

Jay Solomon and Neil King Jr, "Diplomatic Relations: As 'Neocons' Leave, Bush Foreign Policy Takes Softer Line; Ms. Rice Changes Approach To Iran And North Korea; Democracy Still Key Goal; Cheney's Waning Influence?" *The Wall Street Journal*, February 6, 2006, Page A1

WASHINGTON -- During President Bush's first term, Lawrence Franklin was part of a core network of neoconservative strategists at the Pentagon who pushed for taking a hawkish line in the Middle East. He advocated the removal of Iran's theocratic government and made secret trips to Italy in 2001 to learn more about Tehran's overseas intelligence operations, colleagues say.

Now Mr. Franklin works nights as a parking valet at Charles Town Races & Slots in West Virginia. The 59-year-old Farsi speaker and father of five was sentenced last month to more than 12 years in prison for passing classified information to two lobbyists and an Israeli diplomat in hopes they would steer the Bush administration toward taking a tougher approach toward Iran.

Mr. Franklin is an unusually stark illustration of a significant change in American foreign policy between President Bush's first and second terms. In the past year, the ranks of the neoconservatives within the administration who molded the American response to 9/11 have grown thin and their influence has ebbed. At the same time, a band of "neorealists" has been gaining power. They share the neoconservatives' belief in the importance of spreading democracy, but not their conviction that Washington can go it alone on the international stage. The neorealists favor working more closely with allies and with the United Nations, particularly in responding to Iran's nuclear program.

The change coincides with the growing influence of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who is putting her stamp on foreign policy in the second term much as neoconservatives did in the first term. The slow progress of the war in Iraq has made it harder for the U.S. to execute a hard-line foreign policy and has undercut the arguments of the war's chief advocates, such as Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, whose views often dovetailed with the neoconservatives, current and former government officials say.

Mr. Cheney also has been hampered by the loss of his chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, who was indicted in October for allegedly lying to prosecutors about his role in disclosing a Central Intelligence Agency operative's identity. Mr. Libby was a neoconservative coordinator and intellectual conduit inside the White House.

"Cheney is handicapped by the Libby case," and "the contrast between policy and rhetoric is now huge," says Michael Rubin, an Iran specialist in the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans during the first Bush term who now works at the American Enterprise Institute, regarded as a center of neoconservative views. He says he is concerned that Washington's support for European negotiations with Tehran will ultimately allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons. "Diplomacy has a cost," he says.

A press officer for Mr. Cheney said he wouldn't comment on policy debates within the administration.

The foreign-policy shift is occurring, in part, because Ms. Rice is a more effective bureaucratic infighter than was her predecessor, Colin Powell. Her relationship with the president dates back to the early days of the 2000 presidential campaign. She has taken to the State Department an influence over foreign policy she built when working in the White House during the first term.

Mr. Bush has chosen to allow Ms. Rice to pursue a more multilateral foreign policy than he allowed Mr. Powell. During his first term and his re-election campaign, Mr. Bush openly snubbed European allies over Iraq, and said he didn't do "nuance." In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal* last month, he said: "You can have more than one leader on an issue" in dealing with Iran, citing Britain, Germany and France. "This is a multilateral effort," he said. "My view of diplomacy is that it's in constant motion, and we're constantly strategizing and dealing with the latest nuance."

The most recent sign of a shift in the administration's tone came last week in London. After an intense day of diplomacy, Ms. Rice brokered a compromise agreement among Russia, China, France and

Britain for the International Atomic Energy Agency to report Iran to the U.N. Security Council for allegedly violating commitments to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Over the weekend, nearly all other IAEA member countries endorsed the agreement. Ms. Rice's aides came away touting the efficacy of the U.N. and the IAEA -- organizations disdained by Bush aides three years ago in the run-up to the Iraq invasion.

The original neoconservatives were mainly former liberals who feared the U.S. was going soft on Communism and who supported Ronald Reagan's defense buildup and confrontation with the Soviet Union. Neoconservative has since come to refer to a brand of foreign policy that advocates promoting democracy abroad, unilaterally and with military force, if necessary.

During his first term, President Bush broke from the foreign-policy line espoused by his father, whose "realist" strategists embraced alliances and stability over moral and ideological causes. In the younger Mr. Bush's administration, national-security strategists in the Pentagon and White House argued that U.S. interests would be best served by fostering democracy, rather than by seeking an old-fashioned balance of power. They pushed for hard-line policies toward North Korea, Iran and China, and expressed distrust of international bodies seen as constraining American power. Mr. Bush spurned the Kyoto Protocol on global warming and the International Criminal Court, and there was tension with allies over Iraq.

Mr. Bush's second-term foreign policy is more in line with the old realist approach. Ms. Rice and her chief deputies, Robert Zoellick and Nicholas Burns, favor increased engagement with the U.N. and other multinational groups. Ms. Rice has pushed diplomatic efforts to end the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea -- two nations Mr. Bush branded as part of an "axis of evil." She also has played a central role in trying to forge a peace settlement, now unlikely to move forward, between the Israelis and the Palestinian leadership. During his first term, Mr. Bush shunned Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who died in late 2004.

Filling a Vacuum

Ms. Rice and her team are filling a vacuum left by the departure from key policy-making positions of some of the administration's most prominent neoconservatives. In addition to Mr. Libby's departure, former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz left to run the World Bank. State Department arms-control czar John Bolton became ambassador to the United Nations. Another architect of the Iraq invasion, the Defense Department's former No. 3 civilian official, Douglas Feith, left his job last summer.

