

# The latest Bush provocation: Wolfowitz named to head World Bank

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George W. Bush's nomination Wednesday of Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz to head the World Bank is a belligerent move, underscoring that the Bush administration has no intention of retreating from its unilateralist, militarist policy of global domination. The nomination of the man rightly despised around the world as a major architect of the illegal war against Iraq—and looked on as a war criminal—is a political provocation, particularly against America's European allies.

It is even more provocative coming on the heels of Bush's choice earlier this month of long-time right-wing foreign policy operative John Bolton as US ambassador to the United Nations. (See "Bush picks right-wing attack dog as UN ambassador").

Wolfowitz's nomination must be approved by the World Bank's 23-member board.

The response of most European governments to the announcement was summed up by the German publication *Spiegel Online* (March 17): "It's been a mere three weeks since United States President George W. Bush swung through Europe distributing smiles and goodwill like a Fourth of July parade queen throwing candy to the crowds. He is now, from the perspective of many Europeans, throwing rotten eggs. The continent is not pleased."

Britain's former international development secretary, Clare Short, commented, "This is really shocking. It's as though they are trying to wreck our international systems." Michael Müller, the German Social Democratic deputy parliamentary leader, described the choice as "horrificing."

The level of cynicism involved in the nomination is truly remarkable, given that the warmonger Wolfowitz has been selected to head a United Nations body that declares its mission is "to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world." Wolfowitz is, after all, the man whose plans to attack and subjugate the Iraqi people have resulted in death and misery for hundreds of thousands in that country.

The Bush administration's nomination of Wolfowitz is not simply a symbolic gesture. It signals a determination to turn

the World Bank into a direct instrument of US imperialism's drive for global hegemony—punishing "rogue" governments deemed an obstacle to US aims, and tying grants and loans to poorer countries to "free market" austerity policies designed to open them up to unlimited exploitation by American corporations and banks.

An editorial in the March 17 edition of the *Wall Street Journal* gives an indication of how a World Bank with Wolfowitz at the helm would operate. The editorial bemoans the bank's present operation as "a dysfunctional bureaucracy that requires deep reform if it is to recover the trust of American taxpayers and survive as a relevant institution in the 21st century." It criticizes the current World Bank president, James Wolfensohn, who will step down in June, for devoting "a lot of time to berating democratic donor states for being too 'stingy' with their largesse, as if another \$100 billion is all that stands in the way between the poor and their redemption."

Wolfowitz's credentials for the World Bank post, according to the *Journal*, are boosted by his having served as assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs (1982-1986) and as ambassador to Indonesia (1986-1989). They describe his tenure in these posts as a time "when the benefits of free-market reforms were blossoming in that part of the world." In reality, this flowering of bounties was reserved for Asia's tiny wealthy elite, while the region's masses were plunged ever more deeply into poverty.

The *Journal* editorial concludes with this remarkable statement: "In fact, it is the world's dictators who are the chief causes of world poverty. And it seems to us that if anyone can stand up to the Robert Mugabes of the world, it must be the man who stood up to Saddam Hussein."

The meaning of these lines is clear: through Wolfowitz's position as head of the World Bank, the Bush administration seeks to utilize the agency as a financial bludgeon against any country that does not conform to its version of "democracy"—a code word for the opening up of a nation's resources and workforce for exploitation by US transnational corporations.

Paul Wolfowitz has honed his skills to take the leadership of such a task for decades, both ideologically and practically. As the Pentagon's under secretary of state for policy in the administration of the senior George Bush, he supervised the drafting of the "Defense Planning Guidance for the Fiscal Years 1994-1999." This document, issued in the aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet Union, spelled out a unilateralist military policy of world domination, aimed at beating back any threat from Washington's current or potential rivals. It declared that the central goal of US policy was to prevent the rise of any international or regional power that could challenge American interests.

The document advanced a doctrine of unilateral military action by the US and preventive wars, stating that "the world order is ultimately backed by the US" and that "the United States should be postured to act independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated" or when US authorities determine that an immediate military response is required to defend US interests.

In a chilling portent of action that would be taken a decade later against Iraq, the document stated: "The US may be faced with the question of whether to take military steps to prevent the development or use of weapons of mass destruction...punishing the attackers or threatening punishment of aggressors through a variety of means."

Following the first Gulf War, Wolfowitz disagreed with George Bush senior's decision to leave Saddam Hussein in power, but he was forced to wait a decade for another opportunity to invade Iraq and oust the Iraqi leader. Within days of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks, he made the case within the Bush administration for an assault on Iraq, a plan that came to fruition exactly two years ago.

Wolfowitz was one of the key administration figures who argued for the invasion based on phony claims that the Hussein regime possessed weapons of mass destruction and had ties to the Al Qaeda network and the 9/11 attacks. When, after a year of searching, it became clear that these claims were false, he asserted that "murky intelligence" was good enough justification to launch a preemptive attack on Iraq or, for that matter, any other country. (See "Wolfowitz on Iraq: 'Murky intelligence' suffices for pre-emptive wars")

What are Wolfowitz's other "qualifications" for the World Bank post?

\* He is an ideological leader and founding member of the ultra-right Project for the New American Century, whose 1997 Statement of Principles calls for the establishment of a global American empire subjugating those countries "hostile to our interests and values" by military force.

\* He is a central figure in the Pentagon leadership, including Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and other

civilian and military officials, who authorized the torture of prisoners in Afghanistan, Iraq, Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere.

\* He is a hard-line Zionist and long-time enemy of the Palestinian and Arab masses—denouncing Palestinian militants as "murderers" and defending the repression of the Palestinian people by the state of Israel.

John Cavanagh of the Institute for Policy Studies writes that Wolfowitz "would follow in the great tradition of World Bank president Robert McNamara, who also helped kill tens of thousands of people in a poor country most Americans couldn't find on a map before getting the job."

Cavanagh is referring to Lyndon Johnson's 1967 nomination of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara—one of the key architects of "unconventional warfare" and "counterinsurgency" in the imperialist slaughter in Vietnam—to head the World Bank. There have been comparisons made between Johnson's elevation of McNamara from the Defense Department to the World Bank and Bush's nomination of Wolfowitz.

The parallels have definite limits. McNamara was, for good reason, considered by millions around the world at the time to be a war criminal. But he was a cold war Democratic liberal, at a time when the US ruling elite still sought to combine its imperialist foreign policy with a policy of social reforms at home. Despite American crimes in Vietnam, McNamara's assumption of the World Bank post did not signify, and was not seen as, a shift away from that body's carefully cultivated image of humanitarian largesse.

Moreover, Johnson picked McNamara for the World Bank job largely because the defense secretary had become critical of the administration's Vietnam War policy. While it is no secret that Wolfowitz is despised by sections of the American military brass, there is no indication that he is being "kicked upstairs" because he has developed second thoughts about the government's militarist agenda.



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