

# **The Decision to Go to War with Iraq**

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**prepared for**

**Public Administration: Concepts and Cases, 8<sup>th</sup> edition**

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In order to understand how the United States decided to go to war with Iraq, it is necessary to go back to the Gulf War of 1991. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, President George H.W. Bush assembled a broad international coalition to confront Saddam and throw his troops out of Kuwait. After a buildup of nearly half a million troops in the area and a bombing campaign, U.S. ground forces were able to defeat the Iraqis in just 100 hours. As U.S. troops drove the Iraqis out of Kuwait, President Bush made the decision not to slaughter the retreating Iraqi troops on the ““highway of death”” from Kuwait City back to Basra in Iraq. More importantly, the president decided not to invade and occupy Iraq.

To have done so would have exceeded the U.N. mandate and would have moved well beyond the coalition’s support and the U.S. military mission. President Bush and his assistant for national security affairs, Brent Scowcroft, put it this way:

Trying to eliminate Saddam, extending the ground war into an occupation of Iraq, would have violated our guideline about not changing objectives in midstream, engaging in ““mission creep,”” . . . We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq. The coalition would instantly have collapsed, the Arabs deserting it in anger and other allies pulling out as well. Under those circumstances, there was no viable ““exit strategy”” we could see. . . . Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land.

President George H.W. Bush’s restraint in limiting the coalition’s military victory to driving the Iraqi army out of Kuwait without completely destroying it and invading Iraq was to come under considerable criticism from a group of public figures and defense intellectuals known as neoconservatives (neocons).

This loosely connected group of critics of U.S. defense policy believed that the decision not to remove Saddam Hussein was a profound mistake. The neocons organized ““The Project for the New American Century,”” and published a ““Statement of Principles”” in 1997. The statement noted that the United States was the sole remaining superpower, and advocated an assertive U.S. foreign policy and increased defense spending in order to ““accept responsibility for America’s unique role in preserving and

extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles.”” In 1998 the organization wrote an open letter to President Clinton arguing that Saddam’s Iraq was a major threat to the United States and a destabilizing force in the Middle East. They stated that U.S. national security strategy ““should aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein’s regime from power,”” which ““means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing.”” The letter was signed by, among others, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Richard Perle.

When George W. Bush became president in 2001, he appointed Rumsfeld to be Secretary of Defense and Wolfowitz to be his deputy. Other neocons also joined the administration; Perle became Chair of the Defense Policy Board, advisory to the Secretary of Defense; Douglas Feith became under secretary of defense for policy; Lewis (““Scooter””) Libby became chief of staff to Vice President Cheney; Stephen Hadley became deputy to National Security Advisor Concoleezza Rice; John Bolton became undersecretary of state for arms control and international security affairs. Vice President Cheney was their strong ally in their hostility toward Iraq and desire to use U.S. military power to topple Saddam.

For the first six months of the Bush administration, however, their arguments did not persuade President Bush. During the campaign for the presidency, George W. Bush’s tendency was toward disengagement from the rest of the world, compared to the Clinton administration. He believed that the U.S. was too involved in the Middle East peace process, and he thought that the U. S. should reconsider its commitment to peacekeeping in the Balkans. He rejected the Clinton administration’s attempt to foster a reconciliation between North and South Korea.

Bush did not seem to be inclined to an aggressive foreign policy. In commenting on foreign relations during the presidential debates, he said, ““It really depends on how our nation conducts itself in foreign policy. If we’re an arrogant nation, they’ll resent us. If we’re a humble nation, but strong, they’ll welcome us.”” With his support of increased military spending and reservations about an active foreign policy, Bush seemed to echo Theodore Roosevelt’s advice to ““speak softly but carry a big stick.”” But all of this change after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

### **The Public Debate over War with Iraq**

Although the public campaign for war with Iraq did not begin until 2002, President Bush and part of his administration began considering it immediately after September 11, 2001. At the war cabinet meeting at Camp David on September 15, 2001, the issue of Iraq was raised by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz who strongly favored going after Saddam Hussein and argued that war in Iraq might be easier than war in Afghanistan. But Secretary of State Colin Powell argued that the coalition backing the U.S. would not hold if the target was shifted to Iraq. Cheney said, ““If we go after Saddam Hussein, we lose our rightful place as good guy.”” CIA Director George Tenet and chief of staff Andrew Card agreed against attacking Iraq. The president finally decided not to pursue Iraq at that time and recalled, ““If we tried to do too many things . . . the lack of focus would have been a huge risk.””