Ms. Rice became secretary of state in January 2005. The difference in her approach became apparent early on with her work on North Korea's nuclear program. During Mr. Bush's first term, Mr. Bolton and other neoconservatives often characterized holding talks with North Korea as succumbing to nuclear blackmail. The White House insisted that all negotiators be kept to a tight script, according to diplomats who worked on the issue. Negotiators were barred from holding many one-on-one meetings with the North Koreans, fearing such contacts would serve to legitimize a despotic regime.

In the past year, Ms. Rice's special envoy on the issue, Christopher Hill, has made a series of trips to Seoul, Beijing and New York to push forward nonproliferation talks with Pyongyang. Last summer, Mr. Hill spent nearly three weeks in Beijing, in two separate sessions, seeking to broker a multinational deal.

In September, the U.S. and North Korea agreed on an initial plan under which Pyongyang would scrap its nuclear-weapons program in return for economic assistance. Terms of the deal, however, are still being negotiated, in cooperation with China, Japan, South Korea and Russia.

"Chris Hill has certainly been given more day-to-day freedom than I had, but the policy of a complete, once-and-for-all end to North Korean nuclear weapons is unchanged," says James Kelly, who preceded Mr. Hill as the chief envoy on the North Korea talks.

Ms. Rice also has pushed to tone down what often has been a war of words between the U.S. and North Korea. In an interview during his first term, Mr. Bush called the North Korean dictator a "pygmy." Last year, he referred to him as "Mr. Kim Jong Il." The State Department has suggested the Bush administration might be amenable to North Korea having civilian nuclear power if it agrees to give up its nuclear-weapons program, a position Bush advisers previously opposed.

A Graver Threat

Ms. Rice and her aides also are taking a different approach to Iran, which many neoconservatives contend poses a graver threat to peace and stability in the Middle East than Iraq. By supporting European diplomatic overtures toward Iran, Ms. Rice's team has moved to break years of official diplomatic isolation between Washington and Tehran. In a bid to end the standoff over Iran's nuclear program, the U.S. has dangled before Iran membership in the World Trade Organization and other economic incentives. Washington's ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, has even been authorized to hold talks with Iranian officials in Baghdad to seek better cooperation in stabilizing postwar Iraq, over which Iran is considered to hold increasing influence.

Many hard-liners and neoconservatives view such tactics as undercutting their cause. "There's no real policy on Iran," says Michael Ledeen, an Iran analyst at the American Enterprise Institute who advocates a U.S. push to force regime change by funding labor unions and other civic groups inside Iran.

The State Department also appears to be charting a new course on Israel and Sudan. Many neoconservatives were opposed to engaging the Palestinians. Ms. Rice pushed to insert herself into negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians over opening up the Palestinian territories to travel and commerce. In October, she brokered an agreement for opening a border crossing.

Last February, the State Department dropped opposition to a U.N. resolution to refer potential war crimes in Sudan to the International Criminal Court, a body that both the Bush and Clinton administrations - and particularly the Pentagon -- had long opposed. A State Department official points to the Sudan move as a milestone in Ms. Rice's first year as secretary of state. It "helped establish our diplomatic bona fides with Europe" and came despite opposition within the Pentagon and the vice president's office, this person said. Press officers for the Pentagon and Mr. Cheney declined to comment.

No one in government is counting the neoconservatives out in Washington. While Mr. Zoellick, the deputy secretary of state, has been talking regularly with Beijing on U.S.-China relations, Pentagon strategists have been building military relationships in Asia that aim to contain China's growing power. Mr. Rumsfeld has issued a drumbeat of warnings in recent months about the threat China's military poses to Asian security.

And though Mr. Hill continues to pursue talks with North Korea, the administration has pushed forward with an effort to choke off leader Kim Jong Il's overseas financial network, particularly his government's alleged involvement in trafficking counterfeit cigarettes, drugs and U.S. currency. In recent weeks, with efforts to bring Pyongyang back to the negotiating table stalled, American diplomats have hardened their rhetoric, referring to North Korea as a "criminal state."

Franklin's Case

As a Middle East expert in the Pentagon's offices of Special Plans and Near East South Asia, Mr. Franklin had argued stridently for the removal of Iran's Islamic leadership, toiling long hours trying to dissect the workings of Iran's paramilitary and terrorist networks.

This focus on Iran eventually got him into trouble, according to court documents. Mr. Franklin has admitted that beginning in 2002, he shared classified information about Iran's military operations with an Israeli diplomat and lobbyists for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. He had hoped they would push the White House to take a tougher line against Tehran.

Instead, Mr. Franklin was charged last August with illegally disseminating classified intelligence. As part of his plea agreement, he agreed to cooperate with federal law-enforcement officials prosecuting two AIPAC members. In addition to parking cars at the racetrack, he now is teaching courses on terrorism and Asian history at Shepherd University in West Virginia and working as a waiter and bartender in Harpers Ferry, according to court documents. Acquaintances say he is trying to raise money for his sick wife before he begins his prison term. His lawyer says he can't comment because of the ongoing

prosecution.

Mr. Franklin told a Virginia federal judge last October that he shared the classified information because of his "frustration" with U.S. foreign policy and his belief that his contacts "were loyal Americans."