

The Right's Architecture of Power

By Tom Barry | April 22, 2004

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Over the past three decades, the strategists and ideologues of the right wing have designed a new architecture of power. This architecture currently frames most of the country's policy debate and has attracted the allegiance of most sectors of Corporate America. At the same time, it has mobilized a reactionary populist movement to support its anti-popular economic and undemocratic agenda. Following Bush's 2000 election, this architecture of power also incorporated into its structure the Republican Party and the executive branch of our federal government.

The architecture of power is a work in progress. Its designers and planners, while loosely committed as a team to the same ideologies and political goals, work independently to bolster the structure of the right's power and influence. Rather than operating from a single blueprint, these architects of power are constantly renovating and expanding their web of power in the form of new institutes, front groups, media outlets, and political projects.

The architecture of power is a post-modern structure that has no central office or main lobby, no fixed foundation, no elevator that takes you to different levels. Instead, it is an expansive complex that closely resembles a web whose principal skeins and cross-woven filaments constitute both its foundation and frame.

Within the United States, liberals and progressives have similar networks but none so immense, so closely knit, or so ideologically driven and so closely tied to the agendas of the most aggressive, reactionary sectors of corporate America. When compared with the web of multidimensional movements and institutions of the right's web of power, the other networks competing for public, corporate, and policymaker support seem more like aging cobwebs—which unless similarly invigorated by integrated ideologies and visions of the future may eventually be swept away.

The architects of power are not conspirators or members of a secret cabal. Rather they come from a long tra-

dition of all leading political actors that have operated in all variegations of the broad political spectrum. They are a collection of ideologues, intellectuals, scholars, strategists, visionaries, demagogues, and political officials and political operatives that share common critiques of liberal and progressive policy paradigms and uphold the principles of a new radical conservatism. Over the last three decades, this architecture of power has, according to Chip Berlet of Political Research Associates, “yanked politics to the right.”

Dimensions of the Right's Power Complex

The most potent force in this architecture of power is the package of cultural, economic, political, and military ideologies propagated by the right's think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute, Heritage Foundation, Hudson Institute, and Hoover Institution. Less prominent think tanks that advance neoconservative views on foreign policy include the Jamestown Foundation, Foreign Policy Research Institute, and the Manhattan Institute. Also important on the right but situated outside the neoconservative family is the prominent Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Other less prominent foreign policy think tanks on the right are the Lexington Institute and the Nixon Center.

Closely connected to these think tanks are scores of policy institutes that address the core issues of the right's agenda in international affairs. These include a set of militarist institutes such as the Center for Security Policy, National Institute for Public Policy, and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. Second-tier institutes focused on military policy include High Frontier, U.S. Space Foundation, and National Strategy Information Center.

One of the major achievements of the neoconservatives has been the integration of social conservatives, the religious right, and foreign policy hawks. Key to this success have been a small circle of interlinked neocon institutes



including Empower America, Institute for Religion and Democracy, and the Institute for Religion and Public Life. Among the prominent neoconservatives associated with these institutes that promote the superiority of Judeo-Christian values and culture are Michael Novak, William Bennett, Hillel Fradkin, George Weigel, Elliott Abrams, and Richard Neuhaus.

Running in tandem with the right's think tanks and policy institutes are its regionally focused advocacy groups and front groups. Some of these are permanent institutions such as the Middle East Forum and Washington Institute for Near East Affairs. One of the newest and fastest growing policy institutes is the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, which like all neocon institutes and think tanks backs a right-wing Zionist agenda in the Middle East.

A more transient component of this architecture of power includes ad hoc citizen committees created to give the impression of broad public support for particular legislation and objectives. The latter sector includes such groups as the U.S. Committee on NATO, Project on Transitional Democracies, Americans for Peace in Chechnya, Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, U.S. Committee for a Free Lebanon, and the Coalition for Democracy in Iran. Neocon operatives such as Bruce Jackson, Randy Scheunemann, Gary Schmitt, and Michael Ledeen are the central figures in most of these ad hoc groups. While some of them are strictly neocon affairs, others function as front groups that aim to build bipartisan support for their objectives. Conservative Democratic Party figures such as Senator Joseph Lieberman and Progressive Policy Institute president Will Marshall are found in such neocon front groups as the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq.

The right's architecture of power extends into the infrastructure of the U.S. government. In the late 1990s, the two congressionally organized commissions on missile defense and space weapons chaired by Donald Rumsfeld were organized by legislators associated with such neoconservative institutes as the Center for Security Policy. Neoconservatives and their supporters have also been key to the establishment of several permanent government or quasi-government agencies, including U.S.-China Commission, U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom, and the National Endowment for Democracy.

