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## The State Department's extreme makeover

A veteran Foreign Service officer warns that when Colin Powell departs in a second Bush term, America will lose its last bulwark against the radical ideologues who are planning more Iraqs.

**Editor's note:** "Anonymous" is a veteran Foreign Service officer currently serving as a State Department official. The views expressed are personal and not related to his official position.

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**By Anonymous**



Oct. 4, 2004 | Secretary of State Colin Powell is not staying for a second Bush term. When he goes, the last bulwark against complete neoconservative control of U.S. foreign policy goes with him. The implications are enormous, yet the American electorate appears to be blinded by the Bush campaign's deliberate manipulations of 9/11.

Powell has served both as the reasoned voice of career diplomats and the experienced voice of career U.S. military in the Bush administration. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld ignored military advice and excluded Department of State career professionals from Iraq planning. Power was concentrated in the hands of a clique of neocon ideologues he placed in key policy positions, including Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith. In the first term of George W. Bush, protégés of now disgraced former Defense Policy Board member and neocon godfather Richard Perle achieved control or subordination of every executive branch foreign-policy-making body -- except the Department of State.

Career employees of the department enthusiastically greeted Colin Powell when he pulled up to the curb for the first time at Foggy Bottom in his PT Cruiser. They have supported him, and through him, have unfailingly supported the president through thick and thin over four years -- up to and including volunteering in record numbers to staff fully the highly dangerous positions in the new embassy in Baghdad, Iraq. Even after being dumped on by the Pentagon neocons and witnessing the debacle of the Pentagon's Jay Garner's post-conflict solution, the State Department's Civil and Foreign Service staff took up the slack when the Pentagon unceremoniously fled responsibility for Iraq reconstruction and stabilization. Now, Powell's departure is seen within the department as an invitation to a lynching.

The realization that the same neocons who dismissed State's accurate "Future of Iraq Project," prepared before the war, may now take over at State in the second term is widely viewed inside the department as a threat to the very integrity of the country's diplomatic first line of defense. Corridor discussion has turned desperate -- maybe former Secretary of State James Baker will intervene, maybe former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft will talk to

someone, maybe 41 will talk to 43.

State personnel are used to comings and goings of Democratic and Republican administrations, serving all equally and fairly. Not since Vietnam, however, has the U.S. diplomatic establishment viewed the future with such a degree of alarm. Retired U.S. ambassadors and diplomats have raised their own public concerns in signed public statements about the direction of U.S. foreign policy -- but that concern pales compared with the quiet revolt brewing against a neocon takeover at Foggy Bottom.

After 9/11, Wolfowitz, Feith and his subordinate, Harold Rhode, recruited David Wurmser as a contractor from the conservative think tank the American Enterprise Institute to set up what became known internally as the "Wurmser-Maloof" project. F. Michael Maloof, neocon fellow traveler and former aide to Richard Perle, and Wurmser created a hidden intelligence unit, the Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group, under Feith at the Pentagon. The purpose of the group was to end-run the CIA and create the rationale for invading Iraq. The parallel operations model was previously followed by Oliver North at the National Security Council and Elliott Abrams at State in their ill-fated Iran-Contra strategy. It should have come as no surprise that another neocon think-tank insider, Abram Shulsky, an Abrams colleague from their days as staffers to Sen. Henry "Scoop" Jackson, would end up heading up what became the Office of Special Plans, the secret intelligence unit at the Pentagon under Feith. The weapons of mass destruction disinformation that was fed to the president and to the American public came directly from Shulsky's shop.

After setting up this operation at the Pentagon for Wolfowitz and Feith, Wurmser, with the help of Perle, was sent in early 2002 to burrow in at State as senior advisor to John Bolton, under secretary for arms control and international security.

In December 2002, Wolfowitz, Feith, Wurmser and Vice President Cheney's national security advisor, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, acting together, maneuvered Condoleezza Rice into appointing Elliott Abrams to the position of special assistant to the president and senior director for the Middle East at the National Security Council. This appointment gave the neocons everything they wanted -- the NSC, Executive Office of the President, Office of the Vice President, the Pentagon, a cornered director in George Tenet at CIA, and Wurmser at State.

