

The Long War

**Explaining the 2003 Invasion of Iraq
through Historical Narrative
and Cycles of Belligerence**

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Chapter I: Introduction

I developed a curiosity for the Iraq War when I was in third grade. It was 2003 and George W. Bush had announced the United States would be invading Iraq. My parents, especially my mother, never seemed to stop talking about it. What stuck with me the most was how at a loss she was for an explanation. Over and over I would hear about how we had nothing to do with Iraq, how it was just minding its own business and we attacked them out of the blue and lost the support of the world in doing so. She largely blamed Dick Cheney and his history in the oil business, but still thought that there had to be a bigger, more legitimate reason for “them” to take us to war. As I got a little older and heard about my friends’ older brothers being deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, the two countries became the same place in my head — the same war, the same enemies, the same cause. I could never remember the difference between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. The two were interchangeable in my head.

I trace my own interactions with Iraq for the same reason in this thesis I trace the United States’ relationship with Iraq: I am in search of reasons, patterns, and explanations. Starting a story from its beginning is the only way I know how to find them. In a way, I see my younger self as a success story of the Bush administration and its machines of war and information. My confusion over the ties between 9/11, Afghanistan, and Osama bin Laden on one side and weapons of mass destruction, Iraq, and Saddam Hussein on the other was precisely the aim of the Bush administration and something they sought to spread throughout the country in general. And though one might forgive an eight-year-old for her confusion, one must remember that the country as a whole allowed it to happen by abdicating a responsibility for awareness. This thesis

is an attempt to find some answers to my years of questions by learning and telling the story myself.

I start this story at the origins of Iraq itself, though unfortunately I am required to pass over several fascinating centuries in order to bring us to the present without too much delay. The relationship between the United States and Iraq became significant in the 1970s and from there it can be divided into three segments, or what I call cycles of belligerence as they are each defined by U.S. aggression towards Iraq and Iraqi reactions. The first spans from 1970 to 1989. The United States started the 1970s with a poor relationship with Iraq, but this evolved after the fall of the shah of Iran in 1979. Iraq and the United States grew closer during the eight-year Iran/Iraq War, so that by the end of the 1980s, it looked as though the two might have normal relations. However, at this juncture the United States took stock of the international system, which it was now ostensibly leader of, and saw Iraq as a country with significant potential to be a dominant power in a region the United States would very much like control over. In the first of three cycles of belligerence, the United States clipped Iraq's wings by encouraging Kuwait to wage economic warfare on the deeply indebted Iraq. Iraq responded by invading Kuwait, which gave the United States a way to increase its presence in the region by launching Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

The second cycle of belligerence began with the imposition of harsh sanctions and invasive weapons inspections on Iraq throughout the 1990s. While most countries in the United Nations helped impose sanctions in an effort to disarm Saddam Hussein from his WMD, the United States enforced the sanctions regime to strangle Iraq in an effort to topple Saddam Hussein, whose continuing rule in the aftermath of Desert Storm undermined U.S. global power.

American intransigence on sanctions led the Iraqis to lash out in various ways, which provided the United States with excuses to launch airstrikes. During this time, U.S. domestic attitudes towards Saddam Hussein were growing in hostility and there were increasingly loud calls for his forceful removal. The third turn of the cycle came with the election of George W. Bush and the formation of his generally hawkish administration. Almost all of the main players in the Bush administration had developed reasons to wish for Saddam's ousting due to the events of the late 1980s and all throughout the 1990s. The 1999 election empowered them to carry out this desire to a certain extent, yet there remained uncertainty as to how exactly Saddam Hussein should be dealt with. The attacks of 9/11 removed this ambivalence. After 9/11, there was no question the United States would invade Iraq, as it was the next logical turn of a cycle that had been established in the decades before.

Chapter II: Literature Review and Methodology

1. Literature Review

In the fourteen years that have gone by since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, there have been countless theories attempting to explain the motivations to go to war. Some are, of course, more convincing and better-supported than others, and of these I have selected four. The first is neoconservative persuasion theory, as proposed by Colin Dueck, associate professor of government and international politics at George Mason University in his essay “Ideas, American grand strategy, and the war in Iraq.” Dueck argues that the war was prompted by shifts in large-scale American strategy after the attacks of 9/11, causing President George W. Bush to change course from his previous desire to “contain” Iraq to a plan to topple Saddam Hussein. The second theory is intelligence failure, which is argued by Robert Jervis, the Adlai E. Stevenson professor of international affairs at Columbia University. In his essay “Explaining the war in Iraq” Jervis pushes a narrative saying the Bush administration may have had an abstract wish to invade Iraq, but they never would have acted upon it if they hadn’t genuinely believed that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and hadn’t been instilled with a fear he would use them in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

The third examined work is an essay titled “Oil and the decision to invade Iraq” by Professor of Political Science at Georgia State University John Duffield. Duffield argues that oil was a necessary factor allowing for war, but it was not a primary motivator. He suggests that the vast quantities of oil in the Persian Gulf coupled with Saddam Hussein’s aggressive behavior in the region prompted the United States to invade in order to protect its interests. Jane Cramer,

assistant professor of political science at the University of Oregon and Edward Duggan, a Ph.D candidate at the University of Oregon, write in their essay “In pursuit of primacy” that the main decision-makers pushing for war were Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and President George W. Bush — in that order. They argue that none of these men were neoconservatives and therefore had no ideological motivations (such as spreading democracy) for going to war. Instead, each of the three had developed a desire to invade Iraq and topple Saddam before the 9/11 attacks in order to achieve U.S. primacy — a reclamation of the power of the executive and a modernization of the military. Each of these authors present different and interesting theories on why the United States invaded Iraq, but it is the latter two essays by Duffield, Cramer, and Duggan that present the strongest arguments and that I will use as a jumping off point for my own thesis.

Colin Dueck presents a theory called “neoconservative persuasion” which is premised on a common belief that it was the neocons who pushed President Bush to invade Iraq. A fuller discussion of Bush administration neoconservatives comes in later chapters, but generally the neoconservative worldview calls for aggressive action to create a preponderance of U.S. power over the international system, by spreading American values like capitalism and democracy. Dueck distinguishes President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as separate from the neocons, characterizing them as pragmatists who preferred to stay out of international conflicts unless it was in the United States’ direct interest. He argues that while Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld were interested in Saddam Hussein’s removal from power, Bush was not seriously interested in taking military action to oust Saddam and

instead maintained a policy of containment¹ like President Bill Clinton. This changed with the 9/11 attacks, which Dueck says gave the neocons an opening to convince Bush to sign onto their democracy-spreading worldview.

Dueck says the neoconservatives convinced Bush with four main arguments of varying levels of veracity. The first was that Saddam could use WMD to threaten U.S. interests in the Middle East, which was untrue because he had none.² The second was that WMD could be given to terrorists, leading to even worse 9/11-style attacks in the future. This was possible but very unlikely considering how valuable WMD were and that Saddam Hussein's secular regime was unlikely to hand them over to Islamic fundamentalists with a competing political ideology. There was also no supporting evidence for this claim. The third was that a defeated Saddam could lead to a democratized Iraq, which was plausible if one ignored the history, culture, religion, demographics, and politics of the country and assumed that the institutions and popular will necessary for a true democracy would spring up in place of the Baath regime. The fourth and most legitimate argument was that it was getting increasingly risky to keep American troops in Saudi Arabia. The decade-long presence of American troops in the country with the holiest sites in Islam was creating ill will towards both the Americans and the Saudi royal family, as evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of the 9/11 airplane hijackers were Saudis. If a liberated Iraq became a U.S. ally, bases could be relocated from Saudi Arabia to Iraq.

Dueck is right to point out and interrogate the speed with the Bush administration pursued regime change after 9/11, however, the crux of his argument rests on the flawed

¹ See Ch. IV Sec. 2 for a fuller explanation of containment.

² See Ch. IV Sec. 2 for evidence.

perception that Bush and his inner-non neocon circle were not committed to a policy of regime change for Iraq before 9/11.³ Dueck also fails to provide evidence that neocons in the administration were working to convince Bush to change his outlook. Where are the meeting minutes, the declassified memos, the leaked conversations between the neocons and Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld with the former trying to convince the latter that invasion was the right move? In fact, by tracing the history leading up to and directly after 9/11, it becomes clear that there was no real consideration by Bush and his closest advisors over whether or not war with Iraq was the proper course of action, because everyone was already in agreement.⁴ Finally, Dueck's argument for neoconservative persuasion completely ignores the many other, non-ideological factors that could have led to war. These factors include oil, geopolitics, economics, domestic popularity, and a sense of unfinished business.

Robert Jervis in his essay "Explaining the War in Iraq" argues that George W. Bush, his cabinet, and his advisors may have had a vague, abstract desire to invade Iraq before 9/11 because of perceived threats coming from Saddam Hussein, such as expansionism and use of WMD, but that they never would have acted on this impulse had it not been for the terrorist attacks. Jervis argues that the 9/11 attacks created a sense of fear and vulnerability in the president and his administration and that this provoked them to take extreme action to ensure that fears of a repeat attack, possibly with weapons of mass destruction, did not come to pass.

Jervis argues that Bush and his leading advisors genuinely believed that Saddam Hussein had a large WMD program that he was planning on expanding, writing there is "little reason to

³ See Ch. IV Sec. 4 and Ch. V Sec. 1 details.

⁴ See Ch. V Sec. 2 for details.

doubt that Bush and his colleagues sincerely believed that Saddam had active WMD programs,” because that was the judgement of the U.S. intelligence community, the judgement was free of political influence, and that when it was discovered there were no WMD, leaders in the intelligence and political communities showed “evident distress.” The only evidence he provides to support these claims is his pronouncement this was the judgement of the American intelligence community. That means Jervis is ignoring the documented uncertainty within the intelligence community on the presence of a WMD program. For example, President Bush — though apparently sure that Saddam had WMD — never called for a national intelligence evaluation (NIE) of these alleged WMD programs. When Senate Democrats demanded an NIE be prepared (not until September 2002, when the Bush administration had fully made up its mind to invade), it was flawed and contained false, uncorroborated information.⁵ This line of reasoning completely disregards uncertain reports coming from the U.S. intelligence agencies, the intelligence reports from foreign governments saying evidence for WMD was very weak, and the Bush administration’s aggressive push at the United Nations to cut the inspectors’ time short in late 2002 after Saddam agreed to let them in. It also gives Bush’s administration far too much credit by assuming it was misled by a massive intelligence failure (while not going into detail on this failure) rather than the possibility that it hyped weak intelligence to further their pre-existing invasion agendas.

John Duffield in his essay “Oil and the decision to invade Iraq” comes much closer than either Jervis or Dueck to a reasonable explanation of the war. Duffield argues that oil was not a top motivating factor behind the Iraq invasion but that it did set the stage for the invasion. It is

⁵ Cramer, Jane K., and Edward C. Duggan. *Why Did the United States Invade Iraq?* Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013. 201-43. Print. 206.

doubtful the invasion would have taken place without the presence of oil in the region because of its importance in shaping international politics and strategic interests. Duffield shows that while the United States was not as reliant as many other countries were on Gulf oil, it still had a vested interest in making sure the oil coming out of the Persian Gulf was stable and secure because of its influence on the global market. Duffield argues that Saddam Hussein represented the largest threat to that desire in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which pushed the United States to invade Iraq in order to remove him from power.

Because of the importance the United States placed on the region and its top resource, as described above, Duffield suggests Saddam Hussein's threatening and expansionist behavior in the region was alarming to the United States. This point about Saddam's threatening behavior is made again and again by scholars trying to unpack the Iraq War and it almost always ignores critical information about how real the threats Saddam posed were. The most common instance alluded to is Saddam's invasion and annexation of Kuwait in 1990 — the act that provoked (or provided an excuse for) Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Iraq is portrayed as an aggressive authoritarian state hungry for more oil and invades their helpless neighbor to the south in order to get it. This misses the fact that Kuwait was waging economic warfare on Iraq in the late 1980s through 1990⁶ and that the United States had been looking for a way to increase its physical military presence in the Gulf. The threat Saddam posed to the United States was not centered upon weapons or expansionism, but rather his ability to maintain power when the United States wished otherwise and the blow this dealt to U.S. power.⁷

⁶ See Ch. II Sec. 3 for details and evidence.

⁷ See Ch. V Sec. 1 for details and evidence.

Duffield is appropriately cautious by making clear that the presence of oil made the invasion possible, but not inevitable. He also helpfully draws comparisons between Iraq and other “rouge” states: states that sponsored terror, states that were developing WMD, and states that had terrible human rights abuse records. He points out that Iraq was not unique in taking part (to differing degrees) in these categories, but yet it was Iraq that was invaded, not any of these other countries, most likely because of Iraq’s importance to the Gulf oil supply. Duffield also does a good job of taking into account historic precedent — something often lacking in scholarly explanations of the Iraq War. He points out the events of the 1970s, 80s, and 90s and how they all contributed to the decision to invade in 2003, suggesting that the invasion was perhaps the logical culmination of the events of the previous three decades — the hypothesis this thesis revolves upon.

Jane Cramer and Edward Duggan in their essay “In pursuit of primacy” propose the three main actors behind the 2003 invasion of Iraq were Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and President George W. Bush, in that order. Cramer and Duggan argue that these three men all wanted to invade Iraq and topple Saddam Hussein well before the 9/11 attacks as part of a pursuit for American primacy. Cramer and Duggan describe primacy as giving the executive branch more independence and freedom — especially in the realm of foreign policy — and building the most technologically advanced and overall superior military force in the world. The authors put this proposal up against the popular belief that neoconservatives were the primary instigators of the invasion.

