



TEMPUS

THE HARVARD COLLEGE HISTORY REVIEW

Volume VII, Number 1

Winter 2006

Tempus is published annually under the auspices of
the Department of History, Harvard University

Contents

Discussion

- 5 Interview with Niall Ferguson,
Laurence A. Tisch Professor of History

Articles

- 7 Ragusan Trade With Egypt (1200-1500)
By Rowan Dorin
- 23 The Changing Role of Religion in Boston Brahmin Class Identity
By Eric Shroyer
- 35 Dissecting Pearl Harbor: Franklin Roosevelt and the
Origins of World War II in the Pacific, A Historiographical Study
By Benjamin Zimmer
- 43 The Unchosen War of Choice:
George W. Bush's Decision for War in Iraq
By Stephen Wertheim

The Unchosen War of Choice

George W. Bush's Decision for War in Iraq

By Stephen Wertheim

“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.” Vivid and grave, President George W. Bush was at his oratorical best. Already he had told the Cincinnati crowd that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was “driv[ing] toward an arsenal of terror,” which, if unleashed, would presumably dwarf the thirteen-month-old and still fresh attacks of September 11, 2001. Now Bush sought to link his ostensibly new way of thinking—about Iraq and about the world—with ways past:

As President Kennedy said in October of 1962, “Neither the United States of America nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. We no longer live in a world,” he said, “where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nation’s security to constitute maximum peril.”¹

In a post-September 11 world where the thirteen days of Cuban Missile Crisis was every day, Bush argued, only a doctrine of preemption would do. Later, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was even more explicit in tying Saddam Hussein’s Iraq to Soviet-armed Cuba: “It is not a perfect, on all fours, analogy, but it is certainly as similar as anything in recent years that one can find.”²

Theodore Sorensen disagreed. As Kennedy’s advisor and speechwriter, he had attended the ExComm deliberations in October 1962 and penned the words Bush quoted in October 2002. Kennedy did consider a preemptive air strike, Sorensen recalled, “but he also considered the innocent lives that would be lost, the international laws that would be broken, and the allies and friends around the world who would be disaffected—as any thoughtful president would.”³ Indeed, calling the idea of preemptive strike a “Pearl Harbor recommendation,” Kennedy opted for a less confrontational naval quarantine of Cuba, and the Soviets eventually withdrew the offending missiles.⁴

Sorensen did not then have access to the second analogical flaw, but soon after the war empty-handed weapons-of-mass-destruction exploitation teams made it apparent: Saddam Hussein was not the direct threat envisaged by the Bush administration and much of the world. “We were almost all wrong,” weapons inspector David Kay testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee.⁵ The Soviet missiles in Cuba had been the more immediate danger—in fact the only immediate danger. Kennedy had acted out of necessity (even then opting against war) whereas Iraq was a war of choice. Bush himself sometimes acknowledged this fact, even before the war, by calling Hussein a “gathering threat” rather than a pressing one.⁶

That much is fairly uncontroversial. But there is a third, less obvious and far deeper problem with the Cuban Missile Crisis analogy, and it speaks not to the content of the presidential

judgments but to the process by which the presidents formulated their judgments. Kennedy, who hastily approved the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April 1961 that ended in disaster and embarrassment, became by October 1962 a measured, deliberative and scrupulous decision maker. Only after exhaustive debate, the passage of two days and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's repeated warnings that the administration had not "considered the consequences of any of these actions satisfactorily"⁷ did the consensus shift from quick air strikes on the Cuban missiles, an escalation that might have culminated in general or nuclear war, to the flexible strategy of naval blockade.⁸ His appetite for analysis still unsatiated, Kennedy summoned President Dwight Eisenhower and three Truman-era officials—Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett and Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy—for consultation. "If anything," Ernest May and Philip Zelikow conclude, "he listened to too many people and listened to some of them too long."⁹ Although in crisis by necessity, Kennedy resolved to make real, reasoned choices, informed by a maximum of foresight. That, more than preemption, was the true lesson of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

And that was a lesson apparently unlearned, at least unheeded, by George W. Bush in his judgment to invade Iraq in March 2003. The problem is not just that the administration failed to foresee certain issues, among them the lack of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the value of international allies, the challenge of postwar reconstruction and, as former counterterrorism official Richard A. Clarke has emphasized, the potential of inciting radical Islamist terrorism. Those criticisms are by now well documented. Less known, however, is what is perhaps their root cause: internal decision making that was hasty, superficial and often unclear, that had myopia built into its very process. It is the subject of this study.

Bush never chose, in the meaningful sense of the word, to invade Iraq. He chose to brand Iraq ringleader of an "axis of evil," to seek weapons inspections backed by the threat of force and to deploy hundreds of thousands of troops to the region. The administration did debate these steps one-by-one, but it does not appear that Bush ever prefaced those steps, nor followed them, with substantial debate on *whether* and not merely *how* to go to war. By August 2002, when Secretary of State Colin Powell met privately with Bush to lay out the costs of war for the first time, Powell did not feel able to admit explicitly his genuine opposition to war, only to insist on U.N. involvement.¹⁰ From there, as the war council debated one step at a time, American options narrowed. Quickly, and almost certainly by January 2003 when Bush approved invasion,¹¹ war in Iraq became a *fait accompli*; the decision was over before it was seriously made. Bush had asked neither Powell, Rumsfeld nor Vice President Dick Cheney for an overall recommendation on whether to go to war,¹² perhaps because there never seemed an appropriate time to do so. In the absence of a clear decision—made early, with the benefit of foresight and considering all the factors involved in going to war—the administration's failures of coalition building and postwar occupation planning become intelligible.

Of course, the story of the Bush presidency has only begun to be written. Bob Woodward's two behind-the-scenes narratives are nevertheless sufficiently detailed themselves and corroborated elsewhere as to permit early if tentative analysis about the making of the Iraq war. Woodward's reporting may be, as one critique put it, "a catalogue of self-serving revelations by members of the Administration."¹³ If so, it is most interesting to discover what those members chose to reveal.

Though Woodward reports rather than analyzes, his reporting demands analysis. The one attempted here, of Woodward's and other inside accounts of the Bush administration, suggests

that the president got Iraq backward: he acted as though it was a war that had to be waged, and he professed to be making careful choices.¹⁴ In fact, Iraq turned out to be only a potential threat, and Bush never exercised the deliberative, longsighted care necessary for prudent decision making. The invasion of Iraq was, in short, an unchosen war of choice.

War in Afghanistan

ONE OF THE REASONS for President Kennedy's success in the Cuban Missile Crisis was his failure in the Bay of Pigs. Kennedy learned to second-guess his military advisors—to second-guess all his advisors—before he acted. Bush, too, had a formative foreign policy experience: the war in Afghanistan. But for Bush, the pattern of achievement is inverted. One of the reasons for his apparent failure in Iraq was his perceived success in Afghanistan, a war during which Bush practiced impulsive leadership and improvised planning, to some extent out of necessity.

When Bush took office in January 2001, his foreign policy experience was, put mildly, minimal. As Texas governor, he had met around 150 foreign diplomats, many of them trade officials, but his knowledge of international affairs and even his travel history added little more.¹⁵ In George W. Bush, then, the September 11 attacks and the Afghanistan campaign found a relatively blank slate on which to make their mark. Make it they did. Bush told Woodward directly that in the first months of Afghanistan war planning lay his blueprint for decision making vis-à-vis Iraq.¹⁶

The bombings of the World Trade Center and Pentagon were enough to elicit instinctive reactions in anybody, but they moved Bush especially. As soon as he heard the news, in a Sarasota, Florida, classroom, Bush knew his presidency had found its calling. "They had declared war on us, and I made up my mind at that moment that we were going to war," he recalled.¹⁷ An hour later, on the phone with Cheney, he was blunt: "We're going to find out who did this, and we're going to kick their asses."¹⁸ Clarke recalls a similar outburst after Bush's 8:30 p.m. Oval Office address: "No, I don't care what the international lawyers say, we are going to kick some ass."¹⁹ Such bravado generated some unreasonable requests—"I want the economy back, open for business right away, banks, the stock market, everything tomorrow," Bush ordered impossibly²⁰—but the nation bounced back, with Bush's approval rating bouncing to 86 percent by month's end.²¹ "I'm not a textbook player," Bush said; "I'm a gut player."²² After September 11, being a gut player worked.

Bush's snap judgment, with a minimum of deliberation by his advisers and apparently himself, was the driving force behind more than a few ass-kicking. It also bore on the announcement and formulation of foreign policy. On the night of September 11, Bush addressed the nation and swore, "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them."²³ He opened the following National Security Council (NSC) meeting a similar way: "We have made the decision to punish whoever harbors terrorists, not just the perpetrators."²⁴ Instead of "we," the president might have said "I." He and speechwriter Michael Gerson devised the line hours before. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice gave mild approval; but Powell, Cheney and Rumsfeld were never consulted on this pivotal and substantive statement.²⁵ Bush later explained that he did proceed to get his entire team in agreement. His reason is revealing: "One of the things I know that can happen is, if everybody is not on the same page, then you're going to have people peeling off and second-guessing and the process will not, will really not unfold the way it should," he said. "There won't be honest discussion."²⁶ For Kennedy in October 1962, second-guessing had been precisely the way to ensure honest

discussion. For Bush, second-guessing was an impediment. “Bush wanted to get the bottom line,” Clarke remembers, “and move on.”²⁷

Because preparation for the Afghan war had to be scraped together after September 11, the impromptu nature of wartime decision making did not stop with the make-no-distinction declaration. Bush and his war council were “making it up as they went,” in Woodward’s paraphrasing of Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen J. Hadley.²⁸ That applied to military plans, which Rumsfeld admitted were drawn up on the fly.²⁹ To his credit, Bush resisted impulsively ordering a proposed cruise-missile-only strike that would have brought instant but illusory satisfaction.³⁰ But he developed a leadership style, not necessarily unsuccessful in the Afghanistan context, that prized what he called “provocations.” These were intentionally polemical and sometimes impossible orders or ideas designed to promote a “sense of purpose and forward movement,” to “force decisions” within the cabinet.³¹ “I want Afghan options by Camp David. I want decisions quick,” he instructed Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Henry Shelton on September 13, before Rumsfeld urged restraint.³² Likewise, at a September 26 NSC meeting, Bush posited a controversial declaration as if it were undisputed: “Anybody doubt that we should start [the Afghan war] Monday or Tuesday of next week?”³³ September 28 was set arbitrarily as the deadline for deciding when to commence bombing, although Bush backed off once he saw the NSC was unready. American and British bombing of Afghanistan began on October 7.

It was not until the morning of October 3 that the NSC considered the topic of postwar stability and reconstruction.³⁴ Keeping the peace was a concern clearly subordinated, in terms of both discussion time and strategic value, to waging the war. “I oppose using the military for nation building,” Bush affirmed at an October 12 NSC meeting, echoing his 2000 campaign statements. “Once the job is done, our forces are not peacekeepers. We ought to put in place a U.N. protection and leave.”³⁵ For a president who prided himself on achieving “big goals”³⁶ but derided “micromanaging combat and setting the tactics,”³⁷ the toppling of the Taliban was a big goal but cleaning up the mess was a detail, not unimportant but something best left to others.

