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HUGH B. URBAN

MACHIAVELLI MEETS THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT: MICHAEL LEDEEN, THE NEOCONSERVATIVES, AND THE POLITICAL USES OF FUNDAMENTALISM

Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity ... [W]e do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life and all of history.

– George W. Bush, Third State of the Union Address (2003)¹

[T]he politics of mass manipulation, the politics of myth and symbol—have become the norm in the modern world.

– Michael Ledeen, D'Annunzio: The First Duce (2002)²

The presidency of George W. Bush represents a complex intertwining of a number of religious and political factions that would seem, on the surface, to be fundamentally different and even ideologically opposed. Arguably, two of the most important of these factions are the coalition of evangelical Christians often called the New Christian Right³ and the aggressive political ideologues commonly labeled Neoconservatives.⁴ The former began to rise to political power quietly in the 1980's, when such movements as the Moral Majority and later the Christian Coalition undertook massive grassroots campaigns at local levels across the country. The latter has worked primarily through

such conservative think-tanks as the American Enterprise Institute and the Project for the New American Century, counting among their ranks politicians and militarists including Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, and Dick Cheney, as well as such intellectuals as Irving Kristol, William Kristol, and (until recently) Francis Fukuyama. Despite their many ideological, cultural, and socioeconomic differences, these two factions have come together in the current White House and have found common ground in the policies of George W. Bush. Indeed, Bush represents a kind of structural link or ligament that helps tie these two, otherwise very different factions together: He embodies the ideals of piety, morality, and family values that appeal to his strongest base of popular support among evangelical Christians, while at the same time embracing the aggressive militarism and nation-building agenda promoted by the Neoconservatives. The result is what David Domke has called a kind of „political fundamentalism,” that is, „an intertwining of conservative religious faith, politics, and strategic communication.”⁵

In this essay, I will expand Domke's notion of political fundamentalism by examining what I will call the political *uses* of fundamentalism⁶—that is, the strategic manipulation of religious beliefs, narratives, and sentiments for political gain at home and for aggressive militarism overseas. Specifically, I want to look at one of the most influential Neoconservative theorists today, who has much to say about the political uses of religion, namely, Michael Ledeen, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Although most Americans have never heard of him, Ledeen is one of the key figures who has worked to bring the Christian Right and the Neoconservatives together in a very effective but also rather disturbing way in the Bush White House. Considered by many the „Guru of the Neoconservatives”⁷ and „the driving philosophical force” behind the Bush administration's aggressive foreign policy,⁸ Ledeen has also appeared over seventy times on Pat Robertson's televised *700 Club*, promoting the Neoconservatives' political plan for the Middle East before an audience of several million evangelical viewers. An outspoken admirer of the political philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli, Ledeen believes firmly in the use of religion as a powerful political tool to arouse nationalist sentiment and to generate public support for otherwise unpopular things, such as war. Indeed, his favorite example of a great political leader is Moses, who, in

his view, used his divine authority to impose a kind of „temporary dictatorship” upon his own people in order to lead them to the higher goal of freedom.⁹

The influence of Ledeen’s neo-Machiavellian philosophy, I will argue, can be seen throughout the policies of this administration, from the preemptive invasion of Iraq to the indefinite detention and abuse of prisoners, from the CIA’s network of secret prisons to the National Security Agency’s program of warrantless wiretapping of U.S. citizens. These policies, I believe, have less in common with the model of democracy outlined in our Constitution than with the manipulation of religious sentiment and the aggressive—indeed, often authoritarian—political agenda of such radical Neoconservatives as Ledeen.

*The Guru of the Neoconservatives:
Ledeen and the Politics of American Empire*

One of these days, the American people are going to awaken to the fact that we have become an imperial nation, even though the public and all our institutions are hostile to the idea.

– Irving Kristol, „The Emerging American Imperium” (1997)¹⁰

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

– Michael A. Ledeen, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership* (1999)¹¹

The various figures usually lumped under the label „Neoconservative” are a diverse and complex group. However, as Stephen Halper and Jonathan Clarke have argued in their recent book, *America Alone*, the Neoconservatives tend to share three main characteristics: first, „a belief ... that the human condition is defined as a choice between good and evil and that the true measure of political character is found in the willingness by the former to confront the latter”; second, „an assertion that the fundamental determinant of the relationship between states rests on military power and the willingness to use it”; and, third, a „focus on the Middle East and global Islam as the principal theater for American overseas power.”¹²

One of the guiding beliefs of the Neoconservatives is that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War have presented the United States with a unique opportunity in the global balance of power. Indeed, as Robert Kagan and William Kristol have argued, America now has a kind of moral obligation to use its awesome military power to spread its interests and values to every corner of the

world. By the 1990’s, they suggest, „the United States held a position unmatched since Rome,” as its „military power dwarfed that of any other nation”; therefore, we have an opportunity for „preserving and reinforcing America’s benevolent global hegemony, which undergirded what George H. W. Bush rightly called a ‘new world order.’”¹³ For the most part the Neoconservatives are not shy about invoking the word „empire” to describe America’s benevolent global hegemony. According to Irving Kristol, often considered the „godfather” of the Neoconservatives, America has emerged as a new *imperium*, whether we like it or not, so we might as well use that tremendous power to defend our national interests and spread our ideals of democracy and free markets to the rest of the world.¹⁴

Thus, one of the most important texts for Neoconservative ideology is Fukuyama’s widely-read work, *The End of History and the Last Man*, which posits that history has a direction and that American-style democracy and free-market capitalism represent the final stage of human development with few flaws. Although Fukuyama himself has recently disavowed the Neoconservative agenda as a disastrous failure, he was one of the key architects of that ideology, and his „end of history” rhetoric still informs much of Bush’s public discourse.¹⁵

Here I would also add one other important characteristic of Neoconservatism that is often overlooked—namely, the central belief in the importance of religion as a necessary social force and political instrument. While not particularly religious themselves, most of the Neoconservatives recognize the power of religious belief in maintaining social order and inspiring nationalist sentiment.¹⁶ As Irving Kristol has repeatedly argued, religion is the necessary glue that holds society together, without which it descends into vulgarity and chaos. At the same time, he also recognizes that religion, particularly in its most extreme fundamentalist forms, is a powerful political tool and a means to generate intense nationalist sentiment. As he argued in the mid 1990’s, the Republican Party needed to reach out and embrace the religious core of the American population—despite its tendency toward undemocratic attitudes—if it was to triumph over the liberal malaise of Bill Clinton’s America: „conservatives and the Republican party must embrace the religious if they are to survive. Religious people always create problems since their ardor tends to outrun the limits of politics in a constitutional democracy. But, if the Republican party is to sur-

vive, it must work on accommodating these people.”¹⁷ With the fortuitous election of Bush, with his powerful base of support in the Christian Right, that is apparently just what the Neoconservatives have done.