Cramer and Duggan carefully illustrate that the war was not a preventative war aimed to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, and that WMD were an important tool to allow

the Bush administration to get public support for regime change motivated by desires for U.S. primacy. From here, the pair argues that leading, non-neocon members of the Bush administration were behind the invasion — not neoconservatives. Neoconservatives in the administration did not need to convince their superiors (Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld) that Iraq should be invaded and did not use 9/11 as a tool to change the non-neocon leaders' mindsets, because Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld already wanted to overthrow Saddam for U.S. primacy reasons. They seize upon Cheney's realpolitik view of oil and power politics and cite years of evidence suggesting he wanted Saddam Hussein to have been ousted in Desert Storm and his long-standing support for Ahmed Chalabi of the Iraqi opposition. Cramer and Duggan argue that Rumsfeld was motivated to push for an invasion so he could drive his desired overhaul of the U.S. military, seeing it as "a matter of life and death, ultimately, every American's." The authors admit that Bush is more difficult to explain, and they take the route of "unfinished business," suggesting that Bush wanted to finish the work begun by his father in Operation Desert Storm. This argument has some merit, but it is not a strong enough a reason to go to war. But, if one follows this line of reasoning to the next logical conclusion that Cheney and Rumsfeld, in their confidence that Saddam had to go, were able to push Bush further down the path he was already on, that is a persuasive conclusion. Where Cramer and Duggan (and many other scholars) fall short is their lack of international context for the invasion. There is very little mention of other members of the Security Council or states in the Middle East region. While the United States acted unilaterally in its invasion, that should not give leave for scholars to do the same in their study of it. The Iraq invasion did not happen in an international or historical vacuum and should not be treated as though it did.

2. Methodology

The literature I have read on the Iraq War — of which the above is just a small selection, chosen for its diversity of thought — provided me with many interesting theories to work off of and ample evidence to draw from. Reading Iraq War literature brought enormous amounts of information to light, and with it a realization that it may not be possible to provide a wholly satisfying and water-tight explanation for why the United States invaded Iraq in 2003. So many academics and journalists have been trying to solve the mysteries of the Bush administration for over a decade and disagreements continue to abound. There is also a recurring overemphasis on inventing a specific academic theory, cherry picking evidence that supports it, and removing the situation from its larger context. The general population's conception of the Iraq War is that it occurred in a vacuum and academia has not done enough to dispel this myth.

In an effort to provide this essential context, my thesis will trace the United States' relationship with Iraq from the aftermath of World War II. I will show how and why relations have ebbed and flowed over the years and why, by the end of the 1980s, Iraq and the United States were on fairly good terms with each other on the outside. The internal calculations of both countries were quite different, however, and I will show how this led to Iraq's decision to invade Kuwait and George H. W. Bush's response. In addressing Bush's response and the decision-making behind Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm the narrative of international politics will be essential. In addition, the way in which Desert Storm ended set the stage for the 2003 invasion through the imposition of sanctions, large no-fly-zones, periodic bombings, and the allowed continuation of Saddam Hussein's regime. As the 1990s wore on, so did hostility between the Iraq and the United States, Iraq and United Nations weapons inspectors, France and

the United States, Saudi Arabia and the United States, and neoconservatives and the Clinton administration. Each of these dynamics contributed to the 2003 invasion.

Tracing the history of the relationship between the United States and Iraq led to the emergence of several factors that set the stage for invasion. They include a U.S. desire to establish foothold in the region since WWII, previous U.S. attempts to do so, and the threat Saddam Hussein posed to this goal. U.S. (especially Republican) responses to this threat throughout the 1990s shifted more and more towards calling for Saddam's removal. By the time George W. Bush came to power, many in his administration had pragmatic, pre-existing desires to overthrow Saddam Hussein. When the 9/11 attacks gave these desires the opportunity necessary to be acted upon, the hawkish Bush administration pounced.

Chapter III: Setting the Stage

1. A Brief History of Iraq

The name *al-'Iraq*, meaning the shore of a great river, was first used in the 8th century to describe the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, also known as Mesopotamia.⁸ By the 16th century, the sultans of the Ottoman Empire had expanded their reach to this land, which had developed three distinct centers of power and commerce: majority Kurdish Mosul in the north, Shi'a Basra in the south, and Sunni Baghdad between the two. Actual Ottoman authority over the three provinces ebbed and flowed over the years, with regional rulers often wielding more power than those in the central government based in Constantinople. Nevertheless, by the start of the 20th century, Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra were all still firmly part of the Ottoman Empire, making them targets of the Allied forces after the outbreak of World War I when the Ottomans sided with the Germans against the British. The British Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force (MEF) landed near Basra and captured the city in November 1914, eventually taking control of the majority of the territory that would become Iraq.⁹ After the war ended, through the Armistice of Mudros, Great Britain took control of all three provinces with Sir Percy Cox heading the central administration in Baghdad as civil commissioner and Faisal, son of Hashemite Sharif Hussein of Mecca, heading the new country as king.

Soon after Iraq's founding, its vaguely-defined borders caused a series of disputes between Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. In an effort to quell these disagreements, Sir Percy Cox

⁸ Tripp, Charles. *A History of Iraq*. Cambridge: Cambridge U, 2010. Print. 8.

⁹ *Ibid.* 32.

proposed a map with borders of his own drawing in November of 1922 at what became known as the Uqair conference.¹⁰ At this desert summit, Cox gave two-thirds of the land governed by the Kuwaitis under the 1913 Anglo-Turkish agreement to Ibn Saud of what would become Saudi Arabia ten years later. In an attempt to placate Kuwait, Cox allocated to it a sizable chunk of Persian Gulf coastline, and in so doing, cut Iraq's access to the Gulf to just 16 miles.¹¹ Cox's borders essentially land-locked Iraq and cut it off from some of the rich oil fields in parts of Kuwait that it had previously claimed as its own. This situation understandably bred resentment in Iraq, which saw the small, oil-rich Gulf sheikhdoms as creations of Western imperialists who were looking to divide the region, maintain a grip on Gulf oil, and keep the larger states like Iraq from becoming too powerful — all goals the West would maintain over the decades to come. The creation of Kuwait at the expense of Iraq remained a terrible injustice in the Iraqi memory even 68 years later. In an August 10, 1990 speech by Saddam Hussein eight days after his invasion of Kuwait, this historical wound was on full display:

The Arab state of affairs has changed after the foreigner entered their lands and Western colonialism divided and established weak states ruled by families that offered him services that facilitated his mission. The colonialists, to insure their petroleum interests ... set up those disfigured petroleum states. Through this, they kept the wealth away from the masses of this nation.¹²

¹⁰ Frankel, Glenn. "Lines in the Sand." *The Gulf War Reader*. Ed. Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf. New York: Random House, 1991. 16-20. Print. 16.

¹¹ Darwish, Adel, and Gregory Alexander. *Unholy Babylon: The Secret History of Saddam's War*. New York: St. Martin's, 1991. Print. 10.

¹² "Excerpts From Hussein's Statement Declaring a Holy War." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, 10 Aug. 1990. Web.

Iraq had not been idle in those 68 intervening years. Various leaders heading up various forms of government had thrice attempted to bring Kuwait under Iraq's control — once in 1939, again in 1958, and once more in 1961.¹³

Iraq had (nominally) gained its independence from Great Britain in 1932 through the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, but the British military maintained a substantial presence in the recently formed country and Iraq remained a pro-Western monarchy. For example, as the Cold War began to take form in the aftermath of World War II, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa'id approached Prime Minister Adnan Menderes of Turkey and the two signed a formal declaration in 1955 agreeing to repel outside aggression in the region. Pakistan, Iran, and Britain all soon signed this agreement, later known as the Baghdad Pact, and it was supported by the United States because it fit into Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's "northern tier" strategy of containing the Soviet Union by keeping it from expanding southwest into the Middle East.¹⁴ However, Iraq's relationships with the British and the Americans were upset in 1958 when General Abd al-Karim Qasim led a military coup that resulted in the murder of King Faisal II and Nuri al-Sa'id. In 1959, Qasim withdrew Iraq from the Baghdad Pact, allowed for a resurgence of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), and re-established relations between Iraq and the USSR. These were all encouraging signs for Moscow, which was hoping to bring Iraq into its sphere of influence. At the same token they were very troubling to the United States, as everything during the Cold War was a zero-sum game between the two powers. The United States responded by

¹³ Frankel. 19.; Mobley, Richard A. "Gauging the Iraqi Threat to Kuwait in the 1960s." Central Intelligence Agency. Central Intelligence Agency, 27 June 2008. Web.

¹⁴ Darwish and Alexander. 16.

increasing its support for Iraq's regional rival, Iran, which was at that time under the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.

2. Iraq and the U.S. from 1970 to 1989

In 1963 the winds of Iraqi politics changed again with a coup overthrowing Qasim and bringing nationalist and Baathist¹⁵ military officers to power. The next five years were marked by confusion and infighting that resulted in the removal of the Baathists from power. However, they made a comeback in 1968 with yet another coup d'état that installed Baathist Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as president. The Baath in Iraq at this time were theoretically disposed to non-alignment between the USSR and the United States, which was in keeping with the nationalist, pan-Arab line, but in fact, Iraq relied heavily on the Soviet Union. For example, in 1969 Iraq signed an agreement with the USSR to help uncover and develop Iraqi oil reserves, and in 1972 the two countries signed a 15-year Iraq-USSR Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The relationships between Iraq and the Soviet Union on one side and Iran and the United States on the other were looking like a classic balance-of-power-through-proxy scenario common to the Cold War. This balancing act was disrupted in late 1978 when a series of mass uprisings against the shah of Iran led him to flee the country, followed by the return of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini from exile. Iran under Khomeini was militantly anti-United States, Shi'a theocracy. In other words, a nightmare for both the United States and Iraq.

That same year, 1979, Hasan al-Bakr resigned as president of Iraq and was immediately succeeded by his vice president, Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti. The emergence of a fundamentalist, militant Shi'a state on Iraq's eastern border was seen as both a threat and an opportunity by Saddam Hussein. He feared it would provoke uprisings from the Iraqi Shi'a population in the

¹⁵ The Baath political party is a secular, socialist organization advocating pan-Arabism and non-alignment during the Cold War. It was opposed to Western imperialism and colonialism. In Iraq, its structure was authoritarian and highly centralized. From "Ba'th Party." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 16 Mar. 2007. Web.

south against the Sunni-dominated government in Baghdad, so he expelled thousands of Iraqi Shi'a to Iran.¹⁶ This revolutionary and rhetorically expansionist Iran also threatened to undermine the work Saddam had been doing to position Iraq as the most powerful and influential state in the region.¹⁷ Saddam wanted to head off this threat while taking advantage of a variety of factors that included: the disarray of the Iranian government and military, Iran's lack of arms support because of cut ties with the United States, Iraq's solid military situation because of its arms deal with the Soviets, Iraq's comfortable economic situation because of a eight-fold increase in oil revenues over two years,¹⁸ and a warming of relations with Western powers through increased trade. To capitalize on all of the above, and to fulfill his desire to retake the whole of the Shatt al-Arab waterway,¹⁹ Saddam Hussein launched an invasion of Iran in September 1980.

What was intended to be a limited war to assert Iraq's authority, curb the expansionist designs of Iran, and retake the Shatt al-Arab, turned into an eight-year, brutal war of attrition between the two countries. The United States formally maintained neutrality, but in reality it favored the Iraqis. U.S. support began with encouraging the French who were selling 40 percent of all their arms exports to Iraq and lending fighter jets with missiles to the Iraqi government

¹⁶ Tripp. 225.

¹⁷ Ibid. 222.

¹⁸ Ibid. 206.

¹⁹ The Shatt al-Arab waterway is the strategically and commercially vital convergence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that feeds out to the Persian Gulf and runs along the southern portion of the Iran/Iraq border. Saddam Hussein himself struck a deal with the shah of Iran in 1975, which granted that the dividing line of the Shatt al-Arab be at the *thalweg* or center of the waterway and not at its eastern bank as Iraq had always maintained. In exchange for this prize, the shah closed the northern portion of the Iran/Iraq border to the Kurdish *peshmerga* fighters who had been using Iran as a safe haven from which to conduct their rebellion against the state of Iraq. This effectively ended the Kurdish uprising, which freed Saddam to use his forces four years later to invade Iran instead in an effort to retake the entirety of the Shatt al-Arab and cancel the concession made in 1975.

with whom they had extensive business ties,²⁰ but as the war dragged on, the United States took more direct action by removing Iraq from its list of terrorist states, sharing military intelligence, granting credit to the Iraqi government, providing arms, and reestablishing relations between Baghdad and Washington (creating the now-infamous photo of Saddam and Donald Rumsfeld shaking hands).²¹ The United States' motivation was three-fold: block the expansion of fundamental Shi'ism under Khomeini, protect the oil-rich Gulf monarchies, and draw Iraq away from the USSR and under the wing of the United States.

