

The Rise and Continued Influence of the Neocons. The Project for the New American Century (PNAC)

By [Michael Welch](#), [Robbie Martin](#), [Scott Price](#), and [Mark Robinowitz](#)

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“My film itself is essentially... was tracking the neocon influence and how the neoconservatives from the Bush era that pushed the Iraq war, that constructed the blueprints for the Iraq war, how they also were the earliest pioneers pushing this Russiagate Cold War 2.0 mentality.” – Robbie Martin, from this week’s program.

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Robert Kagan. William Kristol. Paul Wolfowitz. Richard Perle. John Bolton. Elliott Abrams. Gary Schmitt. These are a few of the names generally associated with a strain of far-right political thought called neoconservatism. [1][2]

Politically, the neocons favour a world in which the United States adopts a much more aggressive military posture, and utilizes its military might to not only contain terrorist and related threats to its security, but force regime change in regions like the Middle East. They further take on the task of ‘nation-building’ all in the name of creating a safer world for ‘democracy.’ It was the neocons who promoted the stratagem of pre-emptive military action. [3]

The neocons enjoyed a robust period of influence under the **Bush-Cheney** administration. The 9/11 attacks and the triggering of a ‘war on terrorism’ enabled a series of foreign policy choices, most notably the War on Afghanistan and the War on Iraq, which aligned with the aims and aspirations of the group once referred to by **President George Bush Sr.** as the ‘crazies in the basement.’[4]

The neocons did not vanish with the departure of the Bush Republicans from office, and the rise of **Obama**. Indeed, the clout of this group and their grip on power is arguably as strong as ever. Not only did they continue to shape the U.S. foreign policy establishment, but they have managed to alter what constitutes acceptable public and media discourse within the world’s remaining superpower. The trajectory of neocon influence in Washington is explored in depth in the documentary series, [A Very Heavy Agenda](#), by independent journalist and film-maker **Robbie Martin**.

In part one of a special two part interview by Global Research News Hour guest contributor **Scott Price**, Martin describes the inspiration behind making the film, the post 9/11 atmosphere in which the neocons flourished, and the neocons’ role in fostering the new Cold

War mentality which contributed to the smearing of his better-known sister, former RT host **Abby Martin**.

This feature is followed by an interview with writer, ecological campaigner, and Deep State researcher **Mark Robinowitz**. Originally recorded and [aired in January 2018](#), Robinowitz helps delineate the factions of power shaping the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, as well as the players within the National Security State, including the neocons, that appear to be manipulating him and his presidency, possibly maneuvering him towards an impeachment within the next year.

***Robbie Martin** is a journalist, musician and documentary film-maker. He is co-host with his sister Abby Martin of [Media Roots Radio](#). A Very Heavy Agenda can be streamed or purchased [here](#). Soundtrack for Film and music for these series from [Fluorescent Grey](#) (Robbie Martin).*

***Mark Robinowitz** is a writer, political activist, ecological campaigner and permaculture practitioner and publisher of [oilempire.us](#) as well as [jfkmoon.org](#). He is based in Eugene, Oregon.*

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Transcript - Interview with Robbie Martin, July 2018

Global Research: Through the late 20th and early 21st century, the neoconservatives loomed large in American foreign policy...the war on terror, the war in Iraq, the Bush administration. In 2018, it may seem that their power and influence has waned, but in fact, many of these neoconservatives still hold influence, and their legacy has had a much larger impact on politics and society.

In this Global Research News Hour special, we talk with journalist, filmmaker, and musician **Robbie Martin** on his 3-part documentary, A Very heavy Agenda. This film series covers the rise and continued influence of the neoconservatives. In Part 1, Robbie talks about the artistic and political influence for A Very Heavy Agenda and some of the early history of the war on terror.

Talking more broadly about the documentary, what was.. sort of the genesis of the idea for A Very Heavy Agenda? The documentary has a very distinct style and you don't do a lot of editorializing. So what was the inspiration for all that? And why did you choose the kind of... this topic and the kind of technique that you were using for this documentary film?

Robbie Martin: I think I probably should give a shout out to filmmaker Adam Curtis right off the top, because I don't give him enough credit when I talk about the inspiration for this film. As you may know, or if you're not familiar with it...but he made a film series called The Power of Nightmares during the Bush administration that was sort of charting the neoconservative influence in the Bush administration and before, and how they've sort of mirrored the Wahhabist, Islamic, you know, fundamentalists and Al Qaeda figures by using what Adam Curtis described as the Power of Nightmares, that by concocting these nightmare fantasy scenarios, you could gain power, and people like Dick Cheney and Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were able to do that by spinning these hysterical fear-mongering tales about, oh, what would happen if a bio-terrorist attack happened? You know what would

happen if terrorists attacked the World Trade Centers?

