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## Profile

### Joshua Muravchik

- American Enterprise Institute: Resident Scholar
- Project for the New American Century: Signatory
- Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs: Board of Advisers



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Few of the pundits, essayists, and government insiders who define themselves as “neoconservatives” can claim as lasting an influence on the development of this political tendency as Joshua Muravchik, a resident scholar at the [American Enterprise Institute](#) in Washington, DC.

Muravchik, former chairman of the Young People's Socialist League, has been a perennial player in the neoconservative advocacy world since as far back as the mid-1970s, when he served as the director of the [Coalition for a Democratic Majority](#), a hardline Democratic Party pressure group led by, among others, [Penn Kemble](#) and Sen. Henry “Scoop” Jackson that aimed to fight the influence of anti-war elements within the party in the wake of the Vietnam War. Muravchik, like many neocons, shifted to the Republican Party after being largely ignored by his erstwhile Democratic colleagues. In the early 1980s, Muravchik and a group of like-minded hardline foreign policy elites tried to build on the momentum of Ronald Reagan's presidential election victory by forming the [Committee for the Free World](#), a group led by the likes of [Midge Decter](#) (who is married to *Commentary* editor-at-large [Norman Podhoretz](#)) and [Donald Rumsfeld](#). The group was devoted to promoting freedom “in the world of ideas” and opposing the influence of those in and outside the United States “who have made themselves the enemies of the democratic order.”

More recently, Muravchik has been associated with a string of hawkish pressure groups supporting President George W. Bush's war on terrorism and interventionist policies in the Middle East. He signed multiple letters published by the [Project for the New American Century](#) (PNAC) advocating a broadened antiterror fight; he supported the creation in 2002 of the [Coalition for Democracy in Iran](#), a group spearheaded by [Michael Ledeen](#) and [Morris Amitay](#) that advocates regime change in Iran; he was an advisory board member of the now-defunct [Committee for the Liberation of Iraq](#); he is associated with the hawkish, pro-Israel think tanks, the [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#) and the [Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs](#); he joined a plank of other neocons in forming a revived version of the Cold War [Committee on the Present Danger](#); and he and a group of neoconservatives serve as “international sponsors” of the Cambridge, England-based [Henry Jackson Society](#), an organization that promotes a “forward strategy” aimed at assisting democratization across the globe.

#### Affiliations

- **Henry Jackson Society:** International Sponsor
- **Committee on the Present Danger:** Member
- **American Enterprise Institute:** Resident Scholar (1987-current)
- **Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs:** Member, Board of Advisers
- **Committee for the Liberation of Iraq:** Member, Advisory Board
- **Project for the New American Century Statement:** Signatory to Multiple Open Letters
- **Institute of World Politics:** Adjunct Professor (1992-current)
- **Washington Institute on Near East Policy:** Adjunct Scholar (1986-current)
- **Coalition for a Democratic Majority:** Executive Director (1977-1979)
- **World Affairs Journal:** Member, Editorial Board
- **Journal of Democracy:** Member, Editorial Board
- **Orbis:** Member, Editorial Board
- **American Committee for Peace in Chechnya:** Member

#### Government Service

- **U.S. Commission on Civil Rights:** Member, Maryland State Advisory Committee (1985-1997)
- **Commission on Broadcasting to the People's Republic of China:** Member (1992)

#### Education

- **City College of New York:** B.A.
- **Georgetown University:** Ph.D. in International Relations

His leading position in the neoconservative faction was demonstrated in November 2006 with the publication in *Foreign Policy* magazine of a "Memorandum" from Muravchik to "My Fellow Neoconservatives." Lamenting the bad rap neoconservatives have gotten since the Iraq War degraded into a bloody counterinsurgency campaign, Muravchik attempted to revive the spirit of his fellow neocons, many of whom he claimed have attempted to distance themselves from the label. "Where is the *joie de combat*?" pleaded Muravchik. "The essential tenets of neoconservatism—belief that world peace is indivisible, that ideas are powerful, that freedom and democracy are universally valid, and that evil exists and must be confronted—are as valid today as when we first began. That is why we must continue to fight. But we need to sharpen our game."

In outlining a new approach, Muravchik listed a number of mistakes neoconservatives had made, a list which notably did *not* include the group's efforts to drive the country into an ill-advised war. Instead, according to Muravchik, neoconservatives are guilty "of poorly explaining neoconservatism;" of being "glib about how Iraqis would greet liberation;" of supporting "the revolution in military strategy that our neocon hero, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, has championed" and which "has left our armed forces short on troops and resources;" of failing to foresee the difficulties in democratizing the Middle East, where recent elections have seen the emergence of radical Islamists; and of insufficiently influencing Bush's disastrous public diplomacy efforts, since after all "no group other than neocons is likely to figure out how to do that."

Muravchik's suggestions for the future were unsurprising: Neoconservatives "need to pave the way intellectually now and be prepared to defend the action" when Bush bombs Iran's nuclear facilities, which "make no mistake" he will have to do "before leaving office." Also topping the list: "Recruit [Joe Lieberman](#) for 2006." Arguing that "twice in the last quarter-century we had the good fortune to see presidents [Reagan and Bush the younger] elected who were sympathetic to our understanding of the world," Muravchik implored his comrades to begin preparing for the 2008 presidential campaign, promoting "Sen. John McCain [or] former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani," both of whom "look like the kind of leaders who could prosecute the war on terror vigorously." He added: "As for vice presidential candidates, how about [Condoleezza Rice](#) or even Joe Lieberman? Lieberman says he's still a Democrat. But there is no place for him in that party. Like every one of us, he is a refugee. He's already endured the rigors of running for the White House. In 2008, he deserves another chance—this time with a worthier running mate than Al Gore."