This, Bush learned, was how to go to war. He had declared war in his gut on September 11 and expressed as much in public rhetoric, even without extensive consultation of his advisors, even at the risk of constraining his future options. Knowing broadly where he wanted to go—the end of Afghanistan’s Taliban and al Qaeda—Bush pushed his cabinet to get there. To some extent, these strategies had merit because the Afghan war was urgent, seen by almost all as a necessary response to an attack on America. Iraq, by contrast, would be a war of choice and as such would require more fundamental debate about the *whether* before the *when* and the *how*.

Indeed, as relevant to the forthcoming Iraq war as what Bush did in prosecuting the Afghan war was what Bush did not have to do. He did not have to wait for a complete, feasible plan for military invasion or postwar occupation before he ratcheted up the rhetoric. He did not have to concern himself much with the recruitment of allies, who in many cases volunteered for the role and who, if they had not, would not have stopped the U.S. from attacking. Most of all, he did not have to dwell on the decision to go to war. The going was clear, and the executing fell, piece by piece, into place.

Genesis of Invasion

NO MAJOR CHANGE in American relations with Iraq followed the ascension of Bush to the presidency in 2001. Powell pushed to revise U.N. sanctions as “smart sanctions” designed to ease

the burden on the Iraqi people, and calls for more robust aid to Iraqi opposition groups came out of the Pentagon. Nevertheless, there existed no intelligence that Saddam Hussein posed an imminent threat—there never would—and Bush did not seem to be on a war footing. As the *Washington Post* editorialized, the administration was “on its way to adopting the same Iraq policy pursued in recent years by the Clinton administration—a policy President Bush and his top aides repeatedly and vociferously condemned.”³⁸ One of those condemnations came in a 1998 open letter that urged President Bill Clinton to “aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein’s regime from power.”³⁹ The means, however, went unspecified, with regime change a goal only for the “long term.”⁴⁰ Eleven of the eighteen signers had become Bush administration officials by March 2003. Later in 1998, with Clinton’s leadership, Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act,⁴¹ authorizing the funding of indigenous Iraqi anti-regime groups.

By most accounts, the Bush administration’s pre-September 11 interest in ousting Hussein was keen but not necessarily war-bound. Iraq, Clarke reports, was on Bush’s agenda from the start.⁴² Likewise, speechwriter David Frum recalls Bush, at a January 30 meeting with staffers, expressing “his determination to dig Saddam Hussein out of power in Iraq.”⁴³ To find a way, the deputies met four times between May 31 and July 26, generating a Top Secret “Liberation Strategy” paper, which focused once again on aiding opposition groups.⁴⁴

Two observations from this period would prove prescient. Powell, worried even though he viewed the Iraq discussions as “suppose-we-ever-have-to-do-this” preparations,⁴⁵ came to Bush and counseled: “Don’t let yourself get pushed into anything until you are ready for it or until you think there is a real reason for it. This is not as easy as it is being presented, and take your time on this one. Don’t let anybody push you into it.”⁴⁶ Prophetic, also, is Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill’s characterization of NSC discussion in the early months of the Bush presidency:

There was never any rigorous talk about this sweeping idea that seemed to be driving all the specific actions. From the start, we were building the case against Hussein and looking at how we could take him out and change Iraq into a new country. And, if we did that, it would solve everything. It was all about finding *a way to do it*.⁴⁷

In the Bush NSC, the wisdom of what Bush liked to call “big goals” received less scrutiny than the methods by which they might be achieved.

THEN CAME SEPTEMBER 11. Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz immediately suspected Iraqi complicity. That afternoon at the National Military Command Center, aides recorded Rumsfeld’s intention to obtain “best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H. at same time. Not only UBL.” S.H. was Saddam Hussein, and UBL meant Osama bin Laden, whom intelligence already identified as the likely perpetrator. “Go massive,” Rumsfeld continued. “Sweep it all up. Things related and not.”⁴⁸ The following morning at the NSC, Rumsfeld raised the idea of attacking Iraq, but Bush resisted, not opposing such a move but putting it on hold until after Afghanistan.⁴⁹ Rumsfeld tried again at the 4 p.m. meeting. Again Bush, with support from Cheney and Powell, resisted.⁵⁰ Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz broached Iraq once more at Camp David on September 15, the latter putting 10 to 50 percent odds on Iraqi involvement in the September 11 attacks.⁵¹ Bush resisted. “But,” as Todd S. Purdum writes, “a seed had been planted.”⁵²

In this formative, instinctive moment for Bush, that seed seemed also to take root. As early as September 12, the president pulled Clarke aside, instructing him to “see if Saddam did this. See if he’s linked in any way...Just look. I want to know any shred.” Clarke protested that although he knew of no evidence of al Qaeda linkages with Iraq, the same did not apply to Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. “Look into Iraq, Saddam,” was Bush’s response.⁵³ Three days later, when Chief of Staff Andrew Card referred to al Qaeda as the enemy, Bush interrupted: “An enemy.”⁵⁴ Bush told the NSC on September 17, less than a week after the terrorist attacks: “I believe Iraq was involved, but I’m not going to strike them now. I don’t have the evidence at this point.”⁵⁵ If he lacked the evidence, why did Bush believe Iraq was involved? But Bush believed it, for he ended the September 28 NSC meeting thus: “Many believe Saddam is involved. That’s not an issue for now. If we catch him being involved, we’ll act. He probably was behind this in the end.”⁵⁶ In the stressful, emotionally charged days after September 11, the gut player had acquired a big idea: Saddam Hussein, even if not every dot could be connected, was a guilty man.

Rolling to War

IT WAS NOT UNTIL AUGUST of the following year that the president heard a detailed case about possible downsides to war in Iraq. In a two-hour meeting with Bush and Rice on August 5, Powell listed undesirable consequences of war and insisted on the necessity of an international coalition. Powell’s presentation could be taken as an implicit case against war, but neither Bush nor Rice seemed to understand. Powell had not made his case explicit even though, as Woodward makes clear, Powell really opposed war altogether.⁵⁷ Understanding why Powell felt so constrained—as Woodward paraphrases, “to play to the boss and talk about method” and “to talk only within the confines of the preliminary goals set by the boss”⁵⁸—is crucial to understanding the lack of meaningful choice in the Bush administration’s move toward war. For by the time of Powell’s meeting, the administration had constrained itself with escalating military plans and force buildups, bellicose public rhetoric and commitments to opposition groups on the ground in Iraq. American credibility was on the line, and it pointed toward starting a war whose merits and demerits American policymakers had not given serious discussion.

Presidential involvement in military planning for the invasion of Iraq began on September 17, 2001, the day Bush told the NSC he believed in Iraqi participation in the terrorist attacks. Although devoted largely to the Afghan war, a secret presidential directive contained additional instructions for the Pentagon to draw up Iraq invasion plans.⁵⁹ The more significant order came on November 21 as Bush asked a receptive Rumsfeld to work secretly with Tommy Franks, head of Central Command, to devise a detailed war plan.⁶⁰ The three would meet regularly until the war started in March 2003. And until Powell’s presentation in August 2002, “virtually all” NSC discussions on Iraq were devoted to military planning, not to the question of whether in fact to invade.⁶¹

Meanwhile, the administration was going on the public record, building expectations of a confrontation with Hussein. In the *Newsweek* released on November 26, 2001, Bush offered for the first time his stark assessment of the Iraqi dictator. “Saddam is evil,”⁶² he said, perhaps an insight into why he believed Iraqi involvement in September 11 without the evidence. That day, responding to a press inquiry, Bush started making public demands of Hussein. “In order to prove to the world he’s not developing weapons of mass destruction,” Bush said, “he ought to let the inspectors back in.” A reporter asked what would happen if Hussein refused. “That’s up for—he’ll find out,” Bush responded.⁶³ Now, as newspapers around the nation and world duly

recorded, Bush had vowed to take some form of action to confront Hussein. Yet given Hussein's history of defiance of the U.S. and U.N., a record oft-cited by Bush himself, any action might easily become the ultimate action: war. "On to Iraq," enthused neoconservative columnist Charles Krauthammer as the Afghan campaign began to wind down and Bush's anti-Hussein rhetoric began to heat up.⁶⁴

Starting in December, less than three months after September 11, military planning for Iraq proceeded at a blinding clip. Resembling somewhat Bush's style of "provocations" at the NSC, Rumsfeld developed a process of "iterative planning," by which he would push Franks to make quick, bold revisions to the war plan and report to Rumsfeld about once a week for revisions and further instructions. Iterative planning meant, as Woodward writes, that "nothing was ever finished."⁶⁵ This in turn meant that the president would never get a full view, all at once, of the military strategy and troop requirements needed for invasion. It was another obstacle to meaningful choice.

Typically, Franks would have thirty days to devise an initial commander's estimate of the kind Rumsfeld secretly requested on December 1. Rumsfeld gave Franks three.⁶⁶ When Franks presented his plan, which in that time could be only a revision of the old Op Plan 1003 and not the outside-the-box thinking Rumsfeld desired, the Secretary of Defense was unsurprisingly unsatisfied.⁶⁷ The pair met twice more that month, Rumsfeld constantly pressing for lighter invasion forces and less decision-to-action time, between a presidential order and military execution. For a war of choice, the planning was curiously hasty, constantly pressured.

One reason was Rumsfeld's December 12 warning to Franks—after Rumsfeld seemed not to evince any urgency—that war could commence "even as early as April or May" of 2002.⁶⁸ Lack of clarity from the president, it seems, created an artificial deadline that took Franks by surprise and rushed the commander's planning. War plans were ordinarily two-to-three-year projects.⁶⁹ By Franks's fourth iteration presented to Rumsfeld on January 17, 2002, the total force size was down to 245,000 and strikes could start within forty-five days of a presidential go-ahead.⁷⁰ Op Plan 1003, with which Franks began the previous month, had called for 500,000 troops and a six-month wait.⁷¹ The progress was remarkable. Quietly, U.S. military personnel in Kuwait tripled to 3,000.⁷²

Although a gut feeling of Hussein's evil had sprouted in Bush shortly after September 11, it was not yet clear that the military option was the only means of ending Hussein's regime. A CIA briefing on January 3 changed that. CIA Director George Tenet and the CIA's Directorate of Operations, in charge of covert action, told Bush not only that clandestine work in Iraq could not overthrow Hussein but that "in order to recruit sources inside Iraq" for intelligence useful in war, "they would have to say the U.S. was serious and was coming in with its military."⁷³ Bush approved. Powell feared that the CIA had spawned "another substantial pressure for war."⁷⁴ Indeed, following presidential authorization and allocation of \$389 million over two years,⁷⁵ the CIA's survey team was inserted into northern Iraq on February 16 in preparation for CIA paramilitary teams that would arrive in July. Americans were in Iraq.

