

Neocon Wish List

By Jim Lobe | November 11, 2004

A neo-conservative with longstanding ties to top hawks in the administration of President George W. Bush has laid out what he calls “a checklist of the work the world will demand of this president and his subordinates in a second term.” The list, which begins with the destruction of Fallujah in Iraq and ends with the development of “appropriate strategies” for dealing with threats posed by China, Russia and “the emergence of a number of aggressively anti-American regimes in Latin America,” also calls for “regime change” in Iran and North Korea.

The list’s author, Frank Gaffney, the founder and president of the Center for Security Policy (CSP), also warns that Bush should resist any pressure arising from the demise of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to resume peace talks that could result in Israel’s giving up “defensible boundaries.”

While all seven steps listed by Gaffney in an article published on November 5, 2004 in the National Review Online have long been favored by prominent neo-cons, the article itself, “Worldwide Value,” is the first comprehensive compilation to emerge since Bush’s election Tuesday.

It is also sure to be contested, not just by Democrats who, with the election behind them, are poised to take a more anti-war position on Iraq, but by many conservative Republicans in Congress. They blame the neo-cons for failing to anticipate the quagmire in Iraq and worry their grander ambitions, like those expounded by Gaffney, will bankrupt the Treasury and break an already-overextended military.

A Roadmap of Neoconservative Demands

Yet its importance as a road map of where neo-conservatives—who, with the critical help of Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, dominated Bush’s foreign policy after the Sep. 11, 2001 attacks on New York and the Pentagon—want U.S. policy to go, was underlined by Gaffney’s listing of the names of his friends in the administration who he said, “helped the president imprint moral values on American security policy in a way and to an extent not seen since Ronald Reagan’s first term.”

In addition to Cheney and Rumsfeld, he cited the most clearly identified—and controversial—neo-conservatives serving in the administration: Cheney’s chief of staff, I Lewis “Scooter” Libby; his top Middle East advisors, John Hannah and David Wurmser; weapons proliferation specialist Robert Joseph and top Mideast aide Elliott Abrams, on the National Security Council (NSC). Also on the roster are: Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz; Undersecretary for Policy Douglas Feith; Feith’s top Mideast aide William Luti, in the Pentagon; Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton, and for global issues, Paula Dobriansky at the State Department.

Virtually all of the same individuals have been cited by critics of the Iraq War, including Democratic lawmakers and retired senior foreign service and military officials, as responsible for hijacking the policy and intelligence process that led to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Indeed, in a lengthy interview about the war on the most-watched public-affairs TV program, 60 Minutes, last May, the former head of the U.S. Central Command and Secretary of State Colin Powell’s chief Middle East envoy until 2003, retired Gen. Anthony Zinni, called for the resignation of Libby, Abrams, Wolfowitz and Feith, as well as Rumsfeld, for their roles in the attack.

Zinni also cited former Defense Policy Board (DPB) chairman, Richard Perle, who has been close to Gaffney since both of them served, along with Abrams, in the office of Washington State Senator Henry M. Jackson in the early 1970s. When Perle became an assistant secretary of defense under Reagan he brought Gaffney along as his deputy. When Perle left in 1987, Gaffney succeeded him before setting up CSP in 1989.

As Perle’s long-time protégé and associate, Gaffney sits at the center of a network of interlocking think tanks, foundations, lobby groups, arms manufacturers and individuals that constitute the coalition of neo-conservatives, aggressive nationalists like Cheney and Rumsfeld and Christian Right activists responsible for the unilateralist trajectory of U.S. foreign policy since 9/11. Included among CSP’s board of advisers over the years have been Rumsfeld, Perle, Feith, Christian moralist William Bennett, Abrams, Joseph, former United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, former Navy Undersecretary John Lehman and former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director James Woolsey.

Woolsey also co-chairs the new Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), another prominent neocon-led lobby group that argues Washington is now engaged in “World War IV” against “Islamofascism.” Also serving on its advisory council are executives from some of the country’s largest military contractors, which—along with wealthy individuals sympathetic to Israel’s governing Likud Party, such as prominent New York investor Lawrence Kadish and California casino king Irving Moskowitz, and right-wing bodies, such as the Bradley, Sarah Scaife and Olin Foundations—finance CSP’s work.

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Gaffney, a ubiquitous “talking head” on TV in the run-up to the war in Iraq, sits on the boards of CPD’s parent organizations, the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD) and Americans for Victory Over Terrorism (AVOT). He was a charter associate, with Cheney, Rumsfeld, Perle, Wolfowitz and Abrams, of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), another prominent neoconservative-led group that offered up a similar checklist of what Bush should do in the “war on terrorism” just nine days after the 9/11 attacks.

Potential Fissures in the Bush administration’s Base

His article opens by trying to pre-empt an argument that is already being heard on the right against expanding Bush’s “war on terrorism:” that since a plurality of Bush voters identified “moral values” as their chief concern, the president should stick to his social conservative agenda rather than expand the war. “The reality is that the same moral principles that underpinned the Bush appeal on ‘values’ issues like gay marriage, stem-cell research and the right to life were central to his vision of U.S. war aims and foreign policy,” according to Gaffney. “Indeed, the president laid claim squarely to the ultimate moral value—freedom—as the cornerstone of his strategy for defeating our Islamofascist enemies and their state sponsors, for whom that concept is utterly (sic) anathema,” he said.

To be true to that commitment, policy in the second administration must be directed toward seven priorities, according to Gaffney, beginning with the “reduction in detail of Fallujah and other safe havens utilized by freedom’s enemies in Iraq”; followed by “regime change—one way or another—in Iran and North Korea, the only hope for preventing these remaining ‘Axis of Evil’ states from fully realizing their terrorist and nuclear ambitions.”

Third, the administration must provide “the substantially increased resources needed to re-equip a transforming military and rebuild human-intelligence capabilities (minus, if at all possible, the sorts of

intelligence ‘reforms’ contemplated pre-election that would make matters worse on this and other scores) while we fight World War IV, followed by enhancing “protection of our homeland, including deploying effective missile defenses at sea and in space, as well as ashore.”

Fifth, Washington must keep “faith with Israel, whose destruction remains a priority for the same people who want to destroy us (and ... for our shared ‘moral values) especially in the face of Yasser Arafat’s demise and the inevitable, post-election pressure to ‘solve’ the Middle East problem by forcing the Israelis to abandon defensible boundaries.”

Sixth, the administration must deal with France and Germany and the dynamic that made them “so problematic in the first term: namely, their willingness to make common cause with our enemies for profit and their desire to employ a united Europe and its new constitution—as well as other international institutions and mechanisms—to thwart the expansion and application of American power where deemed necessary by Washington.”

Finally, writes Gaffney, Bush must adapt “appropriate strategies for contending with China’s increasingly fascistic trade and military policies, (Russian President) Vladimir Putin’s accelerating authoritarianism at home and aggressiveness toward the former Soviet republics, the worldwide spread of Islamofascism, and the emergence of a number of aggressively anti-American regimes in Latin America,” which he does not identify.

“These items do not represent some sort of neocon ‘imperialist’ game plan,” Gaffney stressed. “Rather, they constitute a checklist of the work the world will demand of this president and his subordinates in a second term.”

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