

Lexington Paul Wolfowitz, velociraptor

Clever, quick and jumping for the throat



MOST deputy secretaries live lives of quiet frustration. They get stuck with all the grunt work while their bosses swan around in the limelight. And they have to sit mutely by while their best ideas are either buried or stolen. Not Paul Wolfowitz, number two at the Pentagon. Mr Wolfowitz is second-in-command to Washington's biggest gun, Donald Rumsfeld, in one of the most sensitive areas of policymaking. Yet his influence seems to grow by the day.

A few days after September 11th Mr Wolfowitz broke two of the cardinal rules of this control-obsessed administration. He not only created a media firestorm by raising the idea of "ending states who sponsor terrorism". He also found the secretary of state contradicting him; in one of the administration's worst public rows. Yet last week it was Mr Wolfowitz's fingerprints, not Colin Powell's, that were all over the state-of-the-union speech. Its commitment to tackling explosively unpredictable dictatorships, alias "rogue states", its unabashed enthusiasm for asserting American power, its insistence that this involves a desperate race against time: all are classic Wolfowitz themes.

Mr Wolfowitz's shy manner and solemn qualifications suggest just another identikit member of the global establishment. His career includes spells as head of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and ambassador to Indonesia. But his views mark him out as a rather more interesting creature. He believes in building a missile-defence shield, in preventing China from becoming a regional hegemon, in using human rights as a weapon in foreign policy; in short, he is every timorous European's worst nightmare. "Hawk doesn't do him justice," says one former colleague. "What about velociraptor?"

Mr Wolfowitz is the leader of a small group of foreign-policy neo-conservatives who have been hanging around Washington since the 1970s. They criticised the realpolitik approach to foreign affairs championed by Henry Kissinger for accepting the cold war's status quo and for implying that there was a moral equivalence between the Soviet Union and the United States. They argued that America should be much more willing to champion its values, insisting that this would advance, not threaten, global security. The biggest threats to America's security were regimes based on values that America, and other free countries, deplore; change those regimes by advancing western

values and—hey presto—you strengthen American security.

Mr Wolfowitz's muscular world view was forged in the groves of academia rather than the paddyfields of Vietnam, a fact that infuriates Mr Powell. After switching from mathematics to political science, he came under the influence of two remarkable mentors. Allan Bloom (later famous as the author of "The Closing of the American Mind") persuaded him that political regimes play a key role in shaping character. Hence his enthusiasm for changing governments. (Mr Wolfowitz appears, lightly disguised, in Saul Bellow's novel about Mr Bloom, "Ravelstein".) Albert Wohlstetter educated him in the arcana of cold-war strategic thinking. The result: a political moralist, with a policy wonk's appetite for the numerology of missiles.

An intense interest in ideas does not make him the most natural member of an administration dominated by businessmen and professional politicians (Mr Bellow is not the writer of choice in the Texan oil industry). But three things have given Mr Wolfowitz a large amount of influence. The most obvious is personal connections. Mr Wolfowitz was Dick Cheney's right-hand man when the latter ran the Pentagon. He worked for Mr Rumsfeld twice before moving to his current job—as a foreign-policy strategist when Mr Rumsfeld ran Bob Dole's 1996 presidential campaign, and as a member of the 1998 Rumsfeld Commission, which gave warning of America's vulnerability to attack by long-range ballistic missiles. Richard Perle, an old friend, is chairman of a Pentagon committee. John Bolton, another star warrior, sits in the heart of Powell territory, the State Department. "Scooter" Libby, Mr Cheney's chief-of-staff, is known as "Wolfowitz's Wolfowitz". The *Weekly Standard* provides an influential megaphone for Mr Wolfowitz's views. (One of the magazine's former writers, David Frum, coined the phrase "axis of evil".)

The second thing is persistence. Nothing seems to deter Mr Wolfowitz from banging his favourite drum. A lengthy series of articles in the *Washington Post* on the administration's response to September 11th presents him as a man in the grip of an *idée fixe*, prepared to turn up to meetings that were reserved for principals, interrupt his boss, and bring up the subject of Iraq at the drop of a hat. After one meeting, Mr Bush made it clear that he wanted only one person to speak for the Defence Department.

But the most important reason is that history has moved in his direction. Mr Wolfowitz has been arguing for years that the world is a far more dangerous place than most people realise; that America needs to increase its military expenditure; and that the best form of defence is offence. September 11th may not have proved him right in every detail. There may be no connection between Saddam Hussein and the September 11th atrocities. Rogue states don't form anything so coherent as an axis. But everybody now understands the premise.

The velociraptor has been right before. In the 1980s Mr Wolfowitz vigorously supported Ronald Reagan's denunciation of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire"—a phrase the conventional-minded of the time regarded as bonkers. His willingness to trust his intellect against the weight of conventional opinion is admirable. Still, he has to remember that, in this war especially, realpolitik, diplomacy and even those carping Europeans have a role. America cannot fight a multi-pronged war on terrorism without enlisting the support of other countries; and it is easier to fight a war in support of western values if you have the support of other western countries. Seeing the future is only half the battle; you have to persuade other people to see it too. ■