showed his dissatisfaction with the president, arguing that, 'None of us [those in his intellectual circle who voted for Nixon] had any grand illusions about Richard Nixon or the Republican Party –it is an essential part of our argument that one ought not to have grand illusions about politics or politicians.' However, he lamented that, 'neither did we expect to see the White House populated by adventurers and tricksters. We supported President Nixon—though many of us are Democrats—not because we expected to see a new Disraeli in the White House but because we anticipated an administration that would be prudent, moderate and responsible.[58] In a letter to Daniel Patrick

[55] Memo from Dan Bell to Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, and James Q. Wilson, September 10 1973, box 18 folder 4, Irving Kristol Papers, Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society; Daniel Bell to Harry, February 17 1973, box 21 folder 3, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[56] During the 1972 election Nixon's aides bugged the Democratic National Headquarters in the Watergate office complex in Washington D.C., the subsequent revelation of this behaviour destroyed trust in the Presidency and resulted in Nixon's resignation on April 8, 1974. For a brief overview of the scandal see: Stanley I. Kutler ed., *Watergate: A Brief History with Documents* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

[57] Irving Kristol, "The Nightmare of Watergate," *The Wall Street Journal,* May 17, 1973, 20. Daniel Patrick Moynihan acted as an advisor for President Nixon during the early years of his administration. See: Troy, *Intellectuals and the American Presidency.*

[58] Irving Kristol, "What Comes Next, After Watergate?" *The Wall Street Journal,* June 14, 1973, 16.

Moynihan, Kristol described the piece as 'bitter.'[59] His depiction of the Nixon White House being full of 'adventures and tricksters' certainly confirmed this, and displayed his clear disappointment. Such dissatisfaction was understandable given that he voted for Nixon in an attempt to avoid, in his mind, the radical excesses of George McGovern. Furthermore, Kristol had abandoned his Democratic Party loyalty to do so, something which given the historic links between Democrats and the Jewish community was not done lightly.[60] Yet, this set-back was not enough to stall his continuing moves to the right, especially on the topic of economics.

Capitalism

Alongside this growing interest in democracy, Kristol's thought on capitalism underwent significant development during this period. He saw capitalism as 'organically linked' to democracy in the America.[61] Moreover, he boldly claimed, 'The United States is the capitalist nation *par excellence*.' He expanded upon this, explaining that 'it is not merely the case that capitalism has flourished here more vigorously than, for instance, in the nations of Western Europe. The point is, rather, that the 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.'[62] His italics emphasised the importance of capitalism to the American system, and suggested that it was America's destiny to become a capitalist nation. In an attempt to strengthen his argument regarding the interdependence of the concepts, he further posited that 'though capitalism may not be sufficient condition for a liberal society, it

[59] Irving Kristol to Daniel P. Moynihan, June 12 1973, box 13 folder 22, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[60] The Democratic Party has traditionally been associated with the Jewish vote. See: Henry Feingold, *American Jewish Political Culture and the Liberal Persuasion* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014).
[61] Irving Kristol, "Corporate Capitalism in America," *The Public Interest* 41 (Fall 1975): 124.
[62] Ibid.

does seem to be a necessary condition of it.'[63] Meanwhile, in a second article on the subject he declared that, 'There is no regime in this world, and there never has been a regime, which was liberal-democratic and did not have a predominantly market-orientated economy.'[64] It was therefore abundantly clear that capitalism and democracy were intrinsically intertwined in his thought.

Furthermore, much like his attitude towards American democracy, he held ambivalent views regarding the concept of capitalism. In the introduction of a collection of essays taken from *The Public Interest* on the topic, *Capitalism Today* (1971) Kristol and Bell explained that what was striking about capitalism was that it 'is not at all self-congratulatory and is not even neutral. It is a term that, from the beginning, has had a critical edge to it.'[65] With this the pair demonstrated that perhaps the capitalist system was not something which should be celebrated. Given their backgrounds as a Trotskyist (Kristol) and Social Democrat (Bell) such a conclusion was unsurprising, but more interestingly it also touched on contemporary conservative critiques of capitalism. In particular, it showed some parallels with the Southern Agrarians, who also were skeptical of modern capitalism and championed religious values.[66]

Echoing this position, Kristol argued that capitalism's 'critical edge' was its lack of morality. This argument was most obviously made in his *Public Interest* article ""When Virtue Loses All her Loveliness"—Some Reflections on Capitalism and the Free Society."[67] According to this article, traditionally capitalism promised, first, 'continued improvement in the material conditions of all its citizens, a promise without precedent in human

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[63] Irving Kristol, *Two Cheers for Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), xi.
[64] Irving Kristol, "Capitalism Anticapitalism: The Moral and Political Issues," 1978, box 1 folder 30, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[65] Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol, "Introduction" in *Capitalism Today* ed., Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol (New York: Basic Books, 1971), vii.
[66] Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2001).
[67] Irving Kristol, ""When virtue loses all her loveliness": Some reflections on Capitalism and "The Free Society,"" *The Public Interest* 21*,* (Fall 1970): 3-15.

improvement;' second, 'an equally unprecedented measure of individual freedom for all these same citizens;' and thirdly, 'it held out the promise that, amidst this prosperity and liberty, the individual could satisfy his instinct for self-perfection—for leading a virtuous life that satisfied the demands of his spirit (or, as one used to say, his soul)—and that the free exercise of such individual virtue would aggregate into a just society.'[68] In this description it was clear that capitalism fostered morality, allowing for the individual to take care not just of the material aspects of their being, but also the religious ones. However, in the mid-twentieth-century this was no longer true: 'the will to success and privilege was severed from its moral moorings.'[69] In other words, capitalism traditionally fostered the Protestant Ethic, but this was no longer the case, and was cause for concern.[70] So persuasive was this argument that William F. Buckley wrote to Kristol that, 'It is the shrewdest analysis of the subject I have seen,' and urged Kristol to put his writings into book form.[71] By the end of the decade Kristol would do just this.

First, though, he presented his ideas on capitalism to the Mont Pèlerin Society. In 1972 economist Milton Friedman invited Kristol to speak at the libertarian organisation in Switzerland.[72] Kristol enthusiastically accepted, writing that, 'I do think that the Mt. Pèlerin Society has, in many important respects, won its argument about the market place. It certainly won it with me!'[73] However, this success did not stop him from sharing his concerns about the modern state of capitalism to the group. In his speech, later published as "Capitalism, Socialism, Nihilism," he asked: 'If the traditional economics of socialism has been

[68] Ibid, 5.
[69] Ibid, 8.
[70] See here: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).
[71] William F. Buckley to Irving Kristol, October 2 1970, box 10 folder 27, Irving Kristol Papers, Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[72] Milton Friedman to Irving Kristol, January 5 1972, box 13 folder 21, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[73] Irving Kristol to George Stigler, February 9 1972, box 13 folder 21 Irving Kristol Papers, Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society.

discredited, why has not the traditional economics of capitalism been vindicated?' Once again the answer lay with morals: he claimed that 'For well over a hundred and fifty years now, social critics have been warning us that bourgeois society was living off the accumulated moral capital of traditional religion and traditional moral philosophy, and that once this capital was depleted, bourgeois society would find its legitimacy ever more questionable.'[74] It was evident that he was worried by the decline of the Protestant Ethic in American society and moral void which was taking its place. He concluded that, '*The enemy of liberal capitalism today is not so much socialism as nihilism.*'[75]

The speech was so successful that Mont Pèlerin offered Kristol a chance to join the society. He refused, writing back that, 'The truth is that, as the society is now constituted, I don't feel quite at home in it.' He attributed this unease to the fact that 'The ideological emphasis is on libertarianism, and I am not a libertarian.'[76] This reflected the fact that, despite their later rift in political thought, in the early 1970s Kristol was more comfortable amongst friends such as Daniel Bell, who articulated similar cultural criticisms of American capitalism.

Like Kristol, Bell was interested in the bourgeois ethic, and collected his thoughts into a single volume entitled *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976). Here, he explained, 'the theme of this book is not just the cultural contradictions of capitalism as such, but of bourgeois society,' furthermore he wrote, 'It is the interrelationship of this economic system [capitalism], culture, and character structure which comprised bourgeois civilization. It is the unravelling of this unity and its consequences which are the threads of this book.'[77] Additionally, not only did Bell emphasise the importance of bourgeois society, he too

[74] Irving Kristol, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Nihilism," *The Public Interest* 31 (Spring 1973): 5.
[75] Ibid, 12.
[76] Irving Kristol to Ralph Harris, October 17 1972, box 13 folder 21, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society. Angus Burgin also notes this ideological difference, see: Burgin, *The Great Persuasion,* 210.
[77] Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), xvi.

lamented the decline of the Protestant Ethic, writing that, 'What this abandonment of Puritanism and the Protestant ethic does, of course, is to leave capitalism with no moral of transcendental ethic.' He went further, 'American capitalism, as I have tried to show, has lost its traditional legitimacy.'[78] For both friends, capitalism, like democracy, was in danger.

Kristol's work on Adam Smith further demonstrated his differences from figures such as Friedman and showed a preoccupation with the lost bourgeois character. As Glory Liu highlights in her work on American interpretations of Smith, the Chicago School 'transformed Smith into an original way of thinking about an individualistic, market-orientated society that was justifiable on social-scientific grounds.'[79] In doing so, these economists emphasised that only markets could provide freedom and that the problems of contemporary capitalism were a result of the government interference rather than the free-market. In 1976 Kristol wrote "Adam Smith and the Spirit of Capitalism," an essay dealing with the bicentennial of the American Revolution and *The Wealth of Nations* (1976) in which he offered an alternative interpretation of Smith's thought.[80] He criticised modern economics' preoccupation with becoming a 'rigorous science.'[81] Alternatively, he posited that morality was equally important to economics because 'Smith did not think it possible to talk about the best economy without reference the character of the people who were at the end result of the economic process.'[82] Once again he stressed the importance of the Protestant Ethic, emphasising the importance of bourgeois values and 'the ability to defer gratification' as central to this responsible capitalist character.[83] This interpretation of Smith as both a

[78] Ibid, 71-84.
[79] Glory M. Liu, *Adam Smith's America: How a Scottish Philosopher Became an Icon of American Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), 215-253.
[80] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations Books I-III* (London: Penguin, 1999); Irving Kristol, "Adam Smith and the Spirit of Capitalism," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 288-289.
[81] Ibid, 291.
[82] Ibid, 297.
[83] Ibid, 297-298.

moral philosopher and economist also formed part of a broader movement on both the left and right which pushed back against the Chicago construction of Smithian thought in this moment.[84]

Yet, despite these ambivalences towards modern capitalism, and as scholarship by Peter Kolozi, Jacob Hamburger and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins has suggested, the pair, and Kristol in particular, did come to wholeheartedly support American capitalism.[85] Indeed, notwithstanding Kristol's grave warnings for capitalism's fate in ""When Virtue Loses all her Loveliness,"" he concluded that 'if the situation of liberal capitalism today seems so precarious, it is likely nevertheless to survive for a long while, if only because the modern era has failed to come up with any plausible alternatives. Socialism, communism, and fascism have all turned out to be either utopian illusions or sordid frauds.'[86] More importantly, socialism was not just a fraud but dead. In his obituary for the idea he argued, 'The most important political event of the twentieth century is not the crisis of capitalism but the death of socialism.'[87] In a vivid description he went further claiming that, 'The dead idea of socialism is now putrefying both the world's mind and the world's body. It has to be removed and buried—with appropriate honors if that will help. Ironically only liberal capitalism can perform that funeral task.'[88] Thus, capitalism remained the only viable political-economic system left. It was true that this was hardly a resounding endorsement, but it did signal at the very least his tepid support of capitalism by the mid-1970s.

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[84] Liu, *Adam Smith's America,* 258. For a detailed discussion of "Adam Smith and the Spirit of Capitalism," see 255-287.
[85] Peter Kolozi, *Conservatives Against Capitalism,* 140-141; Jacob Hamburger & Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, "Why Did Neoconservatives Join Forces with Neoliberals?" 215-230.
[86] Kristol, '"When virtue loses all her loveliness," 13-14.
[87] Irving Kristol, "Socialism: An Obituary for an Idea," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 300.
[88] Ibid, 309.

But it was with the publication of the now famous *Two Cheers for Capitalism* (1978) with which Kristol really announced his acceptance of capitalism.[89] The book, a second compilation of essays, placed his economic thinking into a single volume for the first time. Here, he wrote of capitalism in the preface that, 'the first thing to be said about this extraordinary (in historical terms) conception of social order is that it works. It works in a quite simple, material sense: people who, individually or collectively, subscribe to the social philosophy of a capitalist order, and to those bourgeois virtues associated with it, do indeed better their condition.'[90] This description was far more positive and showed the potential of capitalism to improve society. He echoed this sentiment a second time only a few pages later writing, 'It is worth preserving because (and one cannot repeat it too often) it really does work.'[91] Having witnessed the failure of communism as a young man, the ability of capitalism to perform was surely enticing for him. It was therefore for this reason despite his reservations about the state of its morality, capitalism was ultimately worthy of 'two cheers.' In doing so, he demonstrated he had moved politically and intellectually very far from his youthful Trotskyism in Alcove Number One at City College New York. However, caution should be drawn here. Given the Cold War environment which Kristol inhabited, his assessment that capitalism 'works,' was also a pragmatic one; as a functioning economic system, capitalism was most important as an ideological weapon against the threat of totalitarianism embodied by the Soviet Union.

Two Cheers for Capitalism met with a mixed reaction. Unsurprisingly, given that many of the essays originally appeared in the *Wall Street Journal,* the paper gave a very favourable review of the volume. The paper's reviewer wrote that if readers 'want a better understanding of why it [capitalism] is worth fighting for and a stronger intellectual base for

[89] Kristol, *Two Cheers for Capitalism.*
[90] Ibid, x.
[91] Ibid, xii.

defending it, they can do no better than to read "Two Cheers for Capitalism."'[92] The *New York Times* was less complimentary, concluding that 'This book, as Mr. Kristol says, is full of ambiguities,' but ultimately saw Kristol as winding up 'seriously—and close to home.'[93] Others disagreed. Leading economist John Kenneth Galbraith lamented that while Kristol was the right man for the task of providing a comprehensive assessment of modern capitalism, he had not succeeded.[94]

Particularly important here, was the observation by political theorist Robert A. Dahl in his review of *Two Cheers for Capitalism* that the book was 'hardly more than an up-dating of Schumpeter's argument.'[95] In 1942 Austrian economist Joseph A. Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* was published for the first time in the United States. In this acclaimed work, Schumpeter argued that capitalism was creating the seeds of its own decline and feared that socialism was ready to replace it. In part two of *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* he asked, "Can capitalism survive?" and answered negatively.[96] Significantly, for the purposes of understanding the influences on Kristol's thought, Schumpeter suggested that, 'capitalism creates a critical frame of mind which, after having destroyed the moral authority of so many other institutions, in the end turns against its own,' and then, 'the bourgeois finds to his amazement that the rationalist attitude does not stop at the credentials of kings and popes but goes on to attack private property and the whole scheme of bourgeois values.'[97] The similarity of Kristol's critique of capitalism to Schumpeter's was striking. Kristol was familiar with the economist's work because on at

[92] George Melloan, "Mr Kristol on Liberal Capitalism," *The Wall Street Journal,* April 25, 1978, 24.
[93] Leonard Silk, "The Liberal Menace: Two Cheers for Capitalism," *New York Times,* April 9, 1978, BR3.
[94] John Kenneth Galbraith, "A Hard Case," *New York Review of Books,* April 20, 1978. https://www-nybooks-com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/articles/1978/04/20/a-hard-case/.
[95] Robert A. Dahl, *Two Cheers for Capitalism, New Republic,* June 3, 1978. https://newrepublic.com/article/69474/two-cheers-capitalism.
[96] Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 53.
[97] Ibid, 128.

least one occasion he recommended it as preparatory reading for one of his business lectures.[98] Dahl claimed that Kristol's argument 'was a good deal less' than Schumpeter's 'magisterial book.'[99] But, whether the book was liked or not, one thing was clear: Kristol was now deeply embedded in discussions of liberal capitalism. His later assessment that, 'My intellectual perplexities in the 1970s began to focus rather on economics,' was undoubtedly true.[100]

The New Class

Kristol did not merely accept capitalism, though, he also set about defending it from its critics as a matter of urgency. In an unpublished manuscript in which he pondered anti-capitalist thought, he wrote, 'Why is it that the economic/social/political system which I call liberal-democratic capitalism does not get the two cheers which it does, in fact, merit?'[101] He pursued this question further in his *Wall Street Journal* column. Here he wrote, 'I should like to pursue the truly interesting question of *why* so many intelligent people manage to entertain so many absurd ideas about economics in general and business in particular.' He noted that 'There are people "out there" who find it convenient to believe the worst about business.'[102] He termed these people '"the new class."' According to his own definition, the new class was composed of 'those college-educated people whose skills and vocations proliferate in a "post-industrial society" (to use Daniel Bell's convenient term).'[103] Within this group Kristol placed an enormous number of professions including, but not limited to, teachers, journalists, government workers, lawyers and doctors. He claimed that this so-called new class were

[98] Irving Kristol to J.M. Trickett, November 20 1975, box 15 folder 14, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.
[99] Dahl, *Two Cheers for Capitalism.*
[100] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 34.
[101] Kristol, "Capitalism Anticapitalism."
[102] Irving Kristol, "Business and the New Class," *The Wall Street Journal,* May 19, 1975, 8.
[103] Ibid.

'keenly interested in power,' and more importantly, 'the power to shape our civilization—a power which, in a capitalist system, is supposed to reside in the free market.' In essence then, he argued, 'The "new class" wants to see much of this power redistributed to government, where *they* will then have a major say in how it is exercised.'[104] This definition was striking because it was clearly built upon his critique of the Great Society where, as we saw in chapter three, he opposed government methods employed to solve poverty in America, particularly in relation to the urban crisis. However, this critique went further. It now appeared that all government intervention in the economy was problematic. In light of his recent writings expressing his anger at the state of New York's near bankruptcy, it is likely that his trust in government solutions to economic problems was truly on the wane.[105] More generally, the claim also confirmed his autobiographical reflection that 'I assumed that astute fiscal management by government could reconcile economic growth and economic equilibrium. This assumption certainly seemed validated by the postwar experience—until the 1970s, that is.'[106] His economic outlook could no longer be deemed liberal, and his decision to become a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in 1976 was fitting of this developing position.

Importantly, the new class was not an original idea. As Kristol would later explain, it was taken from the work of Yugoslavian dissident Milovan Djilas and James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* (1941).[107] Yet, despite the lack of originality, the column was one of

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[104] Ibid.

[105] Irving Kristol, "New York Is a State of Mind," *The Wall Street Journal,* December 10, 1975, 20. For an account of New York's financial problems in this period see: Kim Phillips-Fein, "The New York City Fiscal Crisis and the Idea of the State," in *American Capitalism: New Histories* ed., Sven Beckert and Christine Desan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

[106] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 34.

[107] Irving Kristol, "The 'New Class' Revisited," *The Wall Street Journal,* May 3,1 1979, 24; Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957); James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution* (Borough: Lume Books, 2021). For an overview of the new class see: Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 77-110; Robert B. Horwitz, America's Right: Anti-Establishment Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party (Malden: Polity

his most successful *Wall Street Journal* contributions. In a letter to his editor Robert Bartley, Kristol commented that, 'Indeed, that particular article has evoked an awful lot of mail to me, almost all of it favourable. It wasn't a new idea, really, but apparently its time hadn't quite come until now.'[108] It was another important indicator of his fluctuating politics because in positioning himself against the new class he depicted himself as a defender of capitalism. This was significant because as he later explained, 'These days, Americans who defend the capitalist system—i.e., an economy and a way of life organized primarily around the free market—are called "conservative."'[109] Thus, by protecting capitalism he showed a clear conservative shift in his economic outlook.

The column also, once again, reflected the symmetry between his own work and that of Gertrude Himmelfarb. In her 1974 biography of John Stuart Mill, Himmelfarb stated that, 'It is curious, for instance, that liberals who have no faith in the free marketplace as a medium for the efficient production and distribution of material goods should rely more than ever on the free marketplace for the production and distribution of spiritual goods—ideas, morals, manners, art, and artifacts.' Moreover, she was baffled by the fact that, 'Where their material, physical, and financial interests are concerned, they try to protect themselves against risk, loss, and harm. But they take no similar precautions in their spiritual and moral affairs.'[110] In familiar language, Kristol wrote, 'this "new class" is not merely liberal but truly "libertarian" in its approach to all areas of life – except economics.' He went on, 'It celebrates individual liberty of speech and expression and action to an unprecedented degree, so that at times it seems almost anarchistic in its conception of the good life. But this joyful

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Press, 2013), 120-123; Andrew Hartman, *A History of the Culture Wars: A War for the Soul of America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019), 51-5.

[108] Irving Kristol to Robert Bartley, June 4 1975, box 15 folder 15, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[109] Irving Kristol, "On Conservatism and Capitalism," *Wall Street Journal,* September 11, 1975, 20.

[110] Gertrude Himmelfarb, *On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 326-327.

individualism always stops short of the border where economics—i.e., capitalism—begins.'[111] The similarity in language, despite the different mediums (one a newspaper column, the other a historical monograph) was undeniable. Indeed, this may have stemmed in part from their close intellectual circle. Both Kristol and Himmelfarb gave thanks to figures such as Ann and Martin Diamond, Lionel and Diana Trilling, and Daniel Bell in their work. Nonetheless, in their increasingly critical opinions of the left, the couple's intellectual affinity was patent.[112]

This likeness was further reinforced by the pair's contributions to *Commentary's* symposium "What is a Liberal—Who is a Conservative?" The editors asked sixty-four contributors for their thoughts on the contemporary usage of the terms 'liberal,' 'conservative,' 'left,' and 'right.' [113] In her contribution, Himmelfarb, wrote that conservatism was no longer a useful term because it was so vilified. Consequently, she argued, 'because conservatism has been placed outside the pale of civilized discourse, a new term has come into being to permit us to speak about the unspeakable. This, as I understand it, is the function of neoconservative.'[114] Similarly, Kristol wrote, 'neoconservatism believes that conservatism as it has developed over the past 150 years, has lost its intellectual and spiritual vigor. It needs an infusion of new energies—hence, neoconservatism.'[115] With this then, both Himmelfarb demonstrated their cautious advance towards a more right-wing political outlook.

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[111] Kristol, "Corporate Capitalism in America," 134.
[112] Himmelfarb, *On Liberty and Liberalism,* xxii-xiii; Kristol, *On the Democratic Idea,* ix.
[113] Editors, ""What Is a Liberal – Who Is a Conservative? A Symposium," *Commentary* 32, No.3 (September 1976): 31-113.
[114] Gertrude Himmelfarb, ""What Is a Liberal – Who Is a Conservative? A Symposium," *Commentary* 32, No.3 (September 1976): 67.
[115] Irving Kristol, ""What Is a Liberal – Who Is a Conservative? A Symposium," *Commentary* 32, No.3 (September 1976): 75.