At home, Americans were hearing about Iraq almost constantly. That was due partly to the realities of twenty-four-hour cable news and partly to Bush, whose January 29 State of the Union came to be remembered as the "axis of evil" speech. It was a phrase heard round the world, where it was largely condemned, and not just by axis members North Korea, Iran and, especially emphasized, Iraq. BBC's *Newsnight* queried, "Has Bush upset his friends as much as

his enemies?⁷⁶ European Union external affairs commissioner Chris Patten decried America's "absolutist and simplistic" foreign policy, singling out the axis-of-evil line for special rebuke: "I find it hard to believe that's a thought-through policy."⁷⁷ On that charge, Patten was more right than he could have known.

"Axis of evil" began as Frum's "axis of hatred," acquiring its theological dimension from chief speechwriter Michael Gerson, an evangelical Christian.⁷⁸ Rice, Hadley and political strategist Karl Rove were active in approving the phrase, and Powell and his deputy Richard Armitage reviewed drafts.⁷⁹ Even so, like the September 11 make-no-distinction pronouncement, the Saddam-is-evil interview and the he'll-find-out warning, the axis of evil had its origin in the need for rhetoric, not the deliberation of policy. Had Bush been engaging in NSC debate over Iraq, the cost of alienating allies and jump-starting the potentially unstoppable march to war might have been deemed prohibitive. At least it would have been considered.

IN THE SPRING OF 2002, the State Department's director of policy planning, Richard Haass, smelled "something in the air here." His staff suspected "gathering momentum" toward war, in Haass's words. "But it was hard to pin down," he said, presumably because no serious deliberation had taken place or at least had involved him or his staff.⁸⁰

One source of momentum, the Franks-Rumsfeld iterative war planning, began to bear fruit and kept bearing ahead. Franks presented to Bush the first executable war plan, dubbed Generated Start, on February 7,⁸¹ though the planning, replanning and tinkering never stopped until the war began. Franks requested \$300 to \$400 million for initial war preparations such as improving Kuwaiti airfields and building supply storage pads.⁸² Weeks later, he got a blank check from the White House and ordered his commanders on April 24 to spend accordingly.⁸³ Still changing the force size, Franks could not reveal the total operational costs of war even by his May 11 briefing with Bush⁸⁴—yet another way in which Bush was hampered from making a meaningful choice about his war of choice, a downside that patience could have obviated.

Invested monetarily in an Iraq war, the U.S. also became invested politically among Iraqi opposition groups. In a secret March meeting, Tenet made a promise, backed by the promise of millions of American dollars, to two key anti-Hussein figures. Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leader Massoud Barzani and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader Jalal Talabani heard a message that could not appear more clear: "The military would attack. President Bush meant what he said. Saddam was going down."⁸⁵ What Barzani, Talabani and Tenet himself did not know was whether Tenet was right. Bush had not yet decided to attack.

But the potential lie to the Kurdish leaders made any other outcome less likely. What would happen to Barzani's and Talabani's support if the U.S. did not invade? It would be the second time the Kurds placed their faith in a Bush only to be left out to dry. The first followed the 1991 Gulf War, when the CIA fomented an anti-Hussein uprising among Kurds and Shia that Hussein crushed after President George H.W. Bush refused to continue to Baghdad. The second, now, might well be the last.

Thus constrained, and believing Hussein an unacceptable evil anyway, Bush turned up the pressure. According to one report, Bush ducked into Rice's office in March while she met with three senators. His message: "Fuck Saddam. We're taking him out."⁸⁶ At more sober moments the following month, the deputies and principals initiated a series of meetings on Iraq. Like the meetings O'Neill described, these were distinctly limited in scope. "Most of the internal debate in

the administration has really been about tactics,” noted one official.⁸⁷ In this light, the reflection of John B. Craig, appointed special assistant to the president and senior director for combating terrorism in October 2001, becomes illuminating: “The idea that the administration needed a justification for invading Iraq wasn’t raised until after the decision had been made. If the public was against this, the public should have stood up and asked some really tough questions.”⁸⁸

As for the public, it was hearing increasingly definitive statements from Bush, statements from which retreat would be difficult. Asked about Iraq on March 21, Bush announced: “This is an administration that when we say we’re going to do something, we mean it...that we understand history has called us into action, and we’re not going to miss this opportunity to make the world more peaceful and more free.”⁸⁹ If history called the U.S. into action against Hussein, there was little point debating whether to do so, little choice Bush felt himself capable of exercising. And as with the November 2001 Saddam-is-evil and he’ll-find-out comments, the Bush pledge came not as part of a scripted statement but in response to reporters’ prodding.

That pattern continued on April 5, when a British journalist pressed Bush on Iraq. “I made up my mind that Saddam needs to go,” Bush replied. Asked how Saddam would go, Bush answered, “Just wait and see.”⁹⁰ Bush knew the CIA could not do the job covertly, so that left essentially one option—force or the threat of force—if Bush was to honor his word and the now aroused expectations of neoconservatives. His administration, however, had not considered whether to go to war at any length. If it had, and if Bush had recognized the utility of allies as he did months later at the U.N., he might have harbored second thoughts about such definitive statements. A war predestined to happen, regardless of whether other countries joined in, gave little incentive for already skeptical European nations to volunteer their military, monetary or moral support. Those that were quietly pleased, moreover, could bask in the Washington-born free security.

SENSING THE LIKELIHOOD OF INVASION, concerned members of the State Department formed the government’s first program for postwar planning.⁹¹ The Future of Iraq Project convened on April 9, not because Bush or the NSC requested it but as an “academic exercise” initiated by officials at State in case war really happened.⁹² Receiving \$5 million from Congress in May 2002, the project went on to form seventeen working groups composed partly of Iraqi exiles and generated thirteen volumes of specific recommendations for various aspects of postwar administration.⁹³ Among the final report’s warnings was that “the period immediately after regime change might offer...criminals the opportunity to engage in acts of killing, plunder and looting.”⁹⁴ Although certain NSC members did reportedly attend some of the project’s meetings, there is no evidence that the challenge of occupation was a major topic of debate at the NSC insofar as the question of whether to launch an invasion was concerned.

In fact, when Department of Defense members attended CIA war-gaming sessions on such scenarios as postconflict civil disorder, higher-ups from Rumsfeld’s office scolded them and ended their participation. The CIA’s war-gaming had started in May, but by early summer the Defense officials were gone, apparently because the Pentagon saw planning efforts as an “impediment to war.”⁹⁵ Responsibility for postwar planning ultimately fell on the Defense Department, which in October created the Office of Special Plans headed by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith. Much of the Future of Iraq Project’s work, State Department officials later complained, was discarded.⁹⁶

The existence of the multiple planning groups was further evidence of an administration that had broadly decided on war, as the worried State Department planners sensed.⁹⁷ Yet the

lack of coordination among the groups and the lack of direction from Bush and his top advisors were further evidence of an administration that had chosen without really choosing. By not spearheading postwar planning efforts from the start, by discouraging the involvement of some and by apparently treating occupation difficulties as a tactical rather than strategic matter, the decision makers in the administration deprived themselves of another piece of the decision-making calculus. In view of the less-than-urgent threat Hussein posed to America, it by no means had to be that way.

But by the summer of 2002, the fact was, it was that way. To Powell's unease,⁹⁸ Bush articulated the clearest statement yet of the administration's "preemption" doctrine in a June 1 West Point Military Academy graduation speech. "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," Bush said to applause, adding later, "We will not leave the safety of America and the peace of the planet at the mercy of a few mad terrorists and tyrants."⁹⁹ Hussein and Iraq went unnamed but were conspicuously suggested.¹⁰⁰ An administration that had previously debated whether and how best to attack Iraq might have foreseen negative implications for potential allies. True to form, Europeans sounded the alarm: "At the rhetorical level at least this 'new' U.S. approach smacks of extreme unilateralism...There is no necessary reason why pre-emptive or covert operations should not be conducted after careful soundings of key allies. But that is not the way this new policy seems to be developing."¹⁰¹ Such was the view of the BBC's defense correspondent, from the one country, no less, that would lend extensive military support to the invasion of Iraq.

From a strategic perspective, that invasion was becoming increasingly inevitable. Two of his brigades now poised in Kuwait, Franks on June 19 briefed Bush on his and Rumsfeld's new option called Running Start, which reduced the decision-to-action time by first softening Hussein with air strikes and, within a month, invading with slightly more than 100,000 troops.¹⁰² Franks perceived Bush "conveying a sense of urgency" and ordered his component commanders to prepare for Running Start rather than the old Generated Plan.¹⁰³ As July came to a close, Bush signed off on 30 preparatory military projects in the region, totaling \$700 million. Bush's approval was something of a no-brainer; Franks had warned that were the projects incomplete by December 1, the mission would suffer risk.¹⁰⁴ To his half-credit, Bush might have maintained some maneuverability by allegedly withholding knowledge of the expenditure from Congress.¹⁰⁵ Franks would revise the war plan almost two dozen times between July 2002 and February 2003¹⁰⁶—one of the reasons the administration repeatedly refused, on grounds of impossibility, to estimate the cost of war,¹⁰⁷ and a barrier once again to meaningful choice.

In the second week of July, just before the \$700 million approval, the CIA sent two paramilitary teams into northern Iraq to recruit sources who would oppose the regime and supply intelligence to the Americans.¹⁰⁸ At least one of the teams, working with Talabani's PUK, found some success. Of course, recruitment had to be premised on the certainty that the U.S. military was coming and coming soon; otherwise no one would dare to help.¹⁰⁹ Turkey, which did not initially know of the CIA's true motives but which supported the operation, pulled the plug late in August. The teams, however, returned in the fall, around October, one with the PUK and another with the PDK.¹¹⁰ It is no wonder then that in an early July meeting Rice told Haass, according to the latter's paraphrasing, that "that decision's been made, don't waste your breath."¹¹¹ Haass had asked to discuss costs and benefits of an invasion of Iraq.

No Return

THE POINT OF NO RETURN is not easy to pin down. A case could be made that Hussein at any time might have allowed completely unfettered access to his country and his palaces. Even Bush's March 17, 2003, ultimatum, giving the dictator forty-eight hours to leave Iraq, might have averted war. But accepting those as improbabilities, as the Bush administration rightly did, points in an earlier direction: August 2002, specifically August 5.

