

Liberal Hawks Ally with Project for the New American Century

Neocons and Liberals Together, Again

By Tom Barry | February 3, 2005

The neoconservative Project for the New American Century (PNAC) has signaled its intention to continue shaping the government's national security strategy with a new public letter stating that the "U.S. military is too small for the responsibilities we are asking it to assume." Rather than reining in the imperial scope of U.S. national security strategy as set forth by the first Bush administration, PNAC and the letter's signatories call for increasing the size of America's global fighting machine.

The January 28th PNAC letter advocates that House and Senate leaders take the necessary steps "to increase substantially the size of the active duty Army and Marine Corps."

Joining the neocons in the letter to congressional leaders were a group of prominent liberals—giving some credence to PNAC's claim that the "call to act" to increase the total number of U.S. ground forces counts on bipartisan support.

After an initial spate of public pronouncements after September 11th and during the onset of the Iraq occupation, the Project for the New American Century is again positioning itself as the policy institute that will set the second Bush administration's security agenda. Although PNAC's 1997 statement of principles included only prominent right-wing figures—many of whom later joined the first Bush administration—the neocon policy institute has repeatedly reached out to liberals to give its public letters to the Congress and the president the gloss of bipartisanship.

Its new call for congressional leaders to increase overall U.S. troop levels includes endorsement of key liberal analysts. Among the signatories are the leading foreign policy analysts at the Brookings Institution and the Progressive Policy Institute, which are closely associated with the Democratic Party. The endorsees of the letter are largely neoconservatives who are principals in such neocon-led institutes as PNAC, American Enterprise Institute (AEI), Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, and the Center for Security Policy. However, this call for a larger expeditionary force was also signed by prominent liberal hawks, including Michael O'Hanlon, Ivo Daalder, James Steinberg, and Will

Marshall—all of whom have signed previous PNAC letters and policy statements.

Support for a "Generational Commitment" in Middle East

PNAC's "Letter to Congress on Increasing U.S. Ground Forces" endorses Secretary of State Rice's assessment that U.S. military engagement in the Middle East is a "generational commitment." To meet that commitment, the PNAC signatories call on Congress to fulfill its constitutional obligation to raise and support military forces—which they say means increasing the number of ground forces by at least 25,000 troops annually over the next several years.

PNAC, which has repeatedly called for increases in the military budget and for military-backed "regime change" around the world, is concerned that the "United States military is too small for the responsibilities we are asking it to assume." The neoconservative policy institute, which produced the blueprint for the national security strategy of the first Bush administration, echoes the recent assertion by the chief of the Army Reserve that the "overuse" of U.S. ground forces in Iraq and Afghanistan could be result in a "broken force."

Given that the military's reenlistment rates are declining and recruitment goals are not being met, PNAC's call for Congress to increase troop levels implies either reintroducing the draft or dramatically increasing the pay for volunteer enlistees. The latter option would in effect create a global mercenary force deployed to meet the new responsibilities of preventive war, regime change, and political restructuring of the Middle East.



Liberal Hawks Fly with the Neocons

The recent PNAC letter to Congress was not the first time that PNAC or its associated front groups, such as the Coalition for the Liberation of Iraq, have included hawkish Democrats.

Two PNAC letters in March 2003 played to those Democrats who believed that the invasion was justified at least as much by humanitarian concerns as it was by the purported presence of weapons of mass destruction. PNAC and the neocon camp had managed to translate their military agenda of preemptive and preventive strikes into national security policy. With the invasion underway, they sought to preempt those hardliners and military officials who opted for a quick exit strategy in Iraq. In their March 19th letter, PNAC stated that Washington should plan to stay in Iraq for the long haul: “Everyone—those who have joined the coalition, those who have stood aside, those who opposed military action, and, most of all, the Iraqi people and their neighbors—must understand that we are committed to the rebuilding of Iraq and will provide the necessary resources and will remain for as long as it takes.”

Along with such neocon stalwarts as Robert Kagan, Bruce Jackson, Joshua Muravchik, James Woolsey, and Eliot Cohen, a half-dozen Democrats were among the 23 individuals who signed PNAC’s first letter on post-war Iraq. Among the Democrats were Ivo Daalder of the Brookings Institution and a member of Clinton’s National Security Council staff; Martin Indyk, Clinton’s ambassador to Israel; Will Marshall of the Progressive Policy Institute and Democratic Leadership Council; Dennis Ross, Clinton’s top adviser on the Israel-Palestinian negotiations; and James Steinberg, Clinton’s deputy national security adviser and head of foreign policy studies at Brookings. A second post-Iraq war letter by PNAC on March 28 called for broader international support for reconstruction, including the involvement of NATO, and brought together the same Democrats with the prominent addition of another Brookings’ foreign policy scholar, Michael O’Hanlon.

In late 2002 PNAC’s Bruce Jackson formed the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq that brought together such Democrats as Senator Joseph Lieberman; former Senator Robert Kerrey, the president of the New School University who now serves on the 9/11 Commission;

PPI’s Will Marshall; and former U.S. Representative Steve Solarz. The neocons also reached out to Democrats through a sign-on letter to the president organized by the Social Democrats/USA, a neocon institute that has played a critical role in shaping the National Endowment for Democracy in the early 1980s and in mobilizing labor support for an interventionist foreign policy.