In addition to Himmelfarb's influence, it also seems clear that Kristol continued to be inspired by Lionel Trilling. In *Beyond Culture* (1966), Trilling introduced the concept of the 'adversary culture,' claiming that an 'adversary culture' was taking root in the USA and was opposed to bourgeois values and society.[116] Trilling then argued that as this group grew in number and became more ideologically coherent it could be deemed a class. Antti Lepistö has argued that neoconservatives fused together the idea of the "adversary culture" and the new class which sheds important light on our understanding of how Kristol's incorporated Trilling's ideas into his own concern for the decline of bourgeois values and fear of the technical classes.[117] Furthermore, the writings of Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary,* also suggested the intertwined nature of the new class and adversary culture when he wrote that, 'the progress of the adversary culture in the war of ideas served the political interests of the New Class. For the more the economic life of the country shifted from private to state-controlled enterprise, the less power would accrue to businessmen and the more power would accrue to the professional and technical intelligentsia.'[118]

But how could capitalism be protected from this anti-capitalist and supposedly amoral 'new class'? The solution, in Kristol's mind, was the corporation. In "Corporate Capitalism in America," he explored the issue in great detail. He wrote that, 'the Founding Fathers and Adam Smith would have been perplexed by the kind of capitalism we have in 1976. They could not have interpreted the domination of economic activity by large corporate bureaucracies as representing, in any sense, the working of a "system of natural liberty."'[119] In different terms, American capitalism was not designed with the corporation in mind.

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[116] Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture: Literature and Learning* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1966), 9-18.
[117] Antti Lepistö, *The Rise of Common-Sense Conservativism: The American Right And The Reinvention of The Scottish Enlightenment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2021).
[118] Norman Podhoretz, "The Adversary Culture and the New Class," 1977, box 10 folder 23, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[119] Kristol, "Corporate Capitalism in America," 125.

However, he was concerned that, 'more of the basic economic decisions are being removed from the marketplace and transferred to the "public"—i.e., political—sector, where the "new class" by virtue of its expertise and skills, is so well represented.'[120] Moreover, he posed that, 'the trouble with the large corporation today is that it does not possess a clear theoretical—i.e., ideological—legitimacy within the framework of liberal capitalism itself. Consequently, the gradual usurpation of managerial authority by the "new class"—mainly through the transfer of this authority to the new breed of regulatory officials (who are the very prototype of the class)—is almost irresistible.'[121] He ultimately concluded that, 'It is no exaggeration to say that the future of liberal democracy in America is intimately involved with these prospects for survival—the survival of an institution which liberal democracy never envisaged, whose birth and existence have been exceedingly troublesome to it, and whose legitimacy it has always found dubious.'[122] Thus, it fell to the corporation to defend capitalism from the threat of the new class.

His interest in the corporation had been growing for some time. In 1969 he proposed a special issue of *The Public Interest* on the topic.[123] But it was in his *Wall Street Journal* columns where he really explored his thoughts on the topic. In one article, he stressed the extensive nature of the problem when he claimed that 'the businessman and especially the corporate executive—has become the target of opportunity. True, there have always been politicians hostile to business, but they used to constitute a minority. Now, it takes a brave politician not to be hostile to business.'[124] He further cemented this hatred in another column arguing in hyperbolic language that ''Tis the season for scapegoating and the large

[120] Ibid, 135.
[121] Ibid, 137
[122] Ibid, 141.
[123] Irving Kristol to Robert M. Solow, October 22 1969, box 23 folder 24, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[124] Irving Kristol, "The Corporation and the Dinosaur," *The Wall Street Journal,* February 14, 1974, 20.

corporation is once again everyone's favorite candidate for ritual slaughter.'[125] Much of the hostility directed towards business that he was reflecting upon was likely a result of America's poor economic performance during the 1970s in which rising inflation was becoming particularly problematic and employment opportunities were dwindling for the first time since World War Two.[126] It also echoed the fears of the antibusiness climate outlined by Lewis Powell's 1971 "The Attack on the Free Enterprise System" memo to the US Chamber of Commerce.[127] Kristol's pro-business attitude was therefore out of step with his liberal contemporaries and aligned him with conservative figures like Powell.

In order to address this resentment, he proposed that business tackled social responsibility, an issue which Daniel Bell predicted would be at the forefront of economic debates as early as 1970.[128] In another column on the corporation, Kristol commented that, 'Social responsibility begins at home, and if the large corporation wishes to gain the trust of the American public it has to consider what kinds of changes will make it more worthy of this trust. It is true that the corporate image is in a worse condition than it deserves. But it is also true that this image is not going to be changed by the mirror-magic of "public relations."'[129] Moreover, in yet another article on the topic he emphasised that, 'A corporation may be a fictitious person in law, a kind of abstract version of "economic man," but there are moments when it will be expected to behave like a real citizen.' He carried on writing that:

> Such behavior is both "business like" and "responsible" in that it reflects self-interest "rightly understood" (as the Founding Fathers were wont to put it).
>
> That is to say, it takes cognizance of the important truth that, in a liberal

[125] Irving Kristol, "The Credibility of the Corporation," *The Wall Street Journal,* January 17, 1974, 16.
[126] See here: Berkowitz, Something Happened 57-67; Blyth, *Great Transformations,* 127-150.
[127] Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* (New York, 2022),108-34; Lawrence Glickman, *Free Enterprise: An American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 22-54.
[128] Daniel Bell, "The Corporation and Society in the 1970's," *The Public Interest* 24 (Summer 1971): 5-32.
[129] Kristol, "The Credibility of the Corporation," 16.

> democracy, everyone's self-interest is best served if each of us is capable, when required, of temporarily rising above self-interest. *That* is the social responsibility of a corporation: to behave like a citizen when circumstances seem to require it –and regardless of whether or not the law demands it.[130]

It was therefore clear that in order to defend capitalism from those who sought to destroy it, the corporation needed to take social responsibility for its actions.

Once again, he saw social mores as the means by which business could demonstrate its social responsibility to society. He urged capitalists to 'get interested, in a serious way, an intellectually thoughtful way, in the issue of "business ethics."'[131] Such ethics encompassed moral and religious traditions, and he lamented that 'businessmen have come to think that the conduct of business is a purely "economic" activity to be judged only by economic criteria, and that moral and religious traditions exist in a world apart, to be visited on Sundays perhaps.'[132] The reliance on religious rhetoric emphasised his earlier concern that capitalism had lost its moral roots and pushed back against Chicago School understandings of Adam Smith's capitalist thought. This diminished morality was problematic, as Kristol argued in an article on conservatism's relationship with capitalism. He stressed that, 'religion is now ineffectual and even businessmen find the bourgeois ethos embarrassingly old-fashioned,' and explained that, 'This leaves capitalism, and its conservative defenders, helpless before any moralistic assault, however unprincipled. And until conservatism can give its own moral and intellectual substance to its idea of liberty, the "liberal" subversion of our liberal institutions will proceed without hindrance.'[133] Therefore, he suggested to the business class that they needed to turn back to America's Judeo-Christian heritage in order to arm

[130] Irving Kristol, "The Corporation: A Last Word," *The Wall Street Journal,* March 14, 1974, 15.
[131] Irving Kristol, "Business Ethics and Economic Man," *The Wall Street Journal,* March 20, 1979, 22.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Kristol, "On Conservatism and Capitalism," 20.

themselves against the attacks regarding capitalism's decency. In doing so, the corporation could help save capitalism.

Closely linked to the need for social responsibility was the need for the corporation to behave in a philanthropic manner. He warned the business community that 'it is a fact that the majority of large foundations in this country, like most of our major universities, exude a climate of opinion wherein an antibusiness bent becomes a perfectly natural inclination.'[134] This was of course problematic for those who sought to champion capitalism, and therefore he urged that corporations think carefully about where they spent their money, writing that, 'some corporate executives seem to think that their corporate philanthropy is a form of benevolent charity. It is not. An act of charity refines and elevates the soul of the giver—but corporations have no souls to be saved or damned.'[135] So, while the corporation needed to behave responsibly this did not always mean giving money to the most in need. Instead, he suggested that corporation should 'decide not to give money to support those activities of the New Class which are inimical to corporate survival.'[136] According to this viewpoint, business interest should always come first, as this was the only means through which the new class could be disarmed.

However, Kristol was not content with merely lecturing the business community. He quickly offered up his services as a consultant to help businesses tackle these issues. For example, he was employed by International Business Machines Corporations (IBM), Sun Oil and Citibank. Correspondence between IBM executives and Kristol reveal regular praise for his writings in the *Wall Street Journal.* Furthermore, the topics proposed by IBM for discussion at Kristol's seminars were directly related to his writings with topics including,

[134] Irving Kristol, "On Corporate Philanthropy," *The Wall Street Journal,* March 21, 1977, 18.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.

but not limited to, "public problems of the corporations," and "hostility to business."[137] The willingness of major national and international companies to employ Kristol for such purposes demonstrated that his writings had hit a nerve in the business community, and adds further weight to Kim Philips-Fein's argument that some businesses enthusiastically responded to Kristol's calls to reject selfishness.[138]

Furthermore, in 1977 he took on a position as a consultant to The John M. Olin Foundation.[139] John Olin was the owner of America's largest producer of chemicals and recreational weapons and his foundation was a leading organisation in the conservative philanthropic movement which was developing in the decade.[140] In his role as a consultant, Kristol advised the foundation on social responsibility, and also made suggestions as to where to donate money. Interestingly, one such suggestion included Kristol's old publication *Encounter.*[141] Significantly the position demonstrated that as the decade came to a close, he was not just a rhetorical champion of business, but actively involved in its promotion and defence, a clear signal of an ideological shift to the right.

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[137] Jane P. Cahill to Irving Kristol, March 6 1974, box 12 folder 15, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Leslie D. Simon to Irving Kristol, March 15 1974, box 12 folder 15, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Leslie D. Simon to Irving Kristol, May 6 1974, box 12 folder 15, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; J.B. O'Connell to Irving Kristol, October 11 1974, box 12 folder 15, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; William W. Weston to Irving Kristol, May 14 1975 box 15 folder 8, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Dean Chaapel to Irving Kristol, February 24 1976, box 15 folder 8, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Leif. H. Olsen to Irving Kristol, February 9 1978, box 12 folder 19, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[138] Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, 164-5.

[139] Francis A. O'Connell, Jr. to Irving Kristol, December 1 1977, box 26 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[140] For the role of foundations in financing conservative projects see: Alice O'Connor, "Financing the Counterrevolution," in *Rightward Bound* ed., Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 148-68; Alice O'Connor, "The Politics of Rich and Rich: Postwar Investigations of Foundations and the Rise of the Philanthropic Right," in *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century,* ed., Nelson Lichtenstein (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 228-248.

[141] Irving Kristol to Francis A. O'Connell, Jr., July 31 1978, box 26 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

Conclusion: Fracturing Friendships

In 1976 Kristol publicly acknowledged this shift in *Newsweek.* Here, he accepted the term 'neoconservative' for the first time. He declared, 'There can no longer be any question about it. I am, for better or worse, a "neo-conservative" intellectual. *Newsweek, Time* and *The New York Times* have all identified me as such, and that settles the matter.'[142] Despite the sarcastic tone, the summary of his political position which followed surely identified him as such. First, he explained that whilst he opposed the Great Society he did believe in a welfare state; second, he emphasised his respect for tradition; third, he noted his rejection of egalitarianism; and finally, he stressed that in foreign policy matters he was committed to pro-American values.

This identification quickly caused personal problems. In March 1981 Bell wrote to Kristol expressing his desire to resign from *The Public Interest.* Bell complained that, 'the magazine is not just "neo-conservative;" it is, and the imprint is there in unmistakeable ways, (one of them being the politics of all the assistant editors), now a Republican Party journal. And, in the next few years the distinction between neo-conservative and conservative will vanish (it is largely a generational and historical difference by now) and the identification will be complete.'[143] The non-partisan magazine Bell and Kristol had founded in 1965 was, in Bell's view at least, no longer merely analytical, but a reflection of Kristol's ever rightward thinking. Bell had voted for Carter in 1976, and his rejection of the increasingly Republican nature of *The Public Interest* was not unforeseeable.[144] Nor did Bell's departure mark a radical change in the day-to-day life of the magazine; in 1973 Bell took up the role of

[142] Irving Kristol, "What Is a 'Neo-conservative?' *Newsweek,* January 19, 1976, 17.
[143] Daniel Bell to Irving Kristol, March 3 1981, box 18 folder 12, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[144] Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, November 2 1976, box 18 folder 7 Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Daniel Bell to Irving Kristol, October 22 1976, box 18 folder 7, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol, "The Conservative Project," *The Wall Street Journal,* June 13, 1975, 10.

chair of the publication committee with Nathan Glazer replacing him as co-editor. Nonetheless, the decision was not without heartache. Bell explained to his friend, 'I cherish the forty years of friendship with you and would hope that it would never be broken. It is made all the more difficult by your warmth, your wit, your personal tolerance, and your concern. So I would hope we would remain as friends even if our editorial collaboration is sundered.'[145] Meanwhile, in 1982 Kristol informed the rest of the publication committee that Bell had resigned on ideological grounds. He wrote that, 'For me, personally, this matter is especially painful,' but stressed that, 'The friendship between Dan and myself, now going back forty years, will not be impaired—we both agree on that. But an editorial collaboration—a very successful and intimate collaboration—of sixteen years seems to come to what I regard as a premature end. Though the divorce is amiable as could be, it will take some getting used to.'[146] Bell and Kristol's friendship would last the rest of their lifetimes. But it would be fundamentally altered, for one thing was now clear: Kristol's liberalism was truly ruptured. Nonetheless, if it was clear that he was now a neoconservative, it was less certain what the label really meant in practice. Kristol had yet to truly consolidate neoconservatism into a categorical political position.

[145] Daniel Bell to Irving Kristol, March 3 1981, box 18 folder 12, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[146] Memo from Irving Kristol to Members of the Publication Committee, February 25 1982, box 18 folder 13, Irving Kristol Papers, Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society.

Chapter Five: Consolidating Neoconservatism: Developing a Domestic Policy Position

> Meanwhile, for myself, I have reached certain conclusions: that Jane Austen is a greater novelist than Proust or Joyce; that Raphael is a greater painter than Picasso; that T.S. Eliot's later, Christian poetry is much superior to his earlier; that C.S. Lewis is a finer literary and cultural critic than Edmund Wilson; that Aristotle is more worthy of careful study than Marx; that we have more to learn from Tocqueville than from Max Weber; that Adam Smith makes a lot more economic sense than any other economist since; that the Founding Fathers had a better understanding of democracy than any political scientists since; that … Well, enough. As I said at the outset, I have become conservative, and whatever ambiguities attach to that term, it should be obvious what it does *not* mean.
>
> Irving Kristol, 1985[1]

With these remarks Irving Kristol concluded his contribution to *Partisan Review*'s special issue celebrating its fiftieth year of publication. In the issue's editorial, co-founder William Phillips wrote that, 'Just to reread the editorial in the first issue of the new *Partisan Review* is to be reminded of how much the world has changed and how much we have changed. Yet there is a clear line of continuity in the magazine.'[2] Other intellectuals who contributed to the celebratory edition of the publication included Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Sidney Hook, Irving Howe, Alfred Kazin, Milan Kundera, Mary McCarthy, Norman Podhoretz and

[1] Irving Kristol, "Reflections of a Neoconservative," *Partisan Review* 51, No.4 and 52, No. 1 (Winter 1985): 859.
[2] William Phillips, "Partisan Review: Then and Now," *Partisan Review* 51, No.4 and 52, No. 1 (Winter 1985): 491.

Stephen Spender. Kristol's inclusion amongst some of the most prominent essayists and intellectuals of the twentieth century signified his own importance, demonstrating quite how far he had risen from his days debating communists in the alcoves of City College New York. And, yet the article was more than just a demonstration of his intellectual prominence. Kristol's comments, which rejected his early modernist interests and promoted traditional thinkers, undoubtedly showed that he was a part of the 'changed' thinking to which Philips' editorial referred. If Kristol was now, in his own words, a 'conservative,' what did this mean in practice?

The landslide victory of former Governor of California Ronald Reagan over incumbent president Jimmy Carter in 1980 was widely hailed as a conservative revolution.[3] Consequently, a vast body of scholarship on the coalition of conservative movements in the 1980s and their formation in the years before exists to explain this phenomenon. With the notable exception of George Nash's comprehensive study, *The Conservative Movement in America,* much of this literature is focused on the grass roots movements associated with Reagan's electoral success, particularly in relation to the rapidly expanding power of the religious right.[4] Meanwhile, a second strand of scholarship has taken a business-orientated perspective. For example, historian Kim Phillips-Fein looked at the role of the corporate

[3] For an overview of the Reagan years see: Doug Rossinow, *The Reagan Era: A History of the 1980s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). On whether the 1980 election really was a revolution see: Meg Jacobs, "The 1980 Election Victory Without Success," in *America at the Ballot Box: Elections and Political History* ed. Gareth Davies and Julian E. Zelizer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 196-218.
[4] George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Delaware: ISI Books, 2017); Uta A. Balbier, *Altar Call in Europe: Billy Graham, Mass Evangelism, and the Cold-War West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Dallas A. Blanchard, *The Anti-abortion Movement and the Rise of the Religious Right: From Polite to Fiery Protest* (New York: Twayne, 1994); Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America, 1978–1988* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001),10-19; Donald T. Crtitchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer ed., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

community in fostering, financing, and lobbying for conservative policy in the twentieth century.[5] Closely linked to this scholarship is the work on the developing networks of conservative think tanks in this period. Important here is the work of both Jason Stahl and James Smith, whose overviews of leading think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Heritage Foundation showed how these institutions were crucial to reframing policy debates surrounding conservative ideas.[6]

While these historiographies have focused on how grassroots movements contributed to the wider conservative milieu, studies of neoconservatism have alternatively focused on its more rarefied origins in the history of political thought. Here, scholarship is split as to whether the movement developed in the 1960s, as Justin Vaïsse and Peter Steinfels have argued, or whether, as Murray Friedman, Mark Gerson, Gary Dorrien and John Ehrman have concluded, it was a product of the 1940s.[7] Additionally a second, and, for the purposes of this chapter, more important debate also exists within this scholarship, around how to define the movement. Murray Friedman defined it as principally Jewish.[8] Meanwhile, Mark Gerson argues that the label can only be applied to a limited group of intellectuals, in contrast to Justin Vaïsse's looser view that neoconservatism evolved over time with various generations possessing modified forms of the outlook.[9] More recently, Antti Lepistö's study of

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[5] Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement for the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).

[6] Jason Stahl, *Right Moves: The Conservative Think Tank in American Political Culture since 1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 1-7; James A. Smith, *The Idea Brokers: Think Tanks and the Rise of the New Policy Elite* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

[7] Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Origins of A Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2013); Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mark Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision: From the Cold War to the Culture Wars* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1997); Gary Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind: Culture and the War of Ideology* (Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 1993); John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs,* 1945-1994 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

[8] Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution,* 1-10.

[9] Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision*, 26; Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism,* 34.

neoconservatism, which explored its links to Scottish Enlightenment and provides a new understanding of the intellectual motivations of the movement in this era, has attempted to expand conceptions of neoconservatism beyond generational and religious identification.[10] However, there remains no concrete definition of neoconservatism. Consequently, a comprehensive analysis of the thought of Kristol (the only self-confessed neoconservative) in this period of consolidation, is not only vital to reaching a consensus on its characterisation, but also to understanding how neoconservatism fitted into the wider conservative movement.

This chapter is the first of two chapters that consider how Kristol consolidated his neoconservative thought in the late 1970s and 1980s. In doing so, they better define the neoconservative outlook, and, more specifically, draw attention to the influence of Kristol in formulating this position. This first chapter considers the importance of domestic interests to neoconservatism, whilst the second considers the role of foreign policy on neoconservative thought. To analyse Kristol's domestic thought, three of his key contributions to conservatism in this period will be considered: his role in the promotion of supply-side economics, his involvement in conservative think-tanks, and his re-kindled interest in ideas on poverty and the inner-city. These three topics highlight Kristol's advocacy for tax cuts, his acceptance of a minimal welfare state and his importance as a broker between conservative thinkers and donors. Moreover, the chapter demonstrates that even though the 1980s served as a period of crystallisation of Kristol's neoconservative outlook, there was nonetheless significant continuity with his earlier political ideas.

Supply-Side Economics

[10] Antti Lepistö, *The Rise of Common-Sense Conservativism: The American Right And The Reinvention of The Scottish Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 1-9.

In the 1980s a new economic theory captured the interest of Republicans across America: supply-side economics. As former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy Paul Craig Roberts explained, 'Instead of stressing the effects of spending, supply-siders showed that tax rates directly affect the supply of goods and services.' Moreover, in his view, 'Lower tax rates mean better incentives to work, to save, to take risks, and to invest as people respond to the high after-tax rewards, or greater profitability, incomes rise and the tax base grows, thus feeding back some of the lost revenues to the Treasury. The saving rate also grows, providing more financing for government and private borrowing.'[11] In essence then, supply-side economics argued for a reduction in taxes to stimulate economic growth. These tax cuts were particularly enticing because, as Iwan Morgan has argued, they could challenge the hegemonic authority of Keynesian economics which had been the cornerstone of American post-war economic growth until the 1970s.[12] Additionally, they tapped into a growing public discontent with taxation rates following the 1978 property tax revolt in California and the approval in the state of Proposition 13, which capped a maximum rate of property tax.[13]

In June 1980, Kristol excitedly boasted to Executive Vice President of the Olin Foundation Michael S. Joyce about his own involvement in the economic movement. He wrote that, 'everyone is now talking about "supply-side economics." Well, I was present at the creation, which took place exactly three years ago at the American Enterprise Institute!

[11] Paul Craig Roberts, *The Supply-Side Revolution: An Insider's Account of Policymaking in Washington* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 25.
[12] For a detailed account of supply-side economics see: Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 59-89; Paul Krugman, *Peddling Prosperity: Economic Sense and Nonsense in the Age of Diminished Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 82-102; Iwan Morgan, "Taxation as a Republican Issue in the Era of Stagflation," in *Seeking a New Majority: The Republican Party and American Politics 1960-1980* ed. Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 2013), 179.
[13] See here: Thomas Byrne Edsall with Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (W.W. Norton & Co: New York, 1991).

Up until that time, the phrase itself was unheard of and unknown.'[14] Yet Kristol was not just present at the birth of supply-side economics in the late-1970s. In fact, he actively promoted the supply-side doctrine. For example, *The Public Interest,* as Kristol noted, was the first journal to publish a graphic of the Laffer Curve, the theory developed by economist Arthur Laffer to demonstrate the point at which taxes would negatively impact on the economy.[15] By publishing information on the Laffer Curve in *The Public Interest*, Kristol helped to circulate the idea amongst his readership. Given that the journal was highly respected and included government advisors and prominent intellectuals amongst its subscribers, the decision to publish the graphic was a very important act of promotion, even if Kristol had not written the article himself.

