

## The Neoconservative Agenda

By

William R. Polk

Working under the auspices of Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the Neoconservatives today form a powerful network extending throughout the American government which is backed up by an even more elaborate network of “think tanks” in and around Washington. Operating as a virtual government within the government, what do the Neoconservatives want to achieve?

They have partially answered the question themselves not only in the actions they have recently espoused in the Bush administration but also in a sequence of policy papers they have written over the last fifteen years. Assembled by Joseph Cirincione for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, these papers form a graphic agenda for the war against Iraq and plans to engage in future wars. Because they affect the lives of people all over the world, they deserve the closest attention. The major documents are the following:<sup>i</sup>

- 1) In 1992, infuriated by the first President Bush’s halting of the first Gulf War, Paul Wolfowitz, then under secretary of defense for policy, supervised the drafting of the “Defense Policy Guidance” document. The objectives it set were to assure access to Persian Gulf oil, to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to combat threats of terrorism. The document called for preëmptive attacks on actual or would-be rivals – that is, any nation that could challenge American preëminence -- with the United States ready to act alone if “collective action cannot be orchestrated.”

The extreme policy advocated by document so shocked Wolfowitz's colleagues that someone leaked it to *The New York Times*. Embarrassed, the administration retracted it. But, that was only a temporary setback. Today, the basic concepts have been incorporated in the "U.S. National Security Strategy" document of September 2002.

2) In her book *Saddam Hussein's Unfinished War Against America*, Neoconservative Laurie Mylroie popularized the Neoconservative charge that Iraq carried out the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Richard Perle endorsed the charge, calling the book "splendid and wholly convincing." While there is no evidence for the charge, it was the beginning of a concerted campaign to bring about an attack on Iraq.

3) In 1996 Richard Perle, Douglas Feith and David Wurmser joined in writing a paper for the newly elected Likud government of Israel calling for a "clean break" with policies of negotiating with the Palestinians and evacuating the occupied territories. Reaching outward, they urged that Israel should strike preemptively to weaken the government of Syria and overthrow Saddam Hussein.

4) In 1998, 18 Neoconservatives including Elliot Abrams, Richard Armitage, John Bolton, Paula Dobriansky, Zalmay Khalilzad, Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz, many of whom later became key officials of the second Bush administration, joined by Donald Rumsfeld, wrote President Bill Clinton urging him to bring about the removal of Saddam Husain.

5) In the year 2000, the "Project for the New American Century," organized by William Kristol and Robert Kagan, made bellicose recommendations which also have been incorporated in the U.S. National Security Strategy.

6) Immediately after the September 11 attacks, Paul Wolfowitz and other Neoconservative officials urged President Bush to attack Iraq and helped arrange that the general staff of the armed forces begin planning that campaign.

6) On April 3, 2002, those Neoconservatives not yet in government wrote President Bush saying “You have declared war on international terrorism, Mr. President. Israel is fighting the same war...Israel’s victory is an important part of our victory.” They urged both unconditional support for Ariel Sharon’s suppression of the Palestinians and an immediate attack on Iraq.

While foreign affairs was the main focus of their activities, the Neoconservative agenda had a domestic component. Its initial aim has been to silence critics by charging them with lack of patriotism. However, a more complex set of aims is emerging. In the domestic campaign, the leading role has been played by the head of the Middle East Forum, Daniel Pipes, who, before being appointed by President Bush to the United States Institute of Peace, mounted a venture called “Campus Watch.”

Through a vigorous campaign, mainly on the internet, Campus Watch encouraged faculty members and students to report on the speech, teaching or political action of the 1,400 professors and the several thousand students of Middle East studies in American universities so that dossiers could be developed on them.<sup>ii</sup>

Some supporters of the Neoconservatives took more aggressive action. When she was singled out for attack by “Campus Watch,” Glenda Gilmore, a professor of history at Yale University, said, “I know [about the campaign of harassment and intimidation] because I have been branded a traitor. I wrote an op ed piece for the *Yale Daily News* and

received death threats and rape wishes...<sup>iii</sup> Others have reported what appear to be a well-orchestrated campaign, a constant series of harassing telephone calls and letters.<sup>iv</sup>

The McCarthyite scheme Pipes began has now been taken up by the U.S. House of Representatives which, on October 21, 2003, unanimously passed a bill essentially along lines laid out by Pipes's colleague Martin Kramer (in his book *Ivory Towers in the Sand*). The bill, not yet approved by the Senate, would create a government board to monitor teaching in federally-funded academic centers.

Approval by the Senate would be required to make the House bill law, but it has been enthusiastically endorsed by Senator Rick Santorum (R-Pa). Senator Santorum has written a bill with a name only George Orwell could have imagined, "Ideological Diversity," that would cut federal funding for thousands of colleges and universities that permit teachers, students and student organizations to criticize Israeli policies.<sup>v</sup> Santorum's Republican colleague from Kansas, Senator Sam Brownback wants to go even further: he would create what would amount to an ideological police force, a federal commission, to investigate what he loosely terms anti-Semitism.

Real anti-Semitism, of course, is an ugly disease and deserves opprobrium. The Neoconservatives and their allies, however, have used the charge as a sort of "weapon of mass destruction" to silence critics, even American Jewish critics, of Israeli policies. As some of those attacked have pointed out, no reasonable person would suggest that criticism of the Zimbabwe regime would open anyone to the charge of being "anti-black" or criticism of the Saudi Arabian government would make him anti-Arab. Moreover, it would be absurd to charge the many Israelis who vigorously criticize the government of

Ariel Sharon with being anti-Semitic. But, in American politics, the charge of anti-Semitism is both grave and difficult to refute.

Ironically, anti-Semitism has itself been a feature of Neoconservatism. So hostile is Pipes to Arabs (who of course are also Semites) that he famously damned the “massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples, cooking strange foods and not exactly maintaining Germanic standards of hygiene.”<sup>vi</sup> All Muslim fundamentalists, he went on,<sup>vii</sup> “must be considered potential killers.”

Such moves as Messrs. Pipes, Kramer, Santorum and Brownback propose are bound to create, as did the earlier McCarthyism, an atmosphere of fear, mutual suspicion and the loss of the spirit of free inquiry which has been the pride and hallmark of the American academic world.

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<sup>i</sup> Carnegie Endowment Non-Proliferation Project [npp@ceip.org](mailto:npp@ceip.org) Proliferation Brief, volume 6, #5 by Joseph Cirincione. March 19, 2003. He does not mention an even earlier document, still secret, written by Paul Wolfowitz in 1979, when Iraq was still regarded as an American ally and was being aided by the U.S. government, targeting it. This fact was reported by Michael Dobbs in *The Washington Post*, April 7, 2003.

<sup>ii</sup> [www.campus-watch.org](http://www.campus-watch.org)

<sup>iii</sup> [menainfo@aol.com](mailto:menainfo@aol.com)

<sup>iv</sup> Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair: *CounterPunch*, September 23, 2002, article by Will Youmans, “Campus Watch: The Vigilante Thought Police,” [wyoumans@umich.edu](mailto:wyoumans@umich.edu). Campus Watch “generated hostile phone calls and emails to listed professors and their families.”

<sup>v</sup> Michael Collins Piper, “Schools not Teaching Pro-Israel views to Lose Funding, Congress to Pass ‘Ideological Diversity’ Legislation,” *American Free Press*, [www.americanfreepress.net](http://www.americanfreepress.net) April 21, 2003.

<sup>vi</sup> [www.danielpipes.org](http://www.danielpipes.org)

<sup>vii</sup> *National Review Online*, October 22, 2001.