Getting the Message Right

Neoconservatives have a long tradition in publishing, dating back to the involvement of neocon forerunners in

such anticommunist magazines as Encounter and right-wing Zionist magazines like Commentary. Today, the Weekly Standard, closely associated with the ideological agendas of the Project for the New American Century and the American Enterprise Institute, has established itself as the leading political voice of the neoconservatives. Commentary served until the late 1980s as the flagship publication of neoconservatism, but its influence among both neoconservatives and the Washington policy community has now been far surpassed by the Weekly Standard.

Owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, the Weekly Standard regularly features Project for the New American Century analysts such as Reuel Marc Gerecht, Ellen Bork (daughter of AEI scholar and prominent Federalist Society member Robert Bork), Gary Schmitt, and Thomas Donnelly in addition to founders Kristol and Kagan. According to the Nation magazine's media critic Eric Alterman: "The magazine speaks directly to and for power. Anybody who wants to know what this administration is thinking and what they plan to do has to read this magazine."ⁱ

From the perspective of Old Guard conservative Paul Gottfried, neoconservatives beginning in the late 1980s took control of the "New York-Washington" media corridor. Old Guard conservatives and paleoconservatives could no longer find an outlet for their analysis, even in the letters section of National Review, which had veered toward neoconservatism as has the Wall Street Journal. As Gottfried observed in 1993, neocons not only dominated the right's main journals and magazines, they also raised prominent voices on the editorial pages of traditionally liberal media such as the Washington Post, New Republic, and Atlantic.ⁱⁱ In syndicated columns and national radio and television programs, such neoconservative analysts as Charles Krauthammer, Ben Wattenberg, Linda Chavez, William Bennett, and Morton Kronracke have injected neoconservative thinking into the mainstream of the American body politic.

Other right-wing publications with a marked neoconservative perspective include Public Interest, with founder and senior editorial associate Irving Kristol, American Spectator, with chief editor R. Emmett Tyrell, Jr. and board members Richard V. Allen and Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Washington Times, owned by Reverend Moon and featuring Frank Gaffney, a prominent PNAC associate and head of the Center for Security Policy.ⁱⁱⁱ Also key to the neoconservative information network are publishers that cater to neoconservative authors. Encounter Books, a San

Francisco publishing house run by Peter Collier, produces a steady stream of books by neoconservative authors in collaboration with such entities as the Project for the New American Century and Commentary.iv

Center of the Neocon Matrix

At the center of the architecture of power are two closely associated institutions: American Enterprise Institute and the Project for the New American Century (PNAC).

PNAC's offices are located in what seems to be the core of the neoconservative matrix. Entering the 12-story building in downtown Washington, you see the office directory, which includes the stellar lineup of American Enterprise Institute scholars including Irving Kristol and Robert Bork. Like many neoconservative institutes, the AEI lost many of its best and brightest hawks and ideologues to the Bush II administration.

One has only to examine the American Enterprise Institute to appreciate the degree to which Corporate America has aligned itself with the right's think tanks. Its board of directors includes the CEOs of such corporations as ExxonMobil, Motorola, American Express, State Farm Insurance, and Dow Chemical. Its board of trustees is also littered with corporate representatives, although a couple of the most prominent or infamous of them have left the board, such as Halliburton's Richard Cheney and Enron's Kenneth Lay. Expanding upon the existing stream of donations from the nation's leading right-wing foundations, the AEI has achieved a diversified funding base among corporations from just about every sector of the economy—ranging from General Electric and AT&T to Ford and General Motors to Amoco and Shell to Morgan Guarantee Trust and American Express.v

Many former AEI minds now at work implementing the peace-through-war/Pax Americana strategy of the Bush administration previously worked with the PNAC coalition, including Vice President Cheney, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control John Bolton, and Director of International Broadcasting Seth Cropsey. Other PNAC-AEI members have retained their ties with these neoconservative organizations while serving on administration advisory boards, including Jeane Kirkpatrick, Eliot Cohen, and the omnipresent Richard Perle. A quick scan of the list of AEI scholars and officers in the lobby's office directory reveals at least a dozen PNAC associates, including such luminaries as Joshua Muravchik and Michael Novak. PNAC's Middle East director Reuel Marc Gerecht and PNAC's military analyst Thomas Donnelly number

among the AEI associates who have signed PNAC's public statements.vi

Conveniently located in this neoconservative warren is the Philanthropy Roundtable, a right-wing association of foundations that split from the Council of Foundations in the early 1980s. Just as the Business Roundtable was created to unite Corporate America around conservative policy agendas, the Philanthropy Roundtable joined the counter-establishment matrix in the tradition of "shadow liberalism"—creating institutions and campaigns that parallel those of liberals and progressives.