That was a big inspiration for me during the Bush administration. It sort of helped me become more politically aware. It made me question a lot of things after 9/11 and having to do with the Iraq war. But over time, I just became sort of just, oh the neocons, they're the people who were mainly behind the Iraq war. They're sort of an evil class of foreign policy makers in DC who really want war at every opportunity. And that's just how I thought of them throughout the years.

It wasn't until my sister, Abby Martin, and for those listening who aren't aware of this, my sister actually had a show on the Russian-owned television channel, Russia Today America out of DC from the years around 2012 to, I think, early 2015.

So she had a show on RT for about three years, and while she was there, I remember having a conversation with her very early on saying, you know, we have to be ready for when the U.S. government decides that they're going to get mad at what this channel's doing. Because when she started working there in 2012, it didn't seem like there was any attention whatsoever to RT, this idea of Russian meddling, this idea of Russian propaganda, no one cared about it.

In fact, U.S. officials at the time marginalized it and even one of my characters in my film, Victoria Nuland, says it has a very tiny audience. She actually marginalized it during a Brookings panel in DC. Now, that was the attitude back when my sister first started working there, but over time, we started seeing early signs of what appeared to be an information war being waged against the Russian government by shady actors inside the United States.

And that may sound a little bit ironic, considering the way that we see everything through this lens now of Russian meddling, that everyone in the U.S. would describe RT as a form of information war now. You know, that's how everybody would describe it now, but back then it was such a small channel...it...barely anybody watched it, I mean that was kind of more true what they were saying back then, U.S. officials marginalizing it...that was more of the true narrative. It was a small channel and had very little influence.

But yet maybe just a year or two into her working there, maybe a year and a half, we really started to notice something strange happening in the United States where there was all this focus starting to accumulate towards Putin and Russia and why Russia was so bad. And it started more subtly, kind of in the background. The Sochi Olympics, however, was sort of when we noticed — it was almost like all these coordinated narratives started to really flood out of U.S. media channels, and all this awareness all of a sudden about the Russian gay law, which as someone who's very adamantly pro gay rights, I was bothered by it as well, but I mean even at the time I remember thinking, now this is an odd amount of focus towards the Russian gay law when yet Saudi Arabia actually executes gays still, and there's hardly any talk about that in the U.S. media. What's actually happening here?

So there was some early signs and sort of like what...me just sort of my gut reaction and my sister's gut reaction to that climate at the time wondering what was going on. And of course, right after the Sochi Olympics, is when the Euromaidan protest in Ukraine, it kind of boiled over to the point where there were, you know, walls of flaming tires all over Euromaidan — basically a war zone. And of course the Ukrainian government fell due to a coup which many believe, including myself, was partially U.S. sponsored by the U.S. State Department.

And then things from there, Scott, just started to spiral out of control, and from the period between 2014 to 2018, it was like an exponentially rising climate of propaganda against Russia coming from the U.S. media, and when I made my film series, I didn't...I made it before the election, so I didn't realize how hysterical it was going to get after the election, and frankly, I had no idea it was going to get this bad, to the point that it's got now.

i know that doesn't quite answer your question about my inspiration, but it's...kind of a long answer to your question is...my film itself is essentially.. was tracking the neocon influence and how the neoconservatives from the Bush era that pushed the Iraq war, that constructed the blueprints to the Iraq war, how they also were the earliest pioneers pushing this Russiagate Cold War 2.0 mentality.

And how it only took. you know. certain nudges and pushes and policy papers, and here we are. They essentially got their way, and Russia has never been more demonized since the fall of communism and the Berlin wall and the Soviet Union. So that's...I don't know if that was too long of an answer for your question, but that's what was sort of my inspiration for how I made it. My sister was also kind of a part of the story because some of these neocons actually tried to smear her while she was working for RT.

GR: Right...yeah

RM: And that's maybe a more literal answer to your question is - that was the key inspiration for me like, oh, wait these neocons are still around, they're waging some kind of cutting edge information war against Russia at the Obama administration doesn't seem to care about, and they're out there trying to ruin my sister. So all those factors combined, sort of coalesced at once, and I'm like, I have to do something about this because no one else is talking about this push, what I saw as a propaganda push to try to push us into kind of a war-footing with Russia. Whether you want to call it World War III or an ideological confrontation.