Michael Ledeen has often been cited as the most important intellectual influence in the Neoconservative movement and its aggressive foreign policies. Currently holding the „freedom chair” at the American Enterprise Institute, Ledeen has provided much of the theoretical justification for various Neoconservative agendas, including the pre-emptive invasion of Iraq. As William O. Beeman observes, „Ledeen has become the driving philosophical force behind the neoconservative movement and the military actions it has spawned”; indeed, „Ledeen’s ideas are repeated daily by such figures as Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz ... He basically believes that violence in the service of the spread of democracy is America’s manifest destiny. Consequently, he has become the philosophical legitimator of the American occupation of Iraq.”¹⁸ According to *The Washington Post*, Ledeen has been regularly consulted by Karl Rove, who said to him „anytime you have a good idea, tell me”; more than once, in fact, „Ledeen has seen his ideas, faxed to Rove, become official policy or rhetoric.”¹⁹

Ledeen is a curious mixture of scholar, political theorist, and covert operative. With a Ph.D. in history from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Ledeen began as a scholar of European fascism. He wrote one of the best studies of the forefather of Italian fascism, Gabriele D’Annunzio, a man he credits as among the most important political figures of the twentieth century. Not only does he cite D’Annunzio’s movement as the „precursor of fascism,” but he also sees it as a „model for much of the movements of mass politics of the 20th century.”²⁰ Above all in Ledeen’s opinion, D’Annunzio’s powerful use of religious imagery for a secular political cause was the origin of „the politics of mass manipulation, the politics of myth and symbol” that now drives the modern world. It was D’Annunzio, Ledeen suggests, who first saw the power of wedding religious symbolism with nationalist politics that would become one of the defining themes of the last century:

D’Annunzio offers us the possibility of viewing the fusion of „religious” and „political” themes ... The radicalization of the masses in the twentieth century ... could not have succeeded without the blending of

the „sacred” with the „profane.” The timeless symbols that have always inspired men and women to risk their lives for higher ideals had necessarily to be transferred from a religious context into a secular liturgy if modern political leaders were to achieve the tremendous control over their followers’ emotions that they have acquired.²¹

Since the 1980’s, however, Ledeen has also been a shadowy figure working behind the political scenes. As a consultant to National Security Council head Robert MacFarlane, Ledeen played a key role in the Iran-Contra affair, introducing N.S.C. aide Oliver North to the Iranian arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar (an episode that he describes in his own insider-account of Iran-Contra, *Perilous Statecraft*).²² More recently, Ledeen has been cited by many observers as a possible (and some would say probable) source for the forged documents that were used to suggest Saddam Hussein had attempted to obtain yellow-cake uranium from Niger.²³

Ledeen’s covert operations are in keeping with his broader political philosophy, which is drawn explicitly from Machiavelli. In 1999 he published *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership; Why Machiavelli's Iron Rules are as Timely and Important Today as Five Centuries Ago*, which was then circulated among members of Congress who were attending a political strategy meeting shortly after its release. Ledeen makes an unapologetic call for a return to Machiavelli’s harsh, but realistic advice, which he sees as the only means to save the U.S. from its decline into moral malaise and political ruin. The Clinton administration in his view marked the worst decay of strong American values and the surest sign that we need to return to Machiavelli’s harsh political realism: „the corruption has spread far and wide” and „we will soon find ourselves in the same desperate crisis that drove Machiavelli to call for a new dictator to set things aright ... [W]e need Machiavellian wisdom and leadership.”²⁴

Machiavelli, of course, made no bones about the importance of dissimulation and false appearances in politics—a ruthless game that, as he had learned from his own experience, requires guile, secrecy, and the willingness to deceive. Born in the Republic of Florence in 1469, Machiavelli spent his political career in the service of Piero Soderini’s government until it was destroyed by the Medici in 1512. Suspected of conspiracy against the Medici, Machiavelli was arrested, tortured, and then retired to his farm in the country. Still tormented by a

desire to return to the metropolis and to politics, he drafted his most famous work on statecraft, *The Prince*, in 1513.²⁵ As he advises the prince, it is absolutely necessary that a strong ruler appear to be virtuous, just, and compassionate; without such an appearance the populace would never be loyal to him. But, it is no less critical that he be able to *act* in ways that are cruel, dishonest, and vicious. If he has a strong reputation for compassion, he can retain the loyalty of his citizens even when committing the cruelest of deeds: „[A] prince must want to have a reputation for compassion rather than for cruelty; none the less, he must be careful that he does not make bad use of compassion ... So a prince must not worry if he incurs reproach for his cruelty so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal.”²⁶ Therefore, an ability to lie is a great asset to the prince. He must understand the ease with which most people are duped and the ways in which the simple-minded can be misled by the one who is clever: „one must know how to colour one’s actions and to be a great liar and deceiver. Men are so simple, and so much creatures of circumstance, that the deceiver will always find someone ready to be deceived.”²⁷

Following Machiavelli, Ledeen is quite clear about the fact that secrecy, deception, and even treason are often necessary in the messy games of politics and war: „In Machiavelli’s world—the real world as described in the truthful history books—treason and deceit are commonplace.”²⁸ Machiavelli rejected the sort of naïve idealism that sees human beings as good or benevolent creatures, seeing humans instead as inherently violent creatures for whom war is the natural state. America’s failure to accept this basic fact, Ledeen believes, has been one of our nation’s greatest weaknesses: „[One] reason we are never ready for war is our radical egalitarianism and our belief in the perfectibility of man ... [W]e are reluctant to accept Machiavelli’s dictum that man is more inclined to do evil than to do good.”²⁹

More important for Ledeen, however, Machiavelli was aware that strong rulers must occasionally engage in acts that may seem immoral, illegal, even „evil” in order to achieve a higher cause. In Ledeen’s opinion Machiavelli „is simply stating the facts: if you lead, there will be occasions when you will have to do unpleasant, even evil, things or be destroyed.”³⁰ The times when leaders must enter into evil are precisely those times when the higher good of the nation is threatened or when some sort of revolutionary change is needed to bring so-

ciety to a higher level: „There are several circumstances in which good leaders are likely to have to enter into evil: whenever the very existence of the nation is threatened; when the state is first created or revolutionary change is to be accomplished; ... and when the society becomes corrupt and must be restored to virtue.”³¹

Already during the „liberal malaise” of the Clinton era, Ledeen believed that America had reached the kind of severe social and political crisis that would call for such an entry into evil. He was, in fact, one of the more virulent figures demanding Clinton’s impeachment, warning that „only violent and extremely unpleasant methods can bring us back virtue.”³² But, if the social „corruption” of the Clinton era called for „unpleasant measures” to restore our national virtue, then the attacks of September 11, 2001, would require more extreme measures still; in Ledeen’s view 9/11, more than any other event, demands that our leaders now be willing to enter into evil.