The Iran/Iran War led to the buildup of three factors which would greatly influence the events and foreign policies of the next two decades: the improvement of U.S./Iraqi relations, the growth of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program,²² and an explosion of Iraqi debt. Iraq's WMD program began in 1974 with the creation of a three-man committee composed of then-Vice President Saddam Hussein, Vice Premier Adnan Hamdani, and Chief of Staff General Adnan Khairallah. The group's initial focus was the development of chemical weapons that could be used as a check on the Israeli nuclear arsenal, which was tilting the regional balance of power as far as deterrence goes far in the Israelis' favor.²³ The committee spent three years (from 1974 to 1977) recruiting Arab scientists living abroad — about 4,000 of them — to come to Iraq to work on the Iraqi WMD program. They then turned their attention to facilities and materials which they got from a variety of sources. For example, a New York-based company,

²⁰ Bozo, Frédéric. *A History of the Iraq Crisis: France, the United States, and Iraq, 1991-2003*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2016. Print. 23.

²¹ Hersh, Seymour. "U.S. Secretly Gave Aid to Iraq Early in Its War Against Iran." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, 25 Jan. 1992. Web.

²² Weapons of mass destruction include chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons, materials, or devices that when used cause severe bodily harm or death to a large amount of humans. From United States of America. U.S. Government Publishing Office. 18 U.S.C. 2332A -- Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction. 2012. Web.

²³ Darwish and Alexander. 102.

Pfaulder Corporation, drew up the blueprints for Iraq's first chemical warfare plant, though it claimed it believed it was working on a pesticide plant (all the chemicals produced were those used in nerve agents).²⁴ Companies based or operating in Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Japan, and West Germany also participated in one aspect or another of Iraq's chemical weapons development.²⁵ By 1984, the weapons were ready for trial and the merciless war raging on Iraq's eastern border provided a convenient testing ground. Iraqi forces used chemical weapons against Iranian troops several times during the war. While their military impact was not severe, their psychological damage was extensive.²⁶ Though the use of chemical weapons is banned by the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the international community remained largely silent when news of the attacks broke, as the larger threat at the time was still seen to be Iran. Saddam went further with his chemical weapons usage in August of 1988 when he used them on seventy Kurdish villages in the north of Iraq as retribution for the continual Kurdish uprisings in that part of the country.²⁷ The international community was more vocal in its disapproval this time around, but not so much that any action was taken against Iraq. The war against Iran — the bigger threat — was ongoing, and countries such as Britain, France, and Germany were reluctant to give up the lucrative business ties with Iraq that they had spent a long time cultivating.²⁸ The development of chemical weapons in Iraq continued, unsanctioned, throughout the Iran/Iraq War. This would change after Iran accepted a ceasefire in 1988 and Iraq and Saddam Hussein became much less useful to the West — especially the United States.

²⁴ Ibid. 104.

²⁵ Ibid. 104.

²⁶ Tripp. 229.

²⁷ Darwish and Alexander. 102.

²⁸ Ibid. 108.

3. Invasion of Kuwait

The Iran/Iraq War also led to the buildup of debt by the Iraqi government. By 1988, Iraq had incurred \$70 billion of debt:²⁹ \$20 billion owed to Saudi Arabia,³⁰ \$20 billion to Kuwait,³¹ \$3.5 billion to Egypt, and the rest owed to non-Arab states. The debt repayment burden called for half of Iraqi oil revenues in 1990. On top of this there was the high price of reconstruction after eight years of vicious fighting, and the mounting costs of imports for both civilian and military use. At the same time, the price of oil had dropped from \$18 a barrel to \$14 a barrel in early 1990, deepening of Iraq's inability to repay its debts. Iraq blamed this drop in the global price of oil on Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), whom Saddam accused of overproducing in order to expand market share. Indeed, Kuwait was producing 1.9 million barrels a day, though its OPEC quota was 1.5 million, and the UAE was producing 1.1 million barrels more than its quota every day.³² According to Kuwait's and the UAE's own calculations, this would cost Iraq \$6 billion in oil revenue every year, while Saddam claimed it was \$14 billion.³³ Saddam needed a rise in the price of oil immediately and he needed debts forgiven. In the Iraqi mind, this was not too much to ask. The Iran/Iraq War was portrayed by them as the Iraqis acting as a bulwark protecting the Gulf Arab community of states against the Shi'a threat. Iraq had lost anywhere between 250,000 and 500,000 soldiers,³⁴ infrastructure had been destroyed, agriculture and commerce had been interrupted, and huge debts had been incurred.

²⁹ Ibid. 232.

³⁰ Tripp. 242.

³¹ Darwish and Alexander. 238.; Other estimates put this number at \$13.5 billion. Ibid. 265.

³² Ibid. 257.

³³ Ibid. 260.

³⁴ Black, Ian. "Iran and Iraq Remember War That Cost More than a Million Lives." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, 23 Sept. 2010. Web.

As Iraq suffered from a struggling economy and general post-war disarray, Saddam did not forget what happens to Iraqi leaders when they fail to control their population and their generals. He needed his authority secured, both domestically and internationally. One way to get it was by forcing other states to cancel Iraq's debts. In the spring of 1990, Saudi Arabia obliged, and converted Iraq's \$20 billion loan into a grant. The Kuwaitis, however, refused. When Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Sa'doun Hammadi met with several Gulf states in June 1990 to discuss raising the price of oil after the aforementioned \$4 drop, he also requested each Gulf state pay Iraq \$10 billion to help it rebuild its economy after the sacrifices it made "in defense of the eastern wing of the Arab nation." The Kuwaitis insultingly offered \$500 million over three years. Worse, in addition to their refusal to cancel any Iraqi debt and their purposeful overproduction of oil, Kuwait began using diagonal drilling to siphon off oil from the Iraqi portion of the Rumaila oil field which lies across the Iraq/Kuwait border. According to Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, this cost Iraq \$2.4 billion.³⁵ On top of Iraq's dire financial straits and Kuwait's economically aggressive and provocative actions, Saddam Hussein was now in a position of essentially begging his neighbors for money — not at all the image of the powerful, authoritative leader he worked to cultivate both among the Iraqi people and to the other Middle Eastern states of whom he was trying to position Iraq as leader. The more Saddam was backed into a corner by Kuwait's intransigence, the more he and his deputies began to consider a military out. Attacking Kuwait followed by either coercion or full-out annexation would have

³⁵ Darwish and Alexander. 262.

three potential benefits: relief for Iraq's financial difficulties, increase in Saddam Hussein's personal authority, and elevation of Iraq as the top regional military and oil power.³⁶

There was a flaw in this plan, and Saddam Hussein knew it. On February 24, 1990, Saddam gave a speech at the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) in Amman, Jordan. He spoke about pan-Arab unity and how it should be used in the coming decade now that the Soviet Union was headed towards its end and the United States was the unchallenged world power. He perceptively proposed that the United States would be able to act with virtual impunity for the next five years until a coalition of countries could come together to balance against it. Saddam suggested that the Arab world could be one such coalition and that it was indeed necessary to the future of the region that they overcome their differences and animosities so as to take advantage of their unique strategic position in the world and to not be taken advantage of by the new superpower. During the Iran/Iraq War the United States had placed military vessels in the Persian Gulf to guard small Gulf nations like Kuwait from attacks by Iran and to escort other vessels through the Gulf. The war had been over for two years, yet the American fleets remained. Furthermore, Saddam accused the Americans of encouraging Soviet Jews to move to Israel in an effort to unsettle the region. Saddam argued that the destabilization of the Middle East was in the best interests of the United States because it would allow it to easily assert itself as the settler of disputes and the only power capable of keeping the region under control and thereby ensure the stable flow of oil. As he said in his February 24 speech:

The country that will have the greatest influence in the region through the Arab Gulf and its oil will maintain its superiority as a superpower without equal to compete with it. This means that if the Gulf people, along with all Arabs are not careful, the Arab Gulf region will be governed by U.S. will. If the Arabs are not

³⁶ Tripp. 243.

alerted and the weakness persists, the situation could develop to the extent desired by the United States; that is, it would fix the amount of oil and gas produced in each country and sold to this or that country in the world. Prices would also be fixed in line with a special perspective benefitting U.S. interests and ignoring the interests of others. If this possibility is there and it is convincing, those who are convinced by it must conclude that peace in the Middle East is remote from the U.S. point of view...³⁷

This speech clearly shows that Saddam Hussein was fully aware of the stakes of circumstances surrounding his plans to attack Kuwait. He knew that the Americans had never been more powerful and that they were on the lookout for any destabilizing activity in the region so as to use it as an excuse to increase and justify their presence in the region.

Aside from the simple logic of his conclusions on the international political situation, there was evidence that the Americans were working with the United Arab Emirates and with Kuwait to have them overproduce on their quotas. On July 9, 1990, the night before a meeting of Gulf oil ministers in Jeddah, the Iraqi Mukhabarat intercepted a phone call between King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and Sheikh Khalifah al-Thani, emir of Qatar.³⁸ Al-Thani would not be able to attend a summit of Gulf states that Saddam had proposed and Fahd suggested Saddam had done this purposefully so as to keep the small Gulf countries from uniting against him. This would leave the UAE and Kuwait open to his intimidation tactics at the meeting. However, the Saudi king planned to use the Qatari emir's absence as an excuse to postpone the meeting, thereby permitting the UAE and Kuwait to continue with their overproduction and dodge Saddam's demands for debt cancellation. Interestingly, soon after this phone call the Saudis effectively pressured Kuwait and the UAE to cut back on production and allow the price of oil to rise again,

³⁷ Hussein, Saddam. "ACC Member Leaders Deliver Speeches at Summit." Fourth Summit of the Arab Cooperation Council. Royal Cultural Center, Amman. 24 Feb. 1990. Speech.

³⁸ Bulloch, John, and Harvey Morris. *Saddam's War: The Origins of the Kuwait Conflict and the International Response*. London: Faber & Faber, 1991. Print.

but this action was taken with no discussions of long-term plans, which would have been the normal procedure. This led Saddam to believe that the Saudis were conspiring with Kuwait and the UAE to *temporarily* cut back on production so as to calm Saddam and keep him from invading Kuwait. The lack of plans after this short-term cut suggested the UAE and Kuwait would be allowed to resume their former levels of production after a few months once Saddam had been appeased.³⁹ Saddam saw all this maneuvering by Saudi Arabia as a way to put in place a long-term pro-American strategy, as lower oil costs were a top priority for the United States (a close ally of Saudi Arabia), whose industries were greatly affected by the global oil market price.

The United States' hand in these maneuverings is subtle, but it left fingerprints. Kuwaiti overproduction benefited the United States by lowering the price of oil, weakening Iraq, and destabilizing the region. This low-grade destabilization (angering Saddam to provoke him to lash out, rather than true destabilization like overthrowing him) would give the United States reason to expand its presence in the Gulf, increase its control over the flow of oil, and enhance its position as global hegemon. Saddam knew this and was fairly honest about his suspicions with United States Ambassador April Glaspie in a July 25, 1990 meeting. “[United States government’s (USG)] maneuvers with the UAE will encourage the UAE and Kuwait to ignore conventional diplomacy. If Iraq is publicly humiliated by the USG, it will have no choice but to “respond,” however illogical and self-destructive that would prove,” reads a summary of the meeting prepared by Glaspie.⁴⁰ This meeting shows clearly that Saddam believed the United States was manipulating countries in the region to lower oil prices, and that if it continued he

³⁹ Darwish and Alexander. 257.

⁴⁰ As quoted in Brigham, Robert K. *The United States and Iraq since 1990 a Brief History with Documents*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. Print. 31.

would have to take action even though he was aware of the likely repercussions — although it is very unlikely he could have predicted the intensity of the coming Desert Storm. On August 2, 1990, Saddam decided he had no choice but to fight his way out of the corner he had been put in by the Americans. The Iraqi troops that had been massing along the southern border for weeks as he delivered verbal threats to Kuwait were ordered to invade and occupy the tiny county, which they completed within 24 hours.

4. Desert Shield and Desert Storm

The international response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was immediate. When Iraq annexed Kuwait it had in its possession about 20 percent of the world's known oil reserves — doubling its previous holdings overnight.⁴¹ This substantial increase in Iraq's influence and revenue stream was unacceptable to the Western states that purchased Gulf oil, and states in the region that feared they could be the next Kuwait. On August 2, just hours after the event, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 660 condemning the invasion and demanding Iraq's withdrawal.⁴² This was followed by Resolution 661 on August 6 placing economic sanctions⁴³ on Iraq, and then by Resolution 665 on August 25, which called for a naval blockade to enforce the sanctions.⁴⁴ November 1990 was the United States' turn as chair of the UNSC and it capitalized on the good timing of the monthly rotation to draft Resolution 678.⁴⁵ This resolution was designed to give teeth to the previously passed resolutions by including the allowance of "use of force" and by setting a deadline of mid January for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. The United States then had the task of convincing other countries on the Security Council to join them in supporting the resolution, a job energetically undertaken by Secretary of State James Baker.

⁴¹ Duffield, John. "Oil and the decision to invade Iraq." *Why Did the United States Invade Iraq?* New York: Routledge, 2012. 145-166. Print. 151.

⁴² "Resolution 660." United Nations Security Council, 2 Aug. 1990. Web.

⁴³ The sanctions in this resolution call for all states to prohibit the import of all commodities and products from Iraq and Kuwait. Sanctions also ban all countries from selling or supplying Iraq and Kuwait with any product besides those of a strictly medical nature and, in some circumstances, food. "Resolution 661." United Nations Security Council, 6 Aug. 1990. Web.

⁴⁴ "Resolution 665." United Nations Security Council, 25 Aug. 1990. Web.