Nevertheless, on September 17, 2001 President Bush signed a top secret plan for the war in Afghanistan that also contained a direction for the Defense Department to plan for a war with Iraq. Attacking Iraq was the subject of a meeting of the Defense Policy Board, a group chaired by Richard Perle, that advised the secretary of defense on national security issues. In 2003 White House officials said that Bush decided soon after the terrorist attacks that Iraq had to be confronted, but that he did not make his decision public because, ““He didn’t think the country could handle the shock of 9/11 and a lot of talk about dealing with states that had weapons of mass destruction.””

President Bush publicly indicated his decision to pursue Iraq in the State of the Union message on January 29, 2002, though his decision was somewhat obscure and stated at a high level of generality because of his inclusion of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea in what he called an ““axis of evil.”” In the speech Bush declared that the U.S. will ““prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. . . . The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons. . . . History has called America and our allies to action. . . .””

According to the State Department director of policy and planning, Richard Haas, by the summer of 2003 President Bush had already made up his mind that war with Iraq was inevitable (barring capitulation by Saddam Hussein). ““The president made a decision in the summer of 2002. We all saluted at that point. That is the way it works.”” Haas said that he raised the issue of war with Iraq with Rice, ““ . . . I raised this issue about were we really sure that we wanted to put Iraq front and center at this point, given the war on terrorism and other issues. And she said, essentially, that that decision’s been made, don’t waste your breath.”” The president may have made up his mind even earlier. In March 2002 the president told Condoleezza Rice when she was in a meeting with several senators, ““F\_\_\_\_\_ Saddam. We’re taking him out.””

In the spring of 2002, military planning for Iraq began, and the administration started talking publicly about ““regime change.”” in Iraq. The next major public pronouncement by the president on national security and Iraq came at the 2002 commencement address he gave at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The president said, ““Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.””

During the summer of 2002 some of the professional military began to voice reservations about U.S. plans to attack Iraq. It is not unusual for the professional military to not see eye-to-eye with the White House, but it is very unusual for their concerns to be voiced so openly to the press. *Washington Post* articles cited ““senior U.S. military officers”” and ““some top generals and admirals in the military establishment, including members of the Joint Chiefs of staff,”” who argued for a cautious approach to Iraq. They were not convinced that Iraq had any connection to the 9/11 terrorist attacks; they felt that containment had worked up until then; they thought a military invasion would be costly; and they thought that a likely U.S. victory would entail a lengthy occupation of Iraq.

In August, members of President Bush's father's administration came out publicly against war with Iraq. Brent Scowcroft, Bush's (41) national security advisor and Rice's mentor, wrote in an op-ed piece entitled "Don't Attack Saddam" that ". . . there is scant evidence to tie Saddam to terrorist organizations, and even less to the Sept. 11 attacks. . . . An attack on Iraq at this time would seriously jeopardize, if not destroy, the global counterterrorist campaign we have undertaken. . . . Worse, there is a virtual consensus in the world against an attack on Iraq at this time."

James Baker, Secretary of State for Bush (41), also expressed reservations about an attack on Iraq. "If we are to change the regime in Iraq, we will have to occupy the country militarily. The costs of doing so, politically, economically and in terms of casualties, could be great." General Wesley Clark, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, said, "We have not gone far enough in the war on terror. . . . No evidence supports the Bush administration's assertion that the United States may need to invade Iraq soon, or else suffer terrorism at the hands of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein."

Combat veterans also expressed reservations about the wisdom of war with Iraq. Vietnam veteran Chuck Hagel (R-NB) said, "It is interesting to me that many of those who want to rush this country into war don't know anything about war." Retired General Anthony Zinni, senior advisor to Secretary of State Powell and former chief of the U.S. Central Command (which includes the Middle East), said: "We need to quit making enemies that we don't need to make enemies out of. . . . It's pretty interesting that all the generals see it the same way and all the others who have never fired a shot and are not to go to war see it another way." James Webb, Vietnam veteran and assistant secretary of defense and secretary of the Navy in the Reagan Administration argued that war with Iraq was ill-considered. Webb wrote:

Meanwhile, American military leaders have been trying to bring a wider focus to the band of neoconservatives that began beating the war drums on Iraq before the dust had even settled on the World Trade Center. Despite the efforts of the necons to shut them up or dismiss them as unqualified to deal in policy issues, these leaders, both active-duty and retired, have been nearly unanimous in their concerns. Is there an absolutely vital national interest that should lead us from containment to unilateral war and a long-term occupation of Iraq?