The Politics of Myth and Symbol: The Political Expedience of Faith

To those seeing and hearing him, [the prince] should appear a man of compassion, a man of good faith, a man of integrity, a kind and a religious man. And there is nothing so important as to seem to have this last quality ... The common people are always impressed by appearances.

– Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513)³³

Perhaps most of all, Ledeen admires Machiavelli’s recognition of the power of religion as a key political tool. Several centuries before D’Annunzio, Machiavelli had observed the utility of faith and piety for effective rule. Indeed, the most important quality that a prince must possess is that of religious faith—or, rather, the appearance of religious faith—for the *appearance* of piety is extremely useful for generating patriotism and nationalist fervor among the common people, even though the *practice* of religious morality or compassion could be a real liability for the prince, who must often act in quite irreligious and uncompassionate ways:

A prince, therefore, need not necessarily have all the good qualities I mentioned above, but he should certainly appear to have them. I would even go so far as to say that if he has these qualities and always behaves accordingly he will find them harmful; if he only appears to have them they will render him service. He should appear to be com-

passionate, faithful to his word, kind, guileless, and devout ... But his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite, he knows how ... [A] prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things which give men a reputation for virtue, because in order to maintain his state, he is often forced to act in defiance of good faith, of charity, of kindness, of religion.³⁴

Religion, deception, and politics all come together in the harsh reality of war, for war is the single most important fact for a ruler: To rule means to wage war, and the strength of a ruler lies in the ability to wage war successfully. Thus, the prince „must have no other object or thought, nor acquire skill in anything, except war, its organization, and its discipline. The art of war is all that is expected of a ruler; and it is so useful that besides enabling hereditary princes to maintain their rule it frequently enables ordinary citizens to become rulers.”³⁵ Both deception and religion are critical in times of war. The former is the key to strategy and the means to outwit one's enemies; the latter is the key to generating troop loyalty and persuading one's citizens to die for a higher cause:

Religion, too, and the oath soldiers took when they were enlisted, greatly contributed to making them do their duty in ancient times; for upon any default, they were threatened not only with human punishments, but the vengeance of the gods. They also had several other religious ceremonies that had a very good effect on all their enterprises, and would have still in any place where religion is held in due reverence.³⁶

Ledeen admires Machiavelli's utilitarian approach to religion and, in fact, suggests that strong faith is critical to a strong and healthy nation. Without it the nation becomes weak and degenerate (much as the liberal malaise of the Clinton era had, in his opinion, weakened America in the 1990's): „a good state must rest on a religious foundation. To remain good, a state must 'above every other thing keep the ceremonies of their religion incorrupt and keep them always in their veneration, because one can have no greater indicator of the wreck of a land than to see the divine cult scorned.’”³⁷ But, what Ledeen has in mind here is not a religion of peace, love, and harmony on earth; rather, following Machiavelli, Ledeen has in mind a strong, virile kind of religion that would generate the kind of nationalism and patriotism needed to die for the love of one's country: „[A]long with good sol-

diers and good laws, the best state ... requires good religion ... fear of God underlies respect for men ... [Machiavelli] considers the Roman Catholic Church too corrupt and too soft. He wants a tougher, more virile version of the faith, which will inspire men to fight for the glory of their country.”³⁸

Here we can see Ledeen's open admiration for Machiavelli begin to mingle with his less explicit, but often barely-concealed, admiration for such twentieth-century figures as D'Annunzio and the early fascists. As did Machiavelli before him, D'Annunzio realized the political power of religion as a means of generating nationalist sentiment: „D'Annunzio was a master of the crowd ... and he blended religion and politics in a way that had not been seen since the Jacobin Terror during the French Revolution.”³⁹ For Ledeen this is also a powerful means of reawakening nationalist spirit for our own more cynical age in the twenty-first century. As Jeet Heer and Dave Wagner have noted, Ledeen appears to have „an activist's interest in deploying sacred nationalist mythology for contemporary political purposes. For Ledeen early 20th-century European mass politics ... could serve as a well-spring for reinvigorating contemporary middle-class nationalism, particularly in the United States.”⁴⁰ As we have seen in the massive outpouring of flags, God bless America's, and our President's repeated references to the Almighty in the wake of 9/11, this kind of religious nationalism is indeed still a powerful force in the twenty-first century in the U.S.

„*The Armed Prophet*”: *Creative Destruction and the Necessity of Evil*

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

—Michael A. Ledeen, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership*⁴¹

The kind of religion Ledeen is talking about, then, is clearly not that of the Sermon on the Mount. Following Machiavelli, Ledeen contrasts two different kinds of religious leaders: the „unarmed prophet” and the „armed prophet.” While the former knows the good but cannot fight to save it, the latter knows the good and knows how to preserve it—even, if necessary, by „evil” means. The prime example of the unarmed prophet is Girolamo Savonarola, the Dominican reformer who

was executed in Florence in 1498. Conversely, the prime example of the armed prophet is Moses, who first brought God's Law in the Ten Commandments and then—in a part of the Bible most Christians would rather forget—ordered the slaughter of all the idolaters who worshiped the golden calf instead: „[H]e said unto them, ‘Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor’ ... and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.” Ledeen follows Machiavelli's conclusion, then, that „[w]hoever reads the Bible sensibly will see that Moses was forced, were his laws and institutions to go forward, to kill numberless men.”⁴² Thus, it is the armed prophet, the one who is willing to kill to uphold the law, who provides the most effective model for leadership, for the realist knows that „leaders will sometimes have to violate religious strictures to prevail against merciless enemies and competitors.”⁴³

Ledeen's neo-Machiavellian philosophy has had a notable influence, not just in Neoconservative circles, but more broadly through his appearances in Christian venues like the *700 Club*. There is much evidence to suggest that Ledeen's advice and his aggressive vision of foreign policy have been followed by the Neoconservatives in the Bush administration, particularly in its preemptive invasion of Iraq.⁴⁴ A more disturbing fact, however, is that Ledeen has been urging the administration to go further still, by taking the next step in asserting its power in the Middle East and using military force in Iran. As he stated in a 2004 interview with Pat Robertson on the *700 Club*, „Iran is the center of the terror network ... it's the most dangerous of the all the terror countries, and you really marvel that it's taken us this long to get on board with what the president has wanted to do all along.”⁴⁵ Robertson's response to Ledeen's call for war on Iran was a glowing affirmation: „We hope and pray that we'll get some normal Americans in the State Department soon,” thanking him for appearing once again on his show. „Thank you, Pat,” Ledeen replied, „it's always a treat.”

