

U.S. CREDIBILITY IS GONE

The Wolfowitz Doctrine and the ‘Rules-Based Order’

by Harley Schlanger

Jan. 9—The Anglo-American empire is fast reaching its “emperor has no clothes” moment, as the arrogant disregard for international law displayed by the Biden Administration and its NATO allies is being called out by one of its leading defenders, the *Washington Post*. A Jan. 5 [article](#) by their foreign affairs columnist Ishaan Tharoor—who has often served as an apologist for the repeated violations of international law by a succession of U.S. administrations—indicates that it is not just the growing number of anti-colonial leaders from the Global South who recognize the murderous hypocrisy of the “West.”

Tharoor uses the Application filed by the government of South Africa in the International Court of Justice, which charges the Netanyahu regime in Israel with violating law established by the 1948 Genocide Convention, to call attention to the opposition to the atrocities unleashed on the Palestinians in Gaza. Under the headline, “Israeli calls for Gaza’s ethnic cleansing are only getting louder,” Tharoor quotes from the South African Application, that “no armed attack on a State’s territory, no matter how serious—even an attack involving atrocity crimes—can ... provide any possible justification for, or defense to, breaches” of the Genocide Convention.

With quotes from Prime Minister Netanyahu’s extremist allies demanding the removal of most, if not all, of the Palestinian population in Gaza, the article makes a mockery of the oft-repeated assertion that U.S. support for Israel is a defense of the “Rules-Based Order.” The South African filing includes ten pages of quotes

from Netanyahu’s cabinet members which express vile, dehumanizing views of Palestinian civilians.

The ‘New World Order’

The concept of a “rules-based order” is nothing more than a modern iteration of imperial domination built on the foundations of classic 19th-Century British geopolitics. It was crafted by a team of neo-conservative ideologues to consolidate the global control of an “American century” after the break-up of the Soviet Union, providing content to President George H.W. Bush’s assertion in January 1991 that the coalition going to war against Iraq was creating a “New World Order.”

The founding document of this “rules-based order” was the “Defense Planning Guidance” drafted by a team working under the direction of Paul Wolfowitz, which became known as the “Wolfowitz Doctrine.” It was completed in February 1992, when Wolfowitz was Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, serving under notorious war hawk Dick Cheney, who was Bush’s Secretary of Defense. After it was leaked to the *New York Times*, which reported it on

March 8, 1992, a second draft was produced to “soften” the language, but the intent in the original outline was not altered. It was drafted to address the “new situation” in the world, characterized by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the U.S. coalition victory over Iraq in the Gulf War:

Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the



World Bank/Simone McCourtie

Paul Wolfowitz, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in 1992, under whom the “Defense Planning Guidance” was written, the founding document of the “Wolfowitz Doctrine,” otherwise known as the “rules-based order.”

former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power.



Ronald Reagan Presidential Library/Peter J. Souza

Dr. Albert Wohlstetter of the RAND Corporation. His writings on nuclear force strategy were influential in building the neocon networks coordinated later by Paul Wolfowitz.

U.S. policy henceforth will be to “discourage” any nation, including allies, “from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order.” To do this, the U.S. “must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.” After acknowledging that the U.S. “cannot become the world’s ‘policeman,’” it states that nonetheless, the U.S. must take “pre-eminent responsibility” to protect “our own interests.” The first “interest” cited is “access to vital raw materials.” This requires that U.S. strategy “*must now focus on precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor*” (emphasis added).

The political/economic component of the strategy insisted upon promotion of “peaceful democracies with market-based economics”; i.e., a neoliberal international order. This would be enforced by U.S. military power, while preserving NATO “as the primary instrument of Western defense and security, as well as the channel for U.S. influence and participation in European security affairs.” This latter point is seen by its sponsors as a success, as recent events such as the NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, and support for Netanyahu’s genocide in Gaza demonstrate that no European Union or NATO subordinate will step out of line with the empire’s policy.