This was not the first time Muravchik devoted his rhetorical skills to trying to revive the neoconservative movement. He also played a leading role in championing a new interventionist crusade for the United States as the Cold War began to wind down and the Soviet Union crumbled, an event that wreaked havoc on the neoconservative anti-communist consensus that had been in place since before the election of Ronald Reagan. As scholar John Ehrman writes: "The neoconservatives' view of the world assumed a stable, malevolent Soviet Union that was immune from drastic change" (*The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs 1945-1994*, p. 173). With the rise to power of Mikhail Gorbachev and the ensuing warming relations between the two superpowers, neoconservatives experienced a sharp decline in their influence in the Reagan administration and a rupture within their own ranks. The neoconservatives entered "a period of increasing confusion," writes Ehrman, which was characterized by "an intellectual

failure” (p. 173). Lacking an anointed enemy, some neoconservatives, like [Irving Kristol](#), began reconsidering whether the United States needed to undertake an aggressive role in global affairs, while others sought to find renewed justification for continued military mobilization—some by attempting to rehabilitate the Soviet threat, others by envisioning new threats and missions for the United States.

Among the second group were people like *Washington Post* columnist [Charles Krauthammer](#) and Muravchik, who championed a new crusade, one aimed at capitalizing on the country's position as the lone superpower to aggressively promote democracy and American values as a replacement for militant anti-communism. In his seminal 1990 *Foreign Affairs* article, “The Unipolar Moment,” Krauthammer wrote that if “America wants stability, it will have to create it.” The alternative to “such a robust and difficult interventionism,” he argued, “is chaos.” For his part, Muravchik argued that if “communism soon completes its demise, U.S. foreign policy still should make the promotion of democracy its main objective” (cited in Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neoconservatives and the Global Order*, p. 79).

For many first-generation neoconservatives like Irving Kristol, these ideas represented “a dangerous manifestation of Wilsonianism,” as the conservative scholars Halper and Clarke characterize the dissent in their 2004 book *America Alone*. Instead, Kristol advocated a new realism based on the prevailing circumstances in the international system. Arguing that there was no longer any “balance of power for us to worry about,” efforts at “monitoring and maintaining a balance of power among other nations, large and small, in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and elsewhere ... would make the United States the world's policeman.” “We are simply not going to be that kind of imperial power,” he concluded (cited in Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, p. 77). Likewise, Robert Tucker, a longtime contributor to neoconservative journals, warned against undertaking a new mission to impose freedom, promoting instead “a framework of stability and moderation within which democratic institutions may take root and grow” (cited in Ehrman, p. 181). Presciently, however, although he opposed these new trends in neoconservative discourse, Kristol recognized that they would appeal “not only to liberals but to many conservatives who are ideologically adrift in the post-Cold War era” (cited in Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, p. 76). In the late 1990s, neoconservative-led groups like PNAC successfully began to exploit the appeal of their democracy rhetoric to enlist various factions, including many liberal internationalists and Christian Right leaders, behind their appeals for a more interventionist U.S. foreign policy, creating formidable coalitions of elites that proved invaluable as neoconservatives began to push for war in Iraq after 9/11.

For Muravchik and other neoconservative hardliners, people like Kristol and Tucker had ceased being neoconservatives by the end of the 1980s. Instead, they were, according to Muravchik, conservative neo-realists or “right isolationists.” Around the ideas promoted by Muravchik and Krauthammer a new era of neoconservatism began to emerge, one spearheaded by what Halper and Clarke call a “Young Turk faction,” which grew to include the offspring of many of the earliest neoconservatives, including [William Kristol](#) (son of Irving), [Robert Kagan](#) (son of [Donald](#)), [John Podhoretz](#) (son of Norman), and [Daniel Pipes](#) (son of [Richard](#)). Among this faction's early agenda items were: 1) aggressively advance democracy across the globe as the “touchstone of a new ideological American foreign policy,” as Krauthammer phrased it in his 1989 article “Universal Dominion: Toward a Unipolar World,” which appeared in the Irving Kristol-founded [National](#)

[Interest](#), and 2) in the aftermath of the Gulf War, promote the idea that rogue states equipped with nuclear weapons were America's new anointed enemies—or, as Krauthammer defined them in “The Unipolar Moment:” “small aggressive states armed with weapons of mass destruction and possessing the means to deliver them.” Such states, argued Krauthammer, “will constitute the greatest single threat to world security for the rest of our lives.”

Muravchik is a prolific writer, having published a number of books, including *Heaven on Earth*, a 2002 book about the rise and fall of socialism that served as the basis for a PBS documentary by the same title, and *The Future of the United Nations* (2005), which argues for a dramatically reformed and less influential United Nations. He is also author of hundreds of articles for a variety of publications, including *Foreign Policy*, *Commentary*, the *National Review*, and all the major U.S. newspapers.

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## Sources

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