The liberal hawks not only joined with the neocons to support the war and the post-war restructuring but have published their own statements in favor of what is now widely regarded as a morally bankrupt policy agenda. Perhaps the clearest articulation of the liberal hawk position on foreign and military policy is found in an October 2003 report by the Progressive Policy Institute, which is a think tank closely associated with the Democratic Leadership Council. The report, entitled *Progressive Internationalism: A Democratic National Security Strategy*, endorsed the invasion of Iraq, “because the previous policy of containment was failing,” and Saddam Hussein’s government was “undermining both collective security and international law.”

PPI President Will Marshall said that the progressive internationalism strategy draws “a sharp distinction between this mainstream Democratic strategy for national security and the far left’s vision of America’s role in the world. In this document we take issue with those who begrudge the kind of defense spending that we think is necessary to meet our needs, both at home and abroad; with folks who seem to reflexively oppose the use of force; and who seem incapable of taking America’s side in international disputes.” Among the other liberal hawks who contributed to the Progressive Internationalism report were Bob Kerrey; Larry Diamond of the Hoover Institution and the National Endowment for Democracy; and Michael McFaul of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The repeated willingness of influential liberal leaders and foreign policy analysts, such as Marshall, O’Hanlon, and Daalder, to join forces with the neoconservative camp has bolstered PNAC’s claim that its foreign policy agenda is neither militarist nor imperialist but one that is based on a deep respect for human rights, democracy, and universal moral values. Other liberal hawks signing the recent PNAC letter include *New Republic* editor Peter Beinart; Steven Nider, director of security studies at the Progressive Policy Institute; James Steinberg, director of Brookings’ foreign policy studies program and former

director of the State Department's Policy Planning office during the Clinton administration; Craig Kennedy, president of the German Marshall Fund and former program officer at the Joyce Foundation; and Michelle Flournoy, a self-described "pro-defense Democrat" who is a member of the Aspen Strategy Group and served in the Clinton administration in the DOD's strategy secretariat. Having Yale historian Paul Kennedy, the author of *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, sign the new letter was a major coup for PNAC.

Not surprising is the list of neocons signing PNAC's new letter. In addition to PNAC's founders William Kristol and Robert Kagan, other PNAC principals included as signatories were its deputy director Daniel McKivern, executive director Gary Schmitt, military strategist Thomas Donnelly, Middle East associate Reuel Marc Gerecht; and board members Bruce Jackson and Randy Scheunemann. Signatories from the closely associated American Enterprise Institute include Daniel Blumenthal, Joshua Muravchik, Danielle Pletka, and Elliot Cohen. Other neocon luminaries among the 34 signatories include pundit Max Boot; Clifford May, executive director of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies; and Frank Gaffney, founder of the Center for Security Policy.

One striking difference marking the new PNAC letter was its inclusion of several high-ranking retired military officers, including Gen. Barry McCaffrey, former SouthCom commander and Drug Czar and Lt. Gen. Buster Glosson, who directed air strategy during the Gulf War.

Mugging and Hugging

Irving Kristol, known as the "godfather of neoconservatism," famously defined neoconservatives as "liberals who have been mugged by reality." That political mugging occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the rise of the counterculture, the anti-war movement, and progressive New Politics of the Democratic Party.

Former Trotskyite militants and Cold War liberals like Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, and Midge Decter switched their loyalties to the Republican Party. The "reality" that mugged the neocons was the progressive turn in the Democratic Party led by such figures as Jesse Jackson, Bella Abzug, George McGovern, and Jimmy Carter. In contrast, the neoconservatives found the militant

anticommunism and social conservatism of the Ronald Reagan faction in the Republican Party invigorating. In the neocon lexicon, liberalism became synonymous with secularism, women's liberation, anti-Americanism, and appeasement.

Over the past quarter century, the neocons have sought, with increasing success, to rid the Republican Party of its isolationists, its anti-imperialists, and its realists. The younger neocons, such as William Kristol (son of Irving) and Elliott Abrams (son-in-law of Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter), have promoted a new right-wing internationalism that holds that America should be both a global cop and a global missionary for freedom.

Traditional conservatives and Republican Party realists say that the neocons' foreign policy agenda is, respectively, neo-imperialist and unrealistic about the capacity of U.S. military power to remake the world. Apart from their militarist friends in the Pentagon and defense industries, the neocons are finding that their closest ideological allies are the internationalists in the liberal camp. Having recuperated from their mugging, the neocons are now reaching out to liberals who share their idealism about America's global mission. To the delight of the neocons at PNAC and AEI, an influential group of liberal hawks share their vision of a U.S. grand strategy that will create a world order based on U.S. military supremacy and America's presumed moral superiority.

Tom Barry is policy director of the International Relations Center, online at www.irc-online.org, and director of the IRC's Right Web program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE
LIBERAL HAWKS, SEE THE FOLLOWING
RIGHT WEB PROFILES FROM THE IRC:

Project for a New American Century

<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/org/pnac.php>

Will Marshall

<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/ind/marshall/marshall.php>

Progressive Policy Institute

<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/org/ppi.php>

Democratic Leadership Council

<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/org/demleadcoun.php>

Social Democrats/USA

<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/groupwatch/sd-usa.php>

Published by the Right Web of the International Relations Center (IRC, online at www.irc-online.org). ©2005. All rights reserved.

The Right Web

“Exposing the architecture of power that’s changing our world”

Recommended citation:

Tom Barry, “Neocons and Liberals Together, Again,” IRC Right Web (Silver City, NM: International Relations Center, February 3, 2005).

Web location:

<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/analysis/2005/0502ally.php>

Production Information:

Author: Tom Barry, IRC

Layout: Chellee Chase-Saiz, IRC