⁴⁵ "Resolution 678." United Nations Security Council, 29 Nov. 1990. Web.

It is important to note that even though the Cold War had just come to an end, leaving the United States as the globally-recognized world superpower, the George H. W. Bush administration chose to take the United Nations route in dealing with Iraq, spending an enormous amount of time, energy, and money to get other countries to fall in line. For example, in exchange for Egypt's support allowing American planes to traverse Egyptian airspace and American ships to have priority passage through the Suez Canal, and the possibly more important prize of political legitimacy as a result of the blessing of an Arab leader, Bush cancelled \$7.1 billion in Egyptian debt to the United States.⁴⁶ This was one among many deals struck by this Bush administration to form and maintain an international coalition.

As multilateral diplomatic maneuvering took place behind the scenes, an enormous military force was gathering in Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney met with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia on August 3 and persuaded him to formally request assistance from the United States military. Cheney told the Saudis that Iraqi troops had massed along the Saudi border and were preparing for an attack. There is little evidence that Saddam would have actually ordered an attack on Saudi Arabia, though there is debate on this point. The fact that he did not push through Kuwait, which he had successfully invaded and occupied within 24 hours of the initial invasion, and into Saudi Arabia when he had ample opportunity to do so as the world was caught by surprise at his movements is one example. Another is that the positioning of the supposed Iraqi attack force Cheney described to Fahd was in fact an extension of the front line in Kuwait and a fortification of their defensive position, and

⁴⁶ Greenhouse, Steven. "Half of Egypt's \$20.2 Billion Debt Being Forgiven by U.S. and Allies." The New York Times. The New York Times, 26 May 1991. Web.

not an offensive maneuver.⁴⁷ Desert Shield was not conducted to simply protect Saudi Arabia from possible invasion by Saddam as the Bush administration said, but was rather a rendez-vous location and launch point for the international coalition against Iraq led by the United States. Cheney, in his meeting with Fahd, strongly encouraged the Saudi king to accept American “protection.” This put the Saudi royal family in a very difficult position. Saudi Arabia hosts the two holiest sites in Islam — Mecca and Medina — and the House of Saud had already been accused by fundamentalist Muslims of being unfit custodians. The nation of Saudi Arabia itself was born of a union between Ibn Saud and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, founder of the fundamentalist Wahhabi movement, and the Saudi family has always had to strike a balance between the modernists of the country and the fundamentalists. Inviting half a million foreign infidel soldiers to the land of Mecca and Medina was not well-received by many in the Muslim world, including a wealthy and influential man named Osama bin Laden who accused the king of putting infidel interests over those of Muslims, and thereby going against the teachings of Islam.⁴⁸ Fahd’s decision to allow infidel presence in this holy land would lead to severe repercussions about a decade later in the form of the 9/11 attacks and as a U.S. motivation for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, as pressure grew throughout the 1990s for U.S. bases to be removed from Saudi Arabia.

When the deadline of January 15, 1991 set by UN Resolution 678 came and went without Iraqi withdrawal, Desert Shield converted to Desert Storm, an offensive operation. It began on January 16 with a massive arial bombing campaign that dropped 90,000 tons of bombs over 42

⁴⁷ Darwish and Alexander. 286.

⁴⁸ Bin Laden, Osama. "An Open Letter to King Fahd On the Occasion of the Recent Cabinet Reshuffle." Combatting Terrorism Center. West Point, Aug. 1995. Web.

days.⁴⁹ On February 22, Bush told Saddam to retreat from Kuwait or face the coalition troops. When Saddam refused, Bush ordered coalition ground troops into Kuwait and southern Iraq.⁵⁰ Iraqi forces folded quickly and Saddam ordered a full retreat. As Iraqi troops fled on Highway 80 connecting Kuwait City to Basra, U.S. fighter jets bombed the jammed highway, inflicting enormous damage on Saddam's retreating army in a scene that became known as the Highway of Death. After just four days, the United States agreed to end the ground war and announced a ceasefire. Though coalition forces had killed thousands of Iraqi troops⁵¹ during the short conflict, the Republican Guard, Saddam's elite fighting force, was largely left intact at the time of the ceasefire and facilitated his retention of power.⁵² Bush was faced with a decision as Iraqi troops poured out of Kuwait: Should he pursue them into Iraq and up to Baghdad to topple Saddam? The answer was no. "I firmly believe that we should not march into Baghdad. Our stated mission, as codified in UN resolution, was a simple one — end the aggression, knock Iraq's forces out of Kuwait, and restore Kuwait's leaders," Bush said when he ended the mission.⁵³ Regime change in Iraq was never a stated aim of that Bush administration, though according to National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, it was a "hopeful byproduct."⁵⁴ But

⁴⁹ Allison, William Thomas. *The Gulf War, 1990-91*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Print. 108.

⁵⁰ Brigham. 23.

⁵¹ The exact number is disputed and estimates range from 1,500 dead, according to John Heidenrich, to 100,000 dead, according to initial estimates from the Defense Intelligence Agency. The current consensus among military analysts puts the number at somewhere between 10,000 to 25,000. Sources: Heidenrich, John G. "The Gulf War: How Many Iraqis Died?" *Foreign Policy*, no. 90, 1993, pp. 108–125.; Cohen, Eliot A., and Thomas A. Keaney. *Gulf War Ari Power Survey Summary Report*. Rep. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993. Print.

⁵² H.R. 4655, "Iraqi Liberation Act of 1998 (Enrolled Bill, Sent to the President), Bill Summary and Status for the 105th congress, Public Law 105-338, October 31, 1998, Sponsor Representative Gilman, Related Bill S.2526, 6.

⁵³ As quoted in Hahn, Peter L. *Missions Accomplished?: The United States and Iraq since World War I*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print. 106.

⁵⁴ As quoted in Brigham. 24.

Bush knew that his coalition of more than 35 countries would not stay intact if he shifted goals to include invading Iraq and bringing down Saddam.

While the United States did not directly pursue Saddam's ousting, it did encourage uprisings by the Shi'a in the south and the Kurds in the north in accordance with Bush's national security directive, which stated U.S. and coalition forces should seek to "weaken Iraqi support for the current government."⁵⁵ Indeed, Bush himself in a February 1991 speech urged Iraqis to "take matters into their own hands, to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside."⁵⁶ However, when Saddam rearmed his Republican Guard and unleashed them on Iraqi Kurds and Shi'as, killing tens of thousands,⁵⁷ Bush did not act. This situation perfectly illustrates then conflicting desires of the Bush administration at this time. They wanted Saddam gone. His actions had destabilized the region more than they had originally been hoping for and driven up the price of oil instead of down. At the same time, supporting the Kurdish uprising would help to undermine Saddam but would also infuriate Turkey, a close U.S. ally. Supporting the Shi'a in their rebellion could also loosen Saddam's grip on power, but it could also pave the way for a pro-Iran regime in Iraq and the United States certainly did not want a regionally-dominant Iran. Furthermore, the fighting by the Kurds and Shi'a threatened to break up Iraq along sectarian lines, no doubt leading to fighting over oil resources and thereby increasing oil prices. Bush and many in his administration had hoped for a Sunni-led military coup against Saddam, ushering a

⁵⁵ "Responding to Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf," National Security Council Directive 54, January 15, 1991, Bush Presidential Library and Museum.

⁵⁶ As quoted in Hahn, *Mission Accomplished?*. 107.

⁵⁷ This number is disputed. Estimates range from about 25,000 killed in the rebellions to about 100,000 killed. Sources: Kelly, Jack. "Estimates of Deaths in First War Still in Dispute." Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. N.p., 16 Feb. 2003. Web.; Krane, Jim. "Civilian Deaths Could Total 30,000 or Higher." The Seattle Times. The Seattle Times Company, 25 Oct. 2005. Web.; Osborne Daponte, Beth. "A Case Study in Estimating Casualties from War and Its Aftermath: The 1991 Persian Gulf War." Physicians for Social Responsibility (1993): 57-66. Web.

more friendly dictator, but this was made impossible by the continued existence of the Republican Guard, which supported and protected Saddam. Furthermore, the threat of Shi'a takeover from the south rallied Saddam's Sunni generals to his side, as they saw him as the lesser of two evils — the opposite outcome the Americans had hoped for.⁵⁸

In an attempt to temper the large-scale slaughter they were indirectly responsible for, the Bush administration launched Operation Provide Comfort, which established refugee camps for Kurds in the north and created a no-fly zone⁵⁹ in that region. The Bush administration was heavily criticized for encouraging these revolts and then doing too little to stop the killing. Invading Iraq was out of the question from the start, meaning the Americans were never planning on intervening on behalf of the Kurds and Shi'as, but rather hoped those groups would take care of the Saddam problem for them as the Americans refused to go into Baghdad themselves. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell predicted that if they had, “we would be ruling Baghdad today — at unpardonable expense in terms of money, lives lost, and ruined regional relationships”⁶⁰ while Secretary of Defense Cheney explained “once we cross over the line ... it raises the very real specter of getting us involved in a quagmire figuring out who the hell is going to govern Iraq.”⁶¹ Both Cheney and Powell would go on to serve under George W. Bush a decade later where they would come to very different conclusions on the question of what to do about Baghdad and Saddam.

⁵⁸ Bozo. 29.

⁵⁹ See page 40 for details on no-fly zones.

⁶⁰ Powell, Colin L. "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead." *Foreign Affairs*. N.p., 28 Jan. 2009. Web.

⁶¹ As quoted in Herring, George C. *The American Century and Beyond: U.S. Foreign Relations, 1893-2014*. New York: Oxford UP, 2015. Print. 612.

Chapter IV: The Rising Tensions of the 1990s

1. Resolution, Sanctions, and Inspections

The conflict had ended, but Saddam Hussein remained in power, dealing a blow to the American position, as the United States at this point saw Saddam as a threat to its interests of controlling Gulf oil, military domination, and global hegemony. He had come very close to controlling a fifth of the world's oil supply and his ability to hold on to his dictatorship in the face of resounding military defeat raised the idea that maybe the Americans were not all powerful in this new world order. So while the United States was unhappy with Saddam's survival, there was little that could be done as the conflict was over and there no international will to remove him. However, the international community had been alarmed by Saddam's bellicosity and his WMD — both known and suspected — and this led to the UN Security Council's decision to keep his regime in check through sanctions and weapons inspections.

The Americans and the British, with some input from Saddam's former friend the French, drafted Resolution 687 in late February. It passed 12-1-2 in the Security Council and laid the groundwork for American foreign policy towards Iraq for the next decade. The resolution addressed the Iraq/Kuwait border, war reparations, a demilitarized zone, and prisoners of war, but its two most important aspects concerned Iraq's stockpiles and development of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons and sanctions to control those weapons.⁶² The resolution demanded Iraq unconditionally agree to destroy or allow the removal of all its biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, along with all facilities whose purpose is to manufacture, repair,

⁶² "Resolution 687." United Nations Security Council, 3 Apr. 1991. Web.

research, or develop said weapons. To enforce this demand, the resolution ordered Iraq to submit a report to the secretary general of the United Nations detailing the locations, amounts, and types of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons and agree to on-site inspections by a special commission of the sites listed by Iraq and those deemed in need of inspection by the commission itself. In addition, Iraq was required to promise not seek those weapons in the future.

On top of this, sanctions put in place by Resolution 661 were to remain in place until it was deemed Saddam had met the conditions laid out in Resolution 687. The only way to lift the sanctions would be through a new resolution which would have to be passed by the Security Council and which could be vetoed by any permanent member of the Security Council,⁶³ a tool the United States would take advantage of several times over the coming decade. This would turn the temporary sanctions put in place by Resolution 661 into a permanent sanctions regime in Iraq. The vagueness of the word “sanctions” allows it have euphemistic applications so it is important to define and understand what putting sanctions on a country means. The sanctions placed on Iraq on August 6, 1990 prohibited all countries from purchasing any of Iraq's exports and forbade all countries from selling or giving any product besides those needed for medical purposes and, under certain circumstances, food. The sanctions placed on Iraq effectively stopped all its imports and exports, brought its economy to a grinding halt, and inflicted terrible damage on its civilian population. Sanctions would become a major point of contention during the Clinton years as some denounced them as cruel and others as weak and ineffective.

The resolution also created the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) to oversee Iraq’s disarmament in unison with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In

⁶³ The permanent members are the United States, France, the United Kingdom, China, and Russia.

addition to sanctions, monitoring, and disarmament, coalition forces (United States, Great Britain, France) established a no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel near Irbil in April 1991, known as Operation Provide Comfort. To support their action, the three countries cited UN Resolution 688 passed April 5, 1991, which condemned Saddam's repression of Iraqi Kurds and encouraged member states to provide humanitarian aid to them.⁶⁴ The resolution did not call for or condone the establishment of no-fly zones. Nonetheless, in August 1992, Provide Comfort was expanded upon to create a second no-fly zone known as Operation Southern Watch, covering Iraqi territory south of the 32nd parallel, about 100 miles south of Baghdad, in the name of protecting the Shi'a in that region. In 1996, this was enlarged by the British and Americans to include the 33rd parallel, just south of the outer Baghdad suburbs. Paris refused to recognize the new boundary of the no-fly zone and in December of that year French President Jacques Chirac pulled French planes out of the northern no-fly zone, as he no longer saw its utility.⁶⁵

Rather like the use of the word "sanctions," "no-fly zones" also have the innocent ring of ambiguity. No-fly zones like the ones put in place over about half the territory of Iraq prohibit any aircraft from flying in airspace designated as a no-fly zone. Any aircraft in violation can be shot down by those enforcing the no-fly zone. Anti-aircraft weaponry on the ground beneath a no-fly zone, such as surface-to-air missiles, can also be targeted. These two no-fly zones over Iraq would lead to what was essentially a constant state of low-grade warfare between Iraq and the United States throughout the 1990s. Later, in the run-up to the 2003 Anglo-American invasion, U.S. and U.K.⁶⁶ forces were able to take advantage of these no-fly zones already in

⁶⁴ "Resolution 688." United Nations Security Council, 5 Apr. 1991. Web.