The neocons had control of the information reaching the president and a channel for their pseudo-intelligence product from Wolfowitz and Feith's secret Pentagon Office of Special Plans. The only wild card was Colin Powell and State's elite and independent Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR).

Neither Powell nor his deputy, Richard Armitage, who is also leaving with Powell, seems to have been fooled by Wurmser's desire to leave the Pentagon and join John Bolton's staff -- in effect, to come work for Powell. They cornered and then neutralized Wurmser. Wurmser's target was to get at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, a thorn in the neocons' side and Powell's intelligence ace-in-the-hole against Tenet's "slam-dunk" sellout at the CIA.

INR kept telling Powell the truth about Saddam's nonexistent WMD. State's Future of Iraq project, led by a career Foreign Service officer, who was cold-shouldered by Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, laid out what might happen if we took over control of Iraq. Unfortunately, even the sober minds of INR could not stop Powell from lending his credibility to the "unfortunate error" show at the U.N. Security Council. Modeled on Adlai Stevenson's Oct. 25, 1962, Cuban missile presentation to the Security Council, Powell's Feb. 5, 2003, presentation marks the low point of his tenure and, in retrospect, underscores how badly his credibility was needed and then was abused by Vice President Cheney and the president.

The whole time Wurmser was at State, career professionals around him saw someone acting more like an agent of influence than as a subordinate of the secretary of state. He was in constant contact with his Pentagon intelligence cell. Questions were asked -- but never answered -- as to how Wurmser got a full security clearance when he never registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act for his 1996 policy work for Israel's incoming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (including advice on how to lobby the U.S. Congress) and as someone who was married to an Israeli citizen with close ties to Israel's Likud Party -- in theory, a party to U.S.-brokered Middle East peace

negotiations.

In September 2003, Wurmser left the Department of State to become Vice President Cheney's principal deputy for national security affairs under "Scooter" Libby. He left before any questions were answered about his access to and use of classified information. His clearances were never questioned when he joined the vice president's staff, and his status under the Foreign Agents Registration Act has never been clarified.

Powell's early 2005 departure is the subject of intense jockeying among the neocons. A Perle neocon protégé, Michael Rubin, has been given the task of destroying the only competition -- L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer, the former Iraq Coalition Provisional Authority chief, not a neocon insider and the favorite of traditional Republican conservatives. The neocon plan is to make Bremer the scapegoat: It was not bad neocon policy, it was bad Bremer decisions that has led to the fiasco in Iraq. Rubin was sent to Baghdad to be Wolfowitz's man inside the CPA. Bremer dissed Rubin as a lightweight. Rubin tried to push neocon policy inside the CPA -- what he, Perle and Ahmed Chalabi had pushed from the American Enterprise Institute -- restoring the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq by placing Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan on the throne. Bremer would have none of it. Rubin is now tasked by Perle and Wolfowitz to trash Bremer -- which he is dutifully doing in print and media appearances arranged by neocon handler, lecture agent and media Booker Eleana Benador. They intend to close the Foggy Bottom door to any aspirations Bremer, a former Foreign Service officer and Kissinger protégé, might have to take over from Powell.

Given the implosion of Iraq, Wolfowitz and his coterie have doubts that Wolfowitz can be confirmed as secretary (of either DOD or State) without a debilitating confirmation process, though State remains choice No. 1. A more complicated plan is to again play behind Condoleezza Rice. With Rice as secretary of state and Wolfowitz in as national security advisor, neocons would put David Wurmser or John Bolton in as Rice's deputy, replacing Armitage.

Wurmser, Perle and Feith were the principal authors of the 1996 100-day policy plan for incoming Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. None ever registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act for this work.