There is good indication that many in the administration have, in fact, listened to and seriously considered Ledeen's revolutionary plans for Iran. According to a recent article in *The New Yorker*, Ledeen „told a group of Iranian expatriates in Los Angeles not long ago,

„‘I have contacts in Iran, fighting the regime. They need funds. Give me twenty million, and you'll have your revolution.’ He [said] that in 2001 and 2002, when he pressed the case for Iran with friends in the administration, he had support from some officials in the Pentagon and in the office of the Vice President Dick Cheney”⁴⁶ (Interestingly enough, in February, 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made a supplemental budget request for \$75 million to help „confront the aggressive policies of the Iranian regime” and „work to support the aspirations of the Iranian people for freedom and democracy in their country.”)⁴⁷ By mid-2006 the drums for a war with Iran were beating strong among the ranks of the Neoconservatives, and Ledeen was leading the charge.⁴⁸

Ledeen is well aware that a revolutionary upheaval in Iran could be devastatingly violent, perhaps catastrophic, for the entire region. Indeed, he predicts that we are heading for a far larger conflagration in the region, heralding „a much broader war, which will in all likelihood transform the Middle East for at least a generation and reshape the politics of many older countries around the world.”⁴⁹ Yet, for Ledeen, this is all part of America's role in history. As he explains in *War against the Terror Masters*, we are by nature a revolutionary nation, destined to bring the transformative power of „creative destruction” to the entire world:

Creative destruction is our middle name, both within our own society and abroad. We tear down the old order every day, from business to science, literature, art, architecture, and cinema to politics and the law. Our enemies have always hated this whirlwind of energy and creativity, which menaces their traditions ... Seeing America undo traditional societies, they fear us ... They cannot feel secure so long as we are there ... They must attack us in order to survive, just as we must destroy them to advance our historic mission.⁵⁰

At times, Ledeen tells us, America's creatively destructive power must be exercised with brute force; we must demonstrate to the world that we mean business, that we have the guns to back us up, and that we will destroy any and all who stand in our way. As he put it, in frighteningly brown-shirted terms, „Every ten years or so, the United States needs to pick up some crappy little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business.”⁵¹

Yet, this American brand of creative destruction is also, for Ledeen, the means to bring true „freedom” to the Middle East and to all nations. Indeed, he is quite explicit that, despite his admiration for Machiavelli, he has always emphasized „the centrality of human freedom.”⁵² Rejecting the label of „conservative,” he calls himself a „democratic revolutionary,”⁵³ asserting that we are born to be free and that America’s mission is to bring this gift of freedom to all oppressive regimes. It is this innate thirst for freedom, he believes, that will help topple the regime in Iran, spreading freedom throughout the Middle East and ultimately reforming the world as we now know it: „[W]e will have to pursue the war against terror far beyond the boundaries of the Middle East, into the heart of Western Europe. And, there, as in the Middle East, our greatest weapons are political: the demonstrated desire for freedom of the peoples of the countries that oppose us.”⁵⁴ Though often destructive, violent, and chaotic, this revolutionary force of freedom is, for Ledeen, the inevitable direction of America’s „historic mission.”

American Moses: The Ledeen-ian Current in the Bush Administration

The minister said that America is starved for honest leaders. He told the story of Moses, asked by God to lead his people to the land of milk and honey.

– George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep* (1999)⁵⁵

It is difficult not to see the influence of Ledeen in the current policies of the Bush administration. Indeed, Bush is in many ways the ideal embodiment of Ledeen’s „armed prophet,” who, like Moses, knows what he considers to be the Good but is willing to use violence if it is for the spread of „freedom.”

The narrative that Bush and his biographers tell about his own decision to run for office is itself directly modeled on the story of Moses. The most striking version of this narrative is contained in one remarkable passage from Bush’s own 1999 autobiography, *A Charge to Keep* (ghost-written by Karen Hughes, a Presbyterian elder). At a church service in January, 1999, then-Governor Bush heard a sermon by Pastor Mark Craig. The subject of the sermon was the famous story in *Exodus* 3–4, in which God appears to Moses in the burning bush and, despite Moses’ lack of experience or skill, calls him to free Israel. „When God called Moses to deliver his people, he responded, ‘Sorry

God, I’m busy, I’ve got a family ...’ Eventually, though, Moses relented and delivered a nation.”⁵⁶ The pastor went on to link this passage to contemporary history, suggesting that, like Israel then, America today needs strong leaders with faith, integrity, and moral values: „People are ‘starved for leadership,’” Pastor Craig said, „starved for leaders who have ethical and moral courage.” While Bush himself downplayed the incident, suggesting that the pastor could have been talking to anyone, his mother Barbara knew better: „*He was talking to you,*” she said.⁵⁷ As Bruce Lincoln suggests, this carefully constructed passage from Bush’s well-timed autobiography contains a powerful, but subtly double-coded message. Most readers might simply pass over it without much thought, yet an evangelical reader will recognize in this narrative a clear sign that Bush has heard the call and has been chosen for a higher purpose—that he has, like Moses, been called at a time when his people would need him.⁵⁸

If we turn to Stephen Mansfield’s presidential hagiography, *The Faith of George W. Bush*, it seems that this is exactly the way many evangelicals interpreted the episode. Shortly after the Craig sermon, Mansfield recounts, Bush was visited in the governor’s office by popular evangelist James Robison, but Bush was not alone that day. Indeed, Mansfield tells us, they were joined by another important figure: „On the day that the evangelist entered Bush’s office, he was surprised to find political strategist Karl Rove there as well.” Bush then confided to Robison that he had a sense of divine calling to the White House: „I’ve heard the call. I believe God wants me to run for president”; indeed, going further, he linked it to a sense of an urgent mission: „I feel like God wants me to run for President. I can’t explain it, but I sense my country is going to need me. Something is going to happen ... God wants me to do it.”⁵⁹

It is not insignificant that Bush made his announcement to these two men, Rove and Robison, the political tactician and the charismatic televangelist. Rove, of course, has served as Bush’s political „brain” and brilliant campaign strategist (dubbed a „Mayberry Machiavelli” by John Diulio).⁶⁰ Part of Rove’s strategy for the 2000 campaign was, in fact, an effort to „woo powerhouse evangelical pastors and Christian right leaders to Bush’s side” and project the image of Bush, the „compassionate conservative,” as a new kind of Republican who could transform the GOP into a majority party.⁶¹ Robison is an extremely

popular and well-connected televangelist who is known for bringing politicians and religious leaders together: „Robison had a gift for networking, for gathering people to pray and discuss the nation’s problems ... He was particularly adept at connecting the Religious Right with conservative politicians and was even instrumental in encouraging Ronald Reagan to run for president in 1980.”⁶² Together, the political strategist Rove and the evangelist Robison then took Bush to meet a variety of religious leaders and to receive their blessing for his new-found calling. Bush met with pastors of Pentecostal, Southern Baptist, and Charismatic backgrounds, and „before the meeting ended the pastors gathered around Bush and laid hands on him ... the pastors prayed that God would bless him ... tears were in Bush’s eyes during the prayer.”⁶³ According to Mansfield, there were many such gatherings. The Christian Right had given the new Moses their blessing.