‘Bipartisan’ Consensus

The Wolfowitz Doctrine has defined the bipartisan consensus which rules Washington, with a commitment to sustaining the U.S. as the “Sole Superpower” running a Unipolar Order. The continuity of this policy after the first Bush presidency was maintained through President Clinton’s Secretary of State Madeleine Al-

bright, who proclaimed the United States to be the “indispensable nation” in strategic affairs. In defending the administration’s support of U.S. military action in Iraq in 1998 and the Balkans in 1999, she said, “If we have to use force, it is because we are America, we are the indispensable nation.” She was a strong proponent of NATO expansion, telling the Senate in 1997, “We do not need Russia to agree to enlargement.”

When challenged in 1996 about U.S. sanctions against Iraq, which resulted in the deaths of a half million Iraqi children, she stated “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think

the price is worth it.” The U.S. and its allies continue to use sanctions globally, as an instrument of warfare, targeting civilian populations in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, against Russia as part of NATO’s proxy war in Ukraine, and now in Gaza—a financial warfare policy which is killing children in record numbers.

Permanent War in Southwest Asia

In addition to the “generic” application of the Wolfowitz Doctrine to justify permanent war in Southwest Asia, to target leaders such as Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi (assassinated Oct. 20, 2011); Iraq’s Saddam Hussein (executed Dec. 30, 2006); and Bashar al-Assad in Syria, all of whom refused to submit to the rules-based order, Wolfowitz was directly involved in using Israel as an instrument on behalf of Anglo-American geopolitical policy in that region.

One aspect of this was Wolfowitz’s campaign to undermine the proposal for a two-state solution for resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict, through a project of nuclear desalination, which was designed as a program for cooperation among Israel and its Arab neighbors, including a Palestinian state. The project was originally designed by Tennessee Valley Authority officials in the mid-1950s. Wolfowitz attacked this proposal with his Ph.D. dissertation in 1972, which was done under the direction of Albert Wohlstetter of the Rand Corporation. Wohlstetter was influential in building the neocon networks which Wolfowitz coordinated later as Under Secretary of Defense under Cheney in the George H.W. Bush presidency, and worked with

Wolfowitz to build support in diplomatic, intelligence and academic/think tank layers for the “Wolfowitz Doctrine.”

His 1972 dissertation was an attack on the efforts of former President Dwight Eisenhower to organize a peace plan for Israel-Palestine. In 1968, after the 1967 Six-Day War, Eisenhower teamed with Admiral Lewis Strauss, who had earlier served as head of the Atomic Energy Commission, to draft a proposal, called the “Strauss-Eisenhower Plan for Middle East Nuclear Desalting,” to build cooperation as a basis for a sustainable peace.

This plan was featured in a June 1968 article in *Reader’s Digest*, one of the largest circulation magazines in the U.S.

The Plan called for building three nuclear-powered water desalination plants, located in the area which was designated by Lyndon LaRouche several years later in his Oasis Plan. In the Strauss-Eisenhower Plan, the plants would produce a billion gallons of fresh water daily, and would irrigate 1,750 square miles of desert. This proposal was presented to the Congress in [September 1968](#), and was put into a Senate Resolution 155, which passed. The idea was later incorporated in a Middle East peace plan proposed by Nixon’s Secretary of State William Rogers.

Wolfowitz’s hit piece was titled “Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East: The Politics and Economics of Proposals for Nuclear Desalting.” In the introduction, he writes that the possibility exists today to use the “terrible power discovered in the atom” to achieve the “promise that the deserts can at last be made to bloom,” explicitly referring to the Strauss-Eisenhower plan. He proceeds to outline his “contentions” against the Plan:

1. The benefits have been “greatly exaggerated.”
2. The costs have been “underestimated.”
3. The potential harm (which he identifies as nuclear proliferation) has been “largely ignored.”