Michael Joyce, longtime president (1986-2000) of the Bradley Foundation, served until 2003 as chair of the Roundtable's board of directors.vii Bill Kristol, like his father, has cultivated close ties with Bradley and other right-wing foundations that now exhibit a decidedly neoconservative cast.viii Joyce feels it was inevitable that Bush would embrace the neoconservative agenda. "I'm not sure September 11 did more than push the timetable up," Joyce noted.ix

Commenting on the special role of right-wing foundations, Michael Grebe, current president of the Bradley Foundation and one of the five directors of the Philanthropy Roundtable, said: "We have a role in sustaining a conservative intellectual infrastructure." To that end, Bradley granted AEI \$14 million between 1985 and 2002, and during the same period AEI received \$6.5 million from the Olin Foundation.x A handful of archconservative foundations not only sustain the right-wing power complex but form part of the architecture of power through revolving door relationships. Michael Joyce, for example, beyond just providing start-up funding for Kristol's Project for the Republican Future and PNAC, is a signatory of PNAC statements, a trustee of Freedom House, and a member or past member of various presidential and national commissions. Richard Mellon Scaife, who heads the Scaife family foundations and is a major PNAC supporter, was a member of the second Committee on the Present Danger and has been a trustee of the Hoover Institution and the Heritage Foundation.

Right-wing foundations have provided the start-up funding to get PNAC, AEI, and most other idea brokers of the right-wing's power complex into high gear. Although early right-wing donors such as Coors and Amway have dropped off, the top tier of the right's think tank all continue to drink from the same collective trough of right-wing foundations. The Bradley, Sarah Scaife, Olin, and Castle Rock foundations all funded the American

Enterprise Institute, Heritage Foundation, Hudson Institute, Hoover Institution, and Manhattan Institute in the 1997-2001 period.

PNAC “Set the Table” for Bush Administration’s Foreign Policy

With funding from the Bradley Foundation, William Kristol established the Project for the Republican Future in 1993 in anticipation of the 1994 congressional elections. Following the resounding victory of right-wing Republicans, he founded *Weekly Standard* in 1995 in the vacated offices of the Project for the Republican Future. The next year Kristol and Robert Kagan established the Project for the New American Century, which describes itself as a “nonprofit educational organization supporting American military, diplomatic, and moral leadership.”

A wide range of neoconservatives, representatives from the social conservative right, and leading national security hawks coalesced around PNAC. Its founding statement of principles, signed by several individuals who would later become high officials in Bush II’s foreign policy team (Rumsfeld, Cheney, Abrams, Dobriansky, Libby, Wolfowitz, Khalilzad, Rodman, and Friedberg) was a document aimed at reinvigorating and uniting U.S. citizens around a new vision of America that brimmed with confidence and moral conviction.^{xi}

As Kristol and Kagan apparently recognized early on, the Project for the New American Century—with its focus on American supremacy and moral clarity—had all the right ingredients of a unifying ideology for a powerful new front group that could spearhead an elite social movement for radical political change. Although intent on establishing the vision and building blocks for a bold new foreign and military policy, the PNAC 1997 statement of principles avoided the type of provocative language that was common stock in neoconservative publications and in-house think tank policy briefs. There was no mention of a proposed security strategy driven by U.S. supremacy, no allusion to empire, and no explicit suggestion that the post-World War II framework of multilateralism should be tossed in the waste bin of history. Although Wolfowitz, Cheney, Khalilzad, and Libby—the team that fashioned the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance—signed PNAC’s statement of principles, the unifying document remained within the traditional “peace through strength” framework and omitted any language that would have explicitly foreshadowed PNAC’s agenda of preemptive strikes,

regime change, and other measures to block any challenges to U.S. supremacy in the next century.

PNAC succeeded in integrating the various tendencies and diverse expertise found within neoconservatism, uniting political intellectuals associated with neocon publications (Norman Podhoretz and William Kristol), scholars (Eliot Cohen and Francis Fukuyama), military strategists (Paul Wolfowitz and Zalmay Khalilzad), and cultural/religious warriors (William Bennett and George Weigel). Among its 27 founding members, including cochairs Kristol and Kagan, only a handful of individuals didn’t match the neoconservative prototype although all shared in the agendas and new ideological vision of American supremacism as articulated by the neocon political and military strategists.

The two most prominent in the small number of exceptions—Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld—came to their right-wing internationalism more by way of their ties with multinational corporations and the globalizing military-industrial complex, high-tech industries, and energy businesses. Both Cheney and Rumsfeld were corporate CEOs when they signed the PNAC charter.

Albeit sparsely represented, right-wing social conservatives closely associated with the Christian Right constituted another important sector in the PNAC coalition. Among those representing the social conservative faction were Gary Bauer, former director of the Family Research Council, and former Vice President Dan Quayle, as well as two other prominent cultural warriors: cofounder of Empower America and former Representative Vin Weber and Steve Forbes. Forbes, the quintessential corporate conservative, was also a former Empower America director and is associated with other right-wing social conservative and economic libertarian institutes. In 2002 Forbes, with his neocon colleagues, was a founding director of the pro-Likud Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. As PNAC continues to issue new public declarations, it has maintained its strong neoconservative backbone while integrating top figures from other sectors of the right-wing’s power complex.