On that day, Franks briefed Bush on his newly conceived and still unfinished Hybrid Plan, which shrank the time of decision-to-action.¹¹² The day after, Franks had his commanders switch their planning from Running Start to Hybrid.¹¹³ More important than the military aspect, though, was the secretary of state's two-hour August 5 meeting with the president, "to go over some issues," Powell told Rice, "that I don't think he's gone over with anyone yet."¹¹⁴ The meeting came at Powell's request, not Bush's.¹¹⁵ Over dinner that night, Powell detailed what could be heard as an antiwar argument. War in Iraq, he warned, might inflame the Arab world, weaken pro-American regimes, distract from the war on terrorism and other initiatives, destabilize the flow of oil, enlarge the Middle East crisis and prove economically and politically costly to the U.S.¹¹⁶ Besides, Hussein was for the most part contained, and the logic of deterrence broke down upon invasion.¹¹⁷

But when Bush, the man of action, asked Powell, "What should I do? What else can I do?"—a choice of words expressing lack of choice—Powell quite possibly sealed the fate of Saddam Hussein. "You can still make a pitch for a coalition or U.N. action to do what needs to be done."¹¹⁸ Powell hoped at least to suggest his opposition to war,¹¹⁹ but he stopped short of telling all. Bush seemed to miss Powell's intimation. "That's his job," Bush told Woodward, "to be tactical. My job is to be strategic. Basically what he was saying was, was that if in fact Saddam is toppled by military [invasion], we better have a strong understanding about what it's going to take to rebuild Iraq."¹²⁰ As in Afghanistan, winning the war was a big goal, a Bush-level goal, and keeping the peace was tactical, important but details, best left to others. The challenge of postwar reconstruction did not factor into Bush's war-or-no-war calculus.

What "needs to be done," Powell detected, perhaps from the unequivocal public rhetoric, the intense military planning and the ongoing CIA insertion in Iraq, was to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Either it was too late for Powell to oppose war or his boss did not inspire candor. Regardless, this was the last chance for Bush's regime-change instinct to be contested. At the August 5 meeting, as Haass put it, "the agenda was not whether Iraq, but how."¹²¹ So the agenda would remain.

Both the August 14 principals meeting and the August 16 NSC meeting, according to Woodward's accounts, did not take up the question of whether. The principals approved a National Security Presidential Directive titled "Iraq: Goals, Objectives and Strategy," an ambitious document that made it America's goal not only to "free Iraq in order to eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction" but also to

End Iraqi threats to neighbors, to stop the Iraqi government's tyrannizing of its own population, to cut Iraqi links to and sponsorship of international terrorism, to maintain Iraq's unity and territorial integrity. And liberate the Iraqi people from tyranny, and assist them in creating a society based on moderation, pluralism and democracy.¹²²

Such a litany of goals, especially liberation of the people, was not likely to be achieved through weapons inspections or through any means, for that matter, except war.

The principals also agreed to have Bush's upcoming September 12 speech at the U.N. General Assembly, less than a month away, focus on Iraq. The NSC concurred on August 16.¹²³ Given the improbability of Hussein granting full cooperation to inspectors and surrendering his suspected weapons of mass destruction, escalation to all-out war might soon happen. In that sense, though Powell was the voice of moderation, the U.N. further constrained American options. Now would have been a good time to make sure that invasion was wise.

Instead, the principals looked to more immediate concerns. In his General Assembly speech, they decided, Bush would challenge the U.N. to prove it was not toothless and irrelevant. This rationale was the idea of Cheney, who initially protested taking the Iraq issue to the U.N., an institution of which he was not fond.¹²⁴ Conceived quickly and for reasons of rhetoric, the administration's commitment to strengthening the Security Council was shallow, a fact that the year's worth of chest thumping about unilateralism and preemption made patent to potential coalition partners.

It turned out, the chest thumping was not done. Without vetting his remarks in detail with Bush or Bush's staffers,¹²⁵ Cheney delivered a pugnacious address in Nashville on August 26. "A return of inspectors would provide no assurance whatsoever of [Hussein's] compliance with U.N. resolutions," he warned. "On the contrary, there is a great danger that it would provide false comfort that Saddam was somehow 'back in his box.'" The importance of the U.N. process further diminished with this declaration: "The risks"—plural—"of inaction are far greater than the risk"—singular—"of action."¹²⁶ While perhaps violating the spirit of the NSC's agreement to go to the U.N., Cheney's remarks did not directly contradict Bush's position, which was not yet committed either to war or to a U.N. resolution. They, and seemingly contradictory statements from Powell that the U.S. in fact wanted inspectors in Iraq,¹²⁷ were what Bush and the administration got for their lack of clarity in fall 2002 and their failure to plan Iraq and coalition-building strategy from the start. To German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, the Cheney speech signified that Bush would not engage in prewar consultation.¹²⁸ Schroeder, in the midst of a reelection campaign, sharpened his antiwar rhetoric, calling the Iraq invasion an "adventure" on which his troops would not embark. Bush did not place a congratulatory phone call to Schroeder when German voters returned him to office.¹²⁹

"THE THREAT OF WAR has to be there," Powell told the House Intelligence Committee. Of course, if the threat had to be there, non-compliance by Hussein would mean war, too, had to be there. Powell was speaking on September 20, the day the White House released proposed language of a congressional resolution authorizing force against Iraq, about two weeks after Bush began asking congressmen to support such a resolution and three weeks before Congress gave its approval.¹³⁰ That did not allow much time for congressional debate, but passage of the resolution was largely an inevitability.¹³¹ Congress, it was clear, was not the one choosing if or when to go to war; it was handing off the choice to the president, "as he determines to be necessary and appropriate."¹³²

The road to war now led through the United Nations. From September 6 until Bush's September 12 address, the principals and NSC debated what exactly Bush would say.¹³³ Exchanges between Powell and Cheney, who had fundamentally different conceptions of the international institution, grew heated.¹³⁴ Remarkably, Bush did not decide to seek a Security Council

resolution until the night before—so late that the line calling for “the necessary resolutions” remained unloaded in the TelePrompTer, and Bush had to ad-lib.¹³⁵ The administration was again proceeding not from any well-defined plan but from rolling judgments, sometimes month-by-month, sometimes week-by-week and here day-by-day, to meet deadlines the administration set for itself.

In the much-anticipated U.N. speech, Cheney’s rationale was prevalent. “The conduct of the Iraqi regime is a threat to the authority of the United Nations and,” Bush added, “a threat to peace.” Hussein’s defiance left the body at a “defining moment”: “Are Security Council resolutions to be honored and enforced, or cast aside without consequence? Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?”¹³⁶ A clever argument, its implication, especially in light of earlier talk of preemption, was that if the Security Council did not demand inspections and follow through if necessary with war, the U.N. would be irrelevant because the U.S. would act. This was not what France, Germany and many others wanted to hear; in a genuinely relevant Security Council, one party would not predetermine the outcome.

Five days later came two reminders of the superficiality of Bush’s allegiance to multilateralism. One was the White House’s immediate condemnation of Iraqi acceptance of weapons inspectors, leveled because Hussein had not assented to “unfettered” access.¹³⁷ Where Europeans saw progress, Washington saw “the worst kind of trap.”¹³⁸ Second and particularly ill timed, the administration chose to release its new National Security Strategy, which promised to “preempt emerging threats.”¹³⁹ Preemption of imminent threats was a well-established international norm, but preemption of emerging threats was new and a distortion of the meaning of “preemption.” Really it meant prevention, far from an international norm. Canadian Foreign Minister Bill Graham typified the international reaction: “It’s not consistent to the world order that we’ve been trying to build for the last 70 years through the United Nations.”¹⁴⁰ From outward appearances, it was unclear whether the Bush administration was serious about multilateralism. The reason, as for Cheney’s and Powell’s seemingly contradictory statements on weapons inspections in the previous month, was that the Bush administration was in fact internally divided, not having discussed and agreed on the value of U.N. support before initiating the drive to war.

Bush had not yet said whether the U.S. would go to war against Saddam Hussein, even though the *fait accompli* was becoming apparent. The CIA released its October 2 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq, rushed in response to Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Bob Graham’s request.¹⁴¹ For the first time, the CIA stated outright that Iraq had chemical and biological weapons, eliminating the qualifications that accompanied the December 2000 NIE and Tenet’s February 6, 2002, testimony.¹⁴² Bush’s major address on October 7 also boasted few qualifications: “The time for denying, deceiving, and delaying has come to an end,” Bush proclaimed. “Saddam Hussein must disarm himself—or, for the sake of peace, we will lead a coalition to disarm him.” Congress approved the use-of-force resolution four days later, and Resolution 1441, weakened from its original state but still threatening “serious consequences,” passed the Security Council unanimously on November 8. Weapons inspectors entered Iraq later that month. There was no turning back.

The decision was getting made without its getting made. At this point, on October 15, six weeks before Franks would submit his large-scale, 300,000-person MODEPS deployment order,¹⁴³ Rumsfeld drafted a memo to Bush listing twenty-nine possible negative consequences of war. They included strife among Iraq’s ethnic groups, chemical weapons use by Hussein and “public

relations” blunders among Muslims. The diminutive phrase “public relations” underscored the point that Rumsfeld’s late timing ensured: these were designed, in Rumsfeld’s words, “to prepare [Bush] for what could go wrong,” not to factor into a decision of whether to go.¹⁴⁴ If combined with Powell’s objections and stated earlier, they might amount to grounds for debating the logic of invasion. A postwar June 2003 Pew poll would find that “the bottom has fallen out of support for America in most of the Muslim world,” with favorable ratings of America within one year plunging from, for example, 61 to 15 percent in Indonesia and 71 to 38 percent among Muslim Nigerians.¹⁴⁵ An uncommonly critical Army War College report in December 2003 warned of al Qaeda gaining “growing political traction in the Muslim world.”¹⁴⁶ But as one of twenty-nine bullet points in a Rumsfeld memo delivered long after Powell raised the issue and the U.S. had gone to the U.N., the “public relations” problem did not become much of a strategic, Bush-level concern.

In Iraq, the CIA paramilitary teams continued to recruit sources and prepare to conduct sabotage operations.¹⁴⁷ As the agency’s Iraq Operations chief told his superiors, the mission could not comfortably endure beyond the end of February. “We can’t pull back,” he said. “If we turn around and pull back, we’re not going to have any credibility.”¹⁴⁸ The Pentagon issued its first major deployment order on December 6 and kept them coming at about a two-per-week rate. In this context, the administration presented Hussein with what Woodward aptly dubs a “no-win situation:”¹⁴⁹

If Saddam Hussein indicates that he has weapons of mass destruction and that he is violating United Nations resolutions, then we will know that Saddam Hussein again deceived the world. If he said he doesn’t have any, then I think that we will find out whether or not Saddam Hussein is saying something that we believe will be verifiably false.¹⁵⁰

Hussein’s choice was no choice: to be a deceiver or a liar. The lose-lose proposition was not only what Hussein did not want to hear but also confirmation of what perspective allies had long feared. “From the very moment of its passing,” David Coates and Joel Krieger write, “UNSCR 1441 was given the very tightest of interpretations by leading figures in the Bush Administration, so tight in fact that the American interpretation twisted the meaning of the resolution in a way that widened the diplomatic breach with the Security Council members who wanted war to be truly a last resort.”¹⁵¹ And if Bush were ever to desire a second Security Council resolution to authorize war, he would pay a diplomatic price.

