RESEARCH ARTICLE

Why was Iraq Invaded in 2003?

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This research seeks to provide an analysis of why the invasion of Iraq occurred in 2003. War is not an event that emerges in isolation; therefore this research will provide an examination of the historical animosity that existed between Iraq and the US starting with the Gulf War due to the familial connection between Bush presidents. The research will also provide analysis of the changes to the international environment in the late 20th Century and early 21st Century that contributed to the emergence of a permissive environment that increased the likelihood of this war occurring. Finally, due to their predominance in the Bush Jnr Administration the research will centre on the neoconservatives of the Project for the New American Century. It will analyse their ideology and their exploitation of the permissive environment created by the war on terror and their positions of authority within the Bush administration to fulfil their vendetta against Saddam Hussein. This research argues that the neoconservatives were able to take advantage of the opportunities that emerged within the international system to convince the President, Congress and a significant section of the public to support the intervention in Iraq.

Introduction

On the 20th of March 2003 a small coalition led by the United States of America began a 'sustained air bombardment' (Coates and Krieger, 2004, p. 1) against Iraq. The following day saw the deployment of their ground forces (Coates and Krieger, 2004, p. 1). The purpose of this invasion was to enact a regime change in Iraq (Finlan, 2009, p. 139) due to President Saddam Hussein's alleged possession of WMDs, atrocious record on human rights and dubious links to terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda. This regime change was accomplished in April 2003 when the Ba'athist regime of Saddam was overthrown (Ende and Steinbach, 2010, p. 501) leading President Bush to declare that 'major combat operations in Iraq have ended' in May 2003 (Bush, 2003). Saddam was captured in December 2003 (BBC, 2003) and was executed three years later when the US 'transferred custody of Hussein to the Iraqi National Police' (Bassiouni, 2008, p. 315). It has been estimated that by 2014 the US had spent $3 trillion on this war and lost the lives of '4000 service personnel' and their coalition partner Great Britain lost almost 200 soldiers (Finlan, 2014, p. 101). There is further evidence that close to 160,000 Iraqis have died as a consequence of this war (Finlan, 2014, p. 101). The 'vast majority' of these deaths 'happened after major combat activities' had ended (Finlan, 2009, p. 139). The invasion of Iraq undertaken as phase two of the war on terror has arguably created more instability within the region including the occupation of

'city after city in northern Iraq, most notably Mosul' by Daesh (Hobbs, 2016, p. 263).

Even before these events unfolded the international community was highly critical of the US led invasion. The US led coalition failed to gain the approval of the UN Security Council for the invasion and placed many of their traditional allies in 'clear opposition' to this decision (Bell and Coicaud, 2006, p. 99). The purpose of this research is to determine why the political elites of the US were persuaded to undertake unilateral action in Iraq and what events occurred in the international system that enabled them to do so.

The first section of this article will focus on the rising tensions between Iraq and the US stemming from the end of the 1991 Gulf War and the ensuing policy of containment. This war also established a personal dimension to the latter conflict, as the resulting assassination attempt on the life of Bush Senior would arguably have an effect on the future President Bush. This section will deliver a historical narrative of the events that occurred during this period; providing an analysis of how these events contributed to the feelings of hostility between these two nations, especially in regards to Saddam's brinkmanship and how operation Desert Fox established a precedent for the US to undertake unilateral action.

Section two will concentrate on the changes to the international environment in the late 20th century and early 21st century that created the permissive environment that would enable the US to undertake unilateral action against Iraq. This section focuses on the emergence of US unipolarity at the end of the Cold War; the case for humanitarian intervention established by the conflict

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in Kosovo and how the tools of globalization were used against the US on the 11th September 2001 resulting in the war on terror which is arguably one of the key reasons that the invasion occurred.

The third section is predominantly concerned with the neoconservative ideology of the Project for the New American Century and how certain members of this think-tank were granted positions of authority within the Bush administration, which enabled them to pursue regime change in Iraq. This section details how the early successes in Afghanistan in 2001 created a further permissive environment for the pursuit of their agenda and how the neocons were able to reframe the war on terror to position Saddam as a target in this conflict due to an alleged possession of WMDs. Finally, this section will deal with the supposed failure of the intelligence community and how the neocons 'cherry picked' and doctored intelligence assessments to convince Congress and the President to support their vendetta against Saddam.