PNAC’s Executive Director Gary Schmitt once boasted that PNAC “helped set the table” for new policy decisions “by setting the agenda up.” Other factors that the none-too-modest Schmitt cites for PNAC’s success include: “We are articulate; we are very smart about when to say things and how to say it; and do have the advantage of an echo effect—if I write something, it may be picked up by the *Weekly Standard* or repeated by Bill or Bob in various media forums.”

Ideology of Power

Contrary to prevailing academic notions that hold that extreme political movements always revert to moderation, the right wing has maintained an evolving set of radical ideologies and strategies. Despite its extremist ideologies and policy agendas, the right-wing's architecture of power does not operate on the edges of mainstream society and politics but stands at the very center of our society. Like all social/political movements, the right wing's institutional web and its populist constituencies seek political and social power. Over the past three decades the right-wing institutions and associated populist backlash movements have succeeded in undermining liberal policy frameworks and establishing its radicalism as accepted political discourse.

Lately, the right-wing's architecture of power has reformulated its concept of power—no longer merely as holding political power but now as a core ideological concept. In other words, the right-wing's architecture of power since the late 1990s not only seeks increased political power and influence but is propagating an ideology of power that holds that U.S. supremacy—cultural, moral, military, economic, and diplomatic—is a self-evident truth and right.

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Also See:

Tom Barry, "Iraq War Product of Neocon Philosophy of Intelligence," online at:
<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/analysis/2004/0402pi.php>

Tom Barry, "One Year After the Invasion: Baghdad and Beyond," online at: <http://rightweb.irc-online.org/analysis/2004/0403anniv.php>

Endnotes:

i David Carr, "White House Listens When Weekly Speaks," New York Times, March 11, 2003.

ii Paul Gottfried, The Conservative Movement, Revised Edition (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), p. 151.

iii Publication committee members of Public Interest include Nicholas Eberstadt, Roger Hertog, Leon Kass, Charles Krauthammer, William Kristol, and other neoconservatives.

iv Encounter authors include Norman Podhoretz, William Kristol, Ronald Radosh, Joshua Muravchik, Leon Kass, Peter Collier, David Horowitz, Steven Mosher, and Robert Kagan. Encounter published The Mideast Peace Process (2003) in collaboration with Commentary, and Present Dangers (2000) in collaboration with the Project for the New American Century. Another PNAC collaboration was a "just-in-time" book arguing for a U.S. invasion of Iraq: Lawrence F. Kaplan and William Kristol, The War Over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny and America's Mission (2003).

v "American Enterprise Institute," Right Web Profile (Interhemispheric Resource Center, November 2003); Also see: www.democracyunbound.com/aei.html.

vi Other AEI associates who are also associated with PNAC through their sign-on statements include Nicholas Eberstadt, Danielle Pletka, and William Schneider.

vii For more on the influence of Michael S. Joyce, see: Elizabeth Greene, "Reinventing Philanthropy on the Right," Chronicle of Philanthropy, August 23, 2001; Also see "The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation," at www.mediatransparency.org/funders/bradley_foundation.htm; Sally Covington, Moving A Public Policy Agenda: The Strategic Philanthropy of Conservative Foundations (New York: National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, July 1997); and Bruce Murphy, "Neoconservative Clout Seen In U.S. Iraq Policy," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, April 5, 2003, at: www.jsonline.org.com/news/gen/apr03/.

viii Right Web Profiles (Interhemispheric Resource Center, November 2003); Mediatransparency.org. The other major right-wing foundations—Carthage, Earhart, Smith Richardson, JM Foundation—have also funded most of these same think tanks.

ix Bruce Murphy, "Neoconservative Clout Seen In U.S. Iraq Policy," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, April 5, 2003, at: www.jsonline.org.com/news/gen/apr03/.

x Shawn Zeller, "Conservative Crusaders: Unlike some of their more liberal counterparts, conservative foundations aren't bashful

about trying to promote their causes in Washington—from school vouchers to Social Security privatization,” *National Journal*, April 26, 2003.

xi Other signatories of PNAC’s “Statement of Principles” also joined the Bush administration as members of important advisory committees and quasi-governmental agencies, including Eliot Cohen, Dan Quayle, Henry Rowen, and Fred Iklé as members of Rumsfeld’s Defense Policy Board; Vin Weber and Francis Fukuyama as NED chair and board member, respectively; and Fukuyama on the Commission on Bioethics. Stephen Rosen continued serving as a member of the U.S.-China Commission.

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“The architecture of power that’s changing our world”

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