However, this was not to say that Kristol only published others' work on supply-side economics. Throughout the early 1980s he used his own writings to promote the supply-side doctrine. In one such article he explained that 'supply-side economics naturally gives rise to an emphasis on growth, not redistribution. It aims at improving everyone's economic circumstance over time, but not necessarily in the same degree or in the same period of time.'[16] By stressing the beneficial nature of the supply-side doctrine for the whole population, all of whom would see their financial situation improve, he highlighted the populist elements of the economic theory. Meanwhile, in a second article on the topic he further exposed the populist nature of the supply-side doctrine. Here, he posited that, 'Supply-side economics may be viewed as a kind of "humanistic" rebellion against the mathematical-mechanical type of economic analysis in which economic aggregates,

[14] Irving Kristol to Michael S. Joyce, June 19 1980, box 26 folder 30, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[15] Irving Kristol, "Skepticism, Meliorism, and *The Public Interest,*" *The Public Interest* 81 (1985): 35; Jude Wanniski, "Taxes, Revenues, and the Laffer Curve," *The Public Interest* 50 (1978): 4; For detailed explanations on the Laffer Curve see: Jude Wanniski, *The Way The World Works:* 20th *Anniversary Edition* (Regnery Publishing Inc.: Washington, D.C, 1998); Roberts, *The Supply-Side Revolution*.
[16] Irving Kristol, "Ideology & Supply-Side Economics," *Commentary* 71, No.4 (April 1981): 48.

themselves dubious in nature, are related to one another so as to achieve a supposedly accurate series of snapshots of the economic universe we inhabit—something comparable to the universe we perceive when we go to a planetarium.'[17] The use of language which stressed the complicated nature of unfeeling 'mathematical-mechanical' economic theories in contrast to the 'human' faced supply-side doctrine made the later appear as accessible and anti-elitist. This populist language linked to his later reflection that 'I was not certain of its economic merits but quickly saw its political possibilities. To refocus Republican conservative thought on the economics of growth rather than simply on the economics of stability seemed to be very promising.'[18] For Kristol, then, supply-side economics were the route to conservative electoral success, which supports the argument of historian Iwan Morgan that Republicans viewed taxation as important to their political revival.[19]

Significantly, his promotion of supply-side economics was also a product of his interest in capitalism. The links between his capitalist thought and the appeal of the supply-side doctrine were most noticeable in the 1981 article "Ideology & Supply-Side Economics". Here, he stressed the importance of nineteenth-century Scottish economist Adam Smith to the economic theory when he wrote that, 'So far from being new or revolutionary, supply-side economics is frankly reactionary. "Back to Adam Smith" can be fairly designated as its motto.' [20] He reinforced the weight of Smith further, writing that, 'It may sound incredible but supply-side economics really does believe that, if you want an economic education, *The Wealth of Nations* is still the best book to read.'[21] Meanwhile, in *The Public Interest,* he wrote that, 'The significance and originality of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is that it

[17] Ibid, 50.
[18] Irving Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 35.
[19] Morgan, "Taxation as a Republican Issue in the Era of Stagflation," 179-196.
[20] Kristol, "Ideology & Supply-Side Economics," 50-51.
[21] Ibid, 51.

offered a reasoned explanation of why the proliferation of such transactions was morally defensible.' For Kristol, *The Wealth of Nations* was his guiding principle for understanding economics, and the belief that supply-side economics rested on the assumptions of Smith was key to his attraction to the doctrine. Significantly, Kristol's admiration of Smith started in the 1970s as he reconciled himself to the capitalist impulse. He even wrote of his appreciation of the economist at length in the essay, "Adam Smith and the Wealth of Nations." Consequently, despite supply-side economics being a newfound preoccupation, its links to Adam Smith and of his continued admiration for the economist highlighted the continuity in his thought.

It is also notable that these reflections on Smith were made in *Commentary* and *The Public Interest.* Although his work on supply-side economics was not exclusively confined to the pages of the *Wall Street Journal,* the majority of this work was published there. This made much sense, as Robert Bartley, editor at the *Wall Street Journal,* had made the newspaper a national forum on supply-side economics.[22] Additionally, the leading voice of supply-side economics, Jude Wanniski, regularly wrote in the paper. Given the broader national readership of the *Wall Street Journal* in comparison to the more highbrow focus of *Commentary* and *The Public Interest*, Kristol's decision to reflect on Adam Smith in the latter journals may have represented more than just a continued respect for the economist. The supply-side doctrine was not viewed as intellectually respectable amongst many academics, and so the emphasis on Smith's influence on the economic theory was likely intended to stress its credentials in the more policy-orientated journals in addition to the demonstration his admiration of the economist.[23]

[22] Collins, *Transforming America,* 65; Krugman, Peddling Prosperity, 88-102; Morgan, "Taxation as a Republican Issue in the Era of Stagflation," 183.
[23] Roberts, *The Supply-Side Revolution,* 27-28; Krugman, Peddling Prosperity, 84.

Nor was Kristol alone in his celebration of Adam Smith. Wanniski frequently referenced Adam Smith in his writings on supply-side economics.[24] For example, in his famed *The Way the World Works* (1978), a project that Kristol helped secure funding for, Wanniski went as far as to claim that 'Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton and Karl Marx were supply-siders, for example, while John Maynard Keynes, Milton Friedman, Presidents Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon all operated within the framework of demand models.'[25] Given that, as discussed above, Kristol's interest in capitalism was linked to a respect for Adam Smith and that key voices in the movement emphasised the importance of the economist to the supply-doctrine, it seems logical that Kristol was attracted to it. Moreover, it helps shed light on why Wanniski was able to 'indoctrinate' Kristol into supply-side economics, not just with the 'partial success' Kristol later claimed in his memoir but, rather, completely.[26]

Furthermore, he did not merely promote supply-side economics. In fact, the majority of his articles actively defended the economic doctrine from its critics. In August 1981, the Economic Recovery Tax Act was signed into law by Ronald Reagan, reducing personal income tax by some twenty-three percent and provided a number of other tax breaks. However, by the end of the year it was clear that the tax cut was not working. The stock market began to decline, and bonds quickly followed; a recession loomed.[27] Seeking to absolve tax cuts from blame, Kristol took to the *Wall Street Journal* to defend supply-side economics. In one column, entitled, "A Patch of Turbulence," suggesting the temporary nature of supply-side problems, he blamed politicians for the problems associated with the

[24] Wanniski, *The Way The World Works;* Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 35; John L. Kelley, *Bringing the Market Back In: The Political Revitalization of Market Liberalism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997), 78; Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision,* 199-204; Stahl, *Right Moves* 100-115; Collins, *Transforming America,* 65.
[25] Wanniski, *The Way The World Works,* 116.
[26] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 35.
[27] Collins, *Transforming America,* 71-73; John Ehrman, *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 57-58.

tax cuts.[28] He argued that, 'the trouble with the supply-side tax cuts is that Congress insisted they be designed so that their major impact would not be experienced until 1983. This was done, of course, so as to hold the budget deficit down in 1982, out of respect for Wall Street's fears about what a larger deficit would do to inflation and/or the bond market.'[29] He went on to claim that, 'Mr. Reagan has allowed himself to get involved in a pointless, politically expensive battle over further budget cuts. It's the wrong battle, at the wrong time. You don't rush to cut the budget when the economy is slowing down. That's not supply-side economics. It's Herbert Hoover economics.'[30] With this he invoked images of the Great Depression and made reference to the supply-side belief that Hoover made the economy worse in 1929 due to high-tariff policies and a tax hike in 1932.[31] In doing so, he insinuated that Reagan lacked the necessary economic prowess to resolve the country's economic woes.

In a second article blaming politicians for the failure of supply-side economics, Kristol also laid bare his differences from traditional conservatives. Here he claimed that the recession had 'nothing to do with Mr. Reagan's tax cuts, which are only beginning to be phased in, and in a minimal way at that. It had nothing to do with Mr. Reagan's budget cuts, which are still largely on paper.'[32] Indeed, he even suggested that the recession could have been prevented if supply-side economics were implemented earlier. Consequently, he argued that the fault lay with 'conservative Republicans in the Senate, hypnotized by the size of the Treasury's deficit,' who, he claimed, 'insisted on the tax cuts being phased in more

[28] Irving Kristol, "A Patch of Turbulence," *Wall Street Journal,* September 25, 1981, 32.
[29] Ibid, 32.
[30] Ibid, 32.
[31] Wanniski, "Taxes, Revenues, and the Laffer Curve," 14.
[32] Irving Kristol, "The Truth About 'Reaganomics,'" *Wall Street Journal,* November 20, 1981, 30.

gradually.'[33] With this he marked out his differences from traditional conservatives within the GOP who were more fiscally careful and preferred balanced budgets to large deficits.[34]

Moreover, in the same article, he stressed that 'The original tax cut that President Reagan sent to Congress was little more than Kemp-Roth, pure and simple. But then something bizarre happened. The Democratic leadership in the House, desirous of passing "its own" tax bill rather than the administration's, started tacking on the capital formulation agenda to the "supply-side" bill.'[35] Therefore, it was not the fault of supply-side economics that the economy was struggling, but that of politicians for failing to implement the theory correctly. By placing the blame at their feet, he not only sought to protect supply-side economics, but he also further reinforced its populist nature, by claiming it was the elites who were preventing it from functioning.

Additionally, he accused monetarists of being responsible for the failure of supply-side economics. Monetarism, conceptualized by Nobel Prize winning economist Milton Friedman, was employed by the Federal Reserve Board led by Paul Volker in an attempt to control money supply, and thereby stabilise inflation rates.[36] Kristol wrote that, 'I find these monetarists just a little too casual about the recession we are in, a little too bland in their certainty that it will be relatively shallow and far too stoical in the face of the possibility, however, remote, that it will be neither short nor shallow,' which clearly marked his dislike of the group.[37] However, he went further when he posited that, 'you don't have to be a supply-sider or a "gold bug" to wonder whether monetarism is a theory whose time may have

[33] Ibid, 30.
[34] Iwan W. Morgan, *The Age of Deficits: Presidents and Unbalanced Budgets from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009).
[35] Ibid, 30.
[36] Kelley, *Bringing the Market Back In,* 145-181; Collins, *Transforming America,* 73-74; Mark Blyth, *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 139-141.
[37] Irving Kristol, "Economic Policy: Trouble on the Supply Side," *Wall Street Journal,* October 27, 1981, 32.

come and gone.'[38] In making these comments, Kristol shifted the blame from tax cuts not only to politicians, but to the very heart of economic policy in America, the Federal Reserve, furthering the populist sentiments in his support of supply-side economics.

Friedman took issue with Kristol's interventions. In 1982 he wrote to Kristol criticising his 'erroneous analysis of the situation.' Friedman was at pains to note that the reason he was critical of Kristol was not because of 'personal vanity,' or even that Kristol's amateur economics would cause harm to the profession. Instead, Friedman proposed that, 'My concern is very different. What you write in other areas I find extremely important and useful. I believe it is a shame for you to destroy your credibility in areas where you do not know what you are talking about.'[39] Despite this warning, Kristol quipped back, 'As to destroying my credibility by writing on economic policy – well, I'll just have to run that risk. Frankly, I'd just as soon *never* write on economic policy.' However, he claimed that he had no choice but to intervene while it remained 'so controversial and problematic a topic.'[40]

Crucially, his involvement with supply-side economics also represented a marked difference in opinion from those in his usual intellectual circles. He reflected upon this in *The Public Interest* when he wrote that, 'there is no consensus on economic policy among members of our publication committee—I am, for instance, the lone "supply-sider"—and from a narrow, parochial point of view it is an editorial misfortune for us that the problematics of economic policy should have gained such prominence.' Indeed, he most certainly was the 'lone "supply-sider."'[41] In 1978, he wrote to co-editor Nathan Glazer, 'I know you are not quite convinced of it, and Dan is certainly not convinced, but the fact is that

[38] Ibid, 32.
[39] Milton Friedman to Irving Kristol, April 19 1982, box 3 folder 24, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[40] Irving Kristol to Milton Friedman, May 6 1982, box 3 folder 24, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[41] Kristol, "Skepticism, Meliorism, and *The Public Interest,*" 35.

over these past two years, *The Public Interest* has been on the cutting edge of "post Keynesian economics." Or, to be more accurate, on one of the cutting edges, represented by Laffer, Wanniski, et.al.'[42]

Evidence of this split of economic opinion can also be seen in other correspondence with friends. In an early piece on tax reform in the *Wall Street Journal* in December 1978, "The Wrong War on Inflation," Kristol argued that the decision to print more money was causing inflation to rise, and that the only solution to the problem was a tax cut.[43] In response to the article Daniel Bell wrote to Kristol, 'I think you are beginning to oversimplify. Obviously inflation arises because the govt [sic] pays for rising indebtedness by printing money. But "shutting off" the tap is an answer only at one end. A plumber seeking to close a faucet pouring out water with heavy pressure, may stop the outflow, yet the hose, lines of pumps, may also blow up.'[44] Irked by this criticism, Kristol angrily responded that, 'I thought I made it clear that I agree with you, that shutting off the tap at one end is not a sufficient answer to the problem of inflation. That's why I also recommended an expansionist tax policy.' This exchange made clear that the pair's increasingly divergent politics meant that they now disagreed on economic policy too. Meanwhile, in early 1981, sociologist and contributor to *The Public Interest* contributor Seymour Martin Lipset wrote to Kristol that, 'I must confess that I find the assumptions of all economists, including the "supply-sides" much too mono-causal, economic determinist.'[45] Thus, even before Kristol's active and public promotion and defence of supply-side theories in the early 1980s, it was clear that his economic interests set him apart from his traditional intellectual allies.

[42] Irving Kristol to Nathan Glazer, October 17 1978, box 18 folder 9, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[43] Irving Kristol, "The Wrong War on Inflation," *Wall Street Journal,* December 22, 1978, 6.
[44] Daniel Bell to Irving Kristol, No date, box 10 folder 9, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[45] Seymour Martin Lipset to Irving Kristol, April 15 1981, box 13 folder 7, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

New Networks and Think Tanks

Given these tensions, Kristol turned to new friends to discuss his economic interests with. In particular, he began correspondence with Jack Kemp, the ex-American football player and Republican Congressman for Buffalo, whom Wanniski had introduced him to.[46] Kemp had long admired Kristol. In 1973 he had sent him a handwritten note which claimed that, 'I'm a great fan of yours—hope someday to meet you in person.'[47] In a gesture of this regard Kemp read out several of Kristol's articles in Congress to draw attention to the latter's work.[48] But what was really significant about this relationship was that it further embedded Kristol within supply-side networks. Along with Senator William Roth of Delaware, Kemp introduced the Kemp-Roth Tax Reduction Bill which called for a reduction of thirty percent in personal income tax.[49] The copious correspondence between the pair showed that they enthusiastically discussed the supply-side movement. For example, on one occasion, Kristol encouraged Kemp to make an issue of 'substituting a cut in the corporate income tax for a liberalization of the investment tax credit.'[50] He even recommended that Kemp read his wife Gertrude Himmelfarb's work, writing to the Congressman that, 'I take the liberty of enclosing my wife's book. Neither she nor I expect you to read it—you shouldn't have time! But you might want to read the chapters on Smith and Malthus, which are very pertinent to neoconservatism and supply-side economics.'[51] With this letter, Kristol once again made clear the importance

[46] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 35.
[47] Jack Kemp to Irving Kristol, November 30 1973, box 12 folder 28, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[48] "Irving Kristol on the Defense of Capitalism and Other "Liberal" Institutions," Congressional Record – Extension of Remarks, September 11 1975, E4702, box 12 folder 28, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[49] Collins, *Transforming America,* 61.
[50] Irving Kristol to Jack Kemp, November 16 1977, box 12 folder 28, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[51] Irving Kristol to Jack Kemp, April 16 1985, box 12 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

of Adam Smith and his wife to his economic thinking. Moreover, it showed the flourishing friendship developing between himself and Kemp.

However, the relationship between Kemp and Kristol extended far beyond the personal. Kemp was politically ambitious and had eyes on the White House. In the late 1980s Kristol became actively involved with Kemp's various political campaigns and was important in raising funds for them.[52] Indeed, he even publicly endorsed Kemp as a candidate for president in the AEI journal *Policy Review.*[53] Kemp's platform for his proposed presidency was laid out in his political tract *An American Renaissance: Strategy for the 1980s* which further signified his commitment to supply-side economics. He wrote that, 'Inflation is simply too much money and not enough production. Period. Real growth is a matter of individual initiative responding to incentives. Tax incentives can and must be combined with appropriate monetary discipline to eliminate inflation and lay the groundwork for sustained expansion. It is time the lessons of the past decade were put to use.'[54] Kristol's help in securing funds for Kemp's political campaigns showed a further commitment to the progress of supply-side economics since he was not just content to discuss economics with the Congressman, he wanted to see this discussion made into real policy initiatives.

He also drew close to a second high-profile conservative figure during this period: William F. Buckley Junior. Buckley, the founder of the influential conservative journal *National Review,* was a prominent spokesperson for the conservative movement in the post-

[52] Irving Kristol to Jack Kemp, May 14 1986, box 12 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box; Irving Kristol to Richard J. Fox, May 1 1986, box 12 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to Michael Saperstein, June 4 1986, box 12 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Charlie Black to Irving Kristol, June 19 1986, box 12 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to Jeff Bell, February 19 1987, box 12 folder 30, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[53] Irving Kristol, "Who Should Succeed Reagan? Some Preliminary Thoughts," *Policy Review,* (Summer 1986): 34.

[54] Jack Kemp, *An American Renaissance: A Strategy for the 1980's* (Virginia: Conservative Press, 1979), 76.

war era.[55] Kristol and Buckley began their correspondence in the late 1960s and met regularly at what the pair termed the "Boy's Club lunches." These lunches were held over a period of fifteen years and included a maximum of six men who, Buckley claimed, 'had a wonderful time, among other things enhancing any number of professional intimacies without any fear of a leak.'[56] But it was not until the early 1980s that this friendship really bloomed. For example, archival records show that the pair worked on projects together which aimed to increase the European audiences for their respective journals.[57] They even exchanged regular gifts from their numerous travels abroad. On one occasion after receiving a new tie from Buckley, Kristol joked that he would have to buy a new suit to go with it, and that, 'I am counting on Reaganomics to make this expenditure possible.'[58]

Given Buckley's prominent standing within traditional conservative circles, the friendship was highly significant because it demonstrated Kristol's ability to get along with other types of conservatives outside of the neoconservative milieu. This is particularly important to note given the historical focus of the antagonism between more traditional paleo-conservatism rooted in the work of Russell Kirk, and neoconservatives who had travelled via liberalism to their own rightward position.[59]

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[55] For more on the role of William F. Buckley in the conservative movement see: Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*.

[56] William F. Buckley, "Draft Harvard Speech," box 10 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; William F. Buckley, Jr. to Irving Kristol, July 28 1986, box 10 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[57] Irving Kristol to William F. Buckley, Jr., February 19 1985, box 10 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Memo from William F. Buckley, Jr., to William Phillips, Norman Podhoretz, Irving Kristol, and Martin Peretz, March 21 1986, box 10 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to William F. Buckley, Jr, March 26 1986, box 10 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[58] Irving Kristol to William F. Buckley, Jr., November 2 1982, box 10 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[59] Gregory L. Schneider, "Conservatives and the Reagan Presidency," in *Reassessing the Reagan Presidency* ed. Richard Conley (Maryland: University Press of America, 2003), 76; Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement,* 366-370; Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind,* 225; Kelley, *Bringing the Market Back In,* 189.

Nonetheless, there were limits to this friendship. In November 1981, *National Review* published an editorial by Jeffery Hart on the National Endowment for the Humanities' (NEH) search for a new chairman.[60] Kristol had previously served on the board of the NEH and was named in the article as supporting the candidate William Bennet for the position.[61] However, Kristol was annoyed by the editorial's factual inaccuracies in relation to Bennet and the NEH. He complained directly to Buckley writing that, 'I keep saying that the clear distinction that was once visible between "neoconservatives" and "old conservatives" is now so blurred as to be meaningless, but every now and then *National Review* will remind me the gap still exists.' Kristol continued, 'The sad truth is too many "old conservatives" are so far distanced from the academic intellectual world that they find themselves saying things, and doing things, that make the position of *all* conservatives in this world that much more difficult.'[62] With this statement Kristol highlighted that while he was prepared to offer friendship to those he termed "old conservatives," he did not consider himself to be one. Neoconservatism was distinct from mainstream conservatism because it considered intellectual respectability to be at its core, something which he clearly considered other conservatives to lack.

Kristol's charges of anti-intellectualism against *National Review* were unexpected. Buckley worked hard to purge the conservative movement of unrespectable elements like the John Birch Society, the conspiratorial and avidly anti-communist group founded in 1958 by Robert Welch. Welch's claim, amongst many other outlandish accusations, that President Eisenhower was a communist, unnerved leading conservative figures such as Buckley. In an attempt to disassociate mainstream conservatives like himself from Welch and his society, Buckley used the pages of *National Review* to attack and discredit the claims of Welch and

[60] Jeffrey Hart, "NEH Impasse," *National Review* 33, No.2 (November 13 1981): 1318.
[61] Ibid; Armen Tashdinian to Irving Kristol, November 14 1977, box 26 folder 12, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[62] Irving Kristol to William F. Buckley, Jr., November 9 1981, box 10 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

his society, despite receiving financial backing from Welch himself and Roger Milliken, a John Birch Society member.[63] Given the lengths Buckley took to present a respectable form of conservatism, Kristol's charges against his friend reveal just how important the neoconservative perspective of intellectual responsibility was to its proponents, no one was exempt from upholding such standards.

Alongside personal relations, a second factor became important to emerging conservative networks: think tanks. These organisations were important sites of research and promoted public policy making. In the United States such organisations developed in the late-progressive era with the formation of the Brookings Institution in 1916.[64] By mid-century many think tanks developed to promote Keynesian economics and consensus liberalism.[65] However, as Jason Stahl's study of post-war think tanks and Alice O'Connor's history of the Russell Sage Foundation have successfully demonstrated, in the late-1970s and 1980s conservatives created new organisations with which to reframe policy debates towards right-wing concerns.[66] At the forefront of this 'counterrevolution,' the term used by O'Connor to describe the explosion of right-wing think tanks into the American political landscape, were the AEI, the Heritage Foundation, the Hoover Institution and the libertarian Cato Institute.[67]

Critically, Kristol entrenched himself within the developing network of conservative think tanks in this era through his involvement with the AEI. As noted in Chapter Five, he became associated with the AEI in 1978 when he became a visiting fellow at the think tank.