The final section will provide a final summary of the findings within this research concluding that the emergence of a permissive environment and the appointment of individuals with hostile intent towards Saddam into positions of authority enable them to take advantage of opportunities in the international system.

Section One: The Gulf War and Containment

Carl von Clausewitz asserted that in reality 'war is never an isolated act [that] is in no way connected with the previous history of the combatant States' (Clausewitz, 2005, pp. 12–13). This assessment holds true in regards to the United States' decision to invade Iraq in 2003. The two nations shared a contentious history stemming from the 1991 Gulf War (Ricks, 2006, p. 4) and the ensuing US policy of 'containment', which lasted over a decade and even into the first year of the presidency of George W. Bush (Ricks, 2006, p. 12). 'Army Reserve Major Michael Eisenstadt, an intelligence officer' and 'expert on Middle Eastern Security issues' (Ricks, 2006, pp. 4–5) argued that to understand Operation Iraqi Freedom it is necessary to have an understanding of the end of the 1991 Gulf War and the resulting 'distrust of Americans' (Ricks, 2006, pp. 4–5).

The Gulf War

The Gulf War started on the 2nd August 1990, when the Iraqi military invaded and occupied Kuwait (Lewis, 2003, p. 481). US military involvement in this conflict began on the 17th January 1991, with an air campaign that would last for thirty-eight days (Lewis, 2003, p. 481). Unlike the 2003 invasion, the US enjoyed 'unprecedented international support' (Payne, 1995, p. 93) for the intervention in Kuwait including the adoption of Resolution 678 by the UN Security Council, which authorized the use of force to liberate Kuwait (Dean, 2003, p. 457). This resolution was the first issued by the UN since 1950 that permitted the use of force (Dean, 2003, p. 457).

Though the US was successful in liberating Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, Thomas Ricks argues that the fighting was ended 'prematurely and sloppily, without due consideration' towards the 'end state' the Bush administration 'wished to achieve' (Ricks, 2006, p. 5). President Bush gave a speech in February 1991, inciting the Iraqi population to rise up and overthrow Saddam themselves. Furthermore the US Air Force dropped leaflets urging Iraqi military units to rebel. These efforts successfully persuaded 'Iraqi army units in Basra' to rebel on the 1st March (Ricks, 2006, p. 5). These defections were unsurprising as the Iraqi army of almost one million 'contained substantial anti-government elements' (Goldstein et al., 1992, p. 31). The soldiers' rebellion in Basra soon spread to the Shia dominated cities of southern Iraq and on the 4th March the Kurds of northern Iraq began their own uprising in Rania, which spread 'throughout Iraqi Kurdistan' (Westermeyer, 2014, p. 219).

The Shia and Kurdish Rebellions

The rebels were 'inexperienced' and ill equipped; armed 'with little more than Kalashnikovs, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, and a few captured tanks and artillery pieces' (Goldstein et al., 1992, p. 31). The Republican Guard and the majority of the Iraqi military remained loyal to Saddam and responded 'fiercely and effectively' to the 'insurrection in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces' (Westermeyer, 2014, p. 219). The loyalists made extensive use of artillery bombardment and helicopters, which the Iraqi military had secured the right to utilize within Iraq further to the Safwan Accords (Westermeyer, 2014, p. 219), a ceasefire agreement between Iraq and the coalition forces signed on the 3rd March (Carrington, 2002, p. 85). These armed helicopters 'proved to be the decisive weapon against' the rebels (Fishel, 1997, p. 158). According to the Iraq Survey Group, 12 to 32 Sarin gas bombs were dropped from Mi-8 helicopters against the Shiites, however these R-400 bombs malfunctioned resulting in the dropping of 200 tear gas bombs instead (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 75). The rebels were left 'almost defenseless against' the 'helicopter gunships and indiscriminate mortar and artillery barrages' due to their extremely limited number of anti-tank weapons and surface-to-air missiles (Goldstein et al., 1992, p. 31). 'Massive foreign assistance or intervention could have saved [the rebels]' (Goldstein et al., 1992, p. 31), however, the US military provided no support to the Shiites rebelling in southern Iraq or the Kurds in the north during their uprisings. This inaction resulted in the deaths of an estimated 20,000 Shiites and the exodus of tens of thousands of Kurds to 'the mountains of Turkey, where they began to die of exposure' (Ricks, 2006, p. 5). The defeated Kurds chose to flee due to a fear of chemical attack from Saddam's forces; which they had previously experienced in 1988 (Haulman, 2000, p. 180) during the Halabjah attack where an estimated 5000 Kurds died (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 75).