GR: Right, yeah, and I mean, some of the more, the details of some of these things we'll get into. I mean, I don't want to get too far into it, because I want people to to to watch your.. the documentary, because I think it's so great. And especially...I'm 31 so I kind of, the 9/11 thing really shaped myself and my generation in so many ways. But even in watching this, there's so many things that I forgot about or didn't even know about? You know like we kind of form these narratives and we don't really think about it or you know who's controlling this stuff and for what purposes. But I think you give a good summation of that.

But one of the things too about the film itself is you use a lot of footage of these people... if it's one of the Kagans or Bill Kristol or whomever... I mean, obviously this was a conscious decision to use their own words, so could you talk a little bit about why you decided to do it that way? Because I think in watching the how many hours it is over the three parts, you get, you kind of see the same themes coming up again, but it's from these people themselves that are saying this stuff. Could you talk about the power of that and why you decided to do that?

RM: Yeah, that's a really good question. I think at first, I was really fascinated by the psychology of these key neoconservatives. I was watching, at first I didn't even know I was going to make a film. I was kind of in this weird place mentally, my sister had just been put through the wringer, she had over 200 basically hit piece stories written about her within

the span of a week, and I was just in this kind of depressed place checking in with her making sure she was doing okay, and not basically getting too stressed out from all this media pressure and this barrage of negative stories. So I was just watching these videos basically from the neocon think-tank that I believe was behind the smear campaign against her.

So I was watching videos from this think tank, they were called the Foreign Policy Initiative, and I quickly learned maybe over 48 hour period, oh, the Foreign Policy Initiative is actually a re-branded, reopened version of the Project for The New American Century think tank, which was the most infamous neocon think tank that was behind the Iraq War. Once I realized that, then I just...then I was obsessed with watching these videos. I watched probably every single video on their YouTube channel, and the majority of them were incredibly boring, very dry. And I was already in a depressed place, so, you know, it was kind of just putting me into this weird state where I was watching nothing but these dry foreign policy think tank videos for weeks on end.

Finally I got to Robert Kagan. And I was listening to him, and it struck me differently from the way that most other neoconservatives would talk, because I perceived him as being more candid about the way American foreign policy has actually conducted itself, and also more clever with the way that I perceived him as, re-branding, repackaging neocon rhetoric for the Obama era. Once I saw this, I became fascinated with his psychology. And I was already sort of fascinated with Bill Kristol's psychology, you know, going back to when I was a young man when I would watch Fox News you know during the Iraq War, I would watch Bill Kristol, and I found him fascinating back then because he seemed on a different level than most other, you know, war hawks that would go on Fox News.

But it was really Robert Kagan though that made me think, you know, his own words are so fascinating and so candid and so revealing without adding any editorial content that I wonder if this will work, if I present it just simply in his own words.

And then the other reason, if I'm being completely honest, I didn't feel confident at the time to actually add any of my own editorial narration. I kind of cringe sometimes at movies that do that too much, especially political documentaries. Without naming names or crapping on anyone, let's just say I watched a political documentary that had the word wars in the title. And I felt that the filmmaker himself was...made himself the main character, and while the content of the film was great, he talked about Yemen, Somalia all these... how do I say it without revealing the film maker? All these wars, hidden wars, happening in all these other countries, the filmmaker made himself the main character, and I cringe so much at that I kind of was in this position where I was like, I don't even know how to enter my own editorial point of view into this other than my editing and the way I'm presenting all this footage.

So when I made Part 1, it was out of necessity, mostly because I didn't know how to do that yet, and I didn't feel confident enough to do it, but then also the footage I was grabbing was so compelling to me on its own, I felt that maybe this could work just on its own. Like I wasn't... When I was originally making it it didn't even cross my mind to add narration. It was only until later when I was like, I need to release this and show people that I actually decided to add narration. But as you're saying Part 1, I think you're mostly talking about Part 1, has no narration whatsoever. And it's just... It's mostly just a collage of footage of these neoconservatives talking, and conversing and revealing sort of how they truly think.

GR: Yeah, so in talking about it like how they, the neocons, think and what their worldview

really is... I think a lot of listeners of CKUW and the Global Research News Hour would be familiar when you say neocons and Project for a New American Century, but I think the overriding perception is that they're a thing of the past. They were kind of, they had their time with the Bush and through the 2000s and then they're gone. So why should people still be paying attention to the neocons in 2018?