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[63] For an overview of Buckley's differences with the John Birch Society see: Edward H. Miller, *A Conspiratorial Life: Robert Welch, The John Birch Society, and the Revolution of American Conservatism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2021). On the John Birch Society see: D. J. Mulloy, *The World of the John Birch Society: Conspiracy, Conservatism, and the Cold War* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014).
[64] For a history of the Brookings Institute see: Donald T. Critchlow, *The Brookings Institution, 1916–1952: Expertise and the Public* Interest in a Democratic Society (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985).
[65] Stahl, *Right Moves,* 10.
[66] Ibid, 2-6; Alice O'Connor, *Social Science for What? Philanthropy and the Social Question in a World Turned Rightside Up* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007)
[67] O'Connor, *Social Science for What?,* 118; Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 320. For a more detailed overview of these organisations see: Smith, *The Idea Brokers.*

However, in 1988, in a symbol of just how enmeshed within right-wing networks he was, he transferred his position at New York University to the AEI where he became a John M. Olin Distinguished Fellow.[68]

The AEI initially formed in reaction to the New Deal, but slowly expanded under the guidance of William Baroody Senior to become a leading institute of conservative research by the 1970s.[69] Crucially, the AEI saw itself as a counter to the liberal leaning Brookings Institute. Its "Statement of Purpose" declared that its goals were, 'to elevate the level of public policy, to ensure that the choices we make as a nation are based on fact, perspective, understanding, and sound ideas.' Moreover, the think tank claimed that it was 'dedicated to the principle that the competition of ideas is fundamental to a free society,' and that it would, 'Serve as a marketplace of ideas where scholars, public officials, business leaders, journalists, and others may discuss and debate the most important issues facing the U.S. and the free world.'[70] This emphasis on the 'competition' and 'marketplace of ideas' which treated ideas like free-market economics was unmistakably conservative in nature. Indeed, Kristol claimed that the AEI was 'the biggest, the best, and most influential of conservative "think tanks."' [71] Given the traditional image of the university as a place of liberal thought, in the wake of the 1960s Kristol's move to such an explicitly conservative institution demonstrated his desire to be at the forefront of conservative policy making.

Additionally, he was essential in attracting both people and resources to the emerging think-tank network. In another letter to William E. Simon, head of the major conservative donor the Olin Foundation, Kristol noted how he was personally responsible for the

[68] William E. Simon to Irving Kristol, September 30 1987, box 26 folder 32, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[69] Niels Bjerre-Poulsen, "The Heritage Foundation: A Second-Generation Think Tank," *Journal of Policy History* 3, No.2 (1991): 156; Smith, *The Idea Brokers,* 175-180.
[70] "AEI Statement," No Date, 2-3, box 24 folder 1, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[71] Irving Kristol to Michael S. Joyce, June 19 1980, box 26 folder 30, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

recruitment of a number of figures to the AEI, including the prominent public intellectuals Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ben Wattenberg and Michael Novak.[72] The ability to persuade such prestigious persons to attach their names to institutions dedicated to the expansion of right-wing concepts further demonstrated Kristol's centrality to building a conservative apparatus with which to challenge the hegemony of liberal policy making.

Yet, Kristol was not just good at attracting important figures to think-tanks. He was also critical in obtaining financial donations. In May 1980 Kristol spoke at the Annual Conference of the Council of Foundations, where he stressed to the attendees that there was no third philanthropic sector, just the public and private sectors. He explained that foundations emerged in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to 'do all the things that government did not do.' However, he argued that in the contemporary moment, 'We have had a reversal. There is almost nothing you can suggest which government is not eager to do. And it seems to me that foundations, therefore, have a special responsibility to be wary of government and to be a lot more solicitous of their own sector, which I repeat, is the private sector.'[73] The emphasis on the responsibility of the 'private sector' was reminiscent of his 1960s' articles on the new class, where he argued that 'The "new class" wants to see much of this power [the ability to shape society] redistributed to government,' and that it was the responsibility of the corporation to prevent this.[74] He further echoed these earlier sentiments in the conclusion to the speech, claiming that, 'The money you people spend is *private* money. It is *not* public money. Money that government does not take is ours.' Therefore, he explained that, 'You can have whatever public responsibilities you wish to

[72] Irving Kristol to William E. Simon, June 5 1986, box 26 folder 32, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[73] Irving Kristol, "Foundations and The Sin of Pride: The Myth of the "Third Sector,"" Annual Conference of the Council on Foundations, May 30, 1980, box 1 folder 12, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[74] Irving Kristol, "Business and the New Class," *The Wall Street Journal,* May 19, 1975, 8.

assume with that private money.' However, he continued, 'it is private money. It is the life blood of your organizations, and I think it is time foundations gave a little more thought to the source of that life blood and to what might be done to making that life blood a little more abundant, and, shall we say, healthier in composition.'[75] With these comments, he undoubtedly urged for more generous funding of conservative causes. Consequently, his speech highlighted the role he played in brokering financial deals between foundations and intellectuals.

Archival records contain numerous other examples of the ways in which Kristol acted as political and intellectual broker. The most significant illustration of this ability was his relationship with the Olin Foundation, which he used to turn around the fortunes of the AEI. Until the mid-1980s the AEI was the leading conservative think tank, but its importance began to wane as the Heritage Foundation grew.[76] Furthermore, in the mid-1980s William Baroody Senior passed over his chairmanship of the AEI to his son William Baroody Junior, whose mismanagement of the think-tank led to the loss of a number of influential donors. Significantly, in June 1986 the Olin Foundation withdrew financial support for the AEI, leaving its future uncertain.[77] Thanks to his close relationship with the Olin Foundation, where he was previously an advisor, Kristol was able to persuade the foundation to re-start its contributions to the AEI and helped to rescue the think tank from its financial problems.[78] Not only this, but he was also able to secure funds for new AEI Director Christopher DeMuth's magazine *Regulation.*[79] It was not just that Kristol's ideas were important for the expansion of conservative thought then, he was also an indispensable figure in securing the

[75] Kristol, "Foundations and The Sin of Pride."
[76] Bjerre-Poulsen, "The Heritage Foundation."
[77] For the mismanagement of the AEI see: Stahl, *Right Moves* 130-132; Smith, *The Idea Brokers,* 167-186.
[78] Irving Kristol to Christopher DeMuth, April 6 1987, box 24 folder 13, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[79] Irving Kristol to Jim Pierson, June 4 1986, box 26 folder 32, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

necessary financial capital conservatives needed to challenge their liberal counterparts. Nor, as we will now explore, did Kristol merely help bankroll this ideological war, he also shaped the very ideas with which it was fought.

Neoconservatism and the Welfare State

In 1989, Kristol wrote, 'the tide has turned, and that urban problems—particularly inner-city problems—are now once again becoming interesting as issue of public policy.'[80] In the 1960s, as we have previously seen, he was profoundly interested in the so-called 'Urban Crisis'. He wrote widely on the issue in journals and taught courses on urban problems to undergraduate students. Yet, by the 1970s such discussions were almost entirely absent in his work. In his own words, he 'had become bored and depressed,' by the fact that, 'none of the supposed "solutions" to crime, drugs, poverty, homelessness, illegitimacy, etc., seemed to work.' [81] What changed in the 1980s to make this issue of public policy interesting and important again?

In part his assessment that the 'tide has turned' reflected the return of widespread debate on the issue of public policy and, more specifically, the welfare state during the 1980s.[82] In 1984 Charles Murray, a conservative intellectual working at the Manhattan Institute, published *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980.*[83] Murray sought to understand why, despite the rapid increase of social welfare in the 1960s, poverty continued to grow in the United States. He concluded that programmes such as Aid to Families with

[80] Irving Kristol, "Cries of 'Racism' Cow Crime Fighters," *Wall Street Journal,* February 28, 1989, A22.
[81] Ibid.
[82] For an overview of the welfare state in the 1980s see: James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard, 2000); Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Edward D. Berkowitz, *America's Welfare State: From Roosevelt to Regan* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991).
[83] Charles Murray, *Losing Ground (10th Anniversary Edition): American Social Policy, 1950-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); O'Connor, *Social Science for What?* 102; Michael B. Katz, "The Urban "Underclass" as a Metaphor of Social Transformation" in *The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History* ed. Michael B. Katz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 15-22.

Dependent Children (AFDC) encouraged poverty because they made it attractive to be poor. Kristol deemed Murray's work 'absolutely first rate,' but the research behind *Losing Ground* was dubious at best.[84] It should also be noted here, that hostility towards the 'underclass' and those on welfare rolls was not unique to conservatives. Liberals also contributed to the hysteria. For example, William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) attempted to provide a liberal analysis of the rising poverty in the United States. While Wilson may not have used the term underclass, he too was concerned by the number of female-headed families and the number of children born out of wedlock.[85] Nevertheless Murray's provocative argument in particular stirred up old antagonisms regarding the welfare state, and it was within this debate that Kristol re-kindled his own public policy interests.[86]

Unlike many conservatives, Kristol supported a welfare state. In his first book as a self-proclaimed neoconservative, *Reflections of a Neoconservative* (1983), he clarified this position. He wrote that neoconservatism articulated 'no lingering hostility to the welfare state,' and that 'it seeks not to dismantle the welfare state in the name of free-market economics.'[87] The year before he provided a more comprehensive defence of the welfare state in a speech to Viennese bankers. He stressed to his audience that it was 'an error to look at the welfare state as it has emerged in our societies, in our democratic societies, as some kind of halfway mark toward a quasi-socialist of socialist society.'[88] Furthermore, he argued that the 'welfare state will have a central place' in society and that it was 'a collective

[84] Irving Kristol to Martin Kessler, July 17 1986, box 17 folder 59, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[85] William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: the Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). See also: Katz, "The Urban "Underclass,"' 17-22; Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ*: *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, No. 4 (1 May 1997): 457; Collins, *Transforming America,* 126-129.
[86] Collins, *Transforming America,* 124-129; Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century,* 212; O'Connor, *Social Science for What?* 102-107.
[87] Irving Kristol, "Preface," in *Reflections of a Neoconservative: Looking Back, Looking Ahead* ed. Irving Kristol (Basic Books: New York, 1983), xii.
[88] Irving Kristol, "The Effects of Social Policy on Economic and Financial Programs," 1, box 1 folder 24, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

response to a new collective reality, industrialized, urbanized, mass society in which the traditional institutions people relied on to cope with insecurity, and their families, their churches, their local communities are no longer very effective.'[89]

Such vocal support of the welfare state saw his views diverge from many right-wing contemporaries. In Milton and Rose Friedman's *Free to Choose* (1980), the book which accompanied the television series of the same name, the couple laid out an alternative libertarian vision for welfare.[90] In the chapter "Cradle to Grave," the pair argued against the welfare state claiming that, 'We find it hard to conceive of a greater triumph of imaginative packaging than the combination of an unacceptable tax and an unacceptable benefit program into a Social Security program that is widely regarded as one of the greatest achievements of the New Deal.'[91] Instead they posited that the solution was the free market, writing that, 'Wherever the free market has been permitted to operate, wherever anything approaching equality of opportunity has existed, the ordinary man has been able to attain level of living never dreamed of before.'[92] This stood in stark contrast to Kristol's claim in *Reflections of a Neoconservative* that the welfare state was necessary and should not be dismantled in the name of the free market.

However, despite Kristol's toleration of the welfare state, he did not support an all-encompassing government support network. In both his Austrian speech and his remarks in the preface to *Reflections of a Neoconservative*, he underscored that the welfare state should be conservative in nature. He explained that such a welfare state was 'a kind of social insurance welfare state which has certain special features,' that it did 'not aim at

[89] Ibid, 4.
[90] Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), ix. On the production of the television series see: Caroline Jack, "Producing Milton Friedman's *Free to Choose*: How Libertarian Ideology Became Broadcasting Balance," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 62, No.3 (2018): 514-530.
[91] Friedman and Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 105.
[92] Ibid, 146.

redistribution,' and was 'indifferent to the issue of equality.'[93] This rejection of 'redistribution' was evidently linked to his economic position as supply-side economics sought to make all better-off rather than to share out wealth demonstrating how the different components of his thought were intertwining to create a comprehensive outlook.

Meanwhile, Kristol's dismissal of 'equality' appeared linked to his discomfort with affirmative action, the set of policies implemented by the government to increase underrepresented groups in employment and educational affairs. In *Commentary* he explained that 'Affirmative action has come to be judicially and bureaucratically defined in terms of racial and ethnic quotas in hiring and firing—what has been called "positive discrimination." This is utterly repugnant, in principle, to Jews.' [94] Meanwhile, he wrote to his friend Daniel Patrick Moynihan, 'it would be awfully nice if one could come up with genuine "affirmative action" of a kind that was not really reverse discrimination.'[95] Given Kristol's own experience of quotas (most New York Intellectuals were prevented from attending Ivy League Universities because of limits on the number of Jewish students allowed entry during the period in which they were of college age) such hostility appears more comprehensible.

The work of Nathan Glazer, co-editor of *The Public Interest*, further sheds light on this position. In 1975 Glazer published a book length critique of the policy, *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy.* Here, he argued that the 'point is that racial and ethnic groups make bad categories for the design of public policy. They include a range of individuals who have different legal bases for claims of redress and remedy of grievances. If the categories are designed to correct the injustices of the past, they do not

[93] Kristol, "The Effects of Social Policy on Economic and Financial Programs," 5-6.
[94] Kristol, "The Political Dilemma of American Jews," 24.
[95] Irving Kristol to Daniel P. Moynihan, October 13 1977, box 13 folder 22, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

work.'[96] Reflecting on the publication in 1988, he lamented that Reagan had failed to remove affirmative action quotas, and remained steadfastly attached to his earlier criticism writing that, 'No American can be satisfied with the over-all condition of black Americans, despite progress in recent decades; but government actions that aim at statistical goals for minorities are not likely to do better in improving that condition.'[97] For Glazer, just like Kristol the statistical component of affirmative action was problematic and explained their disinclination to support a welfare state which actively promoted 'equality' programmes.

However, this conservative vision of the welfare state did not just oppose redistribution, but also crucially distinguished between those who were 'deserving', and those who were not. In the wittily titled column, "The War of the Words," Kristol explained that, 'If we are talking about people who are "poor" (or, perhaps, "handicapped") we impose upon ourselves a moral obligation to help such people cope with their difficult lives, to the degree that we can sensibly do so without further complicating those lives.' This version of the welfare state which was 'based on the Judeo-Christian tradition,' was one which he believed that 'conservatives ought to find acceptable.'[98] Meanwhile, in another piece for the newspaper on welfare, he wrote that the elderly were, 'the ideal recipients of welfare-state benefits,' because they 'are our parents or grandparents.' Moreover, he suggested that the elderly were, 'beyond all social pathologies' and were 'not likely to be corrupted by welfare entitlements, and in any case would not be corrupted for very long.'[99] The reference to social pathologies played directly into the contemporary discourse surrounding the so-called 'underclass.' The 'underclass' was viewed as a social disease and referred to the continued poverty, unemployment, escalating crime, and rising teenage pregnancies associated with the

[96] Nathan Glazer, *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 198.
[97] Nathan Glazer, "The Affirmative Action Stalemate," *The Public Interest* 90 (Winter 1980): 114.
[98] Irving Kristol, "The War of the Words," *Wall Street Journal,* June 11, 1987, 24.
[99] Irving Kristol, "End Game of the Welfare State," *Wall Street Journal,* September 11, 1989, A18.

American inner-city.[100] Consequently, with this statement, Kristol made clear that it was more important that the beneficiaries of welfare were not a member of this group, and 'deserving' of the state's help.

This rhetoric was present in much of Kristol's other work. In another example he wrote:

> It is nice to provide free lunches for poor schoolchildren, and it is unquestionably nice for the nutritionists, the food service industry, and the farmers. But what avalieth [sic] that free lunch to a black mother if her son at the same time, gets hooked on drugs or is involved in criminal activities, while her teen-age daughter becomes pregnant?[101]

With the reference to crime, drugs, and teenage pregnancy, he once again engaged in the discourse of the 'underclass.' However, the reference to a 'black mother' did not just play into the 'underclass' discourse, it also built on the long existing stigmatisation of welfare recipients, and in particular African-American single mothers who by the 1960s received AFDC in disproportionate numbers and continued to do so well into the 1980s when Kristol wrote this.[102] AFDC, originally Aid to Dependent Children, was introduced in the New Deal Social Security Act of 1935 and was intended as support for widowed white women to raise their children. Backlash to the provision began in the late-1940s when AFDC was expanded to include unwed mothers and racial minorities.[103] In the years that followed as the hostility

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[100] Michael Schaller, *Right Turn: American Life in the Reagan-Bush Era 1980-1992* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 78; Collins, *Transforming America,* 122-124; Rossinow, *The Reagan Era;* Lepistö, *The Rise of Common-Sense Conservativism,* 124-133.

[101] Irving Kristol, "The Political Dilemma of American Jews," *Commentary* 78, No.1 (July 1984): 24.

[102] On the gendered and racialised stigmatisation of welfare recipients see: Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ*: *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, No. 4 (1 May 1997): 442-457; Cathy Cohen, "The Radical Potential of Queer? Twenty Years Later," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 25, No.1 (January 2019): 140-144; Ellen Reese, *Backlash Against Welfare Mothers: Past and Present* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2005), 86-106; Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[103] Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), 31-54; Reese, *Backlash Against Welfare Mothers,* 21.

to expanding welfare rolls grew, AFDC recipients faced stricter regulations. For example in 1951, Californian AFDC recipients had to accept employment, cases of desertion were investigated, and real property other than a home had to be used to meet the needs of a child. While in New York, unannounced visits to recipients' houses began in an effort to crack down on supposed welfare fraud. [104] By 1967 the federal Social Security Amendments required those who received AFDC to undergo work training or find work.[105] Yet, despite these measures and the efforts of campaigners such as the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), resentment towards those of welfare rolls endured and only intensified by the 1980s.[106] Kristol's derision of this fictional mother was not novel, it simply played into age old stereotypes of welfare recipients.

This racialised rhetoric was further seen in an article on tackling crime in the inner-city. Here, Kristol controversially advocated the use of martial law and increased stop and searches in urban centres. He suggested that this was not policy because critics would brand it racist which was 'crazy,' further arguing that, 'If we were to give the policy such authority on Manhattan's Upper East Side, the "gold coast"—now that would indeed be racist,' but that, what on earth is racist in providing protection to a poor, black community against black predators?'[107] Such views about the causes of and solutions to poverty in the inner city were misplaced, and, much like his earlier work on the urban crisis failed to understand the complexity of the problems faced by its residents. Instead, Kristol's writings on welfare in prominent national newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal* further contributed the

[104] Reese, *Backlash Against Welfare Mothers,* 86-106
[105] Andrew Morris, *The Limits of Voluntarism: Charity and Welfare from the New Deal Through the Great Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 197.
[106] For the fight against the backlash: see Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors* and Felicia Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights: Politics and Poverty in Modern America* (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 2007).
[107] Kristol, "Cries of 'Racism' Cow Crime Fighters," A22.

ideological hostility towards welfare recipients and the 'underclass' which was growing during this era.[108]

Moreover, in 1985 James Q. Wilson, a political scientist at Harvard University, published *Crime & Human Nature* with fellow Harvard academic, Richard J. Herrnstein.[109] The book aimed to 'to offer a comprehensive explanation as we can manage of why some individuals are more likely than others to commit crimes.'[110] In chapter eighteen, the pair considered the relationship between crime and race. Here, they sought to understand the differences between the white and Black crime rates in America. Despite acknowledging the horrors associated with the pseudo-scientific theories of social Darwinism, the pair still investigated the relationship between intelligence quotients and race, as well as economic disadvantages, and 'inadequate socialization' which referred to the view that Black families did a poorer job at socialising their children than white families. In a highly questionable conclusion to the already insensitive and scientifically dubious discussion, they wrote that 'each theory is partially correct.'[111] Given Wilson's position as influential member of *The Public Interest*'s publication committee, it seems likely that his emphasis on the connection between race and crime affected Kristol's thinking on the 'underclass.'

But, especially important to Kristol's work on poverty was, once again, his wife Gertrude Himmelfarb who was by now a Distinguished Professor of History at City University, New York.[112] As Antti Lepistö demonstrates in his study of neoconservatism and the Scottish Enlightenment, Himmelfarb's historical work also spoke to contemporary

[108] Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warrior,* 196.
[109] On Wilson's neoconservative outlook see: Christopher P. Loss, "The Making of a Neocon," *Modern American History* 5, No. 3 (2022): 263-287.
[110] James Q. Wilson and Richard J. Herrnstein, *Crime & Human Nature: The Definitive Study of the Causes of Crime* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 20.
[111] Ibid, 459-486.
[112] Bernard Semmel, "Gertrude Himmelfarb: In Celebration," *Humanities* 12, No.3 (May 1,1991): 11.

debates on poverty.[113] During the 1980s she centred her thinking on Victorian understandings and conceptions of poverty. In addition to several articles on the topic, she wrote a monograph, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (1985) which explored the contributions of key nineteenth-century thinkers, including Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, Thomas Malthus, and Alexis de Tocqueville to the conception of poverty in this era.[114] In the introduction she laid out the purpose of the historical investigation, writing that she wanted to understand, firstly, 'Which of the poor were regarded as problematic, and how did the popular image of that group affect the proposals for reform?' Secondly, 'How were the "unworthy," "undeserving" poor distinguished from the "worthy" and "deserving," and why was it that first the former and then the latter became the primary focus of the social problem?' And, finally, 'How did the concept of the "deserving poor" become redefined so as to make them eligible for public assistance, when earlier they were thought deserving precisely because they were self-sustaining, hence not in need of assistance?'[115] The focus on the dichotomy between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' evidently echoed conversations surrounding the 'underclass.'

Furthermore, Himmelfarb was also interested in the topic of Victorian morality. A year later she published *Marriage and Morals Among the Victorians* (1986) a selection of essays which, among other things, studied the relationships of several eminent Victorian couples. In the introduction she argued that what linked these relationships was 'the struggle to preserve the sanctity of marriage, as of all moral institutions, even when the form and

[113] Lepistö, *The Rise of Common-Sense Conservativism,* 113-118.
[114] Gertrude Himmelfarb, "In Defense of Progress," *Commentary* 69, No.6 (June 1980): 53- 60; Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Victorian Values/Jewish Values," *Commentary* 87, No.2 (February 1989): 23-31; Gertrude Himmelfarb, "In Defense of the Victorian Author(s)," *Wilson Quarterly* 12, No.3 (Summer 1988): 90-99; Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Engels in Manchester: Inventing the Proletariat," *The American Scholar* 52, No.4 (1983): 479-496; Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty in England in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Vintage, 1985).
[115] Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty,* 8.

substance were lacking.' This emphasis on traditional heteronormative relationships at a time when conservatives feared family breakdown and rising teenage pregnancy meant that *Marriage and Morals Among the Victorians* provided another example of how Himmelfarb's work, despite its historical focus, also spoke to modern public policy concerns. Her historical investigation into the phenomenon of poverty and emphasis on Victorian values in relationship to this provided the contemporary conservative position, including her husband's writings, with greater intellectual weight. Indeed, so important was this emphasis, historian Gary Gerstle terms it 'neo-Victorianism,' and suggests that it provided the moral code to the nascent neoliberal order.[116]

Himmelfarb's work on Tocqueville was particularly impactful on Kristol's thought. In the penultimate chapter of *The Idea of Poverty,* Himmelfarb analysed Tocqueville's writings on poverty with a focus on his "Memoir on Pauperism."[117] Tocqueville wrote the memoir in 1835 following his trip to Britain to understand the enigma that the world's strongest economy also suffered from widespread poverty. In it, he described a visit to an English Magistrate's Court, where he witnessed several pregnant women attempt to claim relief from the state.[118] He concluded his account with argument that, 'By obliging the parishes to become responsible for illegitimate children and permitting the paternity suits in order to ease this crushing weight, we have facilitated the misconduct of lower-class women as much as we could.' Furthermore he suggested that, 'Illegitimate pregnancy must almost always improve their material condition. If the father of the child is rich, they can unload the responsibility of the fruit of their common blunder on him; if he is poor, they entrust this

[116] Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 132-134; Cooper, *Family Values.*
[117] Ibid, 147-152.
[118] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism with an Introduction by Gertrude Himmelfarb,* trans. Seymour Drescher (London: Civitas, 1997), 34.

responsibility to society.'[119] The similarity to modern discussions of the infamous 'Welfare Queen,' the highly-embellished story of a Chicago woman charged with fraud used by Ronald Reagan in his campaign to reduce the size of the welfare state, was remarkable.[120]

Moreover, this criticism of welfare seemed to influence Kristol's thinking. Kristol complained of liberal attitudes towards sexuality, in one article writing, 'We hand out contraceptive pills to young girls because our experts tell us this will reduce teen-age pregnancies; but the more pills we hand out, the more rapid the increase in such pregnancies; so we make such pills still more easily available.'[121] These gendered remarks demonstrated his view, much like Tocqueville, that the state was enabling and creating the problems it faced. Consequently, it adds further insight into Melinda Cooper's conclusion that while neoconservatives, or 'social conservatives' as she also terms them, were willing to accept some elements of a redistributive welfare state, they fundamentally wanted a return to the poor-law traditions which emphasised family responsibility.[122] Additionally, such work demonstrates that Antti Lepistö is correct to identify the impact of nineteenth century thinkers on neoconservative attitudes to public policy, but as the influence of Himmelfarb's work on Kristol's thought shows, it extended beyond the figures associated with the Scottish Enlightenment.[123] Ultimately, then, the rationale for those considered 'deserving' in Kristol's conception of a 'conservative' welfare state was drawn from across nineteenth century thought and rooted in the English poor-law tradition.