Operation Provide Comfort and the No-Fly Zones

Initially, the humanitarian crisis facing the Kurds was dealt with by the Turkish and international relief agencies (Rudd, 2004, p. 3) such as the British Red Cross and Save the Children Fund (BMJ, 1991, p. 983). However, the magnitude of the task soon overwhelmed them due to an

insufficiency of supplies and aid (Rudd, 2004, p. 3). The growing crisis prompted the US, Britain and France (BMJ, 1991, p. 983) to turn to their 'military services to deal with the crisis' (Rudd, 2004, p. 3). On the 5th April the UN passed 'Resolution 688 condemning Iraqi repression of its people; Baghdad's actions, it stated, threatened international peace and justified international action' (Rudd, 2004, p. 42). On the same day, "after several calls from British and French leaders" (Rudd, 2004, p. 42), the US leadership decided to take action. The coalition's undertaking, designated Operation Provide Comfort, 'began somewhat haphazardly, without clear strategic goals' (Ricks, 2006, p. 8). The plan was to keep the Iraqi Kurds alive and started with the air-dropping of supplies to the refugees for ten days. On the 7th April President Bush directed that no Iraqi aircraft should fly north of the 36th parallel (Rudd, 2004, p. 45). The establishment of this no-fly zone by the U.S, Britain and France (The Committee Office and House of Commons, 2000) was to ensure the success of their humanitarian mission. As the plan evolved the U.S wanted to establish tent camps to house the Kurds but the UN advised against this action fearing that establishing refugee camps in Turkey would create a similar situation to the Palestinian camps in Lebanon (Ricks, 2006, p. 8). Heeding this advice President Bush issued a directive on the 15th April that American ground forces were to enter northern Iraq from Turkey, thereby shifting the parameters of the operation from one of "humanitarian assistance to humanitarian intervention" (Rudd, 2004, p. 107). These forces were utilised to create a space for the Kurds in Iraq, though ultimately the US decided to push back the Iraqi military to allow the Kurds to return to their homes (Ricks, 2006, pp. 8–9). Anthony Zinni, the chief of staff of Operation Provide Comfort, would later comment that after carving 'out that area in the north' for the Kurds it became clear that the US had an 'open-ended commitment to protect them in that environment' (Ricks, 2006, p. 9). Operation Provide Comfort is an important cause of the 2003 invasion of Iraq as it ensured that the US maintained a long-term military commitment in Iraq through the creation of the first no-fly zone. A second no-fly zone was established in Southern Iraq on the 27th August 1992 'dubbed' Operation Southern Watch (Brattebo, 2006, p. 211). This no-fly zone was established south of the 32nd parallel to protect the Shia population (The Committee Office and House of Commons, 2000). Due to incursions by Iraqi forces in September 1996 the southern no-fly zone was expanded northwards to the 33rd parallel covering roughly a third of the territory of Iraq (The Committee Office and House of Commons, 2000). These no-fly zones became cornerstones of the containment policy, which ensured a long-term military commitment in Iraq and the surrounding area by the United States and its allies.

The Containment Policy

The containment policy spanned over a decade and operated under the tenure of Presidents Bush, Clinton and George W. Bush, though the policy was heavily associated with General Zinni (Ricks, 2006, p. 12) who became Commander-in-Chief of the US Central Command, CENTCOM, in 1997 (Sweeney and Byrne, 2006, p. 344). The policy was comprised of three core principles: the disarming and dismantling of Iraq's WMD programs through UN inspections, economic sanctions to prevent Saddam from rebuilding both his conventional and WMD forces and the 'continued readiness to use military force to enforce the no-fly zones and to punish Iraqi intransigence if necessary' (Ritchie and Rogers, 2006, pp. 25–26).