Like Ledeen’s armed prophet, Bush is not afraid to use both strong religious rhetoric and military force in order to pursue what he believes to be the higher good. Portraying the world today as a fundamental struggle between the forces of Good and Evil, he has presented the U.S. as God’s chosen agent for the historic spread of freedom against the powers of darkness and terror. American presidents have, of course, long used the tropes of God’s blessing and freedom throughout their public addresses. However, as Domke has shown, President Bush has used explicit religious language in his public speeches far more frequently than any other president in our history—indeed, three to four times as often as other presidents. „[W]hile Bush’s emphasis on God, freedom and liberty are not uncommon for the presidency, the manner in which he strategically uses these ideas for political advantage is unusual for his office, perhaps even unprecedented”; in his second inaugural address alone, the President invoked „a higher power seven times and used the words freedom or liberty, in some form, 49 times.”⁶⁴ Such extensive use of religious language is not entirely surprising when we note that Bush’s chief speech writer has been (until recently) Michael Gerson, a graduate of Wheaton College (known as „the evangelical Harvard”), who skillfully wove numerous explicit and subtly double-coded references to scripture and Christian hymns throughout Bush’s speeches.⁶⁵

In Bush’s public discourse freedom is not simply a political concept; it is the gift of the Almighty to humankind and the irresistible

direction of history. As he told the United Nations in November, 2001: „[H]istory has an Author who fills time and eternity with His purpose. We know that evil is real, but good will prevail against it.”⁶⁶ Going still further, however, Bush also suggests that the U.S. is not a neutral bystander in this divine plan for history but has a very special—indeed, pivotal—role to play in the unfolding of freedom throughout the world. He stated in his Third State of the Union Address, in January, 2003, in which he made the strongest case for the pre-emptive invasion of Iraq:

[W]e go forward with confidence, because this call of history has come to the right country ...

Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world, it is God’s gift to humanity ...

[W]e do not claim to know ... all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life, and all of history.⁶⁷

An even stronger declaration appeared in his address to the National Endowment for Democracy in 2003, wherein he suggested that „[L]iberty is both the plan of Heaven for humanity, and the best hope for progress here on Earth.” In this plan for humanity, America has been „called” to lead the world:

The advance of freedom is the calling of our time; it is the calling of our country ... We believe that liberty is the design of nature; we believe that liberty is the direction of history. We believe that human fulfillment and excellence come in the responsible exercise of liberty. And we believe that freedom—the freedom we prize—is not for us alone, it is the right and the capacity of all mankind.

... And as we meet the terror and violence of the world, we can be certain the author of freedom is not indifferent to the fate of freedom.⁶⁸

Here we see the Neoconservatives’ „end of history” idealism blend smoothly with an evangelical Christian vision of God’s ultimate triumph over evil. The result of this political fundamentalist mixture is what R. Scott Appleby has called „a theological version of Manifest Destiny”⁶⁹—or what we might even call a Christian millenarian reworking of Fukuyama.

Implicit in these statements are the following basic articles of faith, which are at once religious and political in nature:

- History is not a random series of events but has a specific direction;
- history is guided by God;
- the progress of history involves a fundamental conflict between Good and Evil and the ultimate triumph of the former over the latter;
- the goal of history is freedom for all humankind; and
- the United States is God's chosen agent in the spread of freedom.

We might add to these a sixth, unstated, but no less integral article of faith: The triumph of Good over Evil requires that America, as God's chosen agent of freedom, be willing to use military force in order to achieve what it considers the higher goal of „freedom.” Echoing Ledeen's language and the image of the „armed prophet,” Bush frequently speaks of freedom not just as „God's gift to humanity” but also as a powerful and, at times, destructive force. As he put it in his 2005 second-term inaugural address: „[W]e have lit a fire as well—a fire in the minds of men. It warms those who feel its power, it burns those who fight its progress, and one day this untamed fire of freedom will reach the darkest corners of our world.”⁷⁰

Finally, Bush has also promoted pre-emptive war—again, guided by the will of God—as the only means to achieve victory and this historic spread of freedom:

Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success... . Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.

...

The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.⁷¹

Not only did Bush use the language of freedom and the cosmic struggle between Good and Evil to justify the pre-emptive invasion of Iraq; more recently, in August, 2006, he also used much the same language to warn the Iranians to cease their nuclear program and cut their support for groups like Hizbollah. This new conflict in the Middle East, just as the war in Iraq, is for him yet another „part of a broader

struggle between freedom and terror that is unfolding across the region.”⁷²

Working the Dark Side: From Guantánamo Bay to N.S.A. Wiretapping

We also have to work ... sort of the dark side, if you will. We've got to spend time in the shadows in the intelligence world. A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies ... [I]t's going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective.

– Vice President Dick Cheney, interview on „Meet the Press” (September 16, 2001)⁷³

If we take a brief look at this administration's activities over the last five years, however, it would also seem that the Bush administration has not only accepted Michael Ledeen's model of the armed prophet and the rhetoric of freedom as a divine mandate for America, but it has also apparently adopted Ledeen's belief that a strong leader must at times engage in extreme and unpleasant acts—indeed, engage in the occasional „entry into evil.” As Cheney put it, the U.S. will have to „work ... the dark side, if you will,” using „any means at its disposal” to defeat its enemies.

The last five years have offered ample evidence of this decision to cross over to the dark side, of which the following are just the most obvious examples:

1. In the wake of 9/11, over 1,200 individuals were rounded up, none of whom was ever convicted of any crime related to terrorism; not only have their identities been kept secret, but they were never given the right to hear charges against them or have legal counsel.
2. Roughly 500 people from forty nations have been held incommunicado at Guantánamo Bay for over three years, almost all without legal counsel and with no charges filed against them. There is significant evidence that these detainees have been subjected to abuse, and at least three have been driven to suicide.⁷⁴
3. This administration launched a pre-emptive war based on faulty intelligence against a nation that posed no credible threat. As the *Downing Street Minutes* and many other sources show, the intelligence used to justify the war was „fixed” around a pre-existing plan that had little to do with Al Qaeda or weapons of mass destruction.⁷⁵ This war—now widely recognized even by conservatives as a „shambles” and a „fi-

asco”⁷⁶—has resulted in the deaths of over 3,000 U.S. troops and over 100,000 Iraqi civilians, and it now threatens to unleash a civil war with no foreseeable end.