⁶⁵ Bozo. 42.

⁶⁶ Smith, Michael. "RAF Bombing Raids Tried to Goad Saddam into War." The Times & The Sunday Times. Times Newspapers Limited, 29 May 2005. Web.

place by heavily bombing ground targets in the spring of 2002 in an effort to weaken Iraqi defenses to prepare for the invasion.⁶⁷

The weapons inspections called for in Resolution 687 began in the spring of 1991. As UNSCOM began combing through Iraq, it confirmed what the world already knew: Saddam was in possession of chemical and biological weapons stockpiles, though Saddam claimed in his April 18 disclosure of chemical weapons and ballistic missiles that he had no biological weapons program.⁶⁸ What was surprising to many observers was the extent of his nuclear weapons program. Saddam was producing military-grade fissile material and was in possession of plutonium and highly enriched uranium.⁶⁹ Throughout 1991, Iraq tested the waters of the UN Security Council by giving up a little information and then engaging in obstructionist tactics against inspections, such as detention of inspectors and withholding of documents. On March 19, 1992, Saddam revealed the existence of previously undisclosed ballistic missiles and chemical weapons, but insisted he had destroyed them unilaterally in the summer of 1991 — a move which was in violation of Resolution 687, as it meant UNSCOM was not able to verify their original existence or their destruction. It is not known exactly why Saddam chose to take matters into his own hands in destroying these weapons, though this question is more closely examined in the next section.

This back-and-forth over weapons inspections and its subsequent effects on sanctions, no-fly zones, Western demands and coercion coalesced into a policy called “containment.” It

⁶⁷ Franks, Tommy, and Malcolm McConnell. *American Soldier*. New York: Regan, 2005. Print.

⁶⁸ "Chronology of Main Events." United Nations Special Commission Chronology of Events. United Nations, Dec. 1999. Web.

⁶⁹ Baradei, Mohamed El. *The Age of Deception: Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012. Print. 25.

was a sort of “can’t live with him, can’t live without him” scenario in which Western powers were forced to leave Saddam in power out of fear of sectarian fighting and the Iraqi state fracturing if he were to fall, and the fear of a Saddam armed with WMD and the damage he could cause if he were left to his own devices. Thus, Saddam Hussein remained in power and continued to defy American will, thereby becoming a growing threat.

2. Clinton and Containment

Despite George H. W. Bush's success in driving out Iraqi forces from Kuwait with an international coalition, he was unable to win reelection in 1992 and Bill Clinton took his place in the Oval Office in January 1993. Though Clinton was a Democrat and his predecessor a Republican, this had very little effect on the continuity of foreign policy concerning Iraq. Clinton shared the view laid out in the previous paragraph that there was not much to be done with Saddam except to try to contain him through sanctions and inspections. The United States did launch two attacks on Iraq in the first half of 1993. The first was carried out with the United Kingdom on January 19, and it was aimed at southern Iraq in response to Saddam's announcement that UNSCOM aircraft would no longer be allowed in Iraq airspace, implying they would be shot down. The second took place in June by the United States in retaliation for a supposed assassination attempt of George H. W. Bush. In spite of these attacks, by July the weapons inspections situation was improving. Iraq was feeling the effects of two years of sanctions and in an effort to bring them to an end as soon as possible, it had increased its cooperation with UNSCOM. By the summer of 1994 UNSCOM had destroyed several stockpiles of chemical weapons and was emphasizing the positive direction the inspections had taken. UNSCOM's executive chairman Rolf Ekéus had even said privately that he believed the disarmament of Iraq was almost completed.⁷⁰

Indeed, by 1995, the majority of Iraq's unconventional weapons had been destroyed⁷¹ either by Iraq or by UNSCOM, yet there remained the question of future research and

⁷⁰ Pollack, Kenneth. *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*. New York: Random House, 2003. Print. 69.

⁷¹ Duelfer, Charles. *Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq's WMD*. Rep. United States Government, 23 Sept. 2003. Print.

development capabilities and a general Western mistrust of Iraq's statements saying (truthfully) that those programs had ended.⁷² For example, by 1997 Iraq had provided five "full, final, and complete" disclosures of its biological weapons program, three for its chemical weapons program, and three for its missile program. Each time it submitted a "full, final, and complete" report, UNSCOM would find evidence showing that the reports were neither full nor complete, and therefore, not final.⁷³ On August 8, 1995, Saddam's son-in-law Hussein Kamel who, as former director of Iraq's Military Industrialization Corporation oversaw all of Iraq's weapons programs, defected to Jordan and gave testimony on Iraq's WMD programs.⁷⁴ Kamel revealed previously-unknown Iraqi progress on weaponizing biological material and an early-stages uranium-enrichment program.⁷⁵ After having been outed by Kamel's testimony, Iraq withdrew its third full, final, and complete disclosure on biological weapons and resubmitted it with extensive information on the weaponization of biological materials. Iraq also provided UNSCOM and the IAEA with documentation on its development of the nerve agent VX and its progress on developing a nuclear weapon.⁷⁶

Saddam Hussein went to great lengths to preserve and conceal his WMD programs during this time. Yet it is important to remember that in spite of all the misdirections and evasions that characterized the Iraqi attitude towards the inspections, when the Americans invaded in 2003 under the pretext of destroying these WMD, they found next to nothing. It is now widely accepted that the United States and the United Kingdom knew that these weapons

⁷² United Nations Special Commission Chronology of Events.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Bozo. 38.; United Nations Special Commission Chronology of Events.

⁷⁵ Bozo. 38.

⁷⁶ United Nations Special Commission Chronology of Events.

systems had been degraded until they ceased to exist, yet still chose to fix their argument for invasion around the WMD narrative because it was the most politically expedient option.⁷⁷ The fact that nothing was found after the invasion means that, however unwillingly, Saddam had indeed allowed the inspectors to do their work, and that Iraq had not resumed its WMD development even after the inspections ended. This raises the question if the weapons were no longer there, why not be more forthcoming and get relief from the crippling sanctions in the 1990s and avoid invasion in the early 2000s?

There are several compelling explanations for Saddam's tragic decisions regarding WMD over the years. The first is that Saddam wanted other countries in the region, especially Iran, to think that he might have still had his WMD arsenal so as to keep a hold on his slipping status as a regional power and protect Iraq from regional aggression. In a series of interviews with an FBI agent after his capture in December 2003, Saddam explained that even though "Iraq did not have WMD, the threat from Iran was the major factor as to why he did not allow the return of UN inspectors."⁷⁸ Saddam claimed the UNSCOM inspections would eliminate Iraq's ability to deter aggression from Iran and that this was more of a risk to him than any U.S. or UN repercussions for his blocking inspections. He went on to point out that while Iraq had been disarmed, Iran was able to maintain its WMD and delivery program, putting Iraq at great risk.

Another reason for Saddam's obstructive behavior towards the sanctions was his suspicion of their ulterior motives, specifically U.S. spying. As it turned out, his suspicions were

⁷⁷ Rycroft, Matthew. "Secret and Strictly Personal -- UK Eyes Only; Iraq: Prime Minister's Meeting, 23 July" Message to David Manning, Richard Wilson, John Scarlett, Francis Richards, Jonathan Powell, Sally Morgan, and Alastair Campbell. 23 July 2002. E-mail.

⁷⁸ "Saddam Talks to the FBI." Interview by George L. Piro. The National Security Archive. George Washington University, 1 July 2009. Web.

warranted.⁷⁹ According to David Kay, chief nuclear weapons investigator for UNSCOM from 1991 to 1992, in order to get the expertise and capabilities they needed to conduct weapons inspections, UNSCOM had to make “a bargain with the devil,” by which he meant rely on national intelligence agencies:

[The U.S. intelligence community] immediately realized that the only access they had to Iraq in those days was through UN inspection teams. And my view is that's the point where the relationship started to tilt... I'm convinced that in the period of 1991, '92, '93 the intelligence community contributed a lot more to UNSCOM's success than they ever got out of it. I think by 1994 and '95, the balance inevitably started swaying as the realization was, ‘The only way out is Saddam goes.’⁸⁰

A similar statement was also made by Richard Butler, executive chairman of UNSCOM in 1997, who said that weapons experts came from intelligence agencies and that it was natural for them to inform those agencies of what they discovered about Iraq and its WMD program through their work for UNSCOM.⁸¹ As a result of Saddam’s correct accusations of U.S. spying, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz sent a letter to the president of the UNSC on October 29, 1997 demanding all American members of UNSCOM be removed from the inspections team.⁸²

A third explanation for why Saddam Hussein was not more cooperative with UN inspectors was his growing (correct) belief that the sanctions would not be lifted even if Iraq did comply with all UNSCOM demands and inspections. As Aziz explained in a 1999 interview⁸³ UNSCOM’s purpose went beyond simple disarmament, as it was used by the United States and the United Kingdom as a method of spying and a pretext to continue the sanctions. U.S.

⁷⁹ Gellman, Barton. "U.S. Spied on Iraq Via UN." The Washington Post. WP Company, 2 Mar. 1999. Web.

⁸⁰ "Spying on Saddam." Frontline. Public Broadcasting Service, Apr. 1999. Web.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² United Nations Special Commission Chronology of Events.

⁸³ "The Survival of Saddam." Frontline. Public Broadcasting Service, Jan. 2000. Web.

Secretary of State Madeline Albright essentially confirmed this Iraqi belief when she announced in March 1997, “We do not agree with the nations who argue that if Iraq complies with its obligations concerning weapons of mass destruction sanctions should be lifted.”⁸⁴ This is a particularly illuminating quote as it shows the United States saw disarmament as a means to an end — crippling Iraq — rather than an end unto itself.

These events came to a head on August 5, 1998 when the Iraqi government halted any cooperation with UNSCOM or the IAEA until the oil embargo had been lifted and UNSCOM was reorganized to prevent U.S. spying — specifically calling for the removal of American and British inspectors from the Commission along with the aggressive and pro-American UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler. Iraq’s defiance of inspections and growing Republican pressure in the U.S. Congress for a more aggressive approach pushed Clinton to sign the Iraq Liberation Act into law on October 31, 1998. The law declared regime change in Iraq to be the official policy objective of the United States. It also empowered the president to give aid to democratic Iraqi opposition groups and called on the United Nations to convene an international criminal tribunal to investigate, prosecute, and imprison Saddam Hussein.⁸⁵

Following through on their threat of noncooperation with UNSCOM, in early December 1998, Iraqis blocked UNSCOM agents from inspecting Baath Party headquarters. The Iraqis claimed the established rules for inspecting sensitive sites allowed access for only four UNSCOM team members, whereas this group was much larger. The inspectors claimed that the modalities for sensitive sites no longer applied and the Iraqis responded by refusing the

⁸⁴ As quoted in Bozo. 45.

⁸⁵ H.R. 4655, “Iraqi Liberation Act of 1998.”

inspectors entry. In reaction, Clinton announced on December 16, 1998 that the United States and the United Kingdom were launching (without UNSC consultation) a series of airstrikes known as Operation Desert Fox in an effort “to degrade Saddam's capacity to develop and deliver weapons of mass destruction, and to degrade his ability to threaten his neighbors.”⁸⁶

Despite this spoken emphasis on WMD, the reality of the target was different. In a December 19 press conference, Secretary of Defense William Cohen listed the primary targets of the campaign as: Iraq’s air defense system, Saddam’s military command and control system, his military infrastructure (including his Republican Guard), Iraqi airfields and oil refineries, Saddam’s security forces and facilities that have helped hide his efforts to develop WMD, and the industrial base Saddam “uses to sustain and deliver his deadly weapons.”⁸⁷ These last two targets are very broad and essentially give the United States and United Kingdom license to bomb whatever security forces, industrial sites, and security facilities they chose. Accordingly, of the 100 targets in Desert Fox, 49 were part of the infrastructure of the Iraqi regime itself, like military barracks and presidential sites, including Saddam Hussein’s sleeping quarters just outside Baghdad. Thirty-five were Iraqi air-defense systems and just 13 were associated with WMD.⁸⁸ Clinton, on a call with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, “You know, the first thing we try to take out are their integrated communication and air defense systems.”⁸⁹ Similar to the way the United States was using sanctions, specifically targeting Saddam Hussein’s

⁸⁶ Clinton, Bill. "President Clinton Explains Iraq Strike." Washington D.C. 16 Dec. 1998. CNN. Web.

⁸⁷ Cohen, William S. "Operation Desert Fox Briefing." United States Department of Defense. N.p., 19 Dec. 1998. Web.

⁸⁸ Arkin, William. "The Difference Was in the Details." The Washington Post. WP Company, 17 Jan. 1999. Web.