The success of the containment policy relied on the support of the international community. Byman and Waxman argue that without international support the sanctions placed on Iraq would have 'little or no impact' and assert that UN inspections 'require the support of the Security Council' (2000, p. 34). International support for the containment policy began to wane during the Clinton years. Key European allies, most notably France, sought to reestablish 'economic ties with Iraq' (Lansford, 2006, p. 152) undermining the potential of the sanctions imposed upon Saddam. The US was unable to maintain the support of 'key Arab states' (Lansford, 2006, p. 152) as the perception by these states regarding Iraq as a security threat diminished.

This dwindling international support caused the US to shoulder an 'ever-increasing share of the cost of containment with only the UK providing significant resources and assets' (Lansford, 2006, p. 152). Estimates of the costs of containment vary wildly. Thomas E. Ricks and Anthony H. Cordesman estimate that maintaining the no-fly zones cost $1 billion annually (Cordesman, 2002, p. 14), though Ricks includes other military operations increasing his estimate to $1.5 billion (Ricks, 2006, p. 15). However, Davis, Murphy and Topel estimate that the 'Annual Labour Cost' of 'Military Personnel in Theatre' was $6.37 billion (2006, p. 76) though this figure includes Army and Naval personnel. Using the figures they provide the 'Annual Labour Cost' of Air Force personnel can be calculated at $1.91 billion. The Annual Labour Cost of Air Force personnel when combined with the 'Annual Capital Cost' for Aircraft, $1.46 billion (Davis et al., 2006, p. 76), gives a total cost of $3.37 billion in terms of airpower expenditure. They also provide a second method of cost calculation, which places the 'Total Cost' for Air Force personnel at $6.21 billion (Davis et al., 2006 p. 76). If these costs remained static for the 12 years of the no-fly zones, the US would have spent $12 billion, $18 billion, $40.4 billion or $74.5 billion. In retrospect, even the highest estimation for air power expenditure over 12 years is relatively cheap compared to the $60 billion price of occupying Iraq in 2003–2004 which rose to $70 billion for 2005 (Ricks, 2006, p. 15). However, it would be unfair to judge the critics of containment such as Paul Wolfowitz, who believed the policy was 'very costly' (Ricks, 2006, p. 17) based on hindsight because nobody at that time would have predicted the War on Terror or its cost. Wolfowitz' discontent with the containment policy was further augmented by the suffering of the Iraqi people 'under a contained Saddam' (Ricks, 2006, p. 17); a concern he shared with General Zinni who himself believed that the sanctions in place should be modified to focus on

limiting Saddam's military capacity while lifting the economic sanctions which caused 'unnecessary suffering' (Ricks, 2006, p. 17) for the Iraqi people. Furthermore, Saddam's minimal co-operation with UN inspectors, which resulted in their withdrawal in December 1998 (Coates and Krieger, 2004, pp. 13–14), led containment critics to believe the policy was failing.

Operation Desert Fox

The withdrawal of UN inspectors in 1998 provoked a significant response from the Clinton Administration and Blair government (Coates and Krieger, 2004, pp. 14–15). On the 16th December the US and Britain undertook a four-day-long bombing campaign which would become known as Operation Desert Fox (Ricks, 2006, pp. 18–19). Over the four days of action 415 cruise missiles were fired from Navy ships and Air Force B-52 bombers. B-1 supersonic bombers made their debut in combat operations and over 600 bombs were dropped (Ricks, 2006, p. 19). The strikes hit 97 sites including facilities designed to produce and house chemical weapons, others associated with the missile delivery systems of these weapons, command-and-control facilities related to intelligence and secret police headquarters (Ricks, 2006, p. 19).

