

9/11 Probe Exposes Neo-Con 'War on Terror' Strategy That Creates Terrorism

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Nearly 20 years ago, on Oct. 25, 1984, then-Secretary of State George Shultz delivered a speech at the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City. His remarks might have been made by Vice President Dick Cheney or Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, immediately after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. In stark terms, Shultz—later the godfather of the “Vulcans” team, George W. Bush’s neo-con policy tutors—spelled out the case for preventive war.

In response to the threat of future terrorist attacks, he declared, “our responses should go beyond passive defense to consider means of active prevention, pre-emption and retaliation. Our goal must be to prevent and deter future terrorist acts. We cannot allow ourselves to become the Hamlet of nations, worrying endlessly over whether and how to respond.” Instead, Shultz argued, the United States had to strike first. “The public must understand before the fact that some will seek to cast any pre-emptive or retaliatory action by us in the worst light, and will attempt to make our military and our policy makers—rather than the terrorists—appear to be the culprits. The public must understand before the fact that occasions will come when their government must act before

each and every fact is known.”

When Shultz made those remarks, Saddam Hussein was still an ally of the United States. Indeed, current Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld was serving as the Reagan-Bush Administration’s not-so-secret emissary to Baghdad, arranging the delivery of chemical weapons and other military equipment to the Iraqis, for use in their war against Iran. And back in October 1984, Osama Bin Laden had not yet been dispatched to Peshawar, in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, to establish his “base” (“al-Qaeda”), a hospitality suite/intake center for newly-arrived *mujahideen* combatants recruited by the United States, Britain, France, and other Western states, as well as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, to fight a surrogate war against the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan. At that time, Bin Laden’s activities in Pakistan and Afghanistan were fully blessed by both Washington and Riyadh.

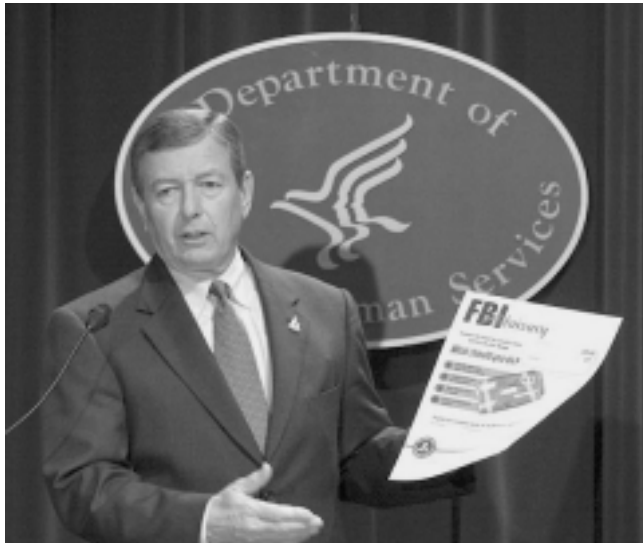
But although the world was a very different place on that Autumn day in 1984, George Shultz was already promoting the idea of preventive war against an amorphously defined “terrorist threat.” Never mind that preventive war was explicitly banned by the United Nations Charter, and categorized as a crime against humanity. Shultz and his minions were



When Vulcans godfather George Shultz first promoted “preventive war” as an anti-terror strategy, 20 years ago, Donald Rumsfeld was shaking hands and making weapons deals with “U.S. ally” Saddam Hussein in Baghdad in December 1983. Al-Qaeda organizer Osama bin Laden was also a U.S. ally.



Given that Rumsfeld and Cheney came into the George W. Bush Administration with a long history of obsession with “rogue states and terrorism,” it is the more noteworthy that the 9/11 Commission found such indifference to terrorist threats against the United States during the first 8 months of that administration.



Ashcroft told an FBI aide not to pester him with briefings on terror threats, and cut \$85 million from counterterror funding on Sept. 10, 2001.



George Shultz still, in a speech in Zurich on April 14, astounded Europeans by proclaiming the U.S. military strategy in Iraq a resounding success. Shultz still promotes a “war on terror” strategy which is a perpetual “preventive war,” including the use of mini-nuclear weapons.

already dreaming of empire, and the fact that Hitler’s top generals were prosecuted and convicted at Nuremberg for waging a preventive war against Central Europe, was of no consequence to him.

Five and a half years after the Shultz speech, in May 1990, then-Defense Secretary Dick Cheney convened a meeting of his Pentagon policy staff, to hear a presentation by Paul Wolfowitz, the unit’s head. Wolfowitz had been tasked by Cheney to devise a new long-range American national security strategy, taking into account the changed global security environment, following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Wolfowitz, who served under Shultz in the Reagan-Bush State Department, echoed Shultz’s Park Avenue Synagogue speech, and revived the theme of preventive war. He argued that the United States must, at all costs, maintain its military, political, and economic primacy, and be prepared to wage preventive war against any nation or combination of nations that might rise at any time in the future, to challenge America’s sole-superpower standing. His secondary theme, later codified in Cheney’s January 1993 Regional Defense Strategy, was the threat of rogue Third World regimes obtaining weapons of mass destruction and arming terrorists. The remedy: The United States should develop and deploy an arsenal of mini-nuclear weapons, for active use against these Third World targets.

Wolfowitz’s presentation summarized the collective wisdom of himself and at least three of his top Pentagon colleagues: Lewis “Scooter” Libby, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Eric Edelman. All four men hold top posts in the current Bush Administration, with Libby serving as Vice President Dick Cheney’s chief of staff and the head of his shadow national security council.