Finally, in January 2003, Bush informed his top advisors of his decision for war. As with the decisions to pursue military buildups, CIA operations and U.N. resolutions, Bush’s authorization trickled out on a rolling basis. First he told Rice at his Crawford, Texas, ranch on January 2 or 3 that “we’re going to have to go to war.” Worried about dragging out the CIA’s mission and the military buildup, Bush explained his reasoning to Rice through the language of necessity: “The United States can’t stay in this position while Saddam plays games with the inspectors...Time is not on our side here.” Rice seconded the logic. “You have to follow through on your threat,” she told Bush. “If you’re going to carry out coercive diplomacy, you have to live with that decision.”¹⁵² These expressions of lack of choice were true but implied a misplaced source. Hussein, not entirely cooperative, had acted predictably. The main source of Bush’s lack of choice was Bush himself,

who had not held serious, wide-ranging debate on whether to invade but whose military, covert and rhetorical escalations, determined bit by bit, were making time work against him.

While in Crawford, Bush informed Rove of the coming war.¹⁵³ Rumsfeld and Cheney learned separately upon Bush's return to Washington in early January.¹⁵⁴ Bush promised war to an eager Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia on January 13. Later that day, at Rice's prompting, Bush informed Powell, who asked the president if he understood the consequences and heard Bush reply affirmatively that "I have to do this." According to Woodward, Powell left the meeting wondering whether Bush ever second-guessed himself.¹⁵⁵

THE REST OF THE STORY is a playing out of the war, and of the failures of coalition politics and postwar planning, that was largely set in motion by Bush's gut feeling and then his series of non-decision decisions.

Thanks in part to American rhetorical excesses and to overwhelmingly unfavorable public opinion abroad, the positions of European countries polarized, not converged, in the months before war. Nine days after a January 11 *Washington Post* story reported Haass's anecdote about Rice telling him that Bush had decided on war back in July,¹⁵⁶ French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin decried American "impatience." "We believe that nothing today justifies envisaging military action," he told reporters, undermining the premise of coercive diplomacy.¹⁵⁷ France, too, had escalated its rhetoric, but in the direction opposite America. Rumsfeld would not be outdone. Within two days he was ruffling transatlantic feathers, branding France and Germany as two "problem" countries, part of "old Europe."¹⁵⁸ France, of course, wielded a Security Council veto. Yet on January 31, Bush promised British Prime Minister Tony Blair that the two coalition partners would seek a second Security Council resolution authorizing war.¹⁵⁹ The resolution had to be withdrawn in the final days before war as France threatened to cast its veto.

One last diplomatic debacle occurred when the Turkish parliament voted against allowing America to use its bases, from which the Army Fourth Infantry Division was supposed to launch a northern front. Throughout, Wolfowitz had guaranteed Turkish cooperation. Powell had warned that the American request would be too much for the Islamic government to accept, although he never flew to Ankara to lobby. When war began on March 19, the Fourth Infantry Division's tanks were stuck in the Mediterranean, one last testament to the failure of diplomatic foresight and clarity.¹⁶⁰

So, too, was the fact that planning for postwar Iraq had to continue, in some ways start anew, all the way up to the war. Before January 20, when Bush signed National Security Presidential Directive #24, setting up the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) under the Defense Department,¹⁶¹ planning had largely occurred separately at the State Department, CIA and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Rumsfeld's office, for example, had continued to bar Defense officials from attending the National Intelligence Council's early January postwar planning exercise.¹⁶² Now, General Jay Garner—who was offered to head ORHA on January 9 and until then had been out of the administration and wholly uninvolved in Iraq planning¹⁶³—"started from scratch" to devise a plan.¹⁶⁴

He brought together diplomats, generals, professors and senior planners in a two-day National Defense University conference starting on February 21. In attendance was Judith Yaphe, a former CIA analyst. "The messiah could not have organized a sufficient relief and reconstruction or humanitarian effort in that short a time," she said.¹⁶⁵ The NSC continued to review postwar plans

at least until March 12.¹⁶⁶ These planning efforts were not only too late to factor in a presidential decision for war, had the president wanted them to, but they failed utterly to foresee postwar looting and prompted the White House to replace Garner one month after war's end. Garner later said he became unaware of the State Department's Future of Iraq Project only a few weeks before the war commenced.¹⁶⁷ The Joint Chiefs' August 2003 staff report, furthermore, criticized postwar planning for being "not fully integrated prior to hostilities"¹⁶⁸—even though, without an imminent threat from Hussein, the Iraq war was, as Bush said, "commenced at a time of our choosing."¹⁶⁹

At 8:01 p.m. on March 17, the president delivered a solemn address from the White House. He gave Hussein forty-eight hours to leave Iraq and avert war. His main audience, however, was the American people, a substantial minority of whom remained unconvinced of the need for war. To them Bush explained, "We choose to meet that threat now, where it arises, before it can appear suddenly in our skies and cities."¹⁷⁰ The statement contained a contradiction. On the one hand, "we *choose* to meet that threat now," because the threat is not imminent. But on the other, the threat "can appear suddenly in our skies and cities." If we do not "choose" to fight now, suddenly, at any time, we could be attacked. That left not much of a choice—perhaps over the details of when and how, but certainly not whether. Indeed, not much of a choice had been exercised all along.

Explaining the Unchosen War

OVER TIME, FURTHER EVIDENCE of the Bush administration's decision making will surface. Pieces of this argument will surely need to be revised, perhaps scrapped altogether. But it seems unlikely that Bush will appear anything near Kennedy-esque when it comes to foreign policy debate within his administration. The White House has disputed only a few details and nothing fundamental in Woodward's account. Moreover, the hypothesis fits related evidence. The absence of early, detailed debate and thus clear decision making helps to explain three aspects of the war: the failure of coalition building, the slipshod nature of postwar planning and the multiplicity of public rationales for war. That latter aspect fueled charges that the administration was being dishonest in selling the war to the American people, leading protesters to suspect something else, such as oil, to be the "true" motive. An alternative explanation is that given Bush's failure to debate Iraq early and often, multiple rationales were actually present. No single rationale can account for Bush's post-September 11 gut feeling that Hussein was "probably behind this in the end." Believing "Saddam is evil" and hearing little discussion, debate, Bush himself might really have embraced every rationale.

Another cause for confidence in the unchosen-war thesis is convergence in sources of evidence. Both Haass and O'Neill heard debate over only how, not whether, to go to war. Others, on separate issues, paint a corresponding picture of a less-than-deliberative White House. John DiIulio, advisor to Bush on faith-based initiatives, describes "on-the-fly policy-making by speech-making" and a "relative lack of substantive concern for policy and administration."¹⁷¹ On cabinet-meeting debates, O'Neill likens the president to "a blind man in a roomful of deaf people," adding that officials receive "little more than hunches about what the president might think"¹⁷²—a possible explanation for why Cheney was able to make his August 26, 2002, anti-weapons-inspections speech at the same time that Powell, acting on his view of the president's wishes, was championing inspections. From his experience, mostly before the administration's focus shifted to Iraq, Clarke goes so far as to predict that no substantive debate on Iraq took place:

I doubt that anyone ever had the chance to make the case to [Bush] that attacking Iraq would actually make America less secure and strengthen the broader radical Islamic terrorist movement. Certainly he did not want to hear that from the small circle of advisors who alone are the people whose views he respects and trusts.¹⁷³

Woodward even paraphrases Armitage as complaining to Rice that the administration's system for forming foreign policy was "dysfunctional" because "policy was not sufficiently coordinated, debated and then settled."¹⁷⁴

WHY MIGHT BUSH HAVE FAILED to debate invasion thoroughly and to consider as important the challenge of postwar reconstruction and the potential of inciting terrorism? First is his inexperience with foreign policy and his experience with the Afghan campaign. That was a defensive war whose justification never required debate and whose necessity was not about to be challenged by potential alliance fractures or postwar reconstruction difficulties. Bush went by his instincts. He seemed to be successful, increasing the likelihood of repeating the same leadership style in the next war.

Second, the period after September 11, when Bush developed his gut feeling against Hussein, was filled with stress and uncertainty. O'Neill's and other accounts portray the Bush administration as ideological to begin with, but September 11 might have furthered that characteristic.¹⁷⁵ "As a rule," writes Frank Ninkovich, "the greater the uncertainty, the greater is the role of ideology;"¹⁷⁶ in changing and unpredictable circumstances, rational debate becomes difficult. Circumstances after September 11 were, to say the least, changing and unpredictable. Bush was informed that an airplane could leave its normal path from National Airport and hit the White House within forty seconds.¹⁷⁷ He cried publicly in the Oval Office on September 13, 2001, and again in front of State Department staffers on October 4, after receiving news of a Florida anthrax outbreak.¹⁷⁸ Threats of imminent terrorist attacks came constantly. On one day, October 18, the White House's alarm for radioactive, chemical and biological agents sounded, an intimate reminder that no place, not even the White House, was secure.¹⁷⁹

Third, Bush's notion of, as he said, "a monumental struggle of good versus evil"¹⁸⁰ might have intensified the urgency of eliminating the evil Hussein, who had attempted assassination of Bush's father in 1993, while it obscured the force of all other issues. In this way, a war of choice could become necessary, and choosing whether to fight it could become unnecessary. Bush repeatedly referred to the terrorists as "evildoers," to Rumsfeld's echo,¹⁸¹ and Hussein as an "evil man," to Rice's.¹⁸² He put a premium on moral clarity. As he told Woodward, "Either you believe in freedom, and want to—and worry about the human condition, or you don't"¹⁸³—the private counterpart to Bush's public formula, "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."¹⁸⁴ Compelling as those examples are, nowhere did Bush more starkly exhibit the connection between his intolerance for nuance and his policy formulation than in a postwar interview with journalist Diane Sawyer. There, Bush equated the threats posed by a Hussein armed with weapons of mass destruction and a Hussein merely desirous of such weapons:

DIANE SAWYER: Again, I'm just trying to ask, these are supporters, people who believed in the war who have asked the question [whether Hussein had weapons of mass destruction].

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, you can keep asking the question and my answer's gonna be the same. Saddam was a danger and the world is better off 'cause we got rid of him.

DIANE SAWYER: But stated as a hard fact, that there were weapons of mass destruction as opposed to the possibility that he could move to acquire those weapons still —

PRESIDENT BUSH: So what's the difference?

DIANE SAWYER: Well —

PRESIDENT BUSH: The possibility that he could acquire weapons. If he were to acquire weapons, he would be the danger. That's, that's what I'm trying to explain to you.¹⁸⁵

"What's the difference," Bush asked, whether Hussein possessed weapons or only wanted them? From the point of view of national security, the difference was immense. Either way, however, Hussein was evil.