4. Bush publicly stated that detainees at Guantánamo and elsewhere „will not be treated as prisoners of war” and thus are not protected by the Geneva Conventions.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales dismissed the Geneva Conventions as „quaint” and „obsolete,”⁷⁸ and Cheney has aggressively pushed for the legal authorization of human-rights abuses by Americans, waging „an intense and largely unpublicized campaign to stop Congress, the Pentagon, and the State Department from imposing more restrictive rules on the handling of terrorist suspects.”⁷⁹

5. This administration has created a network of secret prisons or CIA „Black Sites” around the world, particularly in countries where torture is known to be used, while keeping „even basic information about the system secret from the public, foreign officials, and nearly all members of Congress.”⁸⁰

6. Bush has attached over 750 signing statements to bills signed into law, which give the president the freedom to ignore parts of those laws as he sees fit—including laws such as John McCain’s torture ban. In other words the president has granted himself the authority to ignore even prohibitions against torture if it conflicts with his interpretation of the Constitution.⁸¹

7. This administration has actively censored its own scientists and even its own Environmental Protection Agency reports concerning such serious, potentially catastrophic environmental issues as global warming. According to National Aeronautics and Space Administration scientist James Hansen, the administration tried to stop him from speaking out and worked to prevent Americans from grasping the profound, imminent threat posed by climate change: “They feel their job is to be this censor of information going out to the public,” Hansen concluded.⁸²

Together, these and many other acts by this administration represent an unprecedented assertion of executive power and a general disregard for any form of congressional or public oversight. In the opinion of Scott Horton, professor at Columbia Law School and head of the New York Bar Association’s International Law Committee, this administration has attempted to „overturn two centuries of jurispru-

dence defining the limits of the executive branch. They’ve made war a matter of dictatorial power.”⁸³

What is equally disturbing, however, is that this administration has not only vastly expanded its own power, but it has also impinged dramatically upon the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens. The most obvious example is the ironically-titled USA PATRIOT Act, which gives the government unprecedented powers of surveillance over its citizens—for example, to search citizens’ homes or offices and conduct surveillance of phone and internet use without proving probable cause; to require bookstores and libraries to list the names of all books bought or borrowed; and to conduct “Sneak and Peek” searches, that is, to search homes or offices without even letting the owner know they have been there.⁸⁴

Yet, perhaps the most disturbing—and, according to many scholars, illegal and unconstitutional—of the Bush administration’s programs is the N.S.A.’s secret wiretapping of U.S. citizens without warrant, which was leaked in the fall of 2005. By May, 2006, we learned that this program was far more massive than previously thought—indeed, that the N.S.A. had been tracking not just hundreds or thousands, but *tens of millions* of phone calls made by U.S. citizens, all without court order or congressional oversight.⁸⁵ In April, 2004, Bush had publicly stated that wiretapping was only being done legally and only with court orders.⁸⁶ We now know that, at the time he made this statement, he had already authorized the N.S.A. to conduct wiretaps without court order and that the program had been going on for years. This again provides striking evidence of this president’s ability to say one thing while doing the exact opposite.

The administration, of course, has defended its need to wiretap without warrant as part of a „War on Terror,” in which the existing Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act rules are too slow and cumbersome. But, as pointed out by President Jimmy Carter—who was in office when the FISA laws were put into place—FISA already allows the government to wiretap citizens immediately and then obtain a warrant retroactively. In Carter’s opinion, Bush’s actions are simply „disgraceful and illegal,” and his arguments in their defense are flatly „ridiculous.”⁸⁷ The only possible motivation for the secret N.S.A. program is a much broader and more disturbing project of mass data-mining that

has no legal defense. According to Bruce Schneier, a renowned technology consultant, dubbed „security guru” by *The Economist*, „Arguing that this is legal is basically saying we’re in a police state.”⁸⁸

In sum, what has happened under the current administration is an unprecedented expansion of executive power accompanied by an equally unprecedented erosion of citizens’ rights to privacy. All of this might seem, on the surface, to directly contradict the pious rhetoric of faith and morality that fills Bush’s speeches, yet I would argue that all of this is not only compatible with but in fact intimately tied to his explicit use of religious rhetoric and his vision of America’s divinely-guided role in world history. All of these acts, from pre-emptive war to warrantless wiretapping, are rooted in a kind of religious faith and exceptionalism—that is, a *faith in America’s exceptional status as a divinely guided nation and in this President’s exceptional position as a divinely appointed leader*, one who is above public scrutiny, congressional oversight, and even international law. As Domke suggests, the Bush administration’s worldview is a form of politically institutionalized religious fundamentalism that has little in common with a model of democracy based on checks and balances, separation of church and state, and government transparency: „Such a worldview is disastrous for a democratic political system, for it mandates an ideological shift away from open discussion, publicly responsive leadership, and humility, toward authoritarianism, publicly unmindful leadership, and arrogance.”⁸⁹ But, while it may have little in common with democracy, such a worldview does fit quite well with Ledeen’s neo-Machiavellian „iron rules,” which demand both a sense of divine mandate and a willingness to enter into evil.

*Conclusions: Temporary Dictatorship and
the Dangers of Political Fundamentalism*

Machiavelli’s favorite hero, Moses, ... exercised dictatorial power, but that awesome power was used to create freedom.

– Michael A. Ledeen, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership*⁹⁰

Totalitarian movements use and abuse democratic freedoms in order to abolish them.

– Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)⁹¹

With his powerful use of religious rhetoric and his aggressive policy of preemptive war, President Bush represents the structural link that ties together the two major factions in his administration: the strong religious agenda of the New Christian Right, and the imperialist military agenda of the Neoconservatives. His extensive use of the rhetoric of „freedom” as both the „goal of history” and the „gift of the Almighty” is a powerful blending of Neoconservative and evangelical Christian tropes: It weds Fukuyama’s end-of-history idealism with the millenarian dreams of the Christian Right. Perhaps most important, Bush himself embodies Ledeen’s ideal of the Mosaic „armed prophet,” a leader who is able to wield religious rhetoric and military force equally, a leader who is not afraid to enter into evil or even exercise a kind of „temporary dictatorship.”