RM: Great question. I mean... and you're right to say that. The general perception is that they kind of got shamed out of existence based on the failure... "the failure" of the Iraq War and the amount of public pressure against that, and how most people have come to the belief that it was a disaster. And the neocons are largely associated with that military invasion and frankly, that massacre that was done completely for no logical reason whatsoever...unless we're talking about imperialistic games. The WMDs argument is complete BS and everyone knows that now.

So their names were largely associated with the worst lies of the Bush administration, and that was my perception of it too until I started working on this documentary film, is that they had gone away and they weren't really a problem anymore. And even when I started to see some of the same faces pop up talking about Russia and how evil Putin was back in like 2014, I didn't personally think it was that big of a deal because I thought, well these people are super marginalized. Who's really listening to them anymore? Obama is clearly not listening to them. But that actually turned out not to be true. The Obama part... He actually was listening to them as described in my film.

But I think one way to describe why they're so important and they're still so influential is because they managed to, a very small handful of them, maybe less than a dozen figures, managed to convince the rest of, what people describe as the DC blob, the sort of foreign policy consensus in DC overall, the neocons managed to rebrand themselves, massage their rhetoric, and make themselves seem less crazy in order to influence the larger DC foreign policy community into basically accepting and going along with almost all their foreign policy platforms, with the exception of overtly wanting to invade Iran which... arguably that is the neocon prize but see, a lot of these smarter neocons like Robert Kagan and Bill Kristol, and a lot of these neocons who managed to convince the blob, they have hidden, and not been open about the fact that they want to overthrow the regime of Iran.

That's one of their foreign policy platforms they've sort of brushed under the rug, because that's one of... The reason I'm giving that example is because that's how they have managed to cross the aisle, so to speak, in DC and put a hand out to the neoliberal think tanks and say, hey we're kind of on the same side in this, and we all think Putin's bad, and let's really go after him. Let's overthrow Assad. So these are things that the neocons managed to essentially convince and influence the rest of the DC foreign policy community to believe.

So yes, it's true that there are not that many actual literal neocons, but a lot of people now who are sort of anti-war, do work in anti-war or do foreign policy critique, they don't see much of a difference any more between sort of the neoliberal foreign policy group in DC, which is most of it, and the actual neocons anymore. Because they have essentially merged in a non-partisan fashion, and it's been very surreal to watch, especially after the 2016 election when you actually saw neocons saying well you should vote for Hillary. For the first time ever they all said that you shouldn't vote for a Republican.

That's... so I don't know that fully answers your question, but I think to sum it up it's

because the neocons have influenced everybody. So now that they've been able to do that you don't really need that many of them around you know making that much trouble because everybody is carrying out their agenda essentially. In this DC foreign policy think-tank.

GR: Yeah...I think the way you kind of describe it in... maybe it's... I don't know if you personally describe it, but I wrote it down in my notes about how neoconservatism is almost like a species and it kind of evolved over the last 20 years in a way? So I think what you're talking about how there's a shift to Hillary, and, but I mean that shift is more that the neoconservative line really became the mainstream line, whereas, you know, maybe in the early 2000s, like, there was a larger perception, yes, they were in the White House, but these people are also crazy, whereas now is kind of like the mainstream, which is quite scary. Which is something I think we'll talk about in a little bit. But kind of what I was talking about a bit before what I referenced was that I was a teenager when 9/11 happened, and it really shaped my generation and the world that I'm living in now

But as I was watching the 3-part documentary, there were several things that I was like kind of blown away by how these things kind of just went down the memory hole, and I want to talk about those things because several of these things I vaguely kind of remember now but for some odd reason I had totally forgotten about them, and they're not really within the wider narrative of 9/11 and the war on terror.

So the first one is that how right after 9/11, several of these neocons, I think it's Don and Fred Kagan, went on TV and radio kind of immediately after for at least a 24-hour 48-hour period after 9/11 and basically blamed Palestinians for the attack, and were basically outright calling for the U.S. to attack Palestine. And even saying that they had no evidence but we should just go and attack them. So could you talk about what happened there, and what was the effect there? Everyone kind of forgets about this but what happened there, and what do you think the effect of that was?

RM: You just opened up a really big can of worms with that question. Well, to fully answer that it would require a totally separate interview, but I'll do my best to answer it in this short time that we have. What you're describing is, what I would say, is the neocons flipping up and revealing too much of an early iteration of their script, than the rest of the consensus was ready to reveal or get on board with. And perhaps, even, they jumped ahead with something that the rest of the neocons already decided, we can't go there. Because, and this is important to know, that Don Kagan is one of the only three authors credited as writing *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, the infamous paper that PNAC released that says we need a new Pearl Harbor, a catalyzing event like a new Pearl Harbor.