General Norman Schwartzkopf, commander of U.S. forces in the 1991 Gulf War, also expressed reservations about an attack on Iraq in early 2003. ". . . I don't know what intelligence the U.S. government has. . . . I guess I would like to have better information. . . . I think it is very important to wait and see what the inspectors come up with, and hopefully they come up with something conclusive."

## **The Lead-up to War**

On August 5, 2002 at Colin Powell's initiative, Condoleezza Rice arranged for

him to spend two hours with the president in order to explain his own reservations about war with Iraq. He argued that it would destabilize the whole Middle East, that an American occupation would be seen as hostile by the Muslim world, and that it could not be done unilaterally. He argued that if the president wanted to pursue a military attack, that the U.S. had to recruit allies, preferably through the United Nations. Although Bush was not persuaded by Powell's reservations about war with Iraq, by mid-August the administration decided that the president should make his scheduled speech of September 12 to the UN about Iraq.

The Bush administration felt that opposition to war with Iraq was building and had to be countered. So after close consultation with President Bush and without informing Secretary of State Powell, Vice President Cheney took the occasion of an address to the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention on August 26, 2002 to lay out the administration's case in blunt terms. "“Deliverable weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a terror network or a murderous dictator, or the two working together, constitutes as grave a threat as can be imagined. . . . The risks of inaction are far greater than the risk of action.”” Cheney's public argument that a preemptive strike against Iraq was justified and that further UN inspections were useless seemed to undercut Powell's argument to seek UN inspections and approval of U.S. action against Iraq.

At a meeting on September 7 the president reaffirmed his decision to go to the UN in early September, though Cheney and Rumsfeld pressed their argument that the U.S. should move against Saddam and that there did not have to be a new UN resolution to do it. In his speech to the United Nations on September 12, the president framed the issue as one of credibility for the UN and the need for its many resolutions to be enforced. Citing "“Flagrant violations”” by Saddam Hussein of UN resolutions, Bush declared that "“we have been more than patient. . . . The conduct of the Iraqi regime is a threat to the authority of the United Nations and a threat to peace.”” Shortly after Bush's UN speech, the administration released a new national security doctrine for the United States that echoed the earlier neocon arguments and justified preemptive military strikes by the United States.

In anticipation of the congressional vote on a resolution authorizing war with Iraq, the President gave a speech to the nation from Cincinnati on 7 October 2002 in which he explained the need for the authorization to take military action.

““Some citizens wonder, ‘After 11 years of living with this problem, why do we need to confront it now?’” And there's a reason. We have experienced the horror of September the 11<sup>th</sup>. We have seen that those who hate American are willing to crash airplanes into buildings full of innocent people. Our enemies would be no less willing, in fact they would be eager, to use biological or chemical or a nuclear weapon. Knowing these realities, America must not ignore the threat gathering against us. Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof, the smoking gun that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.

The president made the case that America was vulnerable to terrorist attack and that a

hostile regime in Iraq might be willing to share its weapons of mass destruction (WMD: chemical, biological, nuclear) technology with terrorists. Thus the United States had to act preemptively to prevent this from happening.

The final resolution, which was passed by the House on October 10 and by the Senate on October 11 stated: ““The president is authorized to use the armed forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate, in order to: (1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.””

While there was a debate in Congress and statements by those supporting and opposing the resolution, there was never much doubt about the outcome, and the debate lacked the drama of the deliberation in 1991 over the Gulf War Resolution. A number of Democrats voted for the resolution from fear that a negative vote could be used against them in the upcoming elections. The Democratic leadership, Majority Leader of the Senate Tom Daschele and House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt voted for the measure. The resolution passed in the house by 296 to 133, with 6 Republicans and 126 Democrats (and one independent) voting against it. In the Senate the resolution passed 77 to 23, with 21 Democrats, one Republican, and one Independent voting against it.

After the administration convinced Congress to give the president authority to attack Iraq, Colin Powell and U.S. diplomats went to work building a coalition to convince the UN Security Council to pass a new resolution on Iraq. After much negotiation the Security Council on a strongly-worded, unanimous resolution. Resolution 1441 gave Iraq one week to promise to comply with it and until February 21, 2003 at the latest for the UN inspectors to report back on Iraq’s compliance.