When Cheney and company attempted to slip the Shultz-Wolfowitz preventive war/perpetual war doctrine into the 1992 Defense Policy Guidance, President George H.W. Bush and his top aides, including Secretary of State James Baker III and National Security Advisor Gen. Brent Scowcroft, nixed it, by leaking a draft copy to the *New York Times*.

The preventive war scheme percolated in Beltway neo-conservative circles throughout the Bill Clinton Presidency—and right up until Sept. 11, 2001, it was still overwhelmingly viewed as a zany and wholly un-American hybrid of Britain’s 19th-Century imperialism and Israel’s “preventive assassinations” program. More blunt critics, like Lyndon LaRouche, likened it to Adolf Hitler’s 1938 “preventive war” invasion of Poland.

The attacks on New York and Washington provided the “perfect storm” cover for shoving preventive war down the throats of policymakers at every level of government. A year after the 9/11 attacks, the Sept. 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* enshrined the doctrine of preventive war against terrorist and rogue state adversaries as the official policy of the U.S. government.

Something Wrong with This Picture

Given this 20-year effort since Shultz’s 1984 speech on preventive war on terrorist groups, it should have been assumed that Team Bush—dominated by Vice President Dick Cheney and Shultz—came into office committed to placing the war on terrorism at the very top of the strategic agenda.

But two weeks of public hearings in April by the 9/11 Commission—officially the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States—have revealed that, up until the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, top Bush Administration policymakers, including Cheney and Attorney General John Ashcroft, stymied every effort by career law enforcement and intelligence personnel to respond to a growing pattern of evidence that a major terrorist attack against the United States was imminent.

While neo-conservatives love to heap criticism on the Clinton Administration, the record, as presented by the 9/11 Commission, shows that the Clintonians—who never adopted the Hitlerian conceit of preventive war—were far more serious about dealing with terrorism than the pre-9/11 Bush-Cheney Administration.

The first public evidence of the Bush Administration's ambivalence towards growing evidence of a terrorist threat in the Spring-Summer 2001, came from former White House counterterror czar Richard Clarke, whose book and testimony before the 9/11 Commission exposed that key policy players, led by Cheney, were so obsessed with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, that they ignored the issue of terrorism altogether. Cheney responded by charging, publicly, that Clarke was "out of the loop"—a flagrant lie that even National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice was forced to rebut, under oath, during her April 8 agonizing three-hour appearance before the Commission.

After Rice's testimony, White House polls showed that the President's approval rating had plunged, overnight, by 4%. The next day, a damage control-driven White House declassified the Aug. 6, 2001 Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB), which had dealt with evidence of an al-Qaeda plot inside the U.S.A. Rice had mischaracterized the document as an "historical account," with no current intelligence value. The title of the document, alone, belied Rice's claims: "Bin Ladin Determined to Strike in U.S."

The PDB's damaging item cited a growing pattern of evidence of al-Qaeda penetration of the United States, including "patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks, including recent surveillance of Federal buildings in New York."

During two intensive days of hearings April 14-15, Commission staffers and the former acting director of the FBI provided further proof of the Administration's indifference to the mounting evidence of a terrorist threat. Tom Pickard, who was acting director of the FBI from Spring 2001 through the 9/11 attacks, told the Commission that Attorney General John Ashcroft was so indifferent that at one point in July 2001, he ordered Pickard to stop pestering him with information about terror plots. Butressing Pickard, the Commission found that an FBI request for \$85 million in additional funding for counterterrorism was rejected by Ashcroft—on Sept. 10, 2001! Earlier, in a policy memo outlining the strategic priorit-

Principles of Westphalia

The Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, bringing an end to the Thirty Years' War, which had drowned Europe in blood in battles over religion, defined the principles of sovereignty and equality in numerous sub-contracts, and in this way became the constitution of the new system of states in Europe. We quote the two key principles:

Article I begins:

"A Christian general and permanent peace, and true and honest friendship, must rule between the Holy Imperial Majesty and the Holy All-Christian Majesty, as well as between all and every ally and follower of the mentioned Imperial Majesty, the House of Austria . . . and successors. . . . And this Peace must be so honest and seriously guarded and nourished that each part furthers the advantage, honor, and benefit of the other. . . . A faithful neighborliness should be renewed and flourish for peace and friendship, and flourish again."

Peace among sovereign nations requires, in other

words, according to this principle, that each nation develops itself fully, and regards it as its self-interest to develop the others fully, and vice versa—a real "family of nations."

Article II says:

"On both sides, all should be forever forgotten and forgiven—what has from the beginning of the unrest, no matter how or where, from one side or the other, happened in terms of hostility—so that neither because of that, nor for any other reason or pretext, should anyone commit, or allow to happen, any hostility, unfriendliness, difficulty, or obstacle in respect to persons, their status, goods, or security itself, or through others, secretly or openly, directly or indirectly, under the pretense of the authority of the law, or by way of violence within the Kingdom, or anywhere outside of it, and any earlier contradictory treaties should not stand against this.

"Instead, [the fact that] each and every one, from one side and the other, both before and during the war, committed insults, violent acts, hostilities, damages, and injuries, without regard of persons or outcomes, should be completely put aside, so that everything, whatever one could demand from another under his name, will be forgotten to eternity."