



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

fff@fff.org www.fff.org

The Hijacking of the Republican Party

by James Muhm

The traditional principles of the Republican Party have in the past several years been subordinated to a more intrusive domestic policy and an imperialistic foreign policy. Whereas a policy of less federal government intrusion into domestic personal affairs once held together most party adherents, now the party machinery has more recently been redirected to a more pragmatic policy of winning and keeping political control, attendant to philosophic principles only insofar as “practical politics” demands it. Similarly, what historically was once considered a more reserved, sometimes near-isolationist, stance in foreign affairs has been replaced by a foreign policy that is overtly interventionist.

This transformation of party and governmental policy is in no way accidental and is only marginally related to the appalling terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. That calamity only provided additional stimulus for the visionary, planned takeover or hijacking of the immense power attendant to the presidency of the United States. The neoconservative movement had been looking for just such an opportunity for several years, and has used the Republican Party as its vehicle of transformation only in relatively recent years, beginning when the Reagan administration adopted a more energetic and militaristic approach to international affairs.

The neoconservative movement, now implemented by people who hold disproportionate power in the administration of President George W. Bush, first took shape in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. The movement has always consisted of only a relative handful of extraordinarily influential people who formerly were more aligned with collectivist, or Trotskyite, ideals. Leaders of the movement recognized that the more-militaristic policies of President Reagan in the 1980s lent more advantage to achieving their goals, so many of them became supporters of Republican policies and therefore became, to their friends, new conservatives or “neoconservatives.” The neoconservatives, acting from a self-righteous and virtuous conviction that America possesses a special moral status, believe that the United States should exercise its moral imperative to enforce world peace and extend the benefits of liberty and prosperity through the spread of American values. Their immediate, continuing, and primary goal has been to

stabilize the Middle East and, not incidentally, to buttress the security of Israel. Another description for such a vision is that of an American hegemony.

The president and the neoconservatives surrounding him believe that it is the mission of the United States to redraw the map of the Middle East by force, if necessary, as part of their vision for an American empire. Such a policy translates, of course, into a belief that using the armed services of the United States to force American ideals and values on others is acceptable, and that the American military should not be limited to the direct defense of our country. Nothing in the Constitution of the United States delegates such power to the president.

The neoconservatives further believe that a powerful and encompassing federal government is a benefit to domestic society as well, and that governmental policies should be determined by strong and forceful executive, not legislative, decisions. This attitude goes hand in hand with their belief that infringements on civil liberties, such as some of those in the USA PATRIOT Act, are necessary and desirable. If the PATRIOT Act had been promoted by President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno, most Republicans would have been more than dismayed.

During the current administration, nondefense spending has increased more than 18 percent, and not a single spending bill from a compliant Congress has been vetoed. The bloated farm bill was extravagant beyond recklessness. The education bill increases, not decreases, federal intervention and control of K–12 education. Policies such as these enlarge the scope and power of the federal government and are not conservative at all, but tend toward increased federal control of the citizenry.

Both the new domestic and foreign policies have swept along with them most of the approximately one-third of the population who think of themselves as Republican. The traditional conservative vision of less government, free and open international trade, a more truly humble foreign policy, and expanding civil liberties is dramatically receding. It is to be hoped that more Republicans soon will recognize the trend and attempt to change it, realizing that centralized, intrusive domestic policies and risky, adventurous foreign policies do not conform with their traditional conservative Republican values.

James Muhm is a freelance writer residing in Denver, Colorado.

This article was originally published in August 2004.