He concludes the opening section by declaring, “Scarcity of water has not been the cause of recent wars,” implying that collaboration to ensure a supply of fresh water would not facilitate a political peace process. For the reasons he presented, he writes that *desalting*



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President Dwight Eisenhower warns the nation of the “military-industrial complex” in his farewell address, Jan. 17, 1961.

appears to be a “most unwise squandering of enormous economic resources.” (Emphasis added.) His arguments against cooperation to provide fresh water cannot hide his real goal, to *prevent* an economic policy which would successfully support a peace process for a two-state solution, the real target of his polemics.

This was evident twenty-four years later, when the same team of neocons which joined Wolfowitz in drafting the Defense Planning Guidance, was reconstituted to produce “Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm.”

Written for then-Prime Minister Netanyahu in July 1996, its proposals included that Israel drop once and for all the Oslo Accords; annex the West Bank and Gaza to prevent the potential for creating a Palestinian state; and go to war with Iraq. It also advocated finding an alternative to Arafat as a Palestinian leader.

Though Netanyahu refrained from publicly adopting the Clean Break strategy, its outline has been at the core of his rejection of international law, which insists that a two-state solution is the basis for a sustainable peace in the region. The breakthrough which resulted in the Oslo Accords was based on agreement of both Israel’s Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat to work toward a two-state solution, in which each state recognizes the legitimacy of the other.

Wolfowitz was involved in finishing off the Oslo process when he was appointed President of the World Bank in June 2005, serving in that position for two years. During this time, Oslo was finally killed, in part because the World Bank repeatedly denied credit to fund the economic annexes of Oslo. The two main reasons given were the concern that, due to the “corruption of the PLO,” Arafat would divert the funds to build a terrorist force instead of investing in infrastructure; and fear that any attempt at nuclear desalination would give the Arab world access to atomic technology, resulting in the proliferation of nuclear weapons. During his short tenure at the World Bank, Wolfowitz emphasized the fight against corruption, which he said had to be made a priority; and the “opening of trade,”

LaRouche's Oasis Plan



EIRNS

Some of the major power, transportation, and water management systems ready for collaborative construction and mutual benefit among all nations in the region.

i.e., free trade, which he said would do more to help poor nations than debt relief.

Blinken's 'Rules-Based Order'

Current U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, is the most outspoken proponent in the Biden administration for the disastrous hypocrisy of adhering to the Wolfowitz Doctrine, which he piously refers to during his travels as the "Rules-Based Order." He declares the RBO to be the "core of American foreign policy," though the "rules" are limited to whatever demand the Anglo-American oligarchy makes to defend its supremacy. He is a product of the Albright kindergarten, describing her as his mentor. At her funeral, he said,

Madeleine Albright was a brilliant diplomat, a visionary leader, a courageous trailblazer, a dedicated mentor, and a great and good person who loved the United States deeply and devoted her life to serving it. She was also a wonderful friend to many, including me. I'll miss her very much.

In his defense of the RBO, Blinken shows an utter contempt for principles of international law. As an official in various capacities in the Obama administration, Blinken supported the illegal assault on Libya and supplying weapons to the Syrian "moderate rebels." He has supported "regime-change coups" in Ukraine and "color revolutions" in the former Soviet Union; and has backed Saudi Arabia's bombing of Yemen. He has consistently opposed any move toward a negotiated settlement of NATO's deadly fiasco in Ukraine, while vigorously defending Israel's murderous policy in Gaza, opposing even the use of the word "ceasefire" in State Department memos, while hypocritically continuing to insist that the U.S. has repeatedly asked Israel to take "every possible measure" to prevent civilian casualties!

As the filing before the International Court of Justice shows, toleration of the farce of the RBO has reached a limit. Given the history of the spectacular failure of U.S. military interventions in the last fifty years, including Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine, and multiple interventions in Africa and South and Central America, a change in U.S. policy is long overdue. The neoliberal order is dying, and a new strategic and development architecture is emerging, in opposition to the wars and destruction wrought in defense of the Unipolar Order.

The question before the world is whether the greedy, arrogant egotism of the West will be rejected by the citizens of the West, before it leads to the annihilation of humanity in a thermonuclear World War III.