That plan, "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," published by Israel's Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, has served as the guiding road map for the neocons both in Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office and in the Bush administration. No one should have been surprised by Iraq -- the neocons have not been coy in laying out their vision of Israel's security requirements. David Wurmser published a book-length version of his IASPS study at AEI. The introduction to that screed, "Tyranny's Ally: America's Failure to Defeat Saddam Hussein," was written by Richard Perle. It lists as sources Ahmed Chalabi, Michael Ledeen, Douglas Feith and Harold Rhode.

Control at State would remove the last obstacle to the plan Perle, Wurmser and Feith laid long before 9/11. The neocons telegraphed their intentions clearly in President Bush's GOP convention acceptance speech in New York, in which the neocon hand was palpable in the ambitious agenda to remake the Middle East.

The president used political buzzwords to whip the crowd -- and the voting public -- into a noncomprehending patriotic frenzy of "four more years." Like Pope Urban at the 1095 Council of Clermont, who launched the First Crusade to cries of "God Wills It" from the frenzied Christians wanting to take back the Holy Land, Bush has decreed a crusade to bring enlightened Western democracy to the Muslim populations of the Middle East, left otherwise bereft in dysfunctional colonial-inspired states by the breakup of the Ottoman Empire.

But Bush the Crusader is off to a rocky start in Iraq. The ongoing meltdown is awakening Americans to the reality of the neocon agenda. But is it too late? Neocons are not dissuaded by the problems in Iraq; on the contrary, they are arguing that the problem is "Bremerism" -- the U.S. has not gone far enough. In their view, we need to take out the Palestinians, Syria and Iran now.

The neocons, working in tandem with a similar staff in the office of Prime Minister Sharon of Israel, have a three-part agenda for the first part of Bush's second term: first, oust Yasser Arafat; second, overthrow the secular

Baathist al-Assad dictatorship in Syria; and, third, eliminate, one way or another, Iran's nuclear facilities.

Nowhere has support for the neocon Middle East crusade resonated more than in the constituency of Rep. Tom DeLay, who is the top Christian Zionist handler in the Republican Party and poised to strike GOP gold with his gerrymandering of Texas congressional districts.

For the neocons, Sept. 11 and Israel's security policy under Sharon have morphed into a single concept, the kind of thinking typified by Secretary Rumsfeld's recent lapses mixing Saddam Hussein with 9/11 and Osama bin Laden with Iraq.

Working with direct input from Israeli intelligence, Feith's Pentagon office coordinated with Libby and Wurmser in the vice president's office to spread the story that the missing WMD are to be found hidden in Syria. Israeli agents have worked overtime to neutralize and undo Syrian cooperation with the CIA against al-Qaida. This comes on the heels of a similar highly successful destruction of CIA inroads with the Palestinian Authority. We are now light-years beyond the two-state solution focus of Middle East policy. Instead of chasing Laden, the neocons plan to put the U.S. on the road to Damascus -- and Tehran. The groundwork is laid.

While the FBI scrutinizes whether Pentagon neocon aide Larry Franklin and AIPAC passed secrets to Israel, the larger story of Richard Perle and the neocons' carefully orchestrated takeover of Bush foreign policy has yet to be fully comprehended by the electorate.

Powell is leaving. We need to repeat that. When this reality sinks in, we will finally understand what we are getting ourselves into in a second Bush term. A handful of conservative columnists, Republican senators and a few other GOP luminaries are trying to reclaim a traditional conservative Republican foreign policy approach. But it is clearly too late.

Comparing Bush's foreign policy views in 2000 with his New York convention acceptance speech, it is clear that since 2000, the neocons started with a blank foreign policy slate. Looking carefully at Bush's 2000 campaign and statements and comparing them with the current 2004 campaign, it is startling how far he has come from his traditional Republican base. He has become the "Neoconian Candidate."

George W. Bush has signed on to the neocon agenda with the unshakeable faith of the born again. At this point, we all need a reminder that Crusades 1 through 5 ended badly in the long run, not just for the Crusaders, but on the home front. In a new Bush crusade, in a second term, the first to fall may be the professionals at the State Department.

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