Most Americans—and surely all of us who have seen Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*—are familiar with Bush’s infamous statement made during a meeting with congressional leaders on Capitol Hill in late 2000: „If this were a dictatorship, it’d be a heck of a lot easier, just so long as I’m the dictator.”⁹² Probably far fewer Americans are familiar with Ledeen’s statement that what we most need today is, in fact, a new kind of dictator—indeed, a new Moses. According to Ledeen’s neo-Machiavellian logic, what we need today is a form of „temporary dictatorship” in order to help us resist that greater evil of a slide into corruption, liberal malaise, and decadence: „Paradoxically, preserving liberty may require the rule of a single leader—a dictator—willing to use those dreaded ‘extraordinary measures, which few know how, or are willing, to employ.’”⁹³ Such extreme measures are now the only way to preserve the long-term goal of „freedom”:

a brief period of iron rule is a choice of the lesser of two evils: if the corruption continued, a real tyranny would be just a matter of time ..., whereas freedom can be preserved if a good man can be found to put the state back in order. Just as it is sometimes necessary temporarily to resort to evil actions to achieve worthy objectives, so a period of dictatorship is sometimes the only hope for freedom.”⁹⁴

Like most Americans, I initially took Bush’s dictatorship remark to be simply another failed attempt at humor by a man who is well-known for his bungled sentences and torture of the English language. Surely a man who was unable to name the president of Pakistan could not manage a political concept as complex as dictatorship. Yet,

we receive an almost daily series of revelations about the Bush administration's various activities—the N.S.A.'s warrantless spy program, Cheney's defense of torture as a method in the war on terror, the CIA's global network of secret prisons, the vengeful outing of CIA operative Valerie Plame, the continuing lies about the reasons for the invasion of Iraq, etc.—it is now less clear that Bush was joking when he spoke of dictatorship. As Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek* notes, it appears that the President believes 9/11 has given him „license to act like a dictator.”⁹⁵ Jonathan Schell of *The Nation* put it even more strongly: „There is a name for a system of government that wages aggressive war, deceives its citizens, violates their rights, abuses power and breaks the law, rejects judicial and legislative checks on itself, claims power without limit, tortures prisoners, and acts in secret. It is dictatorship. The administration of George W. Bush is not a dictatorship, but it does manifest the characteristics of one in embryonic form.”⁹⁶ Indeed, it seems possible that Bush's offhand remark about the benefits of dictatorship may have been one of the rare occasions on which he actually told us the truth.

I am not suggesting, of course, that Bush has actually been reading the works of Machiavelli or secretly conspiring with Ledeen about the philosophical advantages of dictatorship as a political system. However, I do think that this administration and the radical Ledeen-ian Neoconservatives both represent a powerful push toward a far more autonomous, unaccountable, and secretive ideal of the executive branch—one that is grounded in a sense of divine-mandate, American exceptionalism and an intense distaste for any kind of external oversight or public transparency.

It does indeed seem ironic that a president who repeatedly invokes „freedom” as God's gift to humanity should also engage in so many acts that would seem to embody the very opposite of freedom (secret prisons, illegal wiretapping, indefinite detainment, preemptive war, torture, etc.). One is tempted to conclude that this President is simply a liar, or a hypocrite, or even just extremely ignorant and uninformed. What is perhaps more likely—and also far more disturbing—is that this president really does believe in his own rhetoric, but that he ultimately means something quite different by the word „freedom” than most of the rest of us do. As Hannah Arendt noted in her classic 1956 essay, „Authority in the Twentieth Century,” the rhetoric of

„freedom” has long been used by those who wish to dismantle democratic institutions and impose total power:

„[T]he totalitarian leader justifies all his measures with the argument that they are necessary for freedom. He is not against freedom, not even for a limitation of it. The trouble is only that his concept of freedom is radically different from that of the non-totalitarian world. It is the historical process of world revolution... . [F]reedom is here understood to be a movement unrestrained by external force or impediment, something like the flow of water in a river.”⁹⁷

The similarity between Arendt's description of totalitarian rhetoric and the rhetoric of Michael Ledeen and George W. Bush is indeed unsettling; one need only replace Arendt's „unrestrained flow” of freedom with Bush's „untamed fire” and Ledeen's „revolutionary freedom” to see the same dangerous impulse at work, at least in embryonic form. This is a chilling thought, and it should be taken seriously by those who wish to defend an open, transparent system of democracy based on public debate and a clear separation of church and state. As former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor warned in a speech at Georgetown University in March, 2006, „It takes a lot of degeneration before a country falls into dictatorship, but we should avoid these ends by avoiding these beginnings.”⁹⁸

Endnotes:

¹„President Delivers Third 'State of the Union,'" January 28, 2003 (available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>).

²Michael A. Ledeen, *The First Duce: D'Annunzio at Fiume* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 202.

³I borrow this term from Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

⁴See Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Anne Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2004); and Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

⁵David Domke, *God Willing? Political Fundamentalism in the White House, the „War on Terror,” and the Echoing Press* (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2004), p. 6. According to Domke, Bush's brand of political fundamentalism uses „language and

communication approaches that [are] structurally grounded in a conservative religious outlook but [are] political in content and application" (ibid.; his emphasis).

⁶I use the term „fundamentalism" somewhat reluctantly and with full awareness that it is a problematic category. Here I follow Almond, Appleby, and Sivan, who define fundamentalism broadly as a „pattern of religious militance by which self-styled 'true believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors" (Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003], p. 17). We should be aware, however, that many scholars prefer to define fundamentalism more narrowly as a subspecies of evangelicalism and define the latter as a largely Protestant Christian movement. See George M. Marsden and William L. Svellmoe, „Evangelical and Fundamental Christianity," in Lindsay Jones, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 5 (New York: Macmillan, 2005), p. 2887.

⁷James Bamford, „Iran: the Next War," *Rolling Stone*, July 24, 2006 (available at http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/10962352/iran_the_next_war). See also *BBC News Panorama*, „Michael Ledeen," <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/3031803.stm>; and Jeet Heer and Dave Wagner, „Man of the World: Michael Ledeen's Adventures in History," *Boston Globe*, October 10, 2004 (available at http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2004/10/10/man_of_the_world?pg=3).

⁸William O. Beeman, „Who Is Michael Ledeen?" *Alternet*, May 8, 2003 (available at www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=15860).

⁹Michael A. Ledeen, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership: Why Machiavelli's Iron Rules Are as Timely and Important Today as Five Centuries Ago* (New York: Truman Talley Books, St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 174. See Michael A. Ledeen, *The War against the Terror Masters: Why It Happened, Where We Are Now, How We'll Win* (New York: Truman Talley Books, St. Martin's Press, 2002).

¹⁰Irving Kristol, „The Emerging American Imperium," *Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 1997.

¹¹Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p. 111.

¹²Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, p. 11.

¹³Robert Kagan and William Kristol, eds., *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy* (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2000), pp. 5–6.

¹⁴Irving Kristol, „The Emerging American Imperium," *Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 1997, p. A-14.

¹⁵Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992). See Roger Burbach and Jim Tarbell, *Imperial Overstretch: George W. Bush and the Hubris of Empire* (New York: Zed Books, 2004), p. 83.