The Desert Fox strikes undermined Saddam's power, inspiring a group of seven Sunni military officials to plan a coup and Shia Grand Ayatollah Sadqi al-Sadr began inciting subtle forms of defiance in his sermons, which 'attracted tens of thousands of disaffected Shi'ah' (Pollack, 2003, p. 93). Saddam 'fearing his control was threatened' ordered vast numbers of arrests and executions, including the killing of al-Sadr and his two sons, which sparked nationwide rioting and a revival of the Shia insurgency in southern Iraq, though Saddam was able to quash all these perceived threats to his power (Pollack, 2003, p. 93). Furthermore, David Kay, initially sceptical about the effects of Desert Fox (like many in the US), discovered while heading the Iraq Survey Group, ISG, that the campaign 'had a devastating effect, far more than had been appreciated back in Washington' (Ricks, 2006, pp. 20–21). Veterans of the Iraqi weapons programs informed the ISG in postwar interrogations that Desert Fox had left them 'demoralized and despairing', realizing that they would never be able to reestablish the production or the facilities required for Iraq's weapons programmes (Ricks, 2006, p. 21). The chairman of Iraq's atomic industry upon his surrender to US Army Colonel Alan King revealed that Saddam had destroyed most of his WMD programme after the revelations made by his son-in-law regarding the programme when he defected to Jordan in 1995. He informed King that not only had Desert Fox destroyed the remaining manufacturing capacity but that Saddam had executed 'the head of an Iraqi delegation to Russia' in the late 1990s because he claimed he would be able to obtain a nuclear warhead and Saddam was afraid of the US learning of this deal (Ricks, 2006, p. 21). The lack of American HUMINT in Iraq prevented the US from discovering the situation in Iraq until after the 2003 invasion (Ricks, 2006, p. 22).

Despite the success of Desert Fox, Saddam continued to challenge Washington and 'pressed the Revolutionary Command Council to adopt a secret resolution severing all forms of cooperation with the United Nations' (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, pp. 75–76) resulting in the UN inspectors not being invited back. Saddam's continuing defiance stemmed from his belief that the US would not invade Iraq without a coalition, like the one formed in the Gulf War (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 76). His belief that a coalition was unlikely to form was unsurprising due to the reaction of the international community and its heavy criticism of America's use of force (Frederking, 2007, p. 117). The US had not sought authorization from the UN Security Council to undertake Desert Fox and incurred harsh criticism from the permanent UN Security Council members France, China and Russia. The French asserted that US unilateral action undermined the international community and that they did not believe that Iraq possessed substantial stocks of nuclear, chemical or biological weaponry. China condemned the action as 'groundless and unprovoked' and Russia recalled its ambassador from Washington. President Yeltsin stated that 'no state can act independently on behalf of the UN as the world's policeman' and the Russian ambassador to the UN stated that 'the Security Council is in charge and the Security Council is in favour of a political settlement of international crisis' (Frederking, 2007, p. 117). These strong condemnations demonstrated to Saddam that his defiance undermined the US in the eyes of the international community and reduced the likelihood of a coalition forming to remove him from power. However, Saddam failed to recognize the new precedent set by Clinton and Blair, that these nations would undertake unilateral military action without the backing of the Security Council. Saddam's continuing defiance arguably led Richard Perle to claim in 2003 that the Clinton Administration had 'allowed Saddam over eight years to grow in strength' and that Saddam 'was far stronger at the end of Clinton's tenure than at the beginning' (Ricks, 2006, p. 20). The lack of intelligence regarding the success of containment and Saddam's persistent defiance contributed to the scepticism shared by figures such as Perle and Kay. The continuing perception that Saddam posed a threat and the precedent established by Desert Fox for the US and Britain to act unilaterally against him arguably contributed to the decision to invade in 2003.

Saddam the Matador

Thomas Ricks describes the implementation of the containment policy as a 'series of limited steps', comparable to 'slowly heating a warm bath' (Ricks, 2006, p. 13). This slow implementation enabled Saddam's regime to adapt to these changes allowing it to survive and frustrate the US for over a decade. Throughout this time Saddam faced sanctions and oversaw the dismantling and destruction of his chemical, biological (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 74) and nuclear programmes (Ricks, 2006, p. 21).

