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Obama: Neoconservative

by Sheldon Richman,
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President Barack Obama was far from candid when he announced the end of combat operations in Iraq last month, but he did nothing to hide the fact that he is a neoconservative when it comes to the American empire.

That was not lost on leading neoconservatives, who tend to prefer Republicans. William Kristol, editor of *The Weekly Standard*, told a colleague that while he would have phrased the speech differently, “his basic response was ‘All hail Obama!’”

John Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* magazine, wrote in his *New York Post* column, “President Obama did something amazing. He delivered — dare I say it? — a rather *neoconservative* speech, in the sense that neoconservatism has argued for aggressive American involvement in the world both for the world’s sake and for the sake of extending American freedoms in order to enhance and preserve American security.”

Just to be clear, it is the neocons who were among the key architects of the war against Iraq in 1991, followed by the embargo that killed half a million children and set the stage for the 9/11 attacks, which were then used to justify the invasion and occupation of Iraq (an ambition long predating 9/11) and the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, American’s longest military engagement — all of which have killed more than a million people, wreaked political havoc, and made life in those countries (and elsewhere) miserable. Let’s not forget the drone assassination program being run in a dozen Muslim

countries. The neocon achievement also has helped drive the American people deep into debt.

Nice crowd Obama is hanging with these days. And that's no exaggeration. Frederick Kagan, one of the top neocon brains and a signatory of the Project of the New American Century imperial manifesto, now works for Gen. David Petraeus.

The U.S. government has left Iraq a physical wreck and squarely in Iran's sphere of influence, but Obama propagates the neocon myth that Iraq was a great success. For him it's just the beginning: "But this milestone should serve as a reminder to all Americans that the future is ours to shape if we move forward with confidence and commitment. It should also serve as a message to the world that the United States of America intends to sustain and strengthen our leadership in this young century.... Our combat mission is ending, but our commitment to Iraq's future is not."

People throughout the Muslim world must be cringing.

It's not enough that the George W. Bush and Obama administrations made messes of Iraq and Afghanistan. Obama promises more. "And because of our drawdown in Iraq," he said, "we are now able to apply the resources necessary to go on offense."

That means more Predator drones shooting Hellfire missiles at so-called insurgents, who always seem to include innocent civilians.

As though his speech was written by the neocon brain trust, Obama intoned, "We must use all elements of our power — including our diplomacy, our economic strength, and the power of America's example — to secure our interests and stand by our allies. And we must project a vision of the future that's based not just on our fears, but also on our hopes — a vision that recognizes the real dangers that exist around the world, but also the limitless possibilities of our time."

If people in the rest of the world would rather shape their own future, too bad. Obama has a date with destiny: "New markets for our goods stretch from Asia to the Americas." Oops. Were foreigners supposed to hear that mercantilist line?

"As the leader of the free world, America will do more than just defeat on the battlefield those who offer hatred and destruction — we will also lead among those who are willing to work together to expand freedom and opportunity for all people," he wrapped up. "Throughout our history, America has been willing to bear the burden of promoting liberty and human dignity overseas, understanding its links to our own liberty and security."

Let's understand that this is blueprint for unlimited government — to be precise, executive — power. The Obama administration again demonstrates that while presidents come and go, the permanent regime rumbles on. Woe to anyone who gets in its way.

