

# Woolsey's Role Crucial to Impact of Occupation

By Jim Lobe | April 8, 2003

If you want to figure out whether the administration of President George W. Bush intends a crusade to “remake the Middle East” in the wake of Washington’s presumed military victory in Iraq, watch what happens with R. James Woolsey. A former director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Woolsey is being pushed hard by his fellow neoconservatives in the Pentagon to play a key role in the post-Saddam Hussein U.S. occupation.

Less well known than his long-time associates and close friends, Deputy Pentagon Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and the former head of the Defense Policy Board (DPB) Richard Perle, Woolsey has long believed that Washington has a mission to use its overwhelming military power and its democratic ideals to transform the Arab world. And he has pushed for war with Iraq as hard as anyone, even before the terrorist attacks of Sep 11, 2001. If he soon pops up in Baghdad, you can bet that the “clash of civilizations” is imminent, if it has not begun already.

To Woolsey’s mind, the United States is already engaged in what he and many of his fellow neocons call “World War IV,” a struggle that pits the United States and Britain against Islamist and “Wahabi” extremists like al Qaeda’s Osama bin Laden, Iranian theocrats, and Ba’ath Party “fascists” in Syria and Iraq.

Their list also includes other authoritarian rulers in the Arab world, such as Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak and the ruling Saud family in Saudi Arabia, whose “Faustian bargain” with the Muslim Wahabi sect, in Woolsey’s view, is responsible for al Qaeda and much of Islamist-related terrorism throughout the world.

“We want you nervous,” Woolsey “told” Mubarak and the Saudi monarchy in a speech to students at the University of California at Los Angeles on Thursday. “We want you to realize now, for the fourth time in a hundred years, (that) this country and its allies are on the march, and that we are on the side of those you most fear: we’re on the side of your own people.”

At a NATO conference in Prague last November, Woolsey declared “Iraq can be seen as the first battle of the fourth world war,” in rhetoric that he has prac-

ticed and honed virtually since the 9/11 attacks on New York and the Pentagon. “After two hot world wars and one cold one that all began and were centered in Europe,” he said, “the fourth world war is going to be for the Middle East.”

A high-flying corporate lawyer, Woolsey, like other neoconservatives, began as a liberal Democrat in the 1960s who marched in the civil rights movement and even campaigned for the anti-Vietnam War candidate, Senator Eugene McCarthy. Unlike most neocons, Woolsey served a brief stint in the Army—albeit not in Indochina—before entering government, where he fell in with the rising stars of the neoconservative movement, including Perle and Wolfowitz, as an arms control negotiator. He served for two years in the Carter administration as undersecretary of the Navy, and was then recruited by Perle and other hard-liners in the Reagan administration to return to arms control work, which he also pursued under the administration of George Bush, Sr.

Unhappy with the realism of the first Bush, and outraged by his failure to oust Saddam after the first Gulf War, he supported Bill Clinton for president in 1992. To the enthusiasm of fellow neocons, Clinton made him CIA director in 1993 but he resigned less than two years later, complaining that he and Clinton never established a close relationship.

But Woolsey maintained his obsession with Saddam Hussein, and in January 1998 signed a public letter to Clinton by the newly formed Project for the New American Century (PNAC) calling for the adoption of a “regime change” as the main U.S. policy goal toward Iraq. In that same year, he lobbied hard for passage of the Iraq Liberation Act (ILA), which not



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only formalized regime change as the policy but allocated up to 100 million dollars for the Iraqi opposition, mainly the Iraq National Congress (INC), headed by Ahmed Chalabi.

That lobby went into high gear immediately after Sept. 11. Within just a few days, Perle convened the DPB to discuss how Washington could use the incidents as justification for attacking Iraq, and Woolsey was tasked to go to Europe to collect evidence that Hussein was linked to al Qaeda. He spent many weeks on that mission, emerging with the story that an unnamed informant had told Czech intelligence that he had seen the leader of the Sep. 11 skyjackers meet with an Iraqi agent in Prague in the April before the attack.

Even though the report was dismissed as not credible by U.S., British, French, and Israeli intelligence agencies, it became the basis—endlessly repeated by Woolsey and other neocons on television talk shows and in op-ed pages of major newspapers—of a major propaganda campaign against Iraq, even as Washington carried out its military campaign in Afghanistan in late 2001. Woolsey even suggested that Saddam was behind the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center towers and the anthrax-bearing letters sent to various lawmakers after 9/11, and that U.S. intelligence agencies could not find the connection because they lacked sufficient imagination.

The campaign largely worked: by late last year, well over half of respondents in one key poll believed that Saddam was somehow linked to the September 11 attacks.

Like other neoconservatives, Woolsey also appears to have somewhat ambivalent views about the democratic revolution he seeks to generate throughout the Arab world. “Only fear will re-establish respect for the U.S.,” he told the *Washington Post* when asked why U.S. conquests in the Islamic world would not incite even more support for Islamist radicals and al Qaeda. When asked last week whether he would retain his enthusiasm for democracy in the Arab world if tomorrow democratic elections were won by Islamist parties hostile to Washington, he joked, “Well, then perhaps the election should be the day after tomorrow.”

Still, Woolsey insists that he opposes a “clash of civilizations” and that he is counting on the empowerment of silent majorities throughout the Arab world to see the value of allying themselves with Washington. “The key alliance here, just as it was in the cold war, over and above our military power, is going to be with the moderate and sensible and reasonable Muslims who constitute the vast majority of the world’s Muslims and their understanding that we are on their side, just as we were on the side of the people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the cold war.”

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