Saddam's refusal to reveal to the international community that his regime no longer possessed WMDs

was due to the deterrent value of these weapons (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 74). He maintained an ambiguity regarding the possession of these weapons to create "deterrence by doubt" (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 74). Deterrence frightens hostile states from carrying out an attack, as the reprisal for such an attack is so costly that it cancels out the potential gains to be made from an attack (Sagan and Waltz, 2012, p. 5). Saddam had demonstrated a willingness to use chemical weapons against his adversaries such as his attack on the Kurds in Halabjah and during Iraq's war with Iran in which '101,000 chemical rounds and bombs' were used 'against Iranian ground forces' (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 74). Saddam was willing to maintain the air of mystery regarding 'whether he might have a hidden cache of WMD' as he believed it deterred Iran from conducting an attack to take advantage of the weakness of the Iraqi army (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 74). Saddam also saw the deterrent value of these weapons domestically using them to frighten 'rebellious groups' within his borders (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 75). Furthermore, he mistakenly believed the threat of chemical weapons had deterred the US from marching 'on Baghdad during the Gulf War' (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, pp. 74–75). The confidence deterrence gave Saddam coupled with the diminishing support for US sanctions and military action against him caused Saddam to engage in brinkmanship (Pilat and Busch, 2015, p. 230). He continued to defy the US in an attempt to undermine them in the eyes of the international community. He sought to achieve this by provoking military responses through minimal co-operation with UN weapons inspectors and even an attempt on the life of former President George H. Bush in 1993, which the US argued constituted a 'direct attack on the United States' (Byers, 2006, p. 54). This assassination attempt would take on a greater significance when Bush's son George W. Bush became President as it resulted in a personal animosity between Bush Junior and Saddam (Shareef, 2014, p. 68).

Saddam's brinkmanship and deterrence by doubt is different from the 'nuclear Chicken game' (Amadae, 2016, p. 82) that was played by the US and USSR during the Cold War. Saddam's interaction with the USA during containment is more comparable to Bull Fighting. The US is the bull in this scenario as its ability to inflict physical damage is vastly superior to that of the matador. As the matador, Saddam constantly waves a red flag at the US enraging it and provoking responses, which cause the crowd, the international community, to support the bull less and less. Saddam's disadvantage as the matador stems from not only his physical inferiority but also the fact that behind the red flag he didn't hold a sabre or even dagger that could fatally wound his adversary. The bull was unable to determine what lay behind the red flag waved in its direction including the potential absence of a weapon, making the matador appear an easy target. The constant frustration facing the bull was caused not only by the matador but the restriction on its movement by the chain of the UN Security Council. Eventually, the bull broke free of this chain in 1998 by undertaking unilateral action in Desert Fox. The matador failed to see the significance of this action and continued to frustrate his adversary. Without constraints, the bull was able to gore the matador in 2003 when the decision was made to invade Iraq. The rising tension, antagonism and personal grievances generated by Saddam's brinkmanship throughout the years of containment increased the likelihood of war between these nations. The lack of clarity surrounding Saddam's WMD programme further increased the chances of war as noncompliance with the UN was to be punished and the potential that he did not possess these weapons or a strong military made Saddam a target that could be easily defeated (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 150).

Conclusion

The US government's belief that Saddam's 'fall was inevitable' and the failure of their armed forces to accomplish the objective of destroying the Republican Guard (Ricks, 2006, pp. 5–6) enabled Saddam to crush the rebellion, incited but unsupported by the United States, allowing him to portray 'himself as an undefeated Arab leader who dared challenge the West' (Harrison, 2010, p. 101). Carl von Clausewitz' assertion is that the aim of war is to 'disarm the enemy' (Clausewitz, 2005, p. 9). However, the failure of the US to destroy the Republican Guard and the Safwan ceasefire arguably demonstrate that Saddam was not truly defeated as he was able to maintain his position and hold over Iraq and continue to defy the US. The outcome of this war and the ensuing rebellion caused Saddam to feel undefeated. The diminished international support for economic sanctions in the post war period and UN Security Council members' (China, Russia and France) opposition to the use of force to assure his compliance with Resolution 687 'emboldened' Saddam to defy UN weapons inspectors and engage in brinkmanship (Pilat and Busch, 2015, p. 230). Saddam also held the mistaken belief that the threat of chemical weapons had deterred the US from marching upon Baghdad during the conflict (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, pp. 74–75). The risky brinkmanship Saddam would engage in on the international stage, his misguided belief in the deterrent properties of chemical weapons and his non-compliance with UN weapons inspectors due to his regime's survival of the Gulf War would play a role in the prolonged antagonism between Iraq and the US. This antagonism coupled with the potential that he did not possess such weapons made Saddam an attractive target for the second Bush Administration and contributed to the decision to invade Iraq in 2003. Furthermore, the long-term commitment of the US in maintaining the containment policy is arguably what Clausewitz deems 'a continuance of action' which 'will advance towards a climax' (Clausewitz, 2005, p. 21). Arguably, the maintenance of the no-fly zone, military actions such as Desert Fox and Saddam's attempted assassination of George Bush Senior constituted an 'unbroken continuity of hostile operations' (Clausewitz, 2005, p. 21), which advanced towards the climax that was the 2003 invasion.