A related fatalism was often present in Bush's language and helps to account for the lack of meaningful choice Bush exercised regarding Iraq. On the vulnerability of the White House to terrorism, Bush stated: "If it's meant to be, it's going to happen. And therefore there's no need to try to hide from a terrorist."¹⁸⁶ By extension, Bush's continued existence and success as president, as in Afghanistan, implied Bush's leadership was meant to be. Sure enough, less than a month after the terrorist attacks, he told Rove, "I'm here for a reason."¹⁸⁷ Such a feeling possibly confirmed his anti-Hussein instincts, which formed in the same period. Indeed, Bush's brand of optimistic fatalism bore directly on the war on terrorism. "Our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil," he said three days after the attacks.¹⁸⁸ If America faced a responsibility to history, it could not choose otherwise. And if that responsibility was to rid the world of evil, Hussein being among evil's chief practitioners, then America was duty-bound to act in Iraq. So when Powell broached the complexity of postwar occupation and the risk of inflaming the Muslim world, Bush saw him being tactical and not strategic, vexed by trivialities and not speaking of big ideas.

One indicator of whether a nation would aid America's war in Iraq was the language with which its leader reacted to September 11. Jacques Chirac of France condemned the "monstrous attacks."¹⁸⁹ Vladimir Putin of Russia denounced the "terrible tragedies."¹⁹⁰ Gerhard Schroeder of Germany called them "war against the civilized world."¹⁹¹ But to Tony Blair of Britain, they constituted no less than a "new evil." Blair vowed, "We, therefore, here in Britain stand shoulder to shoulder with our American friends in this hour of tragedy, and we, like them, will not rest until this evil is driven from our world."¹⁹² Blair's Manichean outlook, like Bush's, might have its roots in religious faith, said to bind the two men. Also like Bush's, Blair's determinism surfaced in the justification of his country's mission in the war on terror. That war, Blair said in early November 2001, was not "a fight that Britain could say out of, even if we wanted to."¹⁹³

In their 2004 analysis of Blair's handling of the Iraq war, David Coates and Joel Krieger come to the following conclusion: "Tony Blair took the UK to war alongside the United States in March 2003 because by his public statements he had locked the UK into a path of confrontation with Iraq, by standing alongside the USA in its condemnation of the Iraqi regime."¹⁹⁴ Blair, in other words, waged an unchosen war of choice.¹⁹⁵

THE GENIUS OF KENNEDY in the Cuban Missile Crisis was that, through sometimes endless ExComm debates, the president kept control of events. At each moment, he and his team remained cognizant of just how far along the crisis was, where the crisis was likely to go and what bearing one action had on future options. There would not be air strikes on Cuba unless America was willing to invade; there would not be invasion unless America was willing to defend Berlin from Soviet attack; therefore, there would not be air strikes on Cuba unless America was willing to defend Berlin. Kennedy thus ensured that each move he made expressed his fullest choice.

If Bush's self-identification with Kennedy cannot, then, withstand scrutiny, where might the antecedents to Bush's non-decision decision making lie? One place is Harry Truman's non-decision decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan, to the extent that both Truman and Bush never seriously debated whether to go ahead because one factor—for Truman winning the war, for Bush ousting Hussein—seemed to dwarf all others. Over time, it became less clear whether the destruction wreaked by and the international implications of the atomic bombs, and now the Iraq war, made the venture worthwhile or should at minimum have given the supposed decision makers pause.

The other and perhaps better parallel is with Lyndon Johnson's decision making as the Vietnam conflict escalated to war in 1964 and 1965. There are enormous differences in the situations and leaders: among them, Bush looked positively on war while Johnson did not; Johnson deliberated often, with deep uncertainty and by enlisting outside advisors such as President Eisenhower while Bush did not; and Johnson realized, to a degree, the dilemma posed by escalation¹⁹⁶ while Bush seems either to have not or to have welcomed it. Yet the analogy holds in the narrow sense that both participants in a war of choice did not confront their real choice, the big questions of whether to go war and how accurate were their underlying assumptions, until that choice was essentially made by events that they themselves set in motion.

Bush's bottom line was getting Saddam Hussein out of power. Johnson's was that he would not lose Vietnam to the Communists as Truman was said to have lost China. Anything else was a non-starter, unthinkable. Bush believed in Hussein's evil; Johnson in March 1965 told Senator George McGovern that he thought the Chinese Communists aimed "to take over the world" in a Hitler-style conquest,¹⁹⁷ although his determination not to lose Vietnam sprang at least as much from domestic politics. These two bottom-line thresholds led the presidents to appeal to the logic of preemption. "To ignore aggression now would only increase the danger of a much larger war," said Johnson at his 1965 State of the Union.¹⁹⁸ "If this threat is permitted to fully and suddenly emerge, all actions, all words, and all recriminations would come too late," said Bush at his 2003 State of the Union.¹⁹⁹ Although neither Communists in South Vietnam nor Hussein in Iraq posed a direct threat to American security, Johnson and Bush enlarged the adversary such that they had to act and act now. In so doing, they deprived themselves of the ability to make a real choice about all that acting now really entailed.

Patterns in Bush's lack of choice in decision making, reinforced by his bottom-line need to be rid of Hussein, surface in Johnson. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident, Johnson convened

his military advisors on September 9, 1964, to contemplate future reprisals. “At this meeting,” Robert Mann writes, “the question of *whether* to bomb was not paramount; rather the operative question was *how long to wait* before a bombing campaign would be effective.”²⁰⁰ When attacks at Pleiku killed eight Americans on February 7 of the following year, Johnson held an NSC meeting that was clearly a “charade,” a time for advisors to tell the boss what he wanted to hear—air strikes—not what they really thought.²⁰¹ Even Undersecretary of State George Ball, the constant advocate of withdrawal, favored strikes, evoking Powell’s resolve to accept Bush’s bounds forty years later. And when a war of choice turned into a war of necessity, outright dissent got watered down into something less, something the principals could use. In a June 1965 memo to Johnson, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy summarized the usable part of Senator Wayne Morse’s position—“The Morse memorandum,” Bundy wrote, “makes the tightest case I have seen for taking Vietnam to the UN”²⁰²—while discarding the broad antiwar intent. Likewise, Condoleezza Rice’s headline encapsulating Colin Powell’s August 2002 message was, “Powell Makes Case for Coalition as Only Way to Assure Success,”²⁰³ even though to Powell a coalition was less preferable than no war at all. In view of the litany of troubles that Powell said war could bring, a coalition could not absolutely assure success.

In the end, after so many meetings, after so much talk, after so many small decisions, Johnson forgot to choose:

Was Vietnam really worth it? What were the ultimate risks to U.S. interests if a negotiated settlement, as expected, resulted in a communist takeover in South Vietnam? Did the domino theory still apply in Southeast Asia?...Johnson and his top advisors never formally debated these and other questions. The United States had made solemn commitments to keep South Vietnam out of communist clutches. That was the task before them. Reassessing Vietnam’s strategic value or considering the possibility of a coalition government were useless notions to minds that saw communist capitulation as the conflict’s only acceptable outcome.²⁰⁴

WAS IRAQ REALLY WORTH IT? What were the ultimate risks to U.S. interests if Saddam Hussein were allowed to stay in power or if the U.S. took its time and pushed weapons inspections, recruited allies and planned for postwar reconstruction? Would stability, much less democracy, be easy to bring to Iraq? Did the odds favor democracy spreading outward from Iraq to the rest of the Middle East or terrorism spreading inward from the rest of the Middle East to Iraq? What would invasion do to America’s image problem in that region and thus to terrorist recruitment? Was partnership between Iraq and al Qaeda really likely? What about America’s transatlantic relationships? What if the occupation failed? Was Iraq really worth it?

In pushing to war, the Bush administration failed to debate most of these questions in any depth. Its fixation on Hussein transformed a real war of choice into a perceived war of necessity. All else faded to the periphery, so the administration neglected to choose a war it did not have to wage. Taking the cue from their leaders, the American people had not chosen; deferring to the president, the American Congress had not chosen; failing specifically to authorize war, the United Nations had not chosen. The choice fell to Bush, because Bush wanted it that way. Yet Bush had not chosen either. The ultimate irony was that the Bush Doctrine of preemption, really

prevention, was supposed to be about thinking ahead. What perhaps the Bush team needed first was to look behind, to history, to the catastrophe of tunnel-vision war planning and the success of the deliberative president they liked to quote.

Endnotes

¹ Bush, George W. "President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat." Speech at Cincinnati Museum Center. 7 Oct. 2002. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021007-8.html>>. Cited 15 May 2004.

² Rumsfeld, Donald. "DoD News Briefing—Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers." U.S. Department of Defense. 22 Oct. 2002. <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2002/t10222002_t1022sd.html>. Cited 15 May 2004.

³ Purdum, Todd S. *A Time of Our Choosing: America's War in Iraq*. New York: Times Books, 2003. 39.

⁴ Kennedy made the analogy toward the end of ExComm's 3:00 p.m. October 22 Cabinet Room meeting. *The Kennedy Tapes*. Ed. Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. 244.

⁵ Kay, David. "Transcript: David Kay at Senate hearing." Testimony to Senate Armed Services Committee. CNN.com. 28 Jan. 2004. <<http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/01/28/kay.transcript/>>. Cited 15 May 2004.

⁶ See, for example, Bush, George W. "President: Iraqi Regime Danger to America is 'Grave and Growing.'" Radio Address. 5 Oct. 2002. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021005.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

⁷ *The Kennedy Tapes*, 96-97.

⁸ In the first meeting of the Executive Committee known as ExComm on October 16, 1962, Kennedy summarized the consensus of the group: "We're certainly going to do number one. We're going to take out these missiles." Two days later, however, having considered the military inadequacy and potential impossibility of limited air strikes, the probable Soviet response and the concerns of global allies, Kennedy led the group to a consensus for, as he called it, "a limited blockade for a limited purpose." *The Kennedy Tapes*, 71, 172.

⁹ *ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰ Woodward, Bob. *Plan of Attack*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004. 149-53.

¹¹ See *ibid.*, 254-56.

¹² See *ibid.*, 251.

¹³ Brookhiser, Richard. "Up Close: The Mind of George W. Bush." *The Atlantic Monthly* 291.2 (March 2003): 55-69. <<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2003/04/brookhiser.htm>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

¹⁴ To reporters Bush revealed both the perceived necessity of the Iraq war and the perceived choice he was exercising: "Regime change is in the interests of the world. How we achieve that is a matter of consultation and deliberation...I'm a deliberative person. I'm a patient man." Quoted in Schlesinger, Robert. "President says he can wait on Iraq." *Boston Globe* 22 Aug. 2002: A1.

¹⁵ Purdum, 10-11.

¹⁶ Woodward, Bob. *Bush at War*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003. 343.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 18.

¹⁹ Clarke, Richard A. *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*. New York: Free Press, 2004. 24.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 24.

²¹ "After Falluja: Public Support for War Steady, but Bush Job Ratings Slip." The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press. 5 Apr. 2004. <<http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/210.pdf>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

²² Woodward, *Bush at War*, 342. Even former Bush speechwriter David Frum, in an overwhelmingly favorable book, described Bush thus: "He is impatient and quick to anger; sometimes glib, even dogmatic, often uncurious and as a result ill informed; more conventional in his thinking than a leader probably should be." Frum, David. *The Right Man: An Inside Account of the Bush White House*. New York: Random House, 2003. 272.