The UN weapons inspectors searched Iraq with seeming carte blanche and surprise visits to sites of possible weapons manufacture, but by late January had found no ““smoking gun.”” Chief UN inspector, Hans Blix, said that he needed more time to do a thorough job. But as the initial reporting date for the UN inspectors (January 27, 2003) approached, President Bush became increasingly impatient with the inability of the UN inspection team to locate evidence of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction. President Bush said, ““This business about, you know, more time — you know, how much time do we need to see clearly that he’s not disarming?. . . . This looks like a rerun of a bad movie and I’m not interested in watching it.””

In his State of the Union address on January 28, 2003, President Bush said that the UN had given Saddam Hussein his ““final chance to disarm,”” but ““he has shown instead utter contempt for the United Nations and for the opinion of the world.”” Bush declared that ““. . .the course of [the United States] does not depend on the decisions of others,”” and that ““We will consult, but let there be no misunderstanding. If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm for the safety of our people, and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him.””

## **The War in Iraq**

Throughout February and early March the United States and Britain continued to build up troop strength and military supplies in the region to prepare for war. As various last-minute peace attempts failed, President Bush decided to attack. At 8pm on March 17 President Bush declared, “Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours,” or the United States would commence military action against them. Two days later 130,000 U.S. and British troops began a land invasion of Iraq and a rush to Baghdad.

Within two weeks U.S. forces were at the outskirts of Baghdad, but supply lines were overextended and had to be secured. After another week of combat, however, American troops had overwhelmed the Iraqi Republican Guard. With only limited street fighting and relatively few American deaths (about 150 to that point), U.S. forces were successful in occupying Baghdad. U.S. forces continued to mop up remaining resistance in Baghdad, and Iraqis began to realize the Saddam’s rule was over. The end of his reign was marked by jubilation on the part of many, but also looting and general disorder and the destruction of government buildings. U.S. troops guarded some infrastructure but not before hospitals, libraries, and the Iraq national museum were damaged by looters.

As U.S. forces began to restore order throughout the country and sought to assist the Iraqis in establishing an interim government, President Bush declared the end of combat on May 1, 2003. In a national televised address from the deck of an aircraft carrier off the coast of California, the president proclaimed: “In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed.” He tied the war in Iraq to the war on terrorism by saying that “the battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September 11, 2001, and still goes on. . . . We have removed an ally of Al Qaeda, and cut off a source of terrorist funding.”

Although President Bush had been critical of the U.N. weapons inspectors who had not been able to locate biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons in Iraq, U.S. troops had not yet found them either. But the president said that “We have begun the search for hidden chemical and biological weapons. . . .” He did not mention the nuclear weapons that the United States had previously asserted that Saddam was developing. The purpose of the speech, according to White House officials was: 1) to state that the role of U.S. forces in Iraq was shifting from war to a police function, 2) to signal that other countries could send humanitarian aid, and 3) to signal to American voters that the president was going to shift his focus from war to domestic concerns in preparation for the 2004 election.

### **The Failure to find Weapons of Mass Destruction**

After the war and the failure of U.S. troops to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the CIA sent in a search force of 1200 experts under the leadership of David Kay to locate the weapons. Kay’s mission was to scour the country for weapons of mass destruction ( WMD) and report back to the President. As his search continued without success, critics of the administration began to charge that the president had misled the country about the presence of WMD in Iraq and thus the imminence of threat to the

United States.

The Bush administration claimed with some certainty that Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons. President Bush said on September 26, 2002 that ““the Iraqi regime possesses biological and chemical weapons. The Iraqi regime is building the facilities necessary to make more biological and chemical weapons.”” That Iraq had chemical and biological weapons in the 1980s is certain, in part because some of the materials came from the United States and because Saddam used chemical weapons against Iran and against the Kurds in northern Iraq. But serious questions about the administration’s claims were raised when U.S. forces were not able to find evidence of Iraq’s chemical and biological weapons after the war, despite the diligent searching of U.S. military forces and the 1200 member Iraq Survey Group headed by David Kay.

Two other aspects of the president’s claims turned out to be problematical: the implied connection between Saddam Hussein and the atrocities of 9-11, and the implications that Iraq had nuclear weapons. Two days after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, a Time/CNN poll found that 78 percent of respondents thought that Saddam Hussein was involved with the attacks on the twin trade towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington. From that time to the beginning of the war and into the summer of 2003, the President Bush and his administration strongly implied that there was a link between Saddam and the al Qaeda hijackers, despite Ossama bin Laden’s contempt for Saddam as the head of a secular state.

