

By Ramzy Baroud

From [Information Clearing House](#) | Original Article

As Iraq stands on the verge of a complete breakdown into mini sectarian states, former leading neoconservative and Iraq war advocate Richard Perle has chimed in on the situation on Newsmax TV. His statements in an interview given on Saturday were yet another testimony to the intellectual degeneration of a group that had once promised a 'new Middle East', only to destabilize the region with violent consequences that continue to reverberate until this day.

The Islamic State (IS), which didn't exist at the time of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, has seized large swathes of Syria and, along helped by a brewing Sunni rebellion, stands in control of large chunks of western, northern and central Iraq.

At the time of the 2003 invasion, Perle was one of the leading so-called intellectuals who was known for his strong support of right-wing Israeli parties, and for his particular closeness to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He served as an advisor to the Netanyahu election campaign in the mid-1990s, and, along with other leading neocons, made Israeli security - read regional domination - a top American priority.

Perle is in no mood to accept any responsibility for Iraq's protracted tragedy, and in so doing he is behaving the same way as Barack Obama's administration.

'Conspiratorial Tones'

As for Perle's new line of logic, he seems to feel that if you criticize the neocons, you are, well, more or less, an anti-Semite. Although the line is quite useful in the lexicon of Israel's defenders, Perle's use of the tactic reflects an unprecedented level of desperation.

Perle said the term 'neoconservative,' is "often used to describe Jewish Americans because, as it happens, some of the original thinkers whose ideas have now been characterized by this general term 'neoconservative' were in fact Jewish, and it often carries conspiratorial tones on the part of people who throw the term around."

One could in fact agree, except that the former assistant secretary of defense is now a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, which served as a major lobby platform for Israeli interests, and is also one of the organizations behind the failed Iraq war strategy.

But Perle's smokescreen on the implied accusation of anti-Semitism could hardly hide the big fib he was about to impart: The neocons "were not doing it [the war and occupation of Iraq] to bring democracy to Iraq, we were not doing it ... on behalf of any other government (meaning Israel). We believed the intelligence that was available at the time that the CIA and other intelligence organizations . . . that Saddam (Hussein) had weapons of mass destruction and there was a danger after 9/11 that he would share those weapons."

Perle, who was known for his nickname 'Prince of Darkness', is slyly presenting himself as an innocent, if not gullible average American who too was misled by false intelligence. But it was not the first time that Perle, along with his neoconservative peers, disowned their horrific record in Iraq.

Prince of Darkness

Writing in Vanity Fair in November 5, 2006, under the title "Neo Culpa", David Rose caught up with Perle together with other neocon enthusiasts as they were starting to repudiate the failed policies of George W. Bush, which until then they had championed.

In 2006, the Iraq war was taking a terrible toll. "At the end of the day, you have to hold the president responsible," he told Vanity Fair when the calamity was becoming irrefutable. Although Perle's views were quote rosy and optimistic just before and soon after the US invasion incited a sectarian civil war.

"Iraq is a very good candidate for democratic reform," he was quoted earlier as saying. Iraq "won't be Westminster overnight, but the great democracies of the world didn't achieve the full, rich structure of democratic governance overnight. The Iraqis have a decent chance of succeeding."

But that 'decent chance' at success will never be achieved through the barrel of a gun and no self-respecting intellectual would argue otherwise. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis lost their lives and a whole generation was raised in the embrace of death and humiliation as the Prince of Darkness was giving interviews from fancy hotels. Now, he is back, hopefully briefly, crying foul and anti-Semitism.

Intervention, again

What is equally appalling is that neocon thinking is also consistent with the philosophy of American foreign policy makers in the Obama administration as well. Not only is Obama failing to accept even a level of moral responsibility over the current plight of Iraqis, he is haggling to achieve some political gains from Iraq's misery. Hundreds of US troops have been ordered back to Iraq to "assess" the fighting capabilities of the Iraqi army, and a cautious attempt at intervention is building up slowly in Washington.

Interventionism is once more permeating American foreign policy thinking; this time around, however, it is 'soft' intervention, although it is laden with the same kind of language and misleading references. It seems that the American government has learned so very little since the last botched effort, championed by Perle's neocons at remaking the Middle East to its liking.

On 26 June, the White House asked Congress for \$1.5 bn to bolster "stability" in Syria's neighbors - Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey. A third of that amount will be dedicated to train "moderate" Syrian rebels for the purpose of fighting the Syrian army and its allies on one hand, and on the other, holding back the growing influence of militants from IS who are also in control of large parts of Iraq.

Considering the level of complexity in the Syrian battleground, and the predictable splinters within existing groups, it's difficult to imagine that the \$500 mn would lead to anything but greater instability in Syria and neighboring countries including those who are part of the

proposed US Regional Stabilization Initiative, for which the funds are requested.

It is reported that the administration was pressured by Republican Senator John McCain and others. But the reading of the Middle East by McCain has been as erroneous as that of the former leading intellectuals of the neoconservative movement. McCain is as discredited as the rest, but the recent gains of ISIL left the US administration with difficult choices: intervention (which proved to be a complete disaster in the past) or non-intervention (which would leave the pro-US camp in the Middle East vulnerable).

The US seems to be opting for neither option, but 'soft' intervention: military and financial support of some groups and forging, even if temporary, alliances with others including Iran.

Despite its attempt to exert pressure and demonstrate its relevance, the collapse of US foreign policy is unmistakable and proves to be, at times, meddling for the sake of asserting its relevance, and nothing more.

As far as US foreign policy in the Middle East is concerned, Obama's years in office have thus far been spent on crisis management, a mix of compulsory pragmatism and a disordered attempt at ensuring American relevance. Considering the multiple crises created by the US in Iraq in past years, no one, not even the supposedly level-headed Obama, can make any difference without a clear and decided shift in US foreign policy.

Such clarity and decidedness would have to be predicated on a level of moral responsibility and legal accountability for the numerous war crimes committed in Iraq. The roots of today's war lie in the original sin, the invasion of a sovereign country, promoted by the likes of Richard Perle, and now manipulated for temporary gain by the Obama administration.

Ramzy Baroud is the Managing Editor of Middle East Eye. Baroud is an internationally-syndicated columnist, a media consultant, an author and the founder of PalestineChronicle.com. His latest book is My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story (Pluto Press, London).