⁸⁹ Clinton, Bill. "Declassified Documents Concerning Iraq." Clinton Digital Library. Clinton Presidential Library, n.d. Web.

residence, air defenses, and communications (all components of a low-grade air war) was an attempt to further weaken or even topple the Iraqi regime, rather than destroy its WMD.

Operation Desert Fox opened the floodgates of constant hostilities between the United States and Iraq. The United States no longer hesitated to strike Iraqi air defenses in the no-fly zones, resulting in almost daily bombings in 1999. After Butler — at the behest of the Americans and the British — pulled UNSCOM out of Iraq in the run-up to Desert Fox, there had been no more inspections in Iraq. It took a full year of Security Council negotiations to establish the United Nations Monitoring and Verification Commission (UNMOVIC), a replacement for UNSCOM, which at that point had become overly-politicized and in the pocket of the Americans in the opinions of the French and the Russians who were the strongest proponents of UNMOVIC.⁹⁰ As UNMOVIC constituted itself, airstrikes continued in the no-fly zones (now about half the country), and a new, aggressive status quo was established. This would carry on after George W. Bush's election in November 2000, up until the attacks of September 11, 2001, because while Bush II's election would usher in a group of people who held strong opinions about more aggressive stances towards Iraq, they lacked a concrete plan on what kind of action that would entail. They were also missing a force that would allow for strong, aggressive action to be taken.

⁹⁰ Bozo. 57.

3. The International Politics of the 1990s

For the United States, sanctions were an indispensable tool in its efforts to contain Iraq — using them for a purpose beyond that of disarmament — and it was very reluctant to let them go. With the United States blocking the prospect of ending the sanctions regime, tensions began to rise — not just with Iraq but also with others in the international community. France, Russia, and China were all pushing for the rehabilitation and the reintegration of Iraq into the international community and cracks had begun to form within the Security Council. When Iraq blocked UNSCOM inspections in 1997, the UNSC passed Resolution 1134 which condemned Iraq's actions, threatened travel restrictions on certain Iraqi leaders, and upheld the continued suspension of periodic sanctions review.⁹¹ This resolution was passed with abstentions from France, Russia, and China.

France and its relationship with Iraq is a useful foil to U.S./Iraqi relations. Though the United States and France share important characteristics (rich, secular, Western democracies) their approaches to Iraq over the years have been quite different. The French have generally been more pro-Arab in the Arab/Israeli conflict, earning them good will in the region and papering over some of their past colonial sins. The French also cultivated extensive business ties with Iraq over the years, meaning their business interests took a hit from the sanctions. Nevertheless, the French condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and supported Resolution 687, sanctions and all. Where France diverged from the United States was that France saw the sanctions as a means to the end of disarming Iraq, whereas the United States saw sanctions as a means to the end of crippling Iraq. For France, once disarmament was accomplished, Iraq could

⁹¹ "Resolution 1134." United Nations Security Council, 23 Oct. 1997. Web.

be reintegrated into the international system and French businesses would be able to resume their deals with the Iraqi government, while the Americans for the most part wanted to use the sanctions to create conditions that would lead to Saddam's removal from power.

The French/Iraqi relationship became significant after the Six-Day War in 1967 when French President Charles de Gaulle condemned Israel's preemptive strike against Egypt, gaining him popularity in the Arab world. During the Cold War, Iraq was aligned with the Soviet Union, but by the early 1970s the Iraqis were looking to diversify their outside support, as they were relying almost exclusively on the Soviets.⁹² They looked to the French, who had in turn been eyeing the secular Baathist regime as people they could do business with. When Iraq nationalized its oil in 1972, French contractors were given priority. Meanwhile, Iraq was rapidly becoming one of France's largest customers for weapons, so that by 1982 Iraq alone was buying 40 percent of France's arms exports.⁹³ France openly supported Iraq during the Iran/Iraq War, even lending it French fighter-bomber jets equipped with French bombs to be used against Iran.⁹⁴ However, when Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait in August 1990 and the Americans under George H. W. Bush moved quickly to create a large coalition to counter Saddam's move towards regional hegemony, the French sided with the Americans against Saddam. The French voted for UN Security Council Resolution 661 calling for strict sanctions against Iraq and Resolution 678 authorizing members to use "all necessary means" to restore international security. They also participated in Desert Shield and Desert Storm. After the successful ousting of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the French voted for Resolution 687 which stipulated sanctions would only be lifted

⁹² Bozo. 21.

⁹³ Ibid. 22.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 23.

once Iraq had been disarmed of its WMD and created the mechanism by which this would be carried out — UNSCOM. They remained on board with the Americans and British by calling for and participating in the no-fly zones over the Kurds in the north and Shi'a in the south.

The French began to diverge from the Anglo-American position in 1994 when many, such as UN Secretary General and Boutros Boutros-Ghali and UNSCOM Executive Chairman Rolf Ekéus, considered disarmament to be succeeding and when the humanitarian disaster of the sanctions regime began to come to light. China, France, and Russia — all permanent members of the UNSC — began pushing for the gradual lifting of sanctions on Iraq as an incentive for the Iraqis to continue cooperating with disarmament. Under pressure from three of the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United States agreed to Resolution 986 in April 1995, which established the Oil-for-Food Program.⁹⁵ This program allowed Iraq to begin selling its oil on the international market again, under UNSC supervision, and use the profits for humanitarian purposes.⁹⁶ However, the Oil-for-Food program ended up backfiring, as the regime used its control over humanitarian funds to increase its control over the Iraqi people, while turning profits by imposing surtaxes on its oil exports and increasing black market activity under the cover provided by Oil-for-Food.⁹⁷

France remained adamant that Iraq ought to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into the international community. Iraqi/French diplomatic contact resumed in 1994 and French President Jacques Chirac made the French position clear in a 1996 speech at the University of Cairo when he said “These resolutions, and they alone should be applied by Iraq, but also by the Security

⁹⁵ "Resolution 986." United Nations Security Council, 14 Apr. 1995. Web.

⁹⁶ Bozo. 38.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 38.

Council and the international community,” meaning as Iraq increased its compliance, the UNSC should increase its relief of sanctions.⁹⁸ While France and other countries wanted to freely buy Iraqi oil again, there was also growing concern for the Iraqi people living under the sanctions regime. The sanctions were having devastating effects on Iraqis and the humanitarian repercussions could not be ignored. By the turn of the century it was estimated hundreds of thousands of Iraqis — many of them children — had died as a result of malnutrition and disease stemming from lack of food and resources because of the UN embargo.⁹⁹ The international community was seeing the United States’ behavior towards Iraq more and more as an attempt by a superpower to maintain tight control over an essential region, no matter the cost to its inhabitants.

The differences between the French relationship with Iraq and the U.S. relationship with Iraq shows how the United States, since the early 1990s, was interested in much more than disarmament. It shows that the United States’ fears concerning Iraq went far beyond its WMD capability to the country’s leadership and position in the Middle East. Iraq under Saddam Hussein threatened the United States’ hegemony in the Gulf. This undermining of the United States’ position affected who controlled Gulf oil, which affected industry, which affected the domestic situation of the United States along with its power around the world. If Iraq could undermine the United States by ending the sanctions and rejoining the international community, the United States’ superpower status would be diminished.

⁹⁸ As quoted Ibid. 41.

⁹⁹ Crossette, Barbara. "Iraq Sanctions Kill Children, U.N. Reports." The New York Times. The New York Times, 30 Nov. 1995. Web.; Sadiq, Sheraz, and Sharon Tiller. "The Debate Over UN Sanctions." Frontline World. Public Broadcasting Service, Nov. 2002. Web.

It is also for this reason, perhaps, that some other countries were interested in re-empowering Iraq under Saddam, as long as the WMD were eliminated. While many countries were pleased to see the fall of the Soviet Union, far fewer were as delighted to witness the rise of a lone superpower that could act with virtual impunity anywhere in the world. Their fears were not assuaged by a New York Times article detailing a leaked document from the Pentagon on March 8, 1992.¹⁰⁰ The paper is known as the Defense Planning Guidance, an internal document prepared every two years instructing Department of Defense (DOD) leaders on how to properly organize their forces and resources to achieve administration goals. The document sketched a world in which the United States as a benevolent superpower maintained such a monopoly over military and political power that no competitor could hope to challenge it either regionally or globally. One of the United States' priorities would be to "convinc[e] potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests," as the United States as global superpower would do it for them. This would be done in an effort to "discourage [advanced industrial nations] from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order."¹⁰¹ While this document was written by the Department of Defense under George H. W. Bush — a more hawkish group than Clinton's administration — it still colored the way other countries viewed the United States and its actions towards Iraq throughout the 1990s. Furthermore, the overall characteristics and position of the United States do not typically change dramatically from president to president, so

¹⁰⁰ Tyler, Patrick E. "U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop." The New York Times. The New York Times, 07 Mar. 1992. Web.

¹⁰¹ Tyler. "U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop."

it is fairly safe to assume that this general goal of global superiority was constant across the Bush and Clinton administrations.

Towards the end of 1996, the State Department outlined three policy paths forward for the Clinton administration: rehabilitate Iraq, repair the coalition, or get rid of Saddam.¹⁰² Clinton wavered somewhere between the second and third. He continued to use the threat of violence in response to Iraqi obstruction yet was unwilling to undertake long-term efforts to overthrow Saddam, but was still open to working with other countries. For example, tensions flared in January 1998 when the Iraqis refused access to eight presidential sites and the Americans once again threatened military strikes. French President Jacques Chirac stepped in and stressed to Clinton that airstrikes would simply enable Saddam to rally his people against the United States and the United Nations. Chirac convinced Clinton to let UN Secretary General Kofi Annan fly to Baghdad to try to work out a deal. Annan managed to get Saddam to agree to a protocol for inspections of presidential sites that would respect Iraq's sovereignty and Clinton backed down from his threats of airstrikes.¹⁰³

While the French celebrated this successful exercise in diplomacy, many in United States were much less enthusiastic about what they saw as a series of appeasements to a dangerous dictator with a lying streak and who could not be trusted — the widespread American view of Saddam throughout the 1990s. Appeasement was distasteful to Washington Republicans because it fostered an image of an impotent United States that rolled over whenever the United Nations asked it to in order to cater to the whims of a dictator. This behavior would be unsavory to them

¹⁰² Bozo, 40.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 49.

under any circumstances, but it was made worse by the unprecedented geopolitical position of the United States at the time. The United States was the world superpower and Republicans (and plenty of Democrats) believed Clinton was squandering the country's chance to create a new world order in a fashion that most suited the United States. This is why the Iraq story is about so much more than whether one small country's dictator should stay or go. The debate over Iraq — the weapons, the sanctions, the oil, the inspections — and its repercussions echoed on the world stage where the United States was trying to take advantage of an opportunity for global domination that would likely never present itself again.

4. Conservative Hostility to Containment

In May 1991, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger declared “Saddam could not be redeemed,” suggesting that regime change was and had been the goal of the Bush administration.¹⁰⁴ Bush knew that the coalition he had built would not condone a push into Baghdad to topple Saddam. Instead, he hoped for a military coup and encouraged uprisings by the Kurds and Shi‘a to destabilize Saddam. This would prove to be a humanitarian disaster as the Kurds and Shi‘a responded to American encouragement and rebelled thinking American aid was on the way, and were slaughtered by Saddam when no help arrived. In the absence of an American overthrow and an internal uprising, the United States and the majority of the international community turned to containment. However, for many American decision makers, containment was not enough. They wanted more aggressive action against Saddam and the threat he posed to U.S. power. At the very least, the sanctions that helped make up containment should be used to squeeze Saddam out, rather than as an incentive for him to rejoin in the international system.

With the benefit of hindsight and historical record, it is clear that containment was effective in disarming Iraq and keeping Saddam from redeveloping his WMD capabilities. However, in the 1990s the constant back and forth between Saddam and UNSCOM described in previous sections created an image in Washington of a third-world autocrat defying, manipulating, and humiliating the United States, and as the decade wore on there was a growing sense among political leaders that containment as a policy could not last. In March 1998, Republican Senator John Kyl accused the Clinton administration as having been “frozen into

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 31.

inaction in dealing with Saddam Hussein”¹⁰⁵ while Republican Senator Don Nickles asserted in October that “Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis ... have really baffled the Clinton administration and, in my opinion, they have beaten the Clinton administration.”¹⁰⁶ They viewed containment as a failure and were openly advocating for Saddam Hussein’s forcible removal.