The problem was that evidence for a connection between Saddam and al Qaeda was not very solid. Neither the FBI nor the CIA was able to establish that the 9/11 terrorist Mohamed Atta had been in Prague to meet with an Iraqi official as the Bush Administration had asserted. And a U.N. terrorism committee could find no link between al Qaeda and Saddam. Despite the lack of solid evidence, President Bush continued to connect the war in Iraq with al Qaeda and 9/11. In his victory speech on 1 May 2003 on an aircraft carrier off the coast of California, he said: ““The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11, 2001. . . . We’ve removed an ally of al Qaeda, and cut off a source of terrorist funding. . . . With those attacks [of 9/11], the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States. And war is what they got.””

But on September 18, 2003 President Bush conceded: ““No, we’ve had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with September the 11th.”” He gave no explanation as to why the previously implied connection was abandoned.

In 2002 President Bush and his administration also made a number of assertions about Saddam Hussein’s potential nuclear capacity. The claim was that Saddam Hussein had reconstituted his nuclear weapons program and was potentially less than a year away from possessing nuclear weapons. This was a powerful argument that deposing Saddam Hussein was important for U.S. national security. Even those who thought that Saddam could be deterred from using chemical and biological weapons (as he had been in 1991) might be persuaded that an attack was necessary if they were

convinced that Saddam was closing in on a nuclear weapons capability. Thus the claim of Saddam's nuclear capacity was one of the strongest argument that President Bush could make for war with Iraq.

Before the president's campaign to convince Congress of the necessity of war with Iraq, the White House asked the CIA to prepare a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq, that is, an authoritative statement of the consensus of intelligence agencies about the potential threat from Iraq. This NIE was used as a basis for President Bush's speech in Cincinnati on October 7, 2002 to convince Congress to give him the authority to go to war with Iraq and convince the nation of the immediacy of the threat from Saddam Hussein. In the speech President Bush said:

We agree that the Iraqi dictator must not be permitted to threaten America and the world with horrible poisons and diseases and gasses and atomic weapons. . . .The evidence indicates that Iraq is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program. . . .he could have a nuclear weapon in less than a year. . . .Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof, the smoking gun that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.

Then in his State of the Union Speech on January 28, 2003, President Bush said: "The British Government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." The African country in question was Niger.

The problem with this series of statements was that the evidence upon which the president's claims were based turned out to be questionable. Two claims of evidence for Saddam's nuclear capacity that the administration relied upon were of dubious authenticity: the claim that Iraq sought uranium oxide, "yellowcake," from Niger and that aluminum tubes shipped to Iraq were intended to be used as centrifuges to create the fissile material necessary for a nuclear bomb.

But the British claim that Saddam sought uranium oxide from Niger turned out to have been based on forged documents. The CIA had serious doubts about the accuracy of the claim, and even had convinced NSC aides to take the claim out of the president's October 7, 2002 speech to the nation. How it got into the 2003 State of the Union address was not clear.

In addition to the Niger yellowcake claim, the administration also adduced as evidence for Iraq's reconstituting its nuclear program reports of large numbers of aluminum tubes purchased by Iraq. President Bush said in his September 12, 2002 speech to the United Nations: "Iraq has made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon. Should Iraq acquire fissile material, it would be able to build a nuclear weapon within a year."

The evidence of the aluminum tubes was also featured in the National Intelligence Estimate issued in early October 2002 which played an important role in convincing members of Congress to vote for the resolution giving the President the authority to take the United States to War with Iraq. The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and

Research, however, dissented from the argument of the rest of the National Intelligence Estimate: “. . . INR is not persuaded that the tubes in question are intended for use as centrifuge rotors. . . . INR considers it far more likely that the tubes are intended for another purpose, most likely the production of artillery rockets. The physical characteristics of the tubes — diameter, length, composition, coating — matched closely the dimensions of aluminum tubes used in Medusa Rockets, but did not track as closely with the dimensions of centrifuge rotors. The State Department concluded: ““The activities we have detected do not, however, add up to a compelling case that Iraq is currently pursuing what INR would consider to be an integrated and comprehensive approach to acquire nuclear weapons.””