Don Kagan is someone who just, mostly an obscure figure in this, but I'd like to believe that if he was saying that on the radio within 24 hours of 9/11, that it was something being heavily discussed within that community behind the scenes. And he and his son Fred Kagan are two of the most intellectual, influential neoconservatives in DC. Fred Kagan is behind the Iraq surge, he is also behind the Afghanistan surge for Obama, directly working under David Petraeus. So these are not just like random neocons. It's important to stress that they are some of the most influential neocon brain-trust type people in DC even though they're so relatively obscure... They're not household names.

So to hear both of them saying that we need to clean out Palestine with the U.S. Delta Force raids and the full panoply of U.S. military tools and arsenal, it's a very shocking thing to

hear. Even though I've long believed that neocons are some of the most evil people on the planet, that was even surprising for me to hear. That they went ahead and openly said that the U.S. military should do that, and actually, in their broadcast they make it clear that they don't even care who's behind 9/11. Which is strange. They say that if we run around tracing the actual perpetrators, we're just going to be wasting our time and we won't get anywhere. So what they are saying is that we should just go attack all these countries anyways because even if they're behind it or not, they hate us and want to kill us.

And Palestine was one of their primary targets to retaliate against in response to 9/11. Now that's very strange when you look at the day of 9/11, and I've actually done a podcast on this, I call it the Palestinian Frame-up, on 9/11, there were four separate incidences that were run throughout U.S. media throughout the day of 9/11 that were attempting to blame Palestinians for the attacks before Bin Laden became the primary culprit that the U.S. media latched on to. So I find that very strange.

And I'm not going to try to explain it here during this interview, but you can look into that. It's all documented. The news media played footage of Palestinians allegedly celebrating the attacks in the middle of a national emergency at 12 p.m. while thousands of people were still missing during the World Trade Center attacks. So this is the kind of stuff that U.S. media was doing.

So it's very interesting for me to see neocons actually piggy-backing on that and saying we should attack Palestine. And that's a rare thing, I think, to find neocons slipping up that badly. And I guess I find that clip particularly fascinating because it's really one of the only ones like that out there, and to my knowledge, I'm the first one to find it by combing through all these archives. I've never heard of it before, never even heard of any neocons saying that before on record.

And then also something else interesting Don Kagan brings up in the recording, and maybe you were going to mention this next, but I'll just say it because it's so weird, as he says what would have happened, and keep in mind this is 9/12-01, one day after 9/11. He says, what would have happened if the terrorists had Anthrax on that plane?

GR: Right. Yeah.

RM: And on October 5, weaponized anthrax was sent through the U.S. mail. While the Bush Administration was already inoculated with Cipro. the antibiotic taken to prevent Anthrax infection. So there's a lot of interesting and very scary questions that are raised just by that single clip. and I'm...to this day it's still a mystery to me.

GR: That was Part 1 of the Global Research News Hour special with Robbie Martin on his documentary series, A Very Heavy Agenda that explores the rise and continued influence of the neoconservatives. Part 2 will air next week where we will explore the anthrax attacks, the role of Vice in spreading U.S. propaganda. You can buy or stream A Very Heavy Agenda at averyheavyagenda.com. Music for this special provided by Fluorescent Grey, AKA Robbie Martin. For the Global Research News Hour, I'm Scott Price.

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Global Research News Hour Summer 2018 Series Part 5

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Campus and community radio [CFMH 107.3fm](#) in Saint John, N.B. airs the Global Research News Hour Fridays at 10am.

Caper Radio CJBW 107.3FM in Sydney, [Cape Breton](#), Nova Scotia airs the Global Research News Hour starting Wednesday Morning from 8:00 to 9:00am. Find more details at [www.caperradio.ca](#)

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Radio Fanshawe: [Fanshawe's 106.9 The X \(CIXX-FM\)](#) out of London, Ontario airs the Global Research News Hour Sundays at 6am with an encore at 4pm.

Los Angeles, California based [Thepowerofvoices.com](#) airs the Global Research News Hour every Monday from 6-7pm Pacific time.

Notes:

1. <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article35106.htm>
2. <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article11811.htm>

3. <https://www.globalresearch.ca/neocon-101-what-do-neoconservatives-believe/6483>
4. <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article11811.htm>

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