Conclusion: Assessing the Domestic Achievements of the Reagan Presidency

[119] Ibid, 35.
[120] O'Connor, *Social Science for What?*
[121] Irving Kristol, "Whatever happened to Common Sense?" *Wall Street Journal,* January 17, 1984, 30.
[122] Cooper, *Family Values*, 67-108.
[123] Lepistö, *The Rise of Common-Sense Conservativism,* 3.

In 1986, during Reagan's second term, Kristol wrote a glowing assessment of the president's achievements in the *Wall Street Journal.* The article's title, "The Force Is With Reagan," was a tongue-in-cheek reference to the popular *Star Wars* film franchise, and was presumably intended to counter jokes made by Reagan's critics who derided the 1983 Strategic Defense Initiative as 'Star Wars.'[124] Whether the defensive nature of the title was intended or not, the substance of the column undoubtedly was. Kristol wrote that, 'Though the Force moves in what seems to be mysterious ways, hard to calculate and forecast, it is actually less mystifying than one would think. For the Force rewards those political leaders whose instincts and basic perception are "in tune with reality"—with human realities, political realities, economic realities, social realities.'[125] Despite the continued joking reference to *Star Wars*, the comments were not sarcastic; it was evident that Kristol viewed the president as down to earth and in tune with the nation's needs.

This support remained throughout the remaining years of the Reagan administration. In a 1988 column reflecting on the period, amid widespread discussion of the failed conservative revolution, he argued that the administration, 'could have been and should have been, a lot more effective than it has been.' This reflected the inability of Reagan to reduce the size of the federal government, the Republican failure to gain control of House in 1982 and the loss of the Senate in 1986.[126] But in spite of this disappointment, he wrote that, 'it is no small political accomplishment for the Reagan administration to have identified Republicans with low taxes, low unemployment and economic growth. This could be of major significance for the future of American politics. But this political importance is nothing

[124] Irving Kristol, "The Force is With Reagan," *Wall Street Journal,* October 24, 1986, 28; Rossinow, *The Reagan Era,* 106-110.
[125] Kristol, "The Force is With Reagan,"28.
[126] Jacobs, "The 1980 Election Victory Without Success," 21; Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion,* 332-339; Schaller, *Right Turn,* 59.

compared with its ideological significance.'[127] Furthermore he continued this praise writing that, 'I believe it is impossible to underestimate the impact of this successful counter-revolution in political economy on the future of democratic politics in general and American politics in particular.'[128]

Kristol was an active figure in this 'counter-revolution,' even if he 'had exactly one private dinner at the White House during the two Reagan terms.'[129] He was a prominent national voice in the promotion of supply-side economics, helping to educate the public and intellectual communities alike about the supposed benefits of tax-cuts which ultimately became a crucial component of 'Reaganomics.' Meanwhile, his vision of a limited welfare state contributed to wider public debates on the topic and an expanding conservative backlash against the legacy of the Great Society. Nor was it only his thought which was significant in this period. He was also a crucial actor in obtaining funds for conservative projects during the 1980s. In this capacity, he ensured that he and fellow conservatives had the means to research and circulate their ideas just like their liberal counterparts. Indeed, in October 1990 Reagan would write to Kristol that, 'I am proud of the work we did together in Washington and hope it can continue.'[130]

Moreover, Kristol's role in the conservative 'counter-revolution' also helps to clarify the intellectual coordinates of neoconservatism more precisely. During the 1980s he combined old and new intellectual interests to shape a cohesive neoconservative outlook. In the domestic realm this view advocated for a limited welfare state to aid the deserving poor and populist tax reducing economic policies, and above all defined itself upon intellectual

[127] Irving Kristol, "The Reagan Revolution That Never Was," *Wall Street Journal,* April 19, 1988, 34.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Irving Kristol to Daniel P. Moynihan, October 7 1985, box 13 folder 23, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[130] Ronald Reagan to Irving Kristol, October 12 1990, box 7 folder 15, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

responsibility in contrast to other members of the conservative coalition. However, this was just half of the neoconservative vision. As the following chapter will demonstrate, a full definition of neoconservatism is incomplete without a consideration of its foreign policy positions.

Chapter Six: Consolidating Neoconservatism: Crafting a Foreign Policy Vision

> Neoconservatives believe—as does the Left—that politics always takes some degree of priority over economics, and that in foreign policy this is most especially true. They therefore believe that the goals of American foreign policy must go well beyond a narrow, too literal definition of "national security." It is the national interest of a world power, as this is defined by a sense of national destiny, that American foreign policy is about, not a myopic national security.
>
> Irving Kristol, 1983[1]

With this statement in *Reflections of a Neoconservative* (1983), and after having established the neoconservative position on domestic policy, Kristol stressed the equal, perhaps even greater, importance of foreign policy to neoconservatism. He suggested that American foreign policy was characterised by a lack of intellectual foresight and needed to become fundamentally more ambitious in nature. Two years earlier in the *Wall Street Journal,* he made a similar intervention when he called for the 'foreign policy equivalent of "supply-side economics"' which would provide 'a whole new way of looking at the world and America's role in it.'[2] But what did he mean by 'supply-side foreign policy'?

Building on the previous chapter, which dealt with Kristol's domestic outlook in the 1980s, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how, having finalised his movement to the right, he started to consolidate his thought into a more coherent outlook in relation to foreign policy. It

[1] Irving Kristol, "Preface," in *Reflections of A Neoconservative: Looking Back, Looking Ahead,* ed. Irving Kristol (Basic Books: New York, 1983), xiii.
[2] Irving Kristol, "The Muddle in Foreign Policy," *Wall Street Journal,* April 29, 1981, 28.

does so by asking the following questions: what was his foreign policy outlook? Who influenced this vision? And what can Kristol's positions tell us about the first-generation of neoconservative thought more generally? In answering these questions, the chapter argues that while undoubtedly conservative, Kristol drew on his liberal anti-communist past to shape an international perspective for neoconservatism, and highlights his influence in popularising the work of other neoconservatives in doing so. It further suggests that neoconservative international thought was intimately linked with its domestic vision because it sought to champion democratic values.

As the previous chapter set out, most historical writing on neoconservatism primarily considers its impact on domestic politics. However, this is not to say that the relationship between neoconservatism and foreign policy has been entirely ignored. The majority of this scholarship has considered the role of 'neo-cons', as neoconservatives later became termed, in the controversial decision to invade Iraq in 2003.[3] Alternatively, a few limited studies have sought to demonstrate the ways in which early neoconservatives attempted to create a foreign policy outlook during the 1980s. Of particular note here is Justin Vaïsse's work, which traced the development of neoconservative thought on international affairs, and argues that it was centred on the importance of democracy and the Cold War.[4] Likewise, John Ehrman's study *The Rise of Neoconservatism* suggests that 'neoconservatives' anti-Communism was accompanied by a belief in the superiority of American democratic values,' and shows 'how these strains of thought worked together in the 1980s, when many neoconservatives held

[3] Muhammad Idrees Ahmad, *The Road to Iraq: The Making of a Neoconservative War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Patrick J. Buchanan, *Where The Right Went Wrong: How Neoconservatives Subverted the Reagan Revolution and Hijacked the Bush Presidency* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2004)*;* Mark Ayyash, "The Appearance of War in Discourse: The Neoconservatives on Iraq," *Constellations* 14, No. 4 (2007): 613-634*;* Brian C. Schmidt and Michael C. Williams, "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives Versus Realist," *Security Studies* 17, No.2 (2008): 191-220; Maria Ryan, *Neoconservatism and the New American Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[4] Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 110-136.

office under President Reagan to reinforce the administration's anti-Communist outlook while also moving it toward a policy of actively assisting foreign governments or groups trying to develop democratic institutions of their own.' He does this by studying the careers of Norman Podhoretz, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Robert W. Tucker.[5] However, he does not consider Kristol in a sustained manner in his analysis, arguing that Kristol 'was not well suited to the role of chief neoconservative theorist for international politics,' because his talents were 'an ability to write quickly and clearly on a variety of topics' and were better suited to 'borrowing, explaining, and popularizing ideas rather than coming up with new concepts.'[6] In many ways this is a fair assessment: as we have seen throughout this thesis Kristol was better skilled at condensing complicated ideas and re-packaging them to his audiences than at creating novel ones. Yet, given Kristol's preeminent position within neoconservative circles as not just the 'Godfather of neoconservatism,' but a key broker between intellectuals and conservative foundations, and a significant publisher of these ideas to both the public and policy elites through his multiple magazines and his own journalism, overlooking his foreign policy thought is to the detriment of understanding the outlook's early geo-political positions.

More specifically, several historians of the 1980s have studied the role neoconservatives played in downplaying the importance of human rights in US foreign policy. These studies have also emphasised neoconservatism's Cold War understanding of totalitarianism which key figures associated with the outlook used to justify promotion of alliances with authoritarian regimes.[7] However, none of these studies has specifically

[5] John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs,* 1945-1994 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), viii-ix.
[6] Ibid, 50.
[7] Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision*, 107; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 151-171; Ilan Peleg and Paul Scham, "Israeli Neo-Revisionism and American Neoconservatism Unexplored Parallels," *The Middle East Journal* 61, No.1 (2007): 78; Jacob Heilbrunn, "The Neoconservative Journey," in *Varieties of Conservatism in America,* ed. Peter Berkowitz (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), 108-112.

considered the role Kristol played in this dialogue. An assessment of Kristol's foreign policy thought is especially important for these discussions because it offers the chance to reflect on how influential he was to the formulation of this position and the promotion of theories of totalitarianism to a more general audience.

Additionally, studying Kristol's attitudes to foreign policy is important for understanding the relationship between Jewishness and neoconservatism, because of his large commentary on American-Israeli relations during the 1980s. Several scholars of neoconservatism, including Murray Friedman and Nathan Abrams, have suggested that Jewish identity played an important role in the development of neoconservatism, but this has yet to be explored in full.[8] Meanwhile, Seth Anziska has proposed that neoconservatives were interested in Israel from an anti-communist perspective rather than a Jewish one.[9] By shedding light on a prominent neoconservative figure's position on the topic of Israel we can better understand the importance of Jewishness to the formulation of neoconservatism in its early years.

The chapter is split into three areas of concern: first, it seeks to understand Kristol's frustration with foreign policy by considering his concerns with US foreign policy, and in particular the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). It then turns to discuss the problem of human rights and the emergence of the "Kirkpatrick Doctrine" in the 1980s, to which he so strongly subscribed. Finally, the chapter analyses his attitudes towards Israel and assesses the motivations behind his support of the nation. This work is largely supported by his prolific writing in the *Wall Street Journal* on foreign policy during the later years of the

[8] Nathan Abrams, *Norman Podhoretz and Commentary Magazine: The Rise and Fall of the Neocons* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-10; Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision,* 192.

[9] Seth Anziska, *Preventing Palestine: A Political History From Camp David to Oslo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 162-193.

Carter presidency and throughout the Reagan administration. Ultimately, the chapter uses these sources to build on the above scholarship and make the case that Kristol shaped a neoconservative foreign policy which was not just anti-communist in nature but one that was driving a moral vision of world politics, which sought the survival of Western values, most significantly democracy.

Foreign Policy Frustrations and 'Fresh Thinking'

As the 1970s came to a close, Kristol was frustrated with American foreign policy. He particularly resented Jimmy Carter's foreign policy aims. Carter won the presidency thanks to his status as a political outsider in the wake of Watergate, but this electoral strength was a drawback in office since he lacked foreign policy experience.[10] Kristol disliked Carter's handling of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks II (SALT). Following the success of SALT I, which was signed in 1972, SALT II was a series of negotiations between the USA and USSR from 1972 to 1979 which intended to further reduce the two countries' nuclear capabilities. The Carter administration dithered over its negotiating position with regards to SALT and its emphasis on human rights increased tensions with the USSR.[11] Like many critics, Kristol felt that Carter's human rights rhetoric was responsible for the slow progress of the negotiations.[12] Ultimately, such criticisms were moot. In December 1979 the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and the treaty was withdrawn from the Senate meaning it was never ratified, but the negotiations still enabled critics such as Kristol to brand Carter as weak.[13]

[10] Aaron Donaghy, *The Second Cold War: Carter, Reagan and the Politics of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 24.
[11] Ibid, 31-49.
[12] Irving Kristol, "Détente and 'Human Rights,'" *Wall Street Journal,* April 15, 1977, 14.
[13] Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter and His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 107-119.

The second major criticism which Kristol made against the Carter administration was over its handling of the Iranian hostage crisis.[14] On November 4 1979, fifty-two American diplomats and citizens were taken hostage by revolutionary Iranians, and remained captive for 444 days.[15] In an article on the situation in Iran, Kristol argued that the administration's foreign policy derived 'from the kind of left-liberal ideology popular in the 1960s,' which he claimed depicted the United States as 'a nation so guilty of transgressions, past and present, against the true and best interests of humanity that we *have no right* to defend our specific national interest,' which further characterised the administration as being feeble.[16] This referred to revisionist left-wing historians, such as William Appleman Williams, who condemned US foreign policy as imperialistic and bent on capitalist expansion. The revisionist perspective was originally put forward in the 1950s, but following the Vietnam War gained wider support amongst radical movements.[17] For Kristol then, not only was Carter weak, but the president's policies also endorsed the perspective of the very radicals who he despised. In 1980, as the Carter presidency entered its final year, Kristol summarised his position writing that, 'The conduct of American foreign policy has long been plagued by all of the attitudes, underlying ideas and preconceptions which one would *not* want to find in the pilot of such a plane. We are naïve; we are sentimental; we are legalistic; we are impulsive; our memories are short; and above all we have the greatest difficultly keeping in mind what world we are in.'[18] In essence, in the wake of Vietnam, and in the context of worsening relations with the USSR, he was exasperated by U.S. foreign policy.

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[14] Irving Kristol, "Mr. Carter and Iran," *Wall Street Journal,* 28 December, 1979, 6; Irving Kristol, "Our Foreign Policy Illusions," *Wall Street Journal,* February 4, 1980, 26; Irving Kristol, "'Moral Dilemmas' in Foreign Policy," *Wall Street Journal*, February 28, 1980, 24.
[15] Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 198-224.
[16] Kristol, "Mr. Carter and Iran," 6.
[17] Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism,* 18-25.
[18] Irving Kristol, "Our Foreign Policy Illusions," *Wall Street Journal,* 4 February, 1980, 26.

A year later, and following a change of administration, his frustration persisted. In a 1981 article he remarked that, 'The [Reagan] administration is faced with three areas of crisis in foreign policy, each very different. There are our relations with NATO, our policy toward the USSR, and our policies toward the Third World. The administration is performing poorly in all of these areas because it has brought little fresh thinking to them.'[19] In particular, Kristol was concerned by US relations with NATO. Established in 1949 as a military alliance between the Benelux countries, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States, NATO sought the collective defence, in particular from the Soviet Union, of its signatories. In 1952 Greece and Turkey joined, and significantly, in 1955 the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was admitted to the alliance. Crucially, the agreement drew the United States' into European affairs and led it to abandon the isolationism which characterised its inter-war foreign policy.[20] As Lawrence Kaplan has demonstrated, the alliance was no stranger to competing interests and tensions. For example, there was much initial debate over which countries should be included in the alliance, should Portugal as a dictatorship be admitted to NATO? Did Italy belong in an association of Atlantic Nations? And, how were French fears of a re-militarised West Germany to be dealt with?[21]

NATO overcame these early tensions to become a lasting alliance. But, by the 1980s it was increasingly troubled and Kristol's numerous writings on the organisation in his *Wall Street Journal* columns throughout the decade reflected this. In fact, he wrote so much on the topic that in 1989 he told American Enterprise Institute (AEI) Director Christopher DeMuth

[19] Irving Kristol, "NATO at a Dead End," *Wall Street Journal,* 15 July, 1981, 26.
[20] For the history of NATO see: Lawrence S. Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984); Timothy Andrews Sayle, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2019).
[21] Kaplan, *The United States and NATO,* 93-144.

of his growing boredom on the subject.[22] For Kristol, the root of NATO's problems were its European critics. European citizens objected to American plans to modernize its short-intermediate-range nuclear weapons systems on their continent.[23] These tensions were so bad that in 1982 he questioned, 'How long can we keep patching up NATO with Scotch tape, string and chewing gum? Has the alliance, perhaps, lost its very raison d'etre?'[24] The mention of these objects invoked the image of a ramshackle and childlike approach to a school project rather than the maintenance of a major world alliance. In creating this picture, he demonstrated his concern for the sustainability of NATO and implied that the USA was better off acting alone.

Writing for a European audience in *Encounter,* he questioned why the U.S. should defend Europe at all, if it would not support American interests in Central America in return for this protection. He explained that, 'One often hears it said that it is perfectly *natural* for Western Europe to have a different world-view of the United States,' but went on to ask, 'just how "natural" is this? Are the nations of Western Europe, with a combined population equal to the Soviet Union's and with far healthier economies, really all that weak? Even taken individually, are Britain, France, or Germany so weak that each could not play a more active role in world affairs if it so wished?'[25] With this repeated use of 'natural' in italics and inverted commas, he demonstrated his disagreement with the idea that Western European nations should take a backseat when it came to their own defence. Meanwhile his ironic tone stressed the ability of these nations to defend themselves and highlighted his anger at European behaviour as American allies.

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[22] Irving Kristol to Christopher DeMuth, October 4 1989, box 11 folder 15, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society,.
[23] Andrew Sayle, *Enduring Alliance,* 191-215.
[24] Irving Kristol, "Reconstructing NATO: A New Role for Europe," *Wall Street Journal,* 12 August, 1982, 18.
[25] Irving Kristol, "Transatlantic Misunderstanding: The Case of Central America," *Encounter* 391 (March 1985): 19.

Moreover, he lambasted European nations for their failure to build up their own national security defences. In a *Harper's Monthly* symposium composed of a variety of foreign policy experts, including figures such as the former Supreme Allied Commander for Europe (1969-1974) General Andrew J. Goodpaster, Kristol once again voiced his dissatisfaction with America's European allies. Here, he argued against the ex-Governor of California Edmund G. Brown Jr.'s belief that Europe and America were 'linked.'[26] Instead, Kristol posited that, 'I don't think the American people are going to continue to expose themselves to nuclear war and nuclear annihilation simply because Western Europeans do not want to pay the price for a powerful conventional defense.' He furthered this view when he claimed that, 'if we continue to have an alliance with NATO, there will have to be a limit, and the limit will be that we are not going to have a nuclear conflict to defend Western Europe.'[27] Kristol was therefore angered by European criticisms of America given the risks it was taking to protect the region, and implicitly suggested that America should prioritise its own safety from international threats.

The anger directed towards European failure to increase its national security also appeared to stem from his domestic policy position. In another article on the subject, he wrote, 'Because our European allies were too preoccupied with expenditures on social services to maintain large conventional armed forces, and also because they seemed not to have much stomach for fighting Russians under any circumstances, we proclaimed the existence of a "nuclear umbrella" over our NATO allies.' [28] This made clear that his advocacy for a limited welfare state and his strong dislike, even hatred, of socialism permeated his international perspective and helped to contextualise his anger at America's allies. In this way he demonstrated how his neoconservative position on domestic affairs

[26] Edmund Brown Jr., "Should the U.S. Defend Europe?" *The Harper's Monthly,* April 1984, 60.
[27] Irving Kristol, "Should the U.S. Defend Europe?" *The Harper's Monthly,* April 1984, 32.
[28] Ibid, 59.

interlinked with his foreign policy concerns. Nor was this criticism reserved for Europeans alone. In a letter to his friend, the recently elected Senator for New York, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, he posited similar views of the American stance towards nuclear weapons when he wrote that, 'if we, after the Russians have turned down our offer to surrender our nuclear weapons to the U.N., had unilaterally declared such a doctrine of non-first-use, and had proceeded to build up our conventional forces, our military situation today would be a lot less desperate.'[29]

Kristol's preference for conventional forces over nuclear weapons was not new. He pointed this out himself in *Commentary* when he wrote that, 'I have always been attracted to a unilateral declaration of no-first-use of our nuclear weapons, accompanied by a massive (and expensive) build-up of our conventional forces.'[30] Daniel Bell concurred, writing in a letter to his friend that, 'I read your short essay in *Commentary;* it is a very good, succinct *precis* of what you have been saying in recent years.'[31] In fact, much earlier in the Cold War Kristol espoused similar inclinations, arguing in the *New Leader* that, 'I sympathize with the demand for [nuclear weapons] cessation,' but that, 'I think such a demand is hypocritical unless it is conjoined to an insistence on longer terms of compulsory military service,' and, 'This would, to be sure, mean a perceptible militarization of American life and, as with our European allies, a cutting into our material standards of living.'[32] Despite his increasingly hostile attitude to U.S. European allies, this demonstrated a level of continuity in his attitudes towards nuclear weapons.

[29] Irving Kristol to Daniel P. Moynihan, 16 October 1979, box 13 folder 22, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[30] Irving Kristol, "How has the United Sates Met Its Major Challenges Since 1945?" *Commentary* 80, No.5 (November 1985): 59.
[31] Daniel Bell to Irving Kristol, November 13 1985, box 10 folder 10, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[32] Irving Kristol, "Thoughts on the Bomb," *New Leader* 41, No. 26 (1952): 15.