This was not simply a partisan band of Republicans taking advantage of Clinton’s political turmoil in 1998 as a result of his affair. In February 1998, Democratic Senator John Kerry said every possible effort must be made to “disrupt” Saddam Hussein’s regime, including possible boots on the ground.¹⁰⁷ In October 1998, Congress took matters into its own hands and passed the Iraqi Liberation Act (ILA) by a vote of 360-38 in the House and unanimous approval in Senate.¹⁰⁸ The ILA made it the official policy of the United States to attempt to remove Saddam Hussein from power and replace him with a democratic government, in addition to authorizing aid to democratic opposition in Iraq. The democratic opposition was increasingly seen to be the Iraqi National Congress (INC), a coalition of anti-Saddam organizations originally established in October 1992 by the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Several major Shi’a organizations joined, along with the Iraqi Communist Party, the Iraqi National Accord, and the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. The INC was headed by an Iraqi Shi’a named Ahmed Chalabi, who throughout the 1990s developed relationships with influential names in Washington including Paul Wolfowitz and New York Times reporter Judith Miller. Chalabi and the INC would come to play an outsized and

¹⁰⁵ Ritchie, Nick, and Paul Rogers. *The Political Road to War with Iraq: Bush, 9/11, and the Drive to Overthrow Saddam*. London: Routledge, 2007. Print. 58.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 58.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 41.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 41.

damaging role in the run-up to the 2003 invasion by supplying the Americans with bad intelligence in order to encourage invasion.¹⁰⁹

As Congress lost faith in containment, forces on the fringe of government were advocating various replacements, specifically the abandonment of containment in favor of regime change. Many of these critics came out of the Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations and when Clinton was elected they flocked to Washington think tanks, publications, and consulting firms. One such conservative organization, the Project for the New American Century, sent a letter to Clinton in January 1998 demanding he implement a new strategy towards Iraq that would “aim above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein’s regime from power.” Seven of this letter’s 18 signatories¹¹⁰ would go on to assume high level positions in the administration of George W. Bush, including Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz. Conservatives saw Clinton as throwing away the opportunity the United States had gained by the fall of the Soviet Union to be the world superpower.¹¹¹ He was bowing to the will of the United Nations and going easy on Saddam when they believed there had never been a moment when the opposite was more necessary.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Drogan, Bob, and John Goetz. "How U.S. Fell Under the Spell of 'Curveball'." Los Angeles Times. N.p., 20 Nov. 2005. Web.

¹¹⁰ Abrams, Elliot, Richard Armitage, William Bennett, Jeffrey Bergner, John Bolton, Paula Dobriansky, Francis Fukuyama, Robert Kagan, Zalmay Khalilzad, William Kristol, Richard Perle, Peter Rodman, Donald Rumsfeld, William Schneider, Jr., Vin Weber, Paul Wolfowitz, James Woolsey, and Robert Zoellick. "PNAC Letters Sent to President Bill Clinton." Information Clearing House. N.p., 26 Jan. 1998. Web.

¹¹¹ Republican Party Platforms: "2000 Republican Party Platform," July 31, 2000. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project.

¹¹² Lemann, Nicholas. "The Next World Order." The New Yorker (n.d.): n. pag. The New Yorker. 1 Apr. 2002. Web.

Chapter V: Bush and the Catalyst

1. Bush II: Pre-9/11

When George W. Bush, son of George H. W. Bush, assumed the presidency in January 2001, there was no discernible change in the United States' foreign policy towards Iraq. While Republicans on the whole were dissatisfied with how the outgoing administration had handled Saddam Hussein's Iraq, there were no cohesive or concrete plans on how to move forward policy-wise. During the 2000 presidential campaign, Bush made statements stressing how the United States should be "humble" in its approach to other nations and should avoid dictating to other states what they should do, saying "I don't think it's the role of the United States to walk into another country and say 'We do it this way, so should you,'" in a October 2000 presidential debate. He also asserted that U.S. troops should not be used for nation-building.¹¹³

These assertions were vague platitudes delivered by a foreign policy novice to a public that was wary of foreign quagmires. Bush did not put forth a concrete foreign policy on Iraq during his campaign so it is more useful to consider the official platform of the Republican Party in 2000, which called for the full implementation of the Iraqi Liberation Act and the resumption of inspections that had effectively ceased after Desert Fox. While the amount of influence a party platform has over foreign policy is dubious, the platform is nonetheless indicative of the general attitudes and opinions of Republican lawmakers at the time. "Republicans recognize that peace and stability in the Persian Gulf is impossible as long as Saddam Hussein rules Iraq," the

¹¹³ "Presidential Debate Excerpts: Gov. George W. Bush vs. Vice President Al Gore." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, 12 Oct. 2000. Web.

platform reads.¹¹⁴ Even though the future president did not yet have a clear policy formed for Iraq, his party most certainly did, and as someone without foreign policy experience, Bush had no other options than to rely on his party and administration for guidance once he was elected.

As his new administration was coming together in the early spring of 2001, those first several months remained business as usual with sanctions, airstrikes, and no-fly zones being used to “contain” Saddam, just as they had been under Clinton. Bush did instruct his staff to prepare a policy review on Iraq, but in the interim he authorized Secretary of State Colin Powell to begin to advocate for “smart sanctions” that would be targeted more narrowly at the Iraqi military and attempt to reduce the harm being inflicted upon the general Iraqi population by the current sanctions regime. Powell’s mission was to redesign the deeply unpopular sanctions and get a reluctant United Nations Security Council to sign on to a new sanctions plan. Yet as Powell (who believed containment was working and should continue) made plans to carry on with the containment of Iraq, other factions within the Bush administration were developing different approaches.¹¹⁵

Generally, there were three ideological camps concerning Iraq among Bush’s advisors: the status quo, the hawks, and the ideologues. The first, led by Powell, advocated a relatively status quo continuation of Bill Clinton’s containment policy. This entailed continued anti-aircraft strikes in the no-fly zones, military action against suspected WMD locations and facilities, continued sanctions, UNMOVIC inspections, and regime change as a formal long-term policy of the United States. The second bloc, the hawks, included Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary

¹¹⁴ "2000 Republican Party Platform."

¹¹⁵ Ritchie and Rogers. 54.

of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice who were all advocates for a tougher policy towards Saddam Hussein and Iraq for national interest reasons, though what form that “toughness” would come in had not yet been determined. The third group has some overlap with the second, but it was comprised of the ideologues whose attitudes towards Saddam Hussein were formed by neoconservative doctrine and theory. The leader of this group was Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and it included Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, Vice President’s Chief of Staff Lewis "Scooter" Libby, National Security Council Staffer for Near East, Southwest Asian, and North African Affairs Elliott Abrams, and Defense Policy Board Member Richard Perle. It should be noted that those with the most power in the administration — Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, and Powell — all belonged to the first two camps. The neocons, though numerous, were almost all deputies, not principles. While the debate over the extent of the neocons’ influence over foreign policy and the decision to invade Iraq is ongoing, this thesis argues they did not hijack Bush’s foreign policy. Rather, their presence combined with the pre-existing general Republican desire for Saddam’s ousting and the shock of 9/11 all pushed Bush towards invasion in early 2002.

All that needs to be said about Powell’s camp — continuing sanctions — has been said, but the second camp could benefit from further explanation, starting with Vice President Dick Cheney. Like several other powerful members of Bush II’s administration, Cheney had been a key decision maker under Bush I as secretary of defense. As leader of the charge against Saddam in the 1990s, Cheney’s views on the Iraqi dictator had been formed years before he became vice president. While he was publicly supportive of the decision of his boss at the time not to chase the Iraqi army back to Baghdad and topple Saddam in 1991, by the time he was

running for vice president, he had changed his tune. In October of 2000, vice presidential candidate Cheney said a Bush II administration may “have to take action to forcibly remove Saddam from power.”¹¹⁶ As has been shown, this was directly in line with the Republican Party’s views at the time.

Cheney was in the hawkish “national interest” camp in Bush II’s White House. His top priorities were restoring the power of the executive after the blow dealt by the Watergate years, increasing the United States’ access to Middle Eastern oil, and bolstering and maintaining the United States’ status as a world superpower by suppressing all challengers.

Cheney was committed to expanding the power of the president, and had been since the passage of the War Powers Act in 1973, which put a check on the president’s power to go to war, as a result of the Vietnam War. Cheney was chief of staff to President Gerald Ford who came into office a year later and Cheney saw the law as a terrible infringement on the executive’s authority.¹¹⁷ Empowering the military and launching a war out of the White House in 2003 was a surefire way to shift that authority back to the president.

During the years between the two Bush administrations, Cheney worked as CEO of Halliburton, an oil and gas company. In this position, the importance and power of oil, especially Middle Eastern oil, became very clear to Cheney, as demonstrated by a 1999 speech: “While many regions of the world offer great oil opportunities, the Middle East with two-thirds of the world’s oil and the lowest cost is still where the prize ultimately lies ... [but] progress continues to be slow,” he said.¹¹⁸ After he was elected vice president, Cheney created the

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 57.

¹¹⁷ Cramer and Duggan. 216.

¹¹⁸ As quoted Ibid. 216.

National Energy Development Project Group (NEDPG) to investigate oil development opportunities, including those in Iraq.¹¹⁹ The NEDPG report warned of increased demand and decreased supply of oil and how this would empower the countries of the Persian Gulf — the opposite of what the Bush II administration wanted.¹²⁰

Cheney was also interested in upgrading the United States' military through increased spending, saying “[I] never saw a defense program I didn’t like.”¹²¹ Growing the military was done in an effort to increase national security, but what exactly does that mean? The United States was without a legitimate challenger after the fall of the Soviet Union and it was not engaged in any large-scale military efforts. For Cheney and most others in the Bush administration at the turn of the century, national security meant international dominance. After all, it was Cheney who had commissioned the Defense Policy Guidance under Bush I that pushed for U.S. domination and suppression of all challengers.

Before Cheney and Bush took office in 2001, Cheney arranged a meeting with outgoing Secretary of Defense William Cohen. On January 10, Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, and Powell went to the Pentagon where Cohen briefed the president-elect on the low-grade air war the United States was waging against Iraq and to have a serious “discussion about Iraq and other different options.”¹²² No policy emerged from the meeting and Bush would later say that there was not necessarily a sense of urgency concerning what to do with Saddam.¹²³ However, Cheney’s insistence on such a meeting before the president even took office shows that Iraq was

¹¹⁹ As quoted *Ibid.* 216.

¹²⁰ As quoted *Ibid.* 227.

¹²¹ As quoted *Ibid.* 233.

¹²² Woodward, Bob. *Plan of Attack*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004. Print. 9.

¹²³ *Ibid.* 12.

a top priority for him (because of national interests including executive power, energy security, and international dominance) and that he wanted to convince the president of the same.

The second major player in the hawkish “national interest” camp of the White House was Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. The career paths of Rumsfeld and Cheney have crossed many times over the years. Rumsfeld was Ford’s chief of staff before Ford appointed him secretary of defense in 1975 and Rumsfeld recommended Cheney to fill his old position. Rumsfeld was secretary of defense from 1975 to 1976 and he had found his short tenure at the DOD to be frustrating and unproductive.¹²⁴ When Bush II appointed him to the same position 25 years later, he was determined to do it better. Rumsfeld was committed to overhauling the Pentagon, which he thought was an unmanageable institution in the 1970s. One of his first tasks was updating the out-of-date war plans. The war plan for Iraq was essentially Desert Storm Part Two — an even larger version of the air assault and ground force that had been used by George W. Bush’s father. It did not take into account a decade’s worth of technological and military advances, which tied in with another one of Rumsfeld’s top priorities: increasing the Pentagon’s budget to modernize the military and get it combat-ready on a quicker timeline.¹²⁵

Rumsfeld’s focus on an overhaul of the DOD stemmed from the place as Cheney’s desire to increase military spending. A stronger military meant a greater ability to project power outside the United States’ physical borders, which Rumsfeld saw as both the prerogative and duty of the United States at the turn of the century. The 1998 letter to Clinton that Rumsfeld signed along with many others who would go on to serve in the Bush II administration called for

¹²⁴ Ibid. 17.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 34.

military action to “protect our vital interests in the Gulf.” According to the letter, these interests included stability in the Middle East, the protection of U.S. regional allies and troops, the preservation of the world’s oil supply, and the elimination of Iraqi WMD.¹²⁶ Each of these is a national interest to the United States because each contributes to the projection of U.S. power abroad. Relative regional stability allows the United States to continue to effectively operate in the Middle East, protection of U.S. troops and allies permits the United States to maintain its presence physically and by proxy, preservation of oil lets U.S. companies and markets profit off of it, and the elimination of WMD neuters the potential challenger who possesses them.

Condoleezza Rice was a political science professor and provost of Stanford University when she was brought on as a National Security Council advisor to Bush I. When Bush II was elected, he appointed her national security advisor and it was said that no one had more access to Bush than Rice did.¹²⁷ Rice was pragmatist whose priority, like Cheney and Rumsfeld, was “the national interest,” as she laid out in a piece in the January/February 2000 issue of *Foreign Affairs* titled “Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest.” Rice opens her piece by grappling with the words “national interest” themselves and how the fall of the Soviet Union has presented the United States with an opportunity to redefine those interests independent of the Cold War, bipolar context. She continues that beyond defining its own interests, the United States has the ability to define the very shape of the world to come. She offers a list of what the national interest in this new world should be, along with how to carry it out. The first recommendation is “to ensure that America's military can deter war, project power, and fight in defense of its

¹²⁶ "PNAC Letters Sent to President Bill Clinton."

¹²⁷ Woodward. 23.

interests if deterrence fails” — all arguments used to support military action against Saddam Hussein.¹²⁸

Rice describes an instance of failed deterrence: Iraq is the prototype of a rogue regime left behind as the world advances towards democracy and open markets. She argues that Saddam seeks WMD to maintain his grip on his regime and his place in an international order in which he has no business partaking. This perceived drive to attain weapons for the sole purpose of hanging onto power makes Saddam an unacceptable threat in the new world order. “Nothing will change until Saddam is gone, so the United States must mobilize whatever resources it can, including support from his opposition, to remove him,” she writes.¹²⁹ Ousting Saddam would accomplish her goals of using the U.S. military to deter war by ensuring Saddam is unable to attack any of his neighbors, to project power by asserting itself more prominently into the affairs of a strategically important region, and to defend U.S. interests by keeping open access to oil and quashing any challengers that may rise up in the region. While Rice’s piece makes clear her resolve to oust Saddam Hussein in the name of the national interest, she, like many other Republicans, is vague on the mechanics. She echoes the prevailing current of thought at the time, which is to offer support to the opposition in hopes they will take care of the problem.