- ²³ Bush, George. "Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation." Television address. 11 Sept. 2001. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ²⁴ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 31.
- ²⁵ *ibid.*, 30.
- ²⁶ *ibid.*, 73.
- ²⁷ Clarke, 244.
- ²⁸ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 182.
- ²⁹ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 38.
- ³⁰ See Woodward, *Bush at War*, 79.
- ³¹ *ibid.*, 144-45. Bush, explaining that he found no reason to inform cabinet members that he was only being provocative, told Woodward: "I'm the commander—see, I don't need to explain—I do not need to explain why I say things. That's the interesting thing about being the president. Maybe somebody needs to explain to me why they say something, but I don't feel like I owe anybody an explanation." 145-46.
- ³² *ibid.*, 63.
- ³³ *ibid.*, 150. Later, another provocation, which Bush had not so much as floated with Rice: "And boots on the ground may or may not be simultaneous [with air strikes]," implying a major shift from the military planning at that point. 151.
- ³⁴ *ibid.*, 192.
- ³⁵ *ibid.*, 237.
- ³⁶ Bush often uses the phrase "big goals" to describe his leadership style (for example, see *ibid.*, 339). At the 2000 Republican National Convention, Bush tied his corporate past to his governance vision: "I've been where the buck stops in business and in government. I've been a chief executive who sets an agenda, sets big goals and rallies people to believe and achieve them." Bush, George. "Governor Bush delivers remarks at the Republican National Convention." CNN/Allpolitics. 3 Aug. 2000. <<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/conventions/republican/transcripts/bush.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ³⁷ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 145.
- ³⁸ "Forging a New Iraq Policy." *Washington Post* 4 Mar. 2001: B06.
- ³⁹ *An Open Letter to President Clinton: 'Remove Saddam Hussein from Power.'* Project for the New American Century. 26 Jan. 1998. In *The Iraq War Reader*. Ed. Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf. New York: Touchstone, 2003. 199-201.
- ⁴⁰ "The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power." Unknowingly presciently, the letter also warned that "in the not-too-distant future we will be unable to determine with any reasonable level of confidence whether Iraq does or does not possess such [chemical or biological] weapons." *ibid.*, 200.
- ⁴¹ The act made it "the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and to promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace the regime." *The Iraq Liberation Act of 1998*. 105th Congress. Pub. Law. 105—338. 31. Oct. 1998. FindLaw. <<http://news.findlaw.com/hdocs/docs/iraq/libact103198.pdf>> Cited 17 May 2004.
- ⁴² See Clarke, 264.
- ⁴³ Frum, 26.
- ⁴⁴ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 21.
- ⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 21.
- ⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 22.
- ⁴⁷ Quoted in Suskind, Ron. *The Price of Loyalty*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004. 86.
- ⁴⁸ "Plans for Iraq Attack Began On 9/11." CBS News. 4 Sept. 2002. <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/09/04/september11/main520830.shtml>>. Cited 17 May 2004. Also see Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 25.

⁴⁹ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 43.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 43. Also see Clarke, 30.

⁵¹ Purdum, 10. Also see Woodward, *Bush at War*, 84-85. The intelligence basis for Wolfowitz's estimate is unclear. It is perhaps indicative that Wolfowitz estimated the radically wide range of 10 to 50 percent.

⁵² Purdum, 10.

⁵³ Clarke, 32.

⁵⁴ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 90.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 99. Importantly, Iraq remained undeniably a war of choice until the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) came out in October 2002 and stated categorically that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction. (Even then, the label "war of choice" easily applies to Iraq, because the war was not waged in immediate self-defense.) Until the NIE, CIA Director George Tenet's testimony to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on February 6, 2002, was the reigning intelligence report. Iraq was not foremost in Tenet's prepared remarks.

Tenet called Hussein a "threat" but not an urgent one, who engaged in "pursuit of weapons of mass destruction" but did not necessarily have them, whose state's infrastructure "could support a reinvigorated nuclear weapons program" but did not necessarily have such a program, much less nuclear weapons. Nor was evidence of Iraqi ties to al Qaeda substantial: "[Iraq] has also had contacts with Al Qaeda. Their ties may be limited by divergent ideologies, but the two sides' mutual antipathy toward the United States and the Saudi royal family suggest that tactical cooperation between them is possible, even though Saddam is well aware that such activity would carry serious consequences." Tenet, George. Testimony to Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Federal Document Clearing House Political Transcripts. 6 Feb. 2002.

⁵⁶ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 167.

⁵⁷ The meeting will be summarized in detail later. See Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 148-152.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 151.

⁵⁹ Kessler, Glenn. "U.S. Decision On Iraq Has Puzzling Past." *Washington Post* 12 Jan. 2003: A01. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A43909-2003Jan11>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

⁶⁰ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 1-3. Busy prosecuting the Afghan war, Franks reacted with less than joy: "Goddamn, what the fuck are they talking about?" 8.

⁶¹ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 331.

⁶² "Newsweek Exclusive Interview: President George W. Bush and Laura Bush." PR Newswire. 25 Nov. 2001. <http://articles.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m4PRN/is_2001_Nov_25/ai_80278144>. Cited 17 May 2004.

⁶³ "Bush on Aid Workers and Policy on Cloning." Transcript. *Washington Post* 26 Nov. 2001. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/bush_112601.html>.

⁶⁴ Krauthammer, Charles. "Victory Changes Everything..." *Washington Post* 30 Nov. 2001: A41.

⁶⁵ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 76.

⁶⁶ The commander's estimate was, moreover, to be an ambitious one: "In two pages the order said Rumsfeld wanted to know how Franks would conduct military operations to remove Saddam from power, eliminate the threat of any possible weapons of mass destruction, and choke off his suspected support of terrorism. This was the formal order for thinking outside the box." *ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 40-41.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 43.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 40.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 81-82.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 36-37.

⁷² *ibid.*, 59.

⁷³ *ibid.*, 73.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 74.

⁷⁵ This, Woodward notes, was "vastly more than the \$70 million the CIA spent in Afghanistan." *Bush at War*, 329.

- ⁷⁶ *Newsnight*. BBC News. 19 Feb. 2002. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/events/newsnight/1836221.stm>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ⁷⁷ "EU's Patten criticises US foreign policy." BBC News. 9 Feb. 2002. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1810615.stm>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ⁷⁸ Frum, 238.
- ⁷⁹ Originally, the axis included only Iraq, but Rice and Hadley inserted Iran and North Korea so as not to single out Iraq. Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 87-91.
- ⁸⁰ Haass, a moderate, told the *New Yorker*: "There had been various hints, just in what people were saying, how they were acting at various meetings. We were meeting about these issues in the spring of 2002, and my staff would come back to me and report that there's something in the air here. So there was a sense that it was gathering momentum, but it was hard to pin down. For me, it was that meeting with Condi," the one they had in the first week of July, "that made me realize it was farther along than I had realized." Lemann, Nicholas. "How it Came to War." *The New Yorker* 31 Mar. 2003. <http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/030331fa_fact>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ⁸¹ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 98. Bush, Woodward writes, was "both behind this planning and involved with the details." 114.
- ⁸² *ibid.*, 120-121.
- ⁸³ "Bush clearly had given him extraordinary authority, declaring that the cost would be whatever it was." *ibid.*, 123.
- ⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 126.
- ⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 116.
- ⁸⁶ Elliott, Michael and James Carney. "First Stop, Iraq." *Time* 24 Mar. 2003: 172.
- ⁸⁷ Kessler, A01.
- ⁸⁸ Ritzel, Rebecca J. "Forum looks back on Iraq." *Intelligence Journal* 31 Mar. 2004: B1.
- ⁸⁹ "President, Vice President Discuss the Middle East." Statement in Oval Office. 21 Mar. 2002. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020321-6.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ⁹⁰ Beeston, Richard. "Iraq still the target, President insists." *The Times* 6 Apr. 2002. <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,1861-258532,00.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ⁹¹ The State Department began preliminaries for postwar planning late in October 2001. Fallows, James. "Blind Into Baghdad." *Atlantic Monthly* 293.1 (January/February 2003): 53-74. <<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2004/01/fallows.htm>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ⁹² "We started it just as an academic exercise, knowing that getting any kind of pre-Iraq planning approved through the interagency process would probably be impossible," one senior State Department official said." *Fineman, Mark, Robin Wright and Doyle McManus. "Washington's Battle Plan: Preparing for War, Stumbling to Peace." Los Angeles Times 18 July 2003: A1.*
- ⁹³ Fallows, 53-74. Fallows outlines some of the project's recommendations, later largely discarded by higher-ups, and argues that they proved prophetic.
- ⁹⁴ Rieff, *David*. "Blueprint for a Mess." *New York Times Magazine* 2 Nov. 2003: 28.
- ⁹⁵ Fallows, 53-74.
- ⁹⁶ See Fallows, Rieff and Fineman *et. al.*
- ⁹⁷ State Department official Thomas Warrick directed the Future of Iraq Project. "According to associates, he explained the importance of preparing for war by saying, 'I'm nervous that they're actually going to do it—and the day after they'll turn to us and ask, "Now what?"'" *ibid.*, 53-74.
- ⁹⁸ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 129. It is unclear how much NSC debate the "preemption" doctrine garnered.
- ⁹⁹ Bush, George W. Speech at West Point Military Academy, New York. 1 June 2002. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁰⁰ "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." *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Marcus, Jonathan. "Pre-emption - new US policy on Iraq." BBC News. 17 June 2002. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/2049872.stm>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

¹⁰² Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 135.

¹⁰³ Franks's order came at a June 27 and 28 meeting in Germany. *ibid.*, 136.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 136-137.

¹⁰⁵ Woodward writes: "Congress, which is supposed to control the purse strings, had no real knowledge or involvement, had not even been notified that the Pentagon wanted to reprogram money." *ibid.*, 137. The White House disputed Woodward's account. See Stevenson, Richard W. and Carl Hulse. "Bush Officials Deny Money Was Diverted for Iraq War." *New York Times* 20 Apr. 2004: A9.

¹⁰⁶ Purdum, 102.

¹⁰⁷ See Fallows, 53-74.

¹⁰⁸ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 141.

¹⁰⁹ As one PUK man told the CIA base chief on the ground: "George Bush decides not to do this, we're going to be left out there and all our relatives are going to get killed and all of our followers. If there's any revelation that we're helping you, all our followers are going to get massacred." *ibid.*, 210.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, 208-209.

¹¹¹ Lemann. Haass gives a similar account in Kessler, A01.

¹¹² For details on the Hybrid Plan, see Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 146.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, 153.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, 149. Powell had been meeting with Bush and Rice once a week for 20 to 30 minutes since late spring of 2002, but Powell had not laid out his concerns about Iraq. Rumsfeld started meeting privately with Bush early in 2002, before Powell requested his time. Woodward, *Bush at War*, 330-331.