¹⁶As Anne Norton notes in her study of the Neoconservatives, „They, though not always religious themselves, ally themselves with religion and religious crusades. They encourage family values and the praise of older forms of family life, where women occupy themselves with children, cooking and the church, and men take on the burdens of manliness. They see in war and the preparation for war the restoration of private virtue and public spirit. They delight in the profusion of flags ... Above all, Ir-

ving Kristol writes, neoconservatism calls for a revival of patriotism, a strong military and an expansionist foreign policy" (Norton, *Leo Strauss*, pp. 178–179).

¹⁷Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: Free Press, 1995), p. 368.

¹⁸Beeman, „Who Is Michael Ledeen?"

¹⁹Thomas B. Edsall and Dana Milbank, „White House's Roving Eye for Politics," *Washington Post*, March 19, 2003, p. A-1.

²⁰See also John Laughland, „Flirting with Fascism: Neocon Theorist Michael Ledeen Draws More from Italian Fascism Than from the American Right," *The American Conservative*, June 30, 2003 (available at www.amconmag.com/06_30_03/print/featureprint.html).

²¹Ledeen, *The First Duce*, p. 202. See Michael A. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928–1936* (New York: H. Fertig, 1972).

²²Michael A. Ledeen, *Perilous Statecraft: An Insider's Account of the Iran-Contra Affair* (New York: Scribner, 1988). See Jim Lobe, „Veteran Neocon Advisor Moves on Iran," *Asia Times*, June 26, 2003 (available at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EF26Ak03.html); and Lawrence E. Walsh, „Final Report of the Independent Counsel for Iran/Contra Matters," August 4, 1993 (available at http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/walsh/part_i.htm).

²³According to James Moore (co-author with Wayne Slater of the incisive study of Karl Rove, *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential* [Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2003]), „The blatantly fake papers ... turned up after a December 2001 meeting in Rome involving neocon Michael Ledeen, Larry Franklin, Harold Rhodes, and Niccolò Pollari, the head of Italy's intelligence agency SISMI, and Antonio Martino, the Italian defense minister" („Fitzgerald's Historic Opportunity," *TomPaine.com*, October 21, 2005 [available at http://www.tompaine.com/articles/2005/10/21/fitzgeralds_historic_opportunity.php]). In a series of articles investigating the forgery, Carlo Bonini and Giuseppe D'Avanzo of the Italian paper, *La Repubblica*, reported that Ledeen had been sent to Rome at the request of the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans to gather intelligence that would support military intervention in Iraq. Shortly after Ledeen's return to Washington in 2002, Vice President Dick Cheney began to urge the CIA to look further into the „possible acquisition of Niger uranium," stating that a crucial piece of intelligence was held by a „foreign intelligence agency" („Pollari ando alla Casa Bianca per offrire la sua verita sull'Iraq," *La Repubblica*, October 25, 2005 [available at <http://www.repubblica.it/2005/j/sezioni/esteri/iraq69/bodv/bodv.html>]).

²⁴Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p. 188.

²⁵Anthony Grafton, Introduction, in Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, tr. George Bull (New York: Penguin, 2003), p. xx.

²⁶Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 53.

²⁷Ibid., p. 57.

²⁸Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p. 61.

²⁹Ledeen, *War against the Terror Masters*, p. xvii.

³⁰Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p.106.

³¹Ibid., pp. 101–102.

³²Ledeen, quoted in Heer and Wagner, „Man of the World.”

³³Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 58.

³⁴Ibid., p. 57.

³⁵Ibid., p. 47.

³⁶Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, tr. Ellis Farnsworth (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p. 128.

³⁷Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, pp. 109–110, quoting Machiavelli’s *Discourses*, I, 12.

³⁸Ibid., p. xx.

³⁹Michael Ledeen, *D’Annunzio: The First Duce* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002), p. x.

⁴⁰Heer and Wagner, „Man of the World.”

⁴¹Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, p. 93 (emphasis in original).

⁴²Ibid., p. 92–93, quoting Ex. 32:26–28 and *Discourses*, III, 30..

⁴³Ledeen, *Machiavelli*, pp. xxi.

⁴⁴See Laughland, „Flirting with Fascism; and ” Edsall and Milbank, „White House’s Roving Eye,” p. A-1.

⁴⁵Robertson, interview with Michael Ledeen, 2004, available at cbn.com/CBNNews/News/030623e.asp?option=print. Ledeen has called repeatedly for invasion of Iran, calling it „the mother of modern Islamic terrorism” (Ledeen, *War against the Terror Masters*, p. 10).

⁴⁶Connie Buck, „Exiles,” *The New Yorker*, March 6, 2006, p. 50.

⁴⁷„Rice: \$75 Million Sought to Spur Democracy in Iran,” *CNN.com*, February 15, 2006 (available at <http://press.jrc.it/NewsExplorer/clusteredition/en/20060215,cnn-2a88f093f7f4690f31bfef0261308891.html>).

⁴⁸See Bamford, „Iran: the Next War”; Sidney Blumenthal, „The Neocons’ Next War,” *Salon.com*, August 3, 2006 (available at http://www.salon.com/opinion/blumenthal/2006/08/03/mideast/index_np.html); and Seymour Hersh, „The Iran Plans,” *The New Yorker*, April 17, 2006 (available at http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/060417fa_fact).

⁴⁹Ledeen, in Heer and Wagner, „Man of the World.”

⁵⁰Ledeen, *War against the Terror Masters*, pp. 212–213.

⁵¹Lewis H. Lapham, „The Demonstration Effect,” *Harper’s Magazine*, June, 2003, p. 11.

⁵²Michael Ledeen, „Dishonorable Congressman,” *National Review*, September, 23, 2003 (available at <http://www.nationalreview.com/ledeen/ledeen091003.asp>).

⁵³Larisa Alexandrovnina, „A Conversation with Machiavelli’s Ghost,” February 28, 2006 (available at http://rawstory.com/news/2006/Conversation_with_Controversial_Neoconservative_0228.html).

⁵⁴Michael Ledeen, „A Theory,” *The National Review*, March 10, 2003 (available at <http://www.nationalreview.com/ledeen/ledeen031003.asp>).

⁵⁵George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1999), p. 8.

⁵⁶Stephen Mansfield, *The Faith of George W. Bush* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2003), p. 107, discussing Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, pp. 8–9.

⁵⁷Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, p. 9, my emphasis.

⁵⁸Bruce Lincoln, „The Theology of George W. Bush,” *The Christian Century*, October 5, 2004 (available at <http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/webforum/102004/commentary.shtml>).

⁵⁹Mansfield, *The Faith*, pp. 108, 109.

⁶⁰David Domke, „George W. Bush and the Gospel of Freedom and Liberty,” *Media Transparency*, May 20, 2005 (available at <http://www.mediatransparency.org/story.php?storyID=67>).

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