In his interim report to Congress in the fall of 2003, David Kay told Congress that Iraq’s nuclear program was in ““the very most rudimentary”” state, ““It clearly does not look like a massive, resurgent program, based on what we discovered.”” According to Kay’s report, Iraqi scientists said ““to date we have not uncovered evidence that Iraq undertook significant post-1998 steps to actually build nuclear weapons or produce fissile material.””

The administration’s inference that Saddam Hussein was continuing his previous weapons programs was not an unreasonable conclusion. The problem was that there was little evidence to support their conclusions about Saddam’s nuclear capacity, and they used claims of dubious validity to make their case to the American people about nuclear weapons and a connection between Saddam and the atrocities of 9/11.

### **Was the Intelligence Process Politicized?**

One possible explanation for the administration’s inaccurate claims about Iraq’s WMD was that the intelligence gathering capacities of the government were subject to pressure to suit their analyses to the policy goals of the administration. Allegations centered around the vice president’s visits to CIA headquarters, the creation of the Office of Special Plans in Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the use of the Defense Policy Board.

Richard Cheney and his aide Scooter Libby made a number of personal visits the CIA Langley headquarters to question the CIA judgment that Iraq did not pose as immediate a threat as the administration was arguing it did. While it is appropriate for the vice president and other high administration officials to ask tough questions and challenge intelligence agencies with hard questions, and it is understandable that career civil servants may see this as pressure; the interventions in the intelligence process seemed to be different in 2002 with respect to Iraq. These visits were perceived by some CIA veterans as political pressure for the agency to come to the conclusions that the administration wanted. Ray McGovern who had been a CIA analyst from 1964 to 1990 and had briefed Vice President George H.W. Bush in the 1980s said, ““During my 27-year career at the Central Intelligence Agency, no vice president ever came to us for a working visit.””

In addition to close attention from the vice president, CIA analysis was also treated with suspicion in the Department of Defense because the CIA was not coming to the conclusions about Iraq's WMD capabilities that the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense expected. A number of CIA analysts perceived this as pressure. In the Pentagon, according to a former official who attended the meetings, "They were the browbeaters. In interagency meetings Wolfowitz treated the analysts' work with contempt." From the perspective of some CIA veterans, the administration was undermining the objectivity and professionalism of the intelligence process. Former DIA analyst and specialist on Iraq, W. Patrick Lang, characterized the administration's efforts to influence intelligence as not professional. "What we have here is advocacy, not intelligence work". One senior State Department analyst told a congressional committee that he felt pressured by the administration to shift his analysis to be more certain about the evidence on Iraq's activities. Other analysts told the Senate Intelligence Committee that the administration was disclosing only the worst case scenario aspects of intelligence reports and not accurately representing the work of the professional analysts.

One response of Secretary Rumsfeld to his dissatisfaction with the analysis of the CIA was to create an Office of Special Plans headed by Deputy Under Secretary of Defense William Luti to do intelligence analysis and bring a different perspective than the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the CIA. One important difference in their analysis was the weight they gave to claims provided by the Iraqi National Congress and its leader Ahmad Chalabi about Saddam's WMD. Chalabi had left Iraq when he was young and in the 1990s had founded the Iraqi National Congress and was seen by the neocons as the best candidate to lead Iraq after Saddam had been deposed.

The CIA had discounted Chalabi and the Iraqi exiles' claims because the exiles had a stake in the outcome of U.S. policy and thus the CIA did not consider them as credible as the Office of Special Plans judged them to be. According to Patrick Lang, former head of Middle East intelligence for the DIA, "The D.I.A. has been intimidated and beaten to a pulp. And there's no guts at all in the C.I.A."

Another tactic Secretary Rumsfeld used to circumvent the established professional intelligence apparatus of the executive branch was his reliance on the Defense Policy Board. The DPB was chaired by Richard Perle, a hawk on Iraq and former member of the Reagan administration. In Perle's opinion, the CIA's judgments about Iraq "isn't worth the paper it is written on." The Board also contained other high visibility neocons and hawks on Iraq, such as James Woolsey and Newt Gingrich, as well as some other former defense officials not necessarily committed to war with Iraq. It is interesting that this board of outside advisors played a much more highly visible role in supporting the administration's war plans than the traditional outside advisory board to the president, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. Perhaps that was because the PFIAB was chaired by Brent Scowcroft, national security advisor to President George H.W. Bush and critic of war with Iraq.