¹¹⁵ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 332.

¹¹⁶ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 150-151; Woodward, *Bush at War*, 332-333.

¹¹⁷ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 333.

¹¹⁸ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 151. Again, the wording is revealing: "You *can still*"—as if this was all Bush was capable of doing—"make a pitch for a coalition or U.N. action to do *what needs to be done*."

¹¹⁹ Powell truly did seem to think war was unwise even if the administration went the U.N. route. Woodward, with few qualifications, depicts Powell as clearly against war. When Brent Scowcroft, national security advisor in the first Bush administration, wrote an August 15 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed entitled "Don't Attack Saddam," Powell phoned Scowcroft to thank him. Rice phoned Scowcroft to express displeasure. See *ibid.*, 160. In his meeting with Bush, Powell might have justified his restraint by the realization that the administration was too far invested to turn back.

¹²⁰ Powell, Woodward claims, was "not sure that the president had fully taken aboard the meaning, the consequences of going to war." *ibid.*, 152. Rice, who also attended the dinner, similarly underappreciated the force of Powell's argument. She congratulated Powell for being "terrific" and told Woodward that the headline of the meeting was, "Powell Makes Case for Coalition as Only Way to Assure Success." But in view of the many troubles Powell said war could bring, a coalition would not, in Powell's view, absolutely assure success. *ibid.*, 151.

¹²¹ Lemann.

¹²² Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 154-155.

¹²³ *ibid.*, 161; Woodward, *Bush at War*, 336.

¹²⁴ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 156-157.

¹²⁵ Newhouse, John. *Imperial America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. 45. Cheney did bring up the speech to Bush: "[Cheney] mentioned to Bush that he planned to give a speech on Iraq, and the president contributed a few suggestions, officials recounted. Then, the day before the speech, Cheney laconically mentioned that the speech would be 'pretty tough.' 'Tough?' Bush asked. 'Yep,' Cheney said. 'Okay,' Bush replied." Kessler, Glenn and Peter Slevin. "Cheney is Fulcrum of Foreign Policy." *Washington Post* 13 Oct. 2002: A01. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A18257-2002Oct12?language=printer>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

- ¹²⁶ Cheney, Dick. Speech at Veterans of Foreign Wars 103rd National Convention, Nashville. 26 Aug. 2002. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹²⁷ See Newhouse, 45; Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 164.
- ¹²⁸ Newhouse, 45. Furthermore, “in capitals around the world, the vice president’s words seemed certain and dramatic proof that Washington was determined to go to war—alone if necessary.” Purdum, 43.
- ¹²⁹ King, John. “U.S. cool to Schroeder’s victory.” CNN/Inside Politics. 24 Sept. 2002. <<http://www.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/09/23/wh.germany/>>.
- ¹³⁰ See Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 169, 187.
- ¹³¹ The House vote was 296 to 133, Senate vote 77 to 23.
- ¹³² H.J.Res.114. Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002. 107th Congress. 10 Oct. 2002. <<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c107:7:./temp/~c107GzdFvn::>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹³³ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 175-176, 182.
- ¹³⁴ *ibid.*, 183.
- ¹³⁵ *ibid.*, 184.
- ¹³⁶ Bush, George. Speech at United Nations General Assembly, New York. 12 Sept. 2002. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹³⁷ Before Europeans could become euphoric, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said: “This is a tactical step by Iraq in hopes of avoiding strong UN Security Council action. As such, it is a tactic that will fail.” Quoted in Purdum, 48.
- ¹³⁸ Purdum, 48.
- ¹³⁹ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. National Security Council. 17 Sept. 2002: 15. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁴⁰ “Ottawa not comfortable with U.S. ‘strike first’ policy.” CBC News. 24 Sept. 2002. <<http://www.cbc.ca/stories/2002/09/23/strikefirst020923>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁴¹ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 195.
- ¹⁴² *ibid.*, 197.
- ¹⁴³ The order came in on November 26 and allowed for war to start in January, February or March. Already, 60,000 military personnel were outside Iraq, including two Army armored brigades in Kuwait. *ibid.*, 231-232.
- ¹⁴⁴ The full warning was, “Iraq could successfully best the US. in public relations and persuade the world that it was a war against Muslims.” *ibid.*, 206.
- ¹⁴⁵ “Views of a Changing World 2003.” Pew Global Attitudes Survey. 3 June 2003. <<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=185>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁴⁶ Record, Jeffrey. *Bounding the Global War on Terrorism*. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College. Dec. 2003. 22. <<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/2003/bounding/bounding.htm>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁴⁷ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 209.
- ¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 241-242.
- ¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 234.
- ¹⁵⁰ Fleischer, Ari. White House press briefing. 2 Dec. 2002. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/12/20021202-6.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁵¹ Coates, David and Joel Krieger. *Blair’s War*. Cambridge: Polity, 2004. 38.
- ¹⁵² Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 254.
- ¹⁵³ *ibid.*, 256.
- ¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 261-261.
- ¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 270-271.
- ¹⁵⁶ Kessler, A01.
- ¹⁵⁷ Preston, Julia. “Threats and Responses: Diplomacy.” *New York Times* 21 Jan. 2003: A1.
- ¹⁵⁸ Watson, Roland. “Rumsfeld seeks to isolate ‘old Europe’ opponents.” *The Times* 24 Jan. 2003: 20.

¹⁵⁹ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 297.

¹⁶⁰ Purdum, 101-102; Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 324-325.

¹⁶¹ "Operation IRAQI FREEDOM Strategic Lessons Learned (SNF)." Joint Chiefs staff report. Unclassified. 29 Aug. 2003. 5. In Scarborough, Rowan. *Rumsfeld's War*. Washington: Pegasus, 2004. 176.

¹⁶² Fallows, 53-74.

¹⁶³ Fineman et. al., *AI*.

¹⁶⁴ Fallows, 53-74.

¹⁶⁵ Fineman et. al., *AI*.

¹⁶⁶ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 342.

¹⁶⁷ Hider, James and Richard Beeston. "US general blames political war for early failure in Iraq." *The Times* 27 Nov. 2003: 23.

¹⁶⁸ "Operation IRAQI FREEDOM Strategic Lessons Learned (SNF)," 12. In Scarborough, 178.

¹⁶⁹ Bush, George W. "President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours." Speech at Cross Hall. 17 Mar. 2003. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁷¹ DiIulio wrote: "There were, truth be told, only a couple of people in the West Wing who worried at all about policy substance and analysis, and they were even more overworked than the stereotypical, non-stop, 20-hour-a-day White House staff. Every modern presidency moves on the fly, but, on social policy and related issues, the lack of even basic policy knowledge, and the only casual interest in knowing more, was somewhat breathtaking—discussions by fairly senior people who meant Medicaid but were talking Medicare; near-instant shifts from discussing any actual policy pros and cons to discussing political communications, media strategy, et cetera." DiIulio, John. Letter to Ron Suskind. *Esquire* 24 Oct. 2002. <http://www.esquire.com/features/articles/2002/021202_mfe_diulio_1.html>. Cited 17 May 2004.

¹⁷² "Bush Sought 'Way' To Invade Iraq?" *60 Minutes*. CBS News. 11 Jan. 2004. <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/01/09/60minutes/main592330.shtml>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

¹⁷³ Clarke, 244.

¹⁷⁴ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 414.

¹⁷⁵ Clarke writes: "The problem was that many of the important issues, like terrorism, like Iraq, were laced with important subtlety and nuance. These issues needed analysis, and Bush and his inner circle had no real interest in complicated analyses; on the issues they cared about, they already knew the answers, it was received wisdom." 243.

¹⁷⁶ Ninkovich, Frank. *The Wilsonian Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. 10.

¹⁷⁷ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 46.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 196.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 249.

¹⁸⁰ Bush, George. Statement with National Security Team in Cabinet Room. 12 Sept. 2001. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010912-6.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

¹⁸¹ "In targeting this place, then, and those who worked here, the attackers, the evildoers correctly sensed that the opposite of all they were, and stood for, resided here." Rumsfeld, Donald. Speech at memorial service at the Pentagon. 11 Oct. 2001. <<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2001/s20011011-secdef.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

¹⁸² Rice said on BBC radio: "This is an evil man who, left to his own devices, will wreak havoc again on his own population, his neighbors and, if he gets weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them, all of us. [It] is a very powerful moral case for regime change." Associated Press. "Rice: Saddam is an 'evil man.'" *USA Today* 15 Aug. 2002. <http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2002-08-15-rice-saddam_x.htm>. Cited 17 May 2004.

¹⁸³ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 340.

¹⁸⁴ Bush, George. Speech to Joint Session of Congress. 20 Sept. 2001. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.

- ¹⁸⁵ “Excerpts From Interview With President Bush.” ABC News. 16 Dec. 2003. <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/primetime/US/bush_sawyer_excerpts_2_031216.html>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁸⁶ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 172.
- ¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 205.
- ¹⁸⁸ Bush, George. Speech at National Cathedral, Washington, D.C. 14 Sept. 2001. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010914-2.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁸⁹ “World leaders express outrage.” *The Guardian Unlimited* 11 Sept. 2001. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/story/0,1300,550229,00.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*
- ¹⁹¹ Williams, Carol J. “Global Leaders Condemn ‘New Evil.’” *Los Angeles Times* 12 Sept. 2001. <<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-091201world.story>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁹² Blair, Tony. Statement on September 11 terrorist attacks. 11 Sept. 2001. <<http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1596.asp>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ¹⁹³ Interview between Tony Blair and Larry King. 6 Nov. 2001. Quoted in Coates and Krieger, 44.
- ¹⁹⁴ Coates and Krieger, 127.
- ¹⁹⁵ The point is corroborated by a senior minister’s explanation of Blair’s strategy: “It was the same pact as with Afghanistan. Go down the UN route however skeptical you may be about it. Give Saddam a final opportunity. If he fails to take it, we’re with you.” Quoted in Kearney, Martha. “Blair’s Gamble.” *The Battle for Iraq: BBC News Correspondents on the War against Saddam*. Eds. Sara Beck and Malcolm Downing. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. 82.
- ¹⁹⁶ For example, Johnson told Richard Russell on March 6, 1965: “A man can fight if he can see the daylight down the road, somewhere. But there ain’t no daylight in Vietnam.” Quoted in Mann, Robert. *A Grand Delusion: America’s Descent into Vietnam*. New York: Basic Books, 2002. 416.
- ¹⁹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 420.
- ¹⁹⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 9.
- ¹⁹⁹ Bush, George W. State of the Union address. 28 Jan. 2003. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>>. Cited 17 May 2004.
- ²⁰⁰ Mann, 372.
- ²⁰¹ *ibid.*, 394.
- ²⁰² Bundy to Johnson. Re: Senator Morse, Vietnam, and the UN. 24 June 1965. In *Lyndon B. Johnson’s Vietnam Papers*. Ed. David M. Barrett. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998. 180.
- ²⁰³ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 151.
- ²⁰⁴ Mann, 369.