Given these significant criticisms, it was hardly a surprise that Kristol called for a foreign policy solution akin to 'supply-side economics' and urged for the Reagan administration to take a fresh approach to international relations.[33] He also needed an environment where he could formulate this vision. Early memos regarding *The Public Interest* made clear that it was to be principally concerned with domestic affairs, and as previous chapters have demonstrated this remained true throughout the years that followed.[34] Kristol therefore needed a new forum in which he could express his emerging thoughts on international affairs and stimulate fresh foreign policy discussions. Initially, he proposed, along with ex-Secretary of State Alexander Haig, the creation of a new think tank which would focus on national security concerns, but conservative foundations were unwilling to finance such an endeavour.[35] However, he was able to secure backing from the Olin and Scaife foundations to finance the publication of a new journal.[36] He envisaged this magazine as, 'a sister publication in foreign policy' to *The Public Interest* but did not intend to serve as editor due to his numerous other intellectual commitments.[37] Instead the magazine would be edited by Owen Harries, a leading Australian foreign policy expert, alongside political scientist Robert Tucker. Moreover, the magazine boasted an impressive Advisory Committee including prestigious foreign affairs specialists such as Henry Kissinger, Jeane Kirkpatrick,

[33] Kristol, "The Muddle in Foreign Policy," 28; Kristol, "NATO at a Dead End," 26.
[34] Memo from Irving Kristol to who it may concern, 31 December 1964, box 20 folder 38, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[35] Michael S. Joyce to Bill Simon, October 21 1983, box 26 folder 31, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[36] Irving Kristol to Rupert Murdoch, December 13 1984, box 13 folder 25, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; William Phillips to Hilail Fradkin, April 10 1986, box 14 folder 4, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to Michael Joyce, February 8 1984, box 26 folder 32, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[37] Irving Kristol to Jack Kemp, August 5 1985, box 12 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

Samuel Huntington and Martin Feldstein.[38] The involvement of such admired experts showed that Kristol had identified a broader desire for greater discussion of U.S. foreign policy.

This journal came into being in 1985 and was called *The National Interest.* The name, which Kristol obtained permission to use from newspaper oligarch Richard Murdoch, was highly significant.[39] By using the term 'National,' he made explicitly clear that the editorial line would promote American concerns in foreign policy discussions. Furthermore, and crucially, unlike *The Public Interest,* which was intended in theory, if not in practice, to be apolitical, Kristol declared that the magazine was to be an explicitly *conservative* publication. He explained, 'The journal will draw on the ideas of both traditional conservatives and "old-style" liberals—the latter referring to those liberals who accept the fact that the United States is a world power, and has to act like one, who take the Soviet threat seriously, who do not disparage the importance of power in international politics, and who are not embarrassed that foreign policy is concerned with the defence of the national interest.'[40] It is also important to note that a second difference with *The Public Interest* was that the magazine would operate from Washington D.C., not New York. This decision was not just a reflection of the fact that the Kristols increasingly spent their time in Washington D.C., and would eventually move there in 1987, but their growing unease in their liberal home city of New York.[41] As such, it further reinforced the conservative credentials of *The National Interest.* Clearly, Kristol was trying to formulate a more coherent neoconservative foreign policy outlook with his new magazine, as he had achieved with domestic issues in *The Public Interest.*

[38] Irving Kristol, "A Proposal to Establish a New Journal of Foreign Policy," 1-5, box 13 folder 25, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to Midge Decter, 12 March 1985, box 13 folder 26, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[39] Irving Kristol to Rupert Murdoch, December 13 1984.
[40] Kristol, "A Proposal to Establish a New Journal of Foreign Policy," 1.
[41] Irving Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," in *Neoconservatism: An Autobiography of an Idea* ed., Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 199), 37.

Defining Human Rights

The first element of this foreign policy perspective concerned human rights. In a 1987 *National Interest* symposium on the topic, Kristol asked: 'Why has the issue of human rights in the last 20 odd years gained so much prominence; and why have the advocates had so much influence in shaping policy and influence on congressional and popular opinion?'[42] This reflected the growing importance of human rights in global public discourse. Such dialogue began in the 1940s following World War Two, but exploded in the 1970s with growing public awareness of the scale of the Holocaust; defections from the Soviet Union by prominent figures such as physicist Andrei Sakharov and writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn; the rising numbers of refugees fleeing to the USA from Vietnam, and Central and South American dictatorships; and the 1975 signing of the Helsinki Act.[43] More specifically, in America this dialogue was also developed in response to the use of torture by the Greek military junta, which seized power in the NATO ally and the birthplace of democracy in 1967.[44] In response, liberal politicians, such as Donald Fraser, joined forces with the newly formed U.S. branch of Amnesty International to campaign for a clearer human rights policy.[45] This resulted in annual reports on countries receiving aid to prevent human rights

[42] National Interest Symposium, Human Rights the Hidden Agenda, box 13 folder 29, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[43] Mark Philip Bradley, *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 156-196; Kathryn Sikkink, *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 71; Sarah B. Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2015).
[44] On the Greek Military Junta see: Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Vintage, 2010).
[45] Sarah B. Snyder, "A Call for U.S. Leadership": Congressional Activism on Human Rights," *Diplomatic History* 37, No.2 (2013): 372-397; Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 75-102.

abuses, and the insertion of language into section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act which demanded that no aid be given to countries with a consistent violation of human rights.[46]

Kristol acknowledged the importance of human rights in his work. In an unpublished paper he wrote, 'Now obviously, any American presidency, any American administration, must stand and should stand for human rights.'[47] However, he was critical of the Carter Administration's particular conception of human rights. He complained that, 'when you stand for human rights you cannot assume, as I fear this administration does, that human rights are gifts of government,' because, 'Human rights are not gifts of government.' He explained that, 'If they [human rights] are gifts of government, government can take them away. To secure human rights you need limited government, not benevolent government.'[48] This seemed to be a direct attack on Carter's policies towards Latin America, in which he withdrew support from countries such as Nicaragua and Argentina over the use of torture and paramilitary actions against counterinsurgency in the region.[49] Meanwhile, the mention of 'limited government' suggested that the criticism stemmed from Kristol's newfound conservatism, and seemed a fitting accusation against a Democratic president.

Yet, the attack was more than just a straightforward criticism of the Carter Administration, or merely a reflection of conservatism. The article was revealing of Kristol's complex relationship with the concept of democracy. His insistence that human rights were not 'gifts of government' was rooted in his conception of the American Constitution. For example, in a second article, using strikingly similar language to critique the UN position on human rights, he posited that 'The American idea of human rights involves rights *against government.* It is important to emphasize this because post-war liberalism has purposefully

[46] Sikkink, *Mixed Signals,* 69; Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue.*
[47] Irving Kristol, "Capitalism Anticapitalism: The Moral and Political Issues," 1978, box 1 folder 30, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[48] Ibid.
[49] For an overview of Carter's human rights policies see: Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 121-147.

expanded the idea of human rights to include a whole spectrum of "entitlements," identified as "rights," that are to be satisfied by government.'[50] The statements showed his understanding that Americans possessed clearly defined rights against the powers of the government as enshrined in the Bill of Rights and demonstrated his reverence for the American political system.[51] It was therefore not Carter's interest in human rights that Kristol disliked, but rather the conception of human rights deployed by the administration, which seemed to overlook American understandings of freedom and liberty, that he opposed.

Significantly, Kristol's criticism was also intertwined with his perception of the New Left and the radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s. His belief that human rights were not 'entitlements' and that 'post-war liberalism' was to blame for this development did not merely echo his domestic stances on limited welfare. The rise of human rights rhetoric in America was largely driven by grass roots activism and was born out of the anti-Vietnam war movement.[52] Moreover, many of the politicians and activists who were leading figures in the human rights movement of the mid-1970s supported George McGovern for president in 1972, a politician who was linked to left-wing movements and was a leading reason for Kristol's decision to vote for Richard Nixon.[53] Meanwhile, by the end of the 1970s non-governmental groups such Amnesty International were associated with mainstream liberalism, but they too initially possessed more left-wing roots.[54] His hesitancy to endorse anything more than limited 'rights *against* government,' was therefore equally fixed in his aversion to radicalism.

In addition to emphasising the importance of one's rights against their government, he stressed the importance of emigration as a human right. He lamented that 'the U.S., at the

[50] Irving Kristol, "The Common Sense of Human Rights," *Wall Street Journal,* 8 April, 1981, 28.
[51] https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript.
[52] Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue*, 48-74.
[53] Ibid, 73-74.
[54] Ibid, 181.

U.N. and in other forums, almost never makes an issue of this barbarous denial of a basic human right.'[55] He went on to explain that 'The right to emigrate, on the individual level, is one of the most precious of human rights. Most Americans owe their very existence as Americans to this right. Moreover, it is an individual right of larger political significance, since it automatically functions as some kind of check on arbitrary misgovernment.'[56] This statement was significant on two levels. First, it spoke to the revolutionary idea of volitional allegiance, the view that an individual could change their citizenship at will, which was closely associated with figures such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin.[57] Second, the comment related to Kristol on a personal level: the child of migrants to the United States, he would not have been born an American if it were not for the right to emigrate. This further reinforced his importance of framing human rights within the U.S. context and his American identity. For Kristol then, human rights meant specific and limited rights rooted in conceptions of American democracy, not the universal all-encompassing ones proposed by either Carter or non-governmental organisations.

His interest in the right to emigrate was also linked to a second element of his identity: his Jewishness. He wrote that, 'Indeed, until the Soviet Union appeared on the scene, one would have to look long and hard to find any government that even dreamed of denying that right [emigration], at least in principle. But the Soviets and other communist countries do deny it on principle.'[58] This referenced the problem of anti-Semitism within the USSR. During the 1970s there was rising concern from Republican politicians in America

[55] Irving Kristol, "A New Foreign Policy Momentum," *Wall Street Journal,* 8 March, 1985, 30.
[56] Ibid.
[57] For discussions of volitional allegiance see: Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity and the Civic Culture* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1990), 1-6; James H. Kettner, *The Idea of Volitional Allegiance: The Development of American Citizenship* (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 173-209; Noah Pickus, *Faith and Allegiance: Immigration and American Civic Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[58] Kristol, "A New Foreign Policy Momentum," 30.

about the Soviet attitudes towards Jewish emigration. The Soviet Union viewed Jewish demands to emigrate to Israel as a threat to its legitimacy and harassed, removed employment and educational opportunities from, and even arrested those who applied to emigrate. In a shocking turn of events, in 1970 a group of Jewish *refuseniks* gained global attention when they tried to escape the USSR by hijacking a plane and received the death sentence. Consequently, as a result of this dire situation for Jews in the Soviet Union, in 1971 the USA lifted its entry quotas for Jewish Soviets. [59] As a Jewish American with Eastern European ancestry, these events were surely linked to Kristol's own emphasis on the importance of emigration to human rights discourse.

Even more significant in moulding his human rights views were his thoughts on totalitarianism. In an early article on the topic, "How to Choose Between Dictatorships," he demonstrated the controversial view that America should form alliances with anti-communist dictators. He wrote that debates on human rights, 'have often hinged on the distinction between "totalitarian" and "authoritarian" countries,' which was 'a valid distinction and provides some rough guidelines for our human rights policies.' He reasoned that this was 'valid' because, 'Totalitarian states deny *in principle* our idea of human rights, and will tend habitually to violate them.' Meanwhile, 'Authoritarian regimes merely assert the irrelevance of our idea to their reality,' but 'in both theory and practice will recognize at least some of the fundamental rights I have made reference to.'[60] For him, these rights predictably included, 'rights *against government*,' freedom from torture, the right to emigrate, religious toleration, and the protection of minorities.[61] In making this case, he suggested that authoritarian countries were suitable allies because in practice they respected a sufficient number of his so-

[59] Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue*, 105-125.
[60] Irving Kristol, "How to Choose Between Dictatorships," *Times,* 5 May, 1981, 12.
[61] Ibid.

called ‘fundamental rights,’ as opposed to totalitarian societies which denied any existence of rights.

This language echoed the work of foreign policy thinker and soon-to-be U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Jeane Kirkpatrick.[62] In her infamous 1979 *Commentary* article, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” Kirkpatrick took aim at Carter’s foreign policy, highlighting its hypocrisy for suggesting it would right the wrongs of South African Apartheid, but remained committed to non-intervention in Cambodia and Vietnam. [63] However, it was not her insistence upon Carter’s hypocrisy that brought the article fame. Rather, it drew attention because of its distinction between what she termed ‘traditional and revolutionary autocracies.’ Here, ‘traditional’ meant merely an autocracy and ‘revolutionary’ meant totalitarian. She explained that:

> Traditional autocracies leave in place existing allocations of wealth, power, status, and other resources which in most traditional societies favour an affluent few and maintain masses in poverty. But they worship traditional gods and observe traditional taboos. They do not disturb the habitual rhythms of work and leisure, habitual places of residence, habitual patterns of family and personal relations. Because the miseries of traditional life are familiar, they are bearable to ordinary people who, growing up in the society, learn to cope, as children born to untouchables in India acquire the skills and attitudes necessary for survival in the miserable roles they are destined to fill. Such societies create no refugees.[64]

[62] For more on Kirkpatrick’s career see: Bianca Rowlett, “Jeane Kirkpatrick and Neoconservatism: The Intellectual Evolution of Liberal” (Ph.D. diss., Arkansas Tech University December, 2014). https://www.proquest.com/docview/1639065808?pq-origsite=primo&accountid=1451.
[63] Jeane Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” in *The Essential Neoconservative Reader,* ed. Mark Gerson (Reading, Ma.: Addison-Wesley, 1996), 181.
[64] Ibid, 186.

In a later 1988 *Commentary* symposium, Kirkpatrick wrote in even plainer language that, 'Authoritarian governments are frequently corrupt, inefficient, arbitrary, and brutal, but they make limited claims on the lives, property, and loyalties of their citizens.'[65] Upon reading "Dictatorships and Double Standards," Kristol wrote to Kirkpatrick to congratulate her on the work.[66] While their precise terminology differed, it was clear that Kirkpatrick's rhetorical sentiment was the inspiration behind Kristol's article "How to Choose Between Dictatorships." In both their articles, Kristol and Kirkpatrick suggested the respect for religion given by authoritarian regimes, and the right to live one's life largely free of interference by the state made such governments acceptable allies.

Conversely, Kirkpatrick argued that, 'the opposite is true of revolutionary Communist regimes. They create refugees by the million because they claim jurisdiction over the whole life of the society and make demands for change that so violate internalized values and habits that inhabitants flee by the tens of thousands.'[67] Striking here was the identification of 'revolutionary autocracies' with Communist regimes, making the distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian clearly anti-communist in nature, or more specifically anti-Soviet, a view that Kristol's article also presented. This tenuous distinction became known as the "Kirkpatrick Doctrine" and influenced the foreign policy of the Reagan Administration, which hired Kirkpatrick as a foreign policy advisor in Reagan's presidential campaign before appointing her as UN ambassador, as well as placing her in the National Security Administration and implementing her ideas across Latin America.[68]

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[65] Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Human Rights and American Foreign Policy," *Commentary* 75, No.5 (November 1988): 44.
[66] Irving Kristol to Jeane Kirkpatrick, November 26 1979, box 5 folder 13, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[67] Ibid, 186-187.
[68] Rowlett, "Jeane Kirkpatrick and Neoconservatism," 2; Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 148-180; Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism,* 162-163.

It was foreseeable that Kristol adopted Kirkpatrick's framework for assessing dictatorships because the theory built upon earlier discourse on totalitarianism. Kirkpatrick's education relied heavily on the work of political theorist Hannah Arendt, the author of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1950).[69] Moreover, Arendt's work, which created an ideal type for totalitarianism, sought to make similar distinctions between regimes which were simply dictatorships and those which were all-encompassing and crushed individuality.[70] Crucially, Arendt argued that totalitarian governments were new because they destroyed private life as well as public life and believed that, 'individuality, anything indeed that distinguishes one man from another, is intolerable.'[71] The defining characteristics of such regimes was their 'demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member.'[72] Kirkpatrick drew directly on this understanding, arguing that what made autocracies acceptable was that, unlike their totalitarian counterparts, they left the 'internalized values and habits,' of their citizens undisturbed. Given the large impact Arendt's work played on the development of Kristol's own anti-communism and political thought during the 1950s, the influence of a theory which drew so clearly upon *The Origins of Totalitarianism* on his thought was logical. In this way it is possible to see the continuity of thought between his liberal anti-communism of the 1950s and neoconservatism in the 1980s, and shows how Kristol sheds further light on Justin Vaïsse's conclusion that liberal anti-communism was a precursor to the neoconservative outlook.[73]

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[69] Hannah Arendt, *On the Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2017). For an overview of this work and the reception to it, see: Richard H. King, *Arendt and America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 43-68.

[70] See here: Sophie Joscelyne, "American Intellectuals and the Concept of Totalitarianism, 1960-2009" (Ph.D. diss., University of Sussex, 2020). http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/96509/. 110-114; Arendt, *On the Origins of Totalitarianism.*

[71] Arendt, *On the Origins of Totalitarianism,* 599.

[72] Ibid, 423.

[73] Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 73-79.

Kristol was not merely influenced by Kirkpatrick; he actively defended her stance too. In a later article, he wrote that, 'For three years now, Jeane Kirkpatrick's distinction between "authoritarian" and "totalitarian" regimes, and our differential "human rights" policies toward the two categories, have been scornfully dismissed. The ground for dismissal was the fact—and it certainly is a fact—that people maltreated by an authoritarian government suffer just as keenly as those treated brutally but a totalitarian one.'[74] Here, he alluded to figures such as the philosopher Michael Walzer who was especially critical of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine. In a 1981 *New Republic* article Walzer argued that totalitarianism was a byword for communist regimes but the distinction was now too simplistic to be of use and blamed 'new cold war ideologists' led by Kirkpatrick for the term's revival. He suggested that Kirkpatrick's assessment that the majority of the global refugee population were victims of communist states and highlighted how many of refugees were actually from East Bengal, who had fled Pakistani oppression. Ultimately, he concluded, 'The contrast between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes is a conceptual contrast, not a practical one. It doesn't conform to, nor does it justify, our actual alliances.'[75] The left-wing intellectual Noam Chomsky went even further, branding Kirkpatrick the 'chief sadist-in-residence of the Reagan Administration' in his book on US interventionism in Latin America, and claiming in a *Commentary* symposium on human rights that, 'While the concepts "authoritarian" and "totalitarian" may have some analytic value in their earlier usage, the current revival is merely an attempt to provide a fig leaf for the traditional policy of supporting regimes that offer their human and material resources for foreign exploitation and plunder.'[76]

[74] Irving Kristol, "Toward A Moral Foreign Policy," *Wall Street Journal,* 15 November, 1983, 34.
[75] Michael Walzer, "Totalitarianism vs. Authoritarianism: The theory of tyranny, the tyranny of theory," *New Republic,* July 4 &11, 1981, 22.
[76] Noam Chomsky, "Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: A Symposium," *Commentary* 72, No.5 (November 1981), 31.

But Kristol, and other figures closely associated with *Commentary* magazine such as Nathan Glazer and Midge Decter, disagreed with such criticism.[77] Kristol further explained that, 'the essential point of the distinction was that one could reasonably hope to see an authoritarian regime evolve into a constitutional one, while any such hope for totalitarian regime was, on the basis of experience, quite utopian,' and that, 'Such an evolution has just occurred in Argentina (actually it previously had occurred in Greece), so Ambassador Kirkpatrick's distinction is being vindicated before our very eyes.' The reference to the end of the Argentine military rule, following its failure to take back control of the contested *Las Malvinas* (Falkland Islands) in the 1982 conflict with Great Britain, and the Greek transition to democracy served as proof in his mind that the theory worked.[78] Meanwhile in the *Wall Street Journal* column called "Coping With an 'Evil Empire,'" a reference to Reagan's 1983 'Evil Empire' speech in which the President denounced the USSR in moral terms, Kristol argued that 'there is a difference' between authoritarian and totalitarian governments: 'No totalitarian regime can allow religious toleration—it is in the soul-control business as well as the body-control business.'[79] Further evidence of this approval comes from his quote intended for the blurb of Kirkpatrick's book on the subject, *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* (1983), which read: 'We are in the midst of rethinking the fundamental premises of American foreign policy and Jeane Kirkpatrick brings a powerful and original mind to this important task. This new book puts us all further in her

[77] Midge Decter, "Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: A Symposium," *Commentary* 72, No.5 (November 1981): 33-34; Nathan Glazer, "Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: A Symposium," *Commentary* 72, No.5 (November 1981): 36-38.
[78] For the Falklands War see: Doug Rossinow, *The Reagan Era: A History of the 1980s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 76-80. For the Greek transition to democracy see: Judt, *Postwar,* 405-534.
[79] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida," 8 March, 1983. Accessed at: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-annual-convention-the-national-association-evangelicals-orlando-florida; Irving Kristol, "Coping with an 'Evil Empire,'" *Wall Street Journal,* December 17, 1985, 32.

debt.'[80] By using his by now large public platform to support Kirkpatrick, Kristol added weight to her ideas and helped them reach an even larger audience. Moreover, by endorsing a doctrine which built on the work of one of the most important political theorists of the twentieth century, he sought to show that neoconservative positions on foreign policy were based on more than just instinct: they were, instead, intellectually rigorous. Given his earlier criticisms that the US lacked the right 'intellectual tools' in foreign policy, this was crucial to his creation of an alternative neoconservative approach to international relations.[81]

This public support and promotion of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine brought Kristol personal criticism. The clearest attack on him came from Stuart H. Loory in left-wing publication *The Village Voice.* Loory mocked Kristol's opinions on dictatorships and compared him to the Sylvester Stallone action film character Rambo to emphasise the aggressive nature of the outlook. Moreover, Loory argued that Kristol's distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism on the grounds that the former allowed religious practice was completely inadequate, and was to 'risk flunking a freshman political philosophy course—at least when I was in school.'[82] Highlighting Kristol as the leading 'Rambo of the neoconservative community,' did more than show left-wing disdain for the neoconservative foreign policy position, it showed that even though he was not responsible for the original doctrine, his adoption and promotion of it was significant enough to be signalled out as responsible for pressing the government for a more aggressive international policy.

The strength of Kristol's position on anti-communist dictatorships was most visible in his reaction to the Timerman Affair. As already noted, in 1976 the Argentine military

[80] Irving Kristol to William M. Childs, October 27 1982, box 24 folder 10, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Jeane Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1983).
[81] Kristol, "The Muddle in Foreign Policy," 28.
[82] Stuart H. Loory, "Moscow: How Not to Cope With a Not-So Evil Empire," *Wall Street Journal,* 28 January, 1986, box 15 folder 16, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

overthrew the government and installed a military junta in its place which ruled the country until 1983. Under this regime the junta abducted and 'disappeared' hundreds of so-called communist subversives in what is commonly known as the 'Dirty War.'[83] In April 1977, journalist Jacabo Timerman was abducted from his home and tortured for two years by the military. His ordeal gained widespread coverage following the 1981 translation of his *testimonio* entitled *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number.*[84] The memoir was on the *New York Times'* bestseller list for a number of weeks and was even chosen as one of the books of the century which helped it draw attention to the dire human rights situation in Argentina.[85] In particular, Timerman, who was from a European Jewish family, accused the junta of being fundamentally anti-Semitic. In the epilogue he wrote of the treatment of Jewish prisoners at the hands of the Argentine police. He explained that, 'When it was a Jewish prisoner, the jokes would refer to the gas chambers, to Auschwitz—"We'll show the Nazis how to do things."'[86] Furthermore, as Mark Philip Bradley notes in his analysis of the memoir, the book drew upon Holocaust literature to further emphasise the anti-Semitism present in Argentina.[87] Such comments and this style combined to demonstrate the horrific anti-Jewish sentiment rife within the regime.