While all executive branch agencies should take their guidance from the president and his appointees, it is dangerous for a presidential administration to pressure

intelligence agencies to distort their professional judgments in order to support an administration's short term policy goals. Once intelligence is politicized, it becomes more difficult for a president to distinguish the professionals' best judgment from what they think that he wants to hear. Such a situation is dangerous for the American presidency. While evidence of undue pressure from the administration is inconclusive and circumstantial at this time, insofar as the Bush administration put pressure on U.S. intelligence agencies to suit their analyses to its policy goals, it jeopardized its own best sources of intelligence.

## **Conclusion**

Disagreements in the international community and in the American public about the wisdom of war with Iraq were mirrored in divisions within the Bush administration. On the pro-war side were the neocons and the political leadership of the Bush administration: Vice President Cheney, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, and his deputy Paul Wolfowitz, along with other officials on their staffs. The neocons were convinced that Saddam was an imminent threat to U.S. national security, and they were optimistic about the ability of U.S. military action to establish a democratic government in Iraq and the beneficial consequences that would entail for the Middle East. After the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, President Bush adopted the neocon vision of how national security policy should deal with the threat.

On the other side were those who were more skeptical about the likelihood that war to depose Saddam would lead to democracy for Iraq, and they were dubious about some of the claims the administration made about Saddam's WMD. The skeptics included many (though not all) Democrats, members of George H.W. Bush's administration (particularly Scowcroft and Baker), some military leaders of the professional officer corps (active duty and retired), and some members of the career services in the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency. Members of the career services, however, are bound to follow the leadership of the president as head of the executive branch of government and commander in chief of the armed forces. Thus their hesitation was low visibility and generally confined to internal analysis, with some leaking to the press about their reservations.

None of the doubters thought Saddam was good for Iraq nor did were they against democracy for Iraq. Their doubts sprang from their judgments that an invasion of Iraq would not achieve the goals sought by the president and might cause more harm to the United States than good. They were particularly concerned that war in Iraq would divert resources from the war on terrorism, alienate other nations whose cooperation was needed in the war on terror, and spawn new terrorists among radical Muslims who might be mobilized by the U.S. occupation of an Arab country.

Possible justifications for war with Iraq ranged from the idealistic goal of bringing democracy to Iraqis and the humanitarian desire to rid them of a tyrant to geostrategic concerns about the future of the Middle East. That Saddam was a vicious tyrant who

tortured his political enemies, gassed his own people, and invaded other countries was known long before the Bush administration decided to go to war to depose him. But the most compelling arguments to the American people were the assertions that the national security of the United States was at risk. Thus the claims that Saddam's WMD posed a direct threat were most effective in sustaining political support for war. After the war, when no WMD could be found, the administration began to shift its justification for the war to the argument that Iraq could become a democracy and have a domino effect in the Middle East by influencing other Arab countries to become democracies.

Whether the war with Iraq was in the best long term national security interests of the United States depends on addressing the following questions about the future of Iraq which can only be answered with the passing of time.

1. Were Iraqis better off after the war than under Saddam? The removal of Saddam as dictator was certainly in the best interests of the people of Iraq. But internal security and a viable economy are also essential to any society, and their long term absence could lead one to question the efficacy of the U.S. war.

2. Will Iraq become a liberal democracy with religious toleration, political parties, freedom of speech and the press, and other institutions of civil society central to democracies? If Iraq does develop these liberal democratic characteristics, the war will have been successful.

3. Will a democratic Iraq serve as a beacon for democratic change for other Middle East governments? If so, the war will have contributed to the transformation of this area of the world.

4. Will the U.S. occupation be short with few casualties or long with many casualties? If U.S. forces are seen as liberators and establish internal security through Iraqi sovereignty, the occupation will have been successful. Insofar as U.S. troops come to be seen as a foreign occupying army and attacked in guerilla raids, there is a danger that the occupation will be long and bitter and that the withdrawal of U.S. forces will be more difficult.

5. Will the war in Iraq be seen by terrorists as a warning and thus discourage them from attacking the United States? Or will the U.S. occupation of an Arab country become a rallying point and recruiting mechanism for terrorists who will make the war on terrorism that much more difficult for the United States.

The Bush administration will argue that the above questions will be answered positively in the long run.. Its critics will argue that the predicated rosey scenarios are unlikely to be borne out. These questions are not likely to be settled soon.

ENDNOTES