Paul Wolfowitz worked in the departments of state and defense for years under Reagan and Bush II before becoming dean of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He was recommended to Bush II as deputy secretary of defense by Cheney and Rumsfeld and was a stalwart proponent of overthrowing Saddam Hussein through force and by working with

¹²⁸ Rice, Condoleezza. "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest." *Foreign Affairs*. N.p., 14 Sept. 2015. Web.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Iraqi opposition — specifically Ahmed Chalabi and the INC. Wolfowitz was part of a cohort known as the neoconservatives, or neocons for short. The neocons are often treated as a monolith that strove to project American ideals and values abroad through force, with the goal of increasing U.S. security. In fact, there are several strands of thought under the neoconservative umbrella — such as prioritizing Israel or seeing Middle Eastern Islamic culture as antithetical to American values — but there is not room here to address them all. Instead the focus must be to highlight their common and most well known trait of dogmatic commitment to democracy and capitalism and the importance of spreading them to other places to create a new world order that favors the United States. The neocons were unabashed in their calls for the removal of Saddam. His continued defiance and undermining of the sanctions regime was a blow to U.S. power and therefore a threat to U.S. security. For the neocons, removing him was an absolute necessity.

Wolfowitz thus became one of the exceptions to the indecision over how to get rid of Saddam that was plaguing the rest of the Bush administration. Wolfowitz, called by some the intellectual godfather of the Iraq invasion, knew exactly what should be done with Iraq, and how. He envisioned an American force entering Iraq from the south, through Kuwait, to seize Iraq's southern oilfields (two-thirds of its total) and carve out a base from which the Americans and the Iraqi opposition could overthrow Saddam. He called this the “enclave strategy” and it would allow the opposition to rally the Iraqi population together against Saddam.¹³⁰

Powell, among others, was vehemently opposed to the enclave strategy, believing it betrayed an ignorance of Iraqi politics and population under Saddam and the Baath. Wolfowitz was a very educated man and was aware of the sectarian divisions within the Iraqi state (Shi'a

¹³⁰ Woodward. 22.

Arab majority and Sunni Kurdish minority ruled by Sunni Arab minority). Indeed, one of the main reasons Bush I did not push all the way to Baghdad or support the Kurdish and Shi'a uprisings after Desert Storm was for fear the Iraqi state would break up along sectarian lines. Brutal though Saddam was, he had managed to survive as leader and keep his country territorially intact over two decades that had seen two wars, economic calamity, international humiliation, frequent coup attempts, multiple rebellions, humanitarian devastation, and constant bombings. It could not be denied that Saddam and the Baath knew Iraqi politics and how to keep some kind of balance. Iraq was in a miserable state, but the Baath had still managed to keep a lid on the potential for sectarian violence that exploded after Saddam was toppled.

However, Wolfowitz seemed to think that the interwar decade had been bad enough to melt sectarian divisions and unite the Iraqi people in animosity for Saddam. He supported his argument by pointing to Chalabi's INC as an example of Shi'as and Kurds coming together to oppose Saddam. Chalabi was a favorite in the DOD which saw him as a possible leader of an armed insurgency. The State Department and CIA were much more reserved in their enthusiasm, as they saw Chalabi as untrustworthy, divisive, and out of touch from his exile in London.¹³¹ Their suspicions proved to be well-founded after the invasion when it was discovered much of the bad intelligence on Iraqi WMD came from an Iraqi defector codenamed Curveball with ties to the INC.

Powell denounced Wolfowitz's enclave strategy as "lunacy" and implored the president to cast it aside, which he did. After rejecting the only concrete plan his administration had put forth, Bush was back to being in the middle of a tug of war with Rumsfeld, Cheney, and Rice on

¹³¹ Ibid. 20.

one side and Powell on the other. Powell was still pulling for more careful sanctions and continued containment, while the national interests hawks and the neocons were looking for regime change. For them, Saddam's continued existence was evidence of a failure of U.S. policy and power. The United States was not in control of Gulf oil, its physical presence was tenuous because of animosity towards American bases in Saudi Arabia, and Saddam's survival showed an inability to project power to quash competitors. The administration was at a stalemate. It seemed as though nothing would advance unless the president made a decision or an outside force changed the equation. Of course, we know now that it would be the latter.

2. Bush II: Post-9/11

On September 11, 2001, nineteen young men from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates, all affiliated with the Afghanistan-based al-Qaeda terrorist organization, flew two planes into the World Trade Center Towers in New York, another into the Pentagon, and a fourth into a field in Pennsylvania through the intervention of the passengers. The images were shocking, the feelings of fear and vulnerability were crushing, and sympathy for the American people poured in from around the world. Only one country withheld its condolences. Saddam Hussein opined that the “American cowboys were reaping the fruits of their crimes against humanity.”¹³² As described in previous sections, U.S./Iraqi relations were badly deteriorated by this point, with the half of Washington seeming to be discussing how to topple Saddam on a day-to-day basis. Saddam’s remarks did not help his cause among the dwindling group of American policy makers who were still advocating for his containment rather than his downfall.

The years of resentment, suspicion, and fear of Saddam Hussein, along with the almost three-year absence of UNSCOM inspectors in Iraq made Saddam jump to the minds of just about every principle in the Bush administration, including Bush himself, in the hours and days immediately after the attack. The very afternoon of the Pentagon attack, one of Rumsfeld’s aids took notes the secretary’s musings on whether to “hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] @ same time — not only UBL [Osama bin Laden].” The next day as Bush’s war cabinet assembled, Rumsfeld wondered aloud if the attacks could be an opportunity to strike Iraq.¹³³ In a more extensive debate at Camp David on September 16 over what the initial target should be — Iraq or

¹³² "Attacks Draw Mixed Response in Mideast." CNN. Cable News Network, 12 Sept. 2001. Web.

¹³³ Woodward. 25.

Afghanistan — Bush, Cheney, Powell, and Rice all voted against attacking Iraq, while Rumsfeld abstained. However, Bush did tell Rumsfeld to continue working on Iraq war plans. It was in this way that war with Iraq became unavoidable after 9/11. There was no one clear moment when the president decided the United States would invade. Rather, 9/11 created an opportunity for the Bush administration to immediately set into motion desires it held towards Iraq for years.

The war in Afghanistan against the Taliban regime harboring al-Qaeda began on October 7. The support for this war was widespread as there was still enormous sympathy for the United States and Afghanistan was closely tied to al-Qaeda. The first month and a half of war was going surprisingly well as the Americans had already taken half the country, including the capital. With this successful operation underway, Bush was able to turn back to Iraq, which had been placed on hold throughout November. On November 21, Bush asked Rumsfeld about the state of the United States' war plans for Iraq. They were not great — rather like a bloated Desert Storm, and Bush asked Rumsfeld to get to work discreetly updating them.¹³⁴ By the next month, General Tommy Franks of United States Central Command (CENTCOM), the theatre of operations for the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, was briefing the president and his national security team on a ground invasion requiring about 230,000 troops. The planning moved along, punctuated with statements from Franks like “We don't know if or when you'd want to do this, but if and when you decide to do this...”¹³⁵ It was in this way that Bush continued to inch towards war, letting the machine gain momentum, while never saying concretely that the United States would definitely go to war.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 2.

¹³⁵ As quoted Ibid. 59.

On June 1, 2002, the president gave a speech to the graduates of West Point Military Academy. Tucked within the pleasant anecdotes often told at graduation ceremonies were the lines: “The war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.”¹³⁶ Though the president still had given no formal directive to his staff or made any press announcements, it was clear that the United States was preparing for war. Throughout the summer the press dug in, pushed sources, and picked up leaks. The reports were often faulty, unclear, or incomplete, yet this was due to the nature of the subject reported on rather than skill of the journalists. That summer saw Rumsfeld and Franks draw and redraw plans, unable to settle on a final draft. Bush made semi-non-committal press statements like, “There are no war plans on my desk. I believe ... that the doctrine of preemption applies. We won’t do anything militarily unless confident we can succeed. Success is the removal of Saddam.”¹³⁷ Again, Bush evades stating concretely what has been accepted knowledge within the White House since 9/11: The United States will take advantage of the opportunity provided by the attacks to strike Iraq, whose retention of Saddam Hussein has made it a threat to U.S. power and therefore, security.

Powell was still trying his best to dissuade the president from what he believed would be a disaster. Powell specifically pointed to the problem of nation building post-Saddam. The Iraqis had never known democracy, democracy takes institutions, and U.S. forces would therefore have to stay in the country to establish that infrastructure. In August 2002, Powell was

¹³⁶ Bush, George W. "President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point." West Point Graduation. United States Military Academy, New York. 1 June 2002. Speech.

¹³⁷ As quoted in Woodward. 138.

still making the case for a multilateral approach. He urged the president to build a coalition and operate through the UN. It would perhaps require Bush to lower his sights from regime change, but it would minimize the threat posed by Saddam while keeping the world on the side of the United States. Powell was doomed to fail. As has been shown, there was very little support for multilateralism, containment, or “appeasement” throughout the 1990s, and after the 9/11 attacks Powell’s calls for a measured response were essentially ignored. There was far too much pressure and momentum coming from most of the Republicans who had rejected containment in favor of regime change years previous. The goals of the national interest hawks and the neocons would carry the agenda. The 1990s had allowed these two groups to hone in on what they thought was in the best interest of the United States: a strong, technologically advanced, and well-funded military; energy security, especially where it concerned Gulf oil; a physical military presence in strategically important regions and accompanying ability to project power; and the capability to quash competitors so as to maintain its status as world superpower.

The speed with which the core of the administration connected Saddam to the 9/11 attacks is evidence of the effect years of history has had on these decision-makers. Patterns of aggression on the part of the United States towards Iraq had been established throughout the previous decade and a half when the United States manipulated Kuwait to economically harm Iraq, launched an enormous attack on Iraqi forces, and then imposed crippling sanctions with no end in sight in order to topple Iraq’s leader. The outcome of those aggressions was a weakening of the U.S. position. It had failed to achieve its goal of controlling Gulf oil. The durability of its physical presence in the Gulf was uncertain because of backlash the Saudi government was getting for hosting infidel soldiers indefinitely in the land of Mecca and Medina. Saddam’s

ability to survive and even profit off of the sanctions while working its way back into the international system revealed the United States' inability to crush its challengers. That a vote was held on whether or not to invade Iraq just five days after sustaining an assault from a totally unrelated enemy shows that after 9/11, war with Iraq was inevitable. To turn back from war after that would be antithetical to the image Bush was trying to build of a superpower that could carry out its will whenever and wherever, and it would be throwing away a chance to oust Saddam Hussein. The wheels were in motion — they had been for years — and there was no going back.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

On March 17, 2003, George W. Bush gave a speech from the White House demanding Saddam Hussein and his sons leave Iraq within 48 hours or the United States would initiate a war against him. Unsurprisingly, Saddam refused and went into hiding in Iraq. The United States launched its invasion on March 20. This act tipped the first domino of a chain that continues to fall to this day.

This thesis was not written to prove George W. Bush lied about WMD, nor to detail the mechanics of the post-9/11 invasion buildup. This thesis was written to expose how the U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was a result of decades of history between the two countries. After the Iran/Iraq War, when Iraq ceased being useful to the United States as a weapon against Iran, a cycle was begun in which the United States would find a new purpose for Iraq. Through the Kuwait crisis, Desert Storm, the UNSCOM inspections, Desert Fox, and of course, Operation Iraqi Freedom, the United States used Iraq as a tool to expand its presence in a strategically vital region that would be key to securing the United States' new position as world superpower. The United States capitalized on each of these conflicts to tighten its grip on Iraq and its problematic dictator while squeezing out any possible competitors. As Saddam fought back by frustrating inspectors and launching effective public relations campaigns against the sanctions, resentment in Washington increased against this man who was undermining and humiliating the top global power. This resentment grew into a potent political force which manifested itself in the passage of a law demanding the ouster of Saddam. The tide had turned against containment and towards regime change, meaning when Bush took office, something had to give vis-à-vis U.S. policy

towards Iraq. Almost all the major players in the Bush administration had developed reasons they saw Saddam Hussein as a threat to the United States and wanted him removed. These reasons were the result of the previous decade and a half of conflict between the two countries. When the hawkish Bush administration took power in Washington, there was no doubt there would be another turn of the cycle of U.S. provocative action towards Iraq. However, what form that turn would take was unclear until the 9/11 attacks exercised a cataclysmic effect on these factors that were waiting to be acted upon. 9/11 only changed the situation in that it intensified the drive of the Bush administration to take down Saddam and gave them the tools to do so.

If Kuwait was a bale of hay, then the 1990s were gasoline being poured on that hay, and the 9/11 attacks were a match dropped on it. There was no one moment, no one conspiracy that made George W. Bush think out of nowhere he needed to invade Iraq. Rather it was years and years of build up of an American desire to remove him because of the threat he posed to U.S. control over oil, U.S. domination of the Gulf, and U.S. ability to crush its competitors. 9/11 provided the opportunity that members of the Bush administration had wanted for a very long time. The Iraq War did not come out of nowhere and it is not without explanation. The 2003 invasion was simply another chapter — albeit more dramatic and destructive — in the history of Iraq's long war with the United States.

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