However, Kristol controversially challenged Timerman's claims. He wrote that, 'his book leads the reader to think that he was arrested because of his Zionism and his politics.

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[83] For information of the Argentina military junta, especially with regards to the "Dirty War" see: Rita Arditti, *Searching for Life: The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Disappeared Children of Argentina* (Berkeley, California: University of California, 1999); Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Michael Goebel, *Argentina's Partisan Past: Nationalism and the Politics of History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011); Paul Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals: The "Dirty War" in Argentina* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002).

[84] Ilan Stavans, "Introduction," in Jacabo Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without A Number* trans. Toby Talbot (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981), xi-xv.

[85] Bradley, *The World Reimagined,* 190; Sikkink, *Mixed Signals,* 134. For U.S.-Argentine relations in this era see: William Michael Schmidli, "Institutionalizing Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy: U.S.-Argentine Relations, 1976–1980," *Diplomatic History* 35, No. 2 (2011): 351-377.

[86] Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without A Number,* 159.

[87] Bradley, *The World Reimagined,* 188-190.

Well, it is not inconceivable that he might have eventually been arrested for those reasons, the situation in Argentina being what it was. But in actuality he was arrested under other circumstances, which he does not so much as mention.'[88] Such a critique echoed Brazilian-American Rabbi Henry I. Sobel's assessment of Timerman. In his "Address to the World Union for Progressive Judaism," Sobel branded Timerman, "unreliable," "unpredictable," and "unscrupulous." He ultimately cited Timerman's business dealings for his imprisonment, not anti-Semitism.[89] Kristol's criticism also resonated with *Commentary*'s assessment of the *testimonio.* Here, Mark Falcoff too questioned Timerman's reliability as a witness to the regime, concluding that, 'Jacobo Timerman was not kidnapped because he was a Jew, or probably even because he was protesting the conduct of Argentina's security forces, but because his business partner was discovered to have intimate connections with one of the most important left-wing guerrilla organizations in the country.' Furthermore, Lucy S. Dawidowicz, the Jewish intellectual and *Commentary* contributor, wrote to Kristol to congratulate him on the article.[90] Considering *Commentary*'s neoconservative credentials, it appeared that his assessment fit within a wider neoconservative narrative on the topic.

Nonetheless, Kristol's problems with the account were chiefly informed by the Cold War lens through which he measured the brutality of dictatorships. He argued that, 'It would become utterly hopeless, however, were we to "write off" Argentina—excommunicate it so to speak, for the community of nations. The more extreme right-wing elements in the armed forces—the one who illegally arrested and tortured Mr. Timerman—would surely take power.' Controversially, he further suggested that 'One strongly suspects that there are many on the Argentine left who would like to see this happen. The politics of polarization, in which

[88] Irving Kristol, "The Timerman Affair," *Wall Street Journal,* 29 May, 1981, 24.
[89] Rabbi Henry I. Sobel, Address to the World Union for Progressive Judaism, box 15 folder 9, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[90] Lucy S. Dawidowicz to Irving Kristol, May 29 1981, box 3 folder 1, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

the left crusades against the right under the banner of "human rights" while the threat from the totalitarian left is altogether ignored, appeals to their ideological bias as well as to their self-righteous passions.'[91] Thus, despite admitting the illegality and horrors which had occurred to Timerman, he was more concerned about the rising power of the radical left which he deemed a greater threat to stability in the region.

Such views at first seem shocking given his strong identification with Jewishness.[92] However, on closer examination, Timerman's accusation that Israel was "fascist" seems to be one of Kristol's principal complaints against the *testimonio.* Kristol stated that, 'Mr. Timerman is above all a political person, far more interested in indicting, in the name of "human rights," the present regime in Argentina, the present administration in Washington and even the present government of Israel—which in conversation, he blandly labels "fascist"—than he is with giving a true report about the facts of life in Argentina.'[93] Here, it is important to note that, radical movements in America, especially the Black Power movement, were increasingly hostile to Israel because of its continued occupation of the West Bank, and American Jews such as Kristol were concerned by these developments which they viewed as anti-Semitic.[94] This, combined with increasing Middle East tensions, made the defence of the Israel an important cause for neoconservatism, and helps makes sense of Kristol's surprising criticisms of Timerman.

Israel

During the early 1970s Kristol became involved with the body which financed *Commentary* magazine, the American Jewish Committee (AJC). Archival records show that he was invited

[91] Ibid.
[92] Irving Kristol to Irwin M. Stelzer, June 12 1981, box 15 folder 4, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.
[93] Ibid.
[94] For a discussion of the Middle East in African American politics see: McAlister, *Epic Encounters,* 84-124.

to, and attended, several meetings on the issues of anti-Semitism, Middle Eastern tensions, and the implications of U.S. businesses accepting Arab money.[95] Consequently, it appears this early involvement in Jewish organisations helped to spur his burgeoning interest in the fate of Israel.

Reflecting on the 1973 Yom Kippur War, he noted his concern for the country, writing that, 'things have not been going so well for Israel, as in my bones I had always feared might be the case. No prescience on my part, just a Jewish instinct for impending disaster, an instinct that has been grotesquely overdeveloped in the course of generations by a kind of "natural selection," you might say.'[96] His pessimism represented the shock felt by Israelis and Jewish Americans when Egypt and Syria unexpectedly invaded Israel as it observed Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement, the holiest day in the Jewish faith.[97] He explained this preoccupation for the nation in deeply personal terms when he stated that, 'Still, I care desperately. I think it is because I sense, deep down, that what happens to Israel will be decisive for Jewish history, and for the kinds of lives my grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be leading.'[98] Moreover, he concluded that, 'In such a war, not only is the whole of the Jewish past at stake, but also the whole of the Jewish future.'[99] Nor was this view unique. In a 1988 symposium on the American Jewish relationship with Israel in *Commentary* Kristol's brother-in-law, Milton Himmelfarb, concluded that, 'Israel is making Jewish self-hate obsolete, everywhere, in the most varied circumstances.'[100] Even Daniel Bell, who questioned the 'hidden agenda' of the symposium

[95] Elmer L. Winter to Irving Kristol, February 14 1975, box 9 folders 27-28, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to Bertram H. Gold, November 27 1974, box 9 folders 27-28, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Bertram H. Gold to Irving Kristol, November 25 1974, box 9 folders 27-28, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[96] Irving Kristol, "Notes on Yom Kippur," *Wall Street Journal,* 18 October, 1973, 18.
[97] Anziska, *Preventing Palestine,* 1-15.
[98] Kristol, "Notes on Yom Kippur," 18.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Milton Himmelfarb, "American Jews and Israel," *Commentary* 85, No.2 (February 1988): 45.

declared that since 1967 his 'emotions about Israel were directly engaged.'[101] For Kristol and his contemporaries then the future of Israel as a nation state was profoundly personal.

Such an understanding helps to shed light on Kristol's criticism of the U.N's "Zionism is racism" resolution. On 10th November 1975 the U.N. passed resolution 3379 which officially made Zionism a form of racism.[102] In an article on the position of American Jews in society, he expressed his outrage at the resolution. He wrote that the slogan '"Zionism is racism" is a doctrine officially proclaimed by the UN, while at no time has the UN shown the slightest interest in protecting the rights of Jews (and other minorities) in the Soviet Union or in Muslim nations.'[103] The criticism harked back to his other criticisms of the UN regarding its position on human rights. Additionally, he criticised those Jews who did not oppose the motion, writing that, 'logic, apparently, plays very little role in defining Jewish attitudes toward the United Nations. Nostalgia for what it was once hoped the UN would be is stronger than the clear perception of what the UN indubitably is.'[104] Thus, while he was not a Zionist, his close identification with Israel meant the resolution had a personal feel to it and should be opposed.[105]

But we should be careful not to view Kristol's support of Israel solely through this personal dynamic. Norman Podhoretz helped Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. at this time, to write a highly charged speech denouncing the resolution.[106] In an article addressing the event, Moynihan chastised the government, writing that, 'The March 1 vote … was a disaster and should have stimulated a reappraisal of the route by which the

[101] Daniel Bell, "American Jews and Israel," *Commentary* 85, No.2 (February 1988): 26.
[102] Keith P. Feldman, *Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 23.
[103] Irving Kristol, "The Political Dilemma of American Jews," *Commentary* 78, No.1 (July 1984): 26.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Kristol, "Notes on Yom Kippur," 18.
[106] Troy Gil, *Moynihan's Moment: America's Fight Against Zionism as Racism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 132-153.

administration had travelled to it.'[107] For Moynihan the resolution was not just an attack on Zionism but on Western-style democracy more generally.[108] The strong reaction by Moynihan to the resolution created great friction with the diplomatic community and especially with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, resulting in his resignation from the ambassadorial role in 1976.[109]

Kristol shared Moynihan's sentiments, and his support for Israel was deeply connected to his belief in Western-style democracy. In the same symposium in which Bell and Himmelfarb expressed their support of the nation, Kristol explained that, 'I am pro-Israel not only because it is a decent, civilized country that is a fine addition to our Western Civilization—there have not been many such additions since World War II—but because it is today, after the Holocaust, the sheet anchor of the Jewish people.'[110] His belief that Israel was 'a fine addition to our Western Civilization,' was crucial. The Israeli unicameral legislature of 120 members, known as the Knesset, was, and continues to be, elected via a proportional representation system, and was largely influenced by Zionist culture and the British parliamentary system, positioning Israel within the Western democratic sphere.[111] Given that the survival of Judeo-Christian civilisation was a crucial component of Kristol's domestic outlook, and the American perspective which he brought to human rights discourse, the importance of the survival of the only Western-style democracy in the Middle East to him was hardly surprising. Additionally, the success of the centre-right Likud Party in the late-

[107] Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Joining the Jackals": The U.S. at the UN 1977-1980, *Commentary* 71, No.2 (February 1981): 23-31.
[108] Gil, *Moynihan's Moment,* 5-6;
[109] Gil, *Moynihan's Moment,* 181; Salim Yaqub, *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.-Middle East Relations in the 1970s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 175-177.
[110] Irving Kristol, "American Jews and Israel," *Commentary* 85, No.2 (February 1988): 51.
[111] For the history of the formation of the Israeli political system see: Nir Kedar, *Ben-Gurion and the Foundation of Israeli Democracy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021).

1970s meant an even closer identification with Israel for the neoconservatives, with both groups united over anti-communism and the free market.[112]

This was not an exceptional perspective. As Sato Masaya has shown, Jewish figures on the left such as Congresswoman Bella Abzug also framed their support for Israel through the lens of democracy.[113] Meanwhile, co-editor of *The Public Interest,* Nathan Glazer reflected in similar terms to Kristol that, 'My own attitudes to Israel have not changed in recent years: it is a state like other states, better than most, unique in the Middle East in maintaining a strong democracy, still offering examples of ingenuity and commitment in maintaining its viability and security that are a source of pride to all Jews, and not doing badly in maintaining a vigorous and pluralistic Jewish culture that is a resource to Jews everywhere.'[114] However, despite the lack of originality, his position remained meaningful. With his public identification of Israel as an important bastion of democracy, Kristol further contributed to the justification of American support for Israel in domestic US politics, and signalled the importance of democratic values to the neoconservative perspective both at home and abroad.[115]

Furthermore, analysis of his numerous articles on the Middle East also suggests that his Cold War ideology permeated this perspective. In an article which pondered the possibility of achieving peace in the Middle East he claimed that:

> American national interest finds its natural focus in a policy of keeping Soviet influence in the area to a minimum. Certainly, the Israeli-Arab conflict gives the Soviets excellent opportunities for fishing in troubled water. But the

[112] McAlister, *Epic Encounters,* 175; Anziska, *Preventing Palestine,* 181.
[113] Sato Masaya, **"**Bella Abzug's Dilemma: The Cold War, Women's Politics, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the 1970s," *Journal of Women's History* 30, No.2 (Summer 2018): 112-135.
[114] Nathan Glazer, "American Jews and Israel," *Commentary* 85, No.2 (February 1988): 37.
[115] Shaul Mitelpunkt, *Israel in the American Mind: the Cultural Politics of US-Israeli Relations, 1958-1988* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 2.

> troubled waters are beyond our power to pacify. There are, as they have been since the end of Turkish rule, the indigenous condition of the Middle East—and surely would be so even if Israel had never come into being. It is the fisherman and his adventurous expeditions we must deal with, not the waters.[116]

What was important about this comment was not its reductive assessment of Middle Eastern geopolitics, but its mention of the USSR. With the analogy of the Soviet fisherman, he alluded to the fact that Moscow endorsed Arab positions in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and had done so since the early 1950s, in an attempt to gain influence in the region. Indeed, by the early 1970s both the USA and USSR were entrenched in the political disputes of the region, and Henry Kissinger attempted to reduce the influence of the Soviet Union over Arab nations in his diplomatic initiatives.[117] Thus, within the Middle East, Israel, which was viewed as a Western-style democracy, as the *Commentary* symposium on the country demonstrated, was an important ally in the anti-Communist struggle and bulwark against the spread of totalitarianism.

Moreover, as Seth Anziska has suggested, with the election of Reagan in 1980 and the heightening of Cold War tensions, Palestine stood in as proxy for the Soviet Union. Israel's new position as a strategic ally in the global Cold War meant that it could dismiss the demands of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) for self-determination on the basis that in actuality it represented Soviet influence.[118] It is arguable that Kristol also subscribed to this assessment of the PLO, since he identified support for Arab nations with left-wing politics. In an essay explaining why American Jews should abandon liberalism, he argued

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[116] Irving Kristol, "Mideast Peace is the Most Elusive Catch," *Wall Street Journal,* 10 May, 1983, 34.
[117] Anziska, *Preventing Palestine,*163; Salim Yaqub, "The Cold War and the Middle East," in *The Cold War in the Third World* ed., Robert J. McMahon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 19.
[118] Anziska, *Preventing Palestine,* 5; For an account of heightened Cold War tensions in this period: see Aaron Donaghy, *The Second Cold War*.

that 'emerging pro-Arab sympathies within the Left grow steadily stronger, not only in the United States, but in every land.'[119] Furthermore, in a later article on Reagan's attempts to negotiate a peace, he wrote that 'the notion that the West Bank is or can be some kind of Palestinian homeland, rather than a convenient base of operations, is absurd.'[120] Here, the term 'operation' surely referred to the PLO, and suggested that he too did not view claims for Palestinian self-determination as genuine, but rather a ploy for Soviet influence in the region. This further demonstrated the ideological framing of the importance Israel's security for him.

This sentiment was similarly reflected in the work of fellow neoconservative and *Commentary* editor Norman Podhoretz. In 1982 Podhoretz wrote an impassioned article which borrowed the famous title of Emile Zola's article on the Dreyfus Affair, "J'Accuse," and likewise discussed the use of anti-Semitism as a 'political screen.'[121] Here, Podhoretz too identified the PLO with the USSR when he wrote that, 'Israel, an American ally, and armed with American weapons, has defeated the Syrians and the PLO, both of them tied to and armed by America's enemy, the Soviet Union.'[122] Moreover, he also saw Israel as an important democratic ally when he charged that, 'Hostility toward Israel is a sure sign of failing faith in and support for the virtues and values of Western civilization in general and of America in particular. How else are we to interpret a political position that, in a conflict between a democracy and its anti-democratic enemies, is so dead set against the democratic side?'[123] Identification with Jewishness alone was not sufficient for understanding the neoconservative support of Israel, Kristol and his fellow neoconservatives were also driven by a commitment to Western-style democracy and the fight against the totalitarianism embodied by the Soviet Union.

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[119] Irving Kristol, "Why Jews Turn Conservative," *Wall Street Journal,* 14 September, 1972, 18.
[120] Irving Kristol, "Why Reagan's Plan Won't Work," *Wall Street Journal,* 10 September, 1982, 28.
[121] Norman Podhoretz, "J'Accuse," *Commentary* 74, No.3 (September 1982): 31.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

Regardless of the personal and ideological framework through which Kristol viewed these issues, it was undeniable that his commentary was unsympathetic to the plight of the Palestinian people. On one occasion he wrote that, 'It is sometimes argued that what the Palestinian refugees want is not so much an actual homeland—a goal now perceived to be unreachable—as a symbolic homeland, a national entity that would issue to them passports and which they could emotionally identify.' But he asked, 'why must the West Bank play this role? Why cannot Jordan, the majority of whose citizens are already of Palestinian origin, issue those passports and be that symbolic homeland? Jordan, after all, is no more "foreign" a country to the refugees than is the West Bank.'[124] The statement reflected private comments made to Nathan Glazer in which Kristol suggested that 'Unless one changes the name of Jordan to Palestine – which is not such a bad idea – the Palestinians will have to cease being Palestinianians [sic] and become citizens of one of the other Arab states.'[125] With this he made evident that whatever sympathy to the position of statelessness Palestinians found themselves, he could not endorse their settlement on the West Bank. For Kristol, his Jewish identity, attachment to Western values, and anti-communist perspective fused together to create a foreign policy outlook overwhelmingly in favour of Israel, whatever that may mean in practice.

The strength of this international position had profound implications for Kristol's perception of domestic US politics. In an article so controversial that his wife Gertrude Himmelfarb advised him not to publish it, he took aim at 1984 presidential candidate Jesse Jackson for standing for 'black nationalism,' with a 'dash of anti-Semitism added for good measure.'[126] Behind such accusations lay the fact that, as previously explored, black power

[124] Irving Kristol, "Muddled Thinking on the Middle East," *New York Times,* 28 June 1982, Section A15.
[125] Irving Kristol to Nathan Glazer, July 6 1982, box 11 folder 37, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
[126] Irving Kristol to Norman Podhoretz, August 13 1984, box 11 folder 1, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Kristol, "The Political Dilemma of American Jews," 24.

movements saw the Israeli state as oppressing Palestinians and therefore imperialistic, leading to an anti-Zionist stance. Particularly problematic for Kristol was that 'Jesse Jackson has substituted Arab money for Jewish money,' and was 'pro-PLO,' the very two existential threats to the Israeli state. He concluded that 'while American Jews have for the most part persisted in their loyalty to the politics of American liberalism, that politics has blandly and remorselessly distanced itself from them. For the first time in living memory, Jews are finding themselves in the old condition of being politically homeless.' Instead, he argued that, 'Jews in the West will find a new home, however uncomfortable, in the conservative and neoconservative politics.'[127] The answer both internationally and domestically was neoconservatism.

Conclusion: A "Supply-Side" Foreign Policy

During Reagan's second term, Kristol claimed that what made the president different from the Republican presidents who had come before him, was that, 'at critical moments,' he was a '"neoconservative."' He explained that neoconservatism was a positive form of conservatism concerned with being 'future-orientated' and hopeful in nature. But, most of all Kristol stressed the achievements of neoconservatism including 'supply-side economics' and 'what one may now call a "supply-side" foreign policy—i.e., a policy of action rather than reaction.'[128] Having established the domestic outlook of neoconservatism in Chapter Five, this chapter has sought to explore the meaning of '"supply-side" foreign policy,' and to define Kristol's international outlook.

Kristol's foreign policy ideas were by no means unique. He heavily relied on the work of Jeane Kirkpatrick to inform his views on US attitudes to dictatorships, and his

[127] Ibid, 29.
[128] Irving Kristol, "The Old World Needs a New Ideology," *Wall Street Journal,* April 1, 1985, 22.

commitment to Israel was shared by many of his contemporaries including Norman Podhoretz, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Bell. But this did not mean he was unimportant to the construction of a robust neoconservative foreign policy.[129] Kristol's criticisms of the 'weak' foreign policy of the Carter administration and despair with America's European NATO allies led to the creation of a new neoconservative publication, *The National Interest.* For the first time, neoconservatives had a forum which they could use as a mouthpiece for this '"supply-side" foreign policy.' Meanwhile, his numerous articles on foreign policy in the *Wall Street Journal* amplified the neoconservative foreign policy perspective so that it reached a national audience, contributing to public debate on these issues.

Additionally, Kristol's vision for a neoconservative foreign policy was built upon a specific American conception of rights. He did not oppose the idea of human rights, rather he disliked universal entitlements. For Kristol, human rights meant limited rights against one's government as laid out in the US constitution, and it was this in part which led him to support the Kirkpatrick Doctrine. Furthermore, it was not just Kristol's early-career liberalism that was shaped by anti-communism, but also his later-career neoconservative outlook. His dubious distinctions between authoritarian and totalitarian governments, was not only informed by his commitment to limited rights, but his schooling in the anti-communist thought of the 1950s, especially Hannah Arendt's *On the Origins of Totalitarianism.* Moreover, his commitment to Israel while undoubtedly the result of his own Jewish identity, was also a consequence of the need for anti-communist allies in the Middle East and Kristol's continued belief in the evil and expansionist tendencies of the Soviet Union.

Kristol therefore helped to craft a neoconservative foreign policy outlook which stressed the importance of championing US values, Western-style democracy, and finally, the importance of defending Israel not just as the world's only Jewish state, but as a Western

[129] Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism.*

state and anti-communist ally. These seemingly disparate topics of interest were all linked together with the goals of his domestic outlook: the creation of a moral, intellectual conservatism which strived for the preservation of Judeo-Christian values, market capitalism, and liberal democracy both at home and abroad as a bulwark against Soviet totalitarianism. It is more than likely that neoconservatism would have continued to mean this for some time, but in a surprising turn of events on 9th November 1989 the ultimate symbol of the Cold War, the Berlin Wall, fell. In its wake, communism collapsed across Eastern Europe, culminating in the dissolution of the USSR just over two years later on 26th December 1991. The omnipresent Cold War, which informed much of the neoconservative perspective and provided the backdrop to most of Kristol's life, was suddenly over. Liberal capitalism had emerged seemingly victorious and with that, neoconservatism would be transformed.

Conclusion: 'The Godfather of Neoconservatism'

> What will future historians of American politics make of the neoconservative position, now drawing to a conclusion? I do not presume to guess, or even to imagine. But I do believe, as someone who has been at the center of this episode, that if they are even minimally interested, the writings collected in this volume will be worth reading.
>
> Irving Kristol, 1995[1]

This thesis has been animated by two central questions about the intellectual life of Irving Kristol: how and why did a one-time Trotskyist become a celebrated conservative by the 1980s, and what can this journey reveal about the wider intellectual life of the post-war United States? In an attempt to probe these questions, the present study has fused biography and intellectual history to reconstruct the career and thought of this often-overlooked figure between the 1940s and 1980s. In doing so, it draws attention to Kristol's substantial body of work, and his involvement in a number of key political movements: Trotskyism; anti-communism; liberalism; and neoconservatism. Reflecting on the contents of *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (1995), his final collection of essays before he died in 2009, Kristol asked what future historians would make of the neoconservative persuasion. Nearly thirty years on from this question, and following this substantial analysis of his life, some conclusions regarding the impact of the so-called 'Godfather of Neoconservatism' on American politics can be drawn.

[1] Irving Kristol, "Preface," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Chicago: Elephant Paper Backs, 1995), xi.

In the mid-1990s Kristol began to withdraw from public life and largely retired from journalism. In the concluding paragraphs of an autobiographical essay, written on his seventy-fifth birthday, he explained that while his wife continued to write prolifically, he had 'slowed down simply because writing commentaries about current affairs interests me less,' and that he was 'happy to leave such work for my son [William Kristol].'[2] With this statement he left behind the intellectual warfare which had dominated his life, and instead dedicated his remaining years to time with his family, reading mystery novels and the newspaper sports section. In fact, over the next decade he wrote just a handful of largely autobiographical articles in his son's journal *The Weekly Standard*.[3]

In part this retreat from intellectual life was a reflection of his declining health.[4] However, it was also likely, and more significantly, a result of his belief that the neoconservative moment was now over. In the same year that he announced his retirement, he published an overview of American conservatism from 1945 to 1995 in *The Public Interest* in which he claimed that, 'the distinction between conservative and neoconservative has been blurred almost beyond recognition.'[5] Meanwhile, when approached about the possibility of the publication of a neoconservative reader, he responded that 'Can it be that neoconservatism is of such great interest at this moment, when it really is ever harder to

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[2] Irving Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Chicago: Elephant Paper Backs, 1995), 40.

[3] Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, February 9 1994, box 10 folder 12, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to Daniel Bell, April 6 1995, box 10 folder 12, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to Earl Raab, July 10 1996, box 14 folder 26, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol, "A Democratic Statesman: Reagan's foremost achievement," *The Weekly Standard,* 5 February, 2001, 29-30; Irving Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion: What It Was, and What It Is," *The Weekly Standard,* August 25, 2003, 23-25; Irving Kristol, "My 'Public Interest,'" *The Weekly Standard*, December 18, 2006, 14-15.

[4] During the 1990s Kristol began to suffer from hearing loss, as well as a number of age and smoking-related health problems. Irving Kristol to Earl Raab, July 28 1997, box 14 folder 26, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society; Irving Kristol to Earl Raab, May 10 1999, box 14 folder 26, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[5] Irving Kristol, "American Conservatism 1945-1995," *The Public Interest* (Fall 1995): 80 -91.

distinguish between conservatism and neoconservatism?'[6] By the mid-1990s, for Kristol at the very least, neoconservatism had been absorbed into the wider conservative movement.

Moreover, the future belonged to conservatives. In 1994 the Republican Party took control of both the House and the Senate for the first time in more than forty years. Liberalism, Kristol posited, was 'at the end of its intellectual tether.' Furthermore, he believed that liberal administrations around the globe found themselves 'relatively impotent when in office,' and that is was 'impossible, without severely compromising their ideology, [for them] to govern successfully.'[7] Such an assessment was evidently informed by the presidency of Bill Clinton, whom Gary Gerstle brands 'The Democratic Eisenhower,' on the grounds that—while Clinton was a Democrat—his decision to sign the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) in 1993, the creation of the World Trade Organisation in 1994, and his continued commitment to deregulation, demonstrated the ideological power of neoliberal economic policies promoted by conservatives.[8] Indeed, Kristol even argued in 1993 that 'The election of Mr. Clinton should not be allowed to obscure the fact that both wings of American liberalism (like the comparable wings of European socialism) have entered into a barren season.'[9] Thus, by the early-1990s not only were the neoconservatives part of a broader right wing coalition, but conservatism was also the leading political force in America. Crucially, this ascent reduced the importance of Kristol's journalism, which until this point helped to legitimise conservatism by presenting its policies and ideas as intellectually serious.

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[6] Irving Kristol to Mark Gerson, May 16 1995, box 11 folder 35, Irving Kristol Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

[7] Irving Kristol, "The Coming 'Conservative Century,'" *Wall Street Journal,* February 1, 1993, A10; Irving Kristol, "The Capitalist Future," December 4, 1991, https://www.aei.org/research-products/speech/the-capitalist-future/.

[8] Gary Gerstle, "The Rise and Fall (?) of America's Neoliberal Order," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 28 (2018): 256; Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[9] Irving Kristol, "Two Parties in Search of Direction," *Wall Street Journal,* May 12, 1993, A14.

It is within this moment of conservative triumph and reduced personal importance that the final years of Kristol's career, during which he was briefly embroiled in the "Culture Wars" of the 1990s, should be considered. The phrase "Culture War" entered popular vocabulary in 1991 with the publication of James Davidson Hunter's *Culture Wars*, in which the sociologist argued that 'America is in the midst of a culture war that has had will continue to have reverberations not only within public policy but within the lives of ordinary Americans everywhere.'[10] In historical scholarship the term has roughly been applied to the twenty-five to thirty-year period which followed the tumultuous decade of the 1960s, during which the left and right fought over what constituted art and socio-cultural mores.[11]

Kristol entered this ideological battlefield in 1990 when he raised the question, "It's Obscene but Is it Art?" in the title of a *Wall Street Journal* column regarding the state of modern art. In the article he recounted his initial support of the National Endowment for Arts (NEA). However, he also explained that he now regretted this decision and thought that the institution should be abolished or, at the very least, reconstituted. This regret stemmed from the fact that, in his view, the NEA supported an arts community engaged in what he termed 'radical nihilism' and sought the '"deconstruction," not only of bourgeois society, but of Western civilization itself.'[12] Meanwhile, in a second column on the topic, he admitted to 'experiencing much pleasure watching Mr. Buchanan make an issue of the National Endowment for the Arts, and of its grants to "artists" (or even artists) whose work, by

[10] James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books,1991), 34.
[11] Andrew Hartman, *A History of the Culture Wars: A War for the Soul of* America (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 6-7; Andrew Hartman, "Are the Culture Wars History? Part I," January 13, 2016, https://s-usih.org/2016/01/are-the-culture-wars-history-new-comments-on-an-old-concept/; Adam Laats, "Are the Culture Wars History? Part II," January 13 2016, https://s-usih.org/2016/01/are-the-culture-wars-history-part-ii/; Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, "Are the Culture Wars History? Part III," January 15, 2016, https://s-usih.org/2016/01/are-the-culture-wars-history-part-iii/; Stephen Prothero, "Are the Culture Wars History? Part IV", January 17, 2016, https://s-usih.org/2016/01/are-the-culture-wars-history-part-iv/; Leo P. Ribuffo, "Are the Culture Wars History? Part V," January 18, 2016, https://s-usih.org/2016/01/are-the-culture-wars-history-part-v/.
[12] Irving Kristol, "Its Obscene but is it Art?" *Wall Street Journal,* August 7, 1990, A16.

common judgment, is obscene, pornographic and blasphemous.'[13] Both these columns made reference to the developing dispute surrounding the NEA's funding of controversial art works. In 1988 the NEA subsidised, albeit indirectly, Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ*, an art work in which a plastic crucifix was placed within a jar of the artist's own urine. Further controversy followed in 1989 when photographer Robert Mapplethorpe's work, which included homoerotic and sadomasochist images, was scheduled to appear at Washington's Corcoran Gallery. The incident sparked what Andrew Hartman has termed the 'art wars,' as liberals defended the right to freedom of expression and conservatives opposed artworks which they deemed offensive.[14]

For Kristol, the art wars were about more than mere personal offense. As he explained in his initial article on the NEA, he believed that 'The purpose of such obscenity is to deride the Judaeo-Christian-humanist idea of "human dignity" that Western civilization has fostered.'[15] Furthermore, he was concerned about the quality of post-modern art, as demonstrated by his 1991 acceptance speech, "The Capitalist Future," for the American Enterprise Institute's Francis Boyer Award. Here, he told his audience that, 'The modern movement in the arts, from 1850 to 1950, was distinctly "highbrow,"' and that it took experts decades to master the understanding of figures such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee.[16] Alternatively, in the 1990s he explained that, 'at some of our best universities, you can take a course, for credit, in the meaning of a popular comic strip which explores the ways in which American society and Western civilization in general is infested with race, sex, and class antagonism.'[17] Such comments reflected his formative education in the pages of *Partisan Review* where, even if he came to prefer Jane Austen to

[13] Irving Kristol, "What Shall We do With the NEA?" *Wall Street Journal,* March 16, 1992, A14.
[14] For more on these debates see: Hartman, *A History of the Culture Wars,* 191-197.
[15] Kristol, "Its Obscene but is it Art?" A16.
[16] Irving Kristol, "The Capitalist Future."
[17] Ibid.

James Joyce by the 1980s, he learned to appreciate modernism and the 'high' arts.[18] His commentary therefore not only weighed in on wider public debates between conservatives and liberals over the proper definitions of art, but drew on his wider desire to protect Western cultural heritage which he saw his liberal opponents as undermining with vulgar and inferior artworks.

Similarly, Kristol opposed multiculturalism for undermining American culture. In typical conservative terminology he described discussions of multiculturalism and diversity as 'twaddle.'[19] He argued that, 'There is no evidence that a substantial number of Hispanic parents would like their children to know more about Simon Bolivar and less about George Washington,' nor he claimed did Chinese parents, 'feel that their children are being educationally deprived because their textbooks teach them more about ancient Greece than about ancient China.'[20] If parents did feel this way, he suggested that 'it can be coped with in the traditional way—by a few hours a week of after-school instruction for their children, privately arranged.'[21] This drew on his own childhood experiences of receiving an extra-curricular Jewish education at the Yeshiva, but it also signalled the importance he attached to the teaching of Western history and culture in American schools. Indeed, in hyperbolic language he concluded that, 'What these radicals blandly call multiculturalism is as much a "war against the West" as Nazism and Stalinism ever were,' demonstrating the strength of his dislike for multicultural values.[22]

But it was in the debates regarding social mores where Kristol's rhetoric against liberalism was strongest. Here, and perhaps unsurprisingly, he drew specific attention to the need to uphold the bourgeois family. In an article addressing the role of fathers, he claimed

[18] Irving Kristol, "Reflections of a Neoconservative," *Partisan Review* 51, No.4 and 52, No. 1 (Winter 1985): 859.
[19] Irving Kristol, "The National Prospect," *Commentary* 100, No.5, (November 1995): 73.
[20] Irving Kristol, "The Tragedy of Multiculturalism," *Wall Street Journal,* July 31, 1991, A10.
[21] Ibid; Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 3-4.
[22] Kristol, "The Tragedy of Multiculturalism," A10.

that children in a two-parent household were less likely to take drugs, drop out of school or suffer abuse, and that, 'The new focus on the father derives mainly from the realization that the social pathologies exhibited by families on welfare, or in the "underclass" generally, have a lot to do with the fact that these are so often fatherless families.'[23] Meanwhile, he further reinforced traditional family structures when he stressed that, 'A good father has two characteristics. First, he is *there,* a loyal member of the household. Second, he works to help support his family.'[24] These statements chimed with his previous work on welfare in the 1980s which championed the idea of the nuclear family and opposed liberal welfare policies which he saw as undermining it.

Additionally, such thoughts were reflected in Himmelfarb's *One Nation, Two Cultures: A Searching Examination of American Society in the Aftermath of Our Cultural Revolution* (1999). In a discussion of the bourgeois family, she argued that the right to work came at a cost for women 'because she still has (whatever some feminists might insist and some obliging husbands might concede) the primary responsibility for the care of the children.'[25] Given Himmelfarb's successful academic career, the couple's insistence on a traditional family structure in which the wife reared the children while the father worked must have appeared hypocritical to their audiences. However, despite this apparent hypocrisy, the couple believed that they embodied these conventions. In his own words, Kristol declared he was a 'bourgeois type,' and his marriage to Himmelfarb lasted seventy years, from 1939 until his death in September 2009.[26] Indeed, Daniel Bell, as a figure present

[23] Irving Kristol, "Life Without Father," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paper Backs, 1995), 67.
[24] Ibid, 68.
[25] Gertrude Himmelfarb, *One Nation, Two Cultures: A Searching Examination of American Society in the Aftermath of Our Cultural Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 54-55.
[26] Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," 31.

at the marriage's 'creation,' spoke with authority on the matter when he described the marriage as the best of their generation.[27]

But for Kristol, this traditional family was under threat from the sexual revolution. In "Reflections on Love and Family," he described men as 'natural predators,' and suggested that sexual liberation was a 'male scam,' because, '[e]asy available sex is pleasing to men and debasing to women, who are used and abused in the process.'[28] In another article on gender relations he questioned how films with sexual aggression and the murder of women could be considered entertainment.[29] Ironically, this language was similar to a handful of feminists, such as Andrea Dworkin, who were concerned by the increasingly violent and pornographic depictions of women in the media.[30] However, this comparison was limited because, unlike these feminists, Kristol believed the solution to this debasement was a return to 'the ladies-gentleman relationship' as embodied by the Victorians, which signalled his continued commitment to the bourgeois family structure which they rejected, and further reflected the symmetry of his and Himmelfarb's work.[31]

His writings on the Auto Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic sweeping across America went even further. Here, he used the public health crisis to rebuke Americans for their apparent sexual promiscuity. In an article on 'American malaise,' he pondered the question: 'Whoever dreamed that an "enlightened" move towards greater sexual freedom would engender a new, fatal venereal disease called AIDS?' which demonstrated the

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[27] Daniel Bell, "For Bea and Irving's 60th Wedding Anniversary," January 1 2002, box 52 folder 7, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives; William Kristol, "Foreword: In Memoriam: Irving Kristol 1920-2009," in *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays* 1942-2009, ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (New York: Basic Books, 2011), ix-x.

[28] Irving Kristol, "Reflections on Love and Family," *Wall Street Journal,* January 7, 1992, A10.

[29] Irving Kristol, "Men, Women, and Sex," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paper Backs, 1995), 59.

[30] See here: Whitney Strub, *Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[31] Kristol, "Men, Women, and Sex," 60.

association he saw between promiscuity and the virus.[32] Meanwhile, in a highly charged column focused specifically on AIDS, he wrote, 'There are innocent victims, to be sure,' however, these were limited to 'people who have been infected with the AIDS virus as a result of receiving a tainted blood transfusion,' and those who contracted the virus from, 'their bisexual husbands or lovers and have then transmitted it to their children.'[33] However, he felt that the majority of AIDS patients were not innocent, claiming that, 'The epidemic character of the disease was first established by reason of homosexual promiscuity, and has since been accelerated by sexual promiscuity in general, as victimized women became carriers in their turn. Absent such sexual promiscuity there would still be AIDS, but nothing like an AIDS epidemic.'[34] Considering the suffering and high levels of mortality caused by AIDS this view was decidedly unsympathetic. However, despite this lack of sympathy, he did not consider that the blame lay entirely at the feet of AIDS victims. He boldly concluded that 'The victims of AIDS are, in truth, the victims of the liberal-progressive ideology.' Using a public health crisis to score points over one's political opponents was cynical at best, and demonstrated a far less sophisticated means of challenging liberalism than the methods taken by Kristol in *The Public Interest* in previous decades.

This anti-liberal sentiment reached its apex in the essay "My Cold War." In the concluding paragraphs of the memoir reflecting on the collapse of the Soviet Union, he claimed that, 'American life has been ruthlessly corrupted by the liberal ethos,' and that, 'rot and decadence was no longer the consequence of liberalism,' but the 'actual agenda of contemporary liberalism.'[35] Daniel Bell was so disgusted by the article, which he believed

[32] Irving Kristol, "America's Mysterious Malaise," *Times Literary Supplement,* May 22, 1992, 5.
[33] Irving Kristol, "AIDS and False Innocence," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paper Backs, 1995), 63.
[34] Ibid, 64.
[35] Irving Kristol, "My Cold War," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paper Backs, 1995), 486.

was a 'call to arms against liberalism,' that he questioned the future of his long-time friendship with Kristol.[36] In his personal notes, Bell wrote that he knew Kristol to be 'witty,' 'ironic,' 'self-deprecating,' and 'cynical,' but that 'the words that end his Cold War essay betray a degree of anger, a Manicheanism division of the world, a pharisaical [sic] anger which has been alien to his temperament.'[37]

Kristol's forays into the "Culture Wars" thus highlighted his inherent cultural conservatism on issues such as family values, 'high' art, and the preservation of Western history which in many ways was connected to his earlier life experiences. But, as Bell identified, this commentary was distinct because of its polemical targeting of liberalism. It was not just that Kristol no longer agreed with liberals, but that he no longer respected liberalism as a political ideology. His absorption into the wider conservative movement in the 1990s thus aligned him with the crude partisanship increasingly associated with the Republican Party under Newt Gingrich, and encapsulated a wider breakdown in communication between liberals and conservatives at the close of the millennium.[38] Ultimately, then, the early-1990s marked not only the end of his journalistic career but also of his neoconservative journey.

In the years that pre-dated this absorption into the wider conservative movement, though, Kristol engaged seriously, albeit critically, with liberalism and its ideas. In fact, what stands out most clearly about his thought in the period 1940 to 1990 is its continuity. In the preface to *Neoconservatism* (1995), he wrote that despite the contradictions in the wide-ranging essays taken from across his career, 'it is the homogeneity of the approach, the consistency of a certain cast of mind, that impresses (and even surprises) me, as I look over

[36] Daniel Bell to Irving Howe, April 1 1993, box 75 folder 10, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives.
[37] Daniel Bell, Untitled Notes, No Date, box 59 folder 2, Daniel Bell Papers, Harvard University Archives.
[38] See here: Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Ma.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011); Julian E. Zelizer, *Burning the House Down: Newt Gingrich, The Fall of a Speaker, and the Rise of a New Republican Party* (New York: Penguin, 2020).

this collection.'[39] Given the apparent disjuncture between the left-wing radicalism of his youth and his later neoconservatism, this statement might be confusing for those unfamiliar with his thought. However, the inherent anti-Stalinism associated with Trotskyism brought him to periphery of the New York Intellectual circle where he became schooled in their, and more specifically Hannah Arendt's, conception of totalitarianism. Therefore, by placing his virulent anti-communism in the 1950s, his 1960s fear of New Left radicalism, and his aggressively anti-Soviet neoconservative foreign policy outlook in this context, we see evidence of Kristol's self-perception in the statement and the consistent theme of anti-totalitarianism in his work.

Furthermore, considering the whole body of Kristol's domestic policy writings shows that his interests were eclectic and disparate, ranging from public policy issues to essential questions about the nature of American capitalism and democracy. But these too demonstrated continuity of thought. His writings were infused by a deep concern for the decaying morality of American society. On the issue of public policy, he feared that the extensive security net of the welfare state was rewarding illegitimacy and encouraging delinquency rather than providing aid to the most deserving in society. Meanwhile, his writings on capitalism and democracy were marked by the grave concern that contemporary Americans lacked the self-restraint and traditional mores of their ancestors to sustain these vital socio-economic systems. It is here that the influence of his wife, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and her voluminous writings on Victorian Britain, as well as her avocation of its bourgeois morality, can most evidently be seen on his thought, and in this way, Himmelfarb was not only Kirstol's life partner but, to borrow his own phrase, his intellectual twin.[40]

[39] Kristol, "Preface," ix.
[40] Irving Kristol, "An Autobiographical Memoir," in *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* ed. Irving Kristol (Chicago: Elephant Paper Backs, 1995), 39.

Underlying these interests was his fundamental preoccupation with the survival of Western civilisation. For Kristol, Western civilisation, and the inherent Judeo-Christian values within it, provided its citizens with individual liberty and material prosperity. His hawkish foreign policy positions on Vietnam, endorsement of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine, and explicit support of the Israeli state in the wake of the Six-Day War, were all rooted in his desire to ensure the survival of these values in the face of a pervasive communist enemy. Meanwhile, his twin concerns for capitalism and democracy were about more than just America's moral fibre. Capitalism and democracy were key tenets of the Western socio-political system, and thus their survival was key to the United States winning the ideological battle against Soviet Communism. This consequently reveals that while he may have traversed the political landscape, his journey from left-wing radical to prominent conservative was not as unlikely as may initially be assumed because his intellectual thought remained engaged in the same issues.

Additionally, this identification with so-called Western values also helps sheds light on the wider phenomenon of neoconservatism. As this thesis has discussed, despite the wealth of scholarship which focuses on the political thought of the post-war right, historians have struggled to define precisely what constitutes neoconservatism. Kristol, alongside Norman Podhoretz, was undoubtedly one of the central figures within the neoconservative movement in its early years between the mid-1970s and late-1980s, during which time he insisted that neoconservatism was distinct from mainstream conservatism because it was intellectually responsible. He drew upon the work of classic economists such as Adam Smith and invoked the Founding Fathers in his discussions of democracy. In doing so, he instilled Western values into the heart of the neoconservative perspective. This recognition shows the overarching links between the various generations of neoconservatives. For example, the second cohort of neoconservatives in the 1990s, more commonly referred to as the

"neocons," were widely associated with the defence of Western civilisation in the wake of September 11 2001.[41] Thus, Kristol's thought offers the chance to move beyond temporal debates regarding the neoconservatives and consider its wider substance and tenets.

More broadly speaking, the intellectual life of Irving Kristol also provides insights about the varied political landscape of the post-war United States. Too often, as Julian E. Zelizer has noted, political histories of the United States consider the development of conservatism in isolation from liberalism.[42] This separation is to the detriment of our understanding of twentieth-century conservatism because, as Kristol's trajectory shows, twentieth century liberalism and conservatism were not separate, but symbiotic. Kristol was both a Trotskyist and a neoconservative during his lifetime and his trajectory from left to right was not clear cut. From the late 1950s until the early 1970s his thought was hard to categorise: His anti-Communism, suspicion of the Great Society programmes, and support of the Vietnam War were certainly at odds with New Left, but were less out-of-step with many contemporary Cold War liberals. Meanwhile, his initially tepid enthusiasm for capitalism, along with his decision to decline membership of the Mont Pèlerin Society, signalled his unease amongst early free-market advocates, despite his interest in right-wing ideas. Therefore, during this period of transition his political and intellectual positions were informed by discussions on both the left and the right, and it is impossible to comprehend the development of his neoconservatism without acknowledging these broad political influences. Moreover, even after his transition to the right he remained in dialogue with the left until the late-1980s. His thoughts on the welfare state and public policy in the 1980s were in direct response to the liberal policy making initiatives. In this way, his intellectual trajectory

[41] Maria Ryan, *Neoconservatism and the American Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 1-10; Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 220-270.
[42] Julian E. Zelizer, "Rethinking the History of American Conservatism," *Reviews in American History* 38, No.2 (June 2010): 388.

demonstrates that the conservative turn of the late-twentieth-century was born out of a fundamental set of responses to mid-century liberalism, responses which have not yet been given adequate attention by historians of the post-war United States.

Between 1940 and 1990, then, Kristol was both a Cold War liberal and a conservative. Today, in an increasingly fractured and polarised political era when both the right and the left continue to refuse to enter into dialogue with one another, this entanglement is vital to remember. We cannot understand conservatism without liberalism, nor liberalism without conservatism. Consequently, we have much to learn from the thought and intellectual life of Irving Kristol.

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