Section Two: The Changing World

In the final years of the 20th Century and the early years of the 21st Century the world was rocked by a series of profound changes that reshaped the international environment that states had become accustomed to in the latter half of the 20th Century. In July 1991 Presidents Bush and Gorbachev declared that the Cold War was over (Lansford, 2007, p. 43), establishing a unipolar world in which the US was the sole superpower (Hansen et al., 2008, p. 2) enabling them to undertake unilateral action such as Desert Fox in 1998. Also in 1999 NATO intervened in Kosovo on the grounds of a humanitarian intervention (Breau, 2016, p. 16). The effects of globalisation became more pronounced with the emergence of revolutionary communication technology such as the Internet. Furthermore, cheap air travel enabled more people to have physical access to other countries (Kofman and Youngs, 2008, p. 77). The access to air travel enabled a relatively unknown group of people to carry out the most devastating attack on US soil since Pearl Harbour. The attack on the 11th September 2001 was an event, which would lead the Bush Administration to declare a war on terror (Finlan, 2014, pp. 25–29). These changes had a profound effect on the international system, generating both motive and permissive conditions for the US and its allies to invade Iraq in 2003.

The rise of US unipolarity and the foundations of Cold War blowback

One of the most surprising events to take place at the end of the 20th Century was the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. Throughout the latter half of the century the US and USSR shaped the international system by vying for global power and influence with each seeking to undermine the other's prestige and power through the use of propaganda and proxy wars (McMahon and Zeiler, 2012, p. 476). The proxy wars that characterized this period were undertaken due to the catastrophic consequences that direct confrontation between these two superpowers would entail. Both the US and USSR possessed vast nuclear arsenals and so the policy of Mutually Assured Destruction, MAD, was adopted. This policy operated under the premise that if these nations were to attack one another, the response of the victim would inflict such great damage that both sides would be destroyed (Painter, 2002, p. 58). The threat of nuclear holocaust was enough for these nations competing for international dominance to avoid direct confrontation. The covert action undertaken by the US against the USSR during the latter's occupation of Afghanistan (Schwab, 2008, p. 26) would have profound implications for US security in the 21st Century. Operation Cyclone was a CIA covert operation in which the US provided military equipment and financial support to the mujahedeen insurgents who were fighting against the occupying Soviet forces in Afghanistan (Adams, 2014, p. 59). The US government allegedly spent $4 billion creating training camps in Afghanistan and the CIA provided training in sabotage for these anti-Soviet forces during Operation Cyclone (Turner and Holton, 2016, p. 265). Osama Bin Laden is believed to have been a recipient of this training and he played a role in the recruitment, training and indoctrination of Arab volunteers in Afghanistan (Finlan, 2009, p. 113). The significant role this man would play in the 21st Century constitutes blowback from the US covert actions in Afghanistan at that time because the US suffered 'unintended consequences' (Goldman, 2015, p. 47) as a result of Operation Cyclone.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the declaration that the Cold War had ended in 1991 positioned the US as the only superpower in the international community, whereas the military forces Russia inherited from the dissolution of the union were greatly diminished, "decaying" and "obsolete" (Aldis and McDermott, 2003, p. 307). The fall of the USSR saw US military spending account for 41% of the world's total military spending in 1991 (Segal, 2015). The defence spending of the US began to reduce in the period between 1991 and 2001 falling from this high of 41% to 34% of global spending and a reduction in military spending of this period from a high expenditure of $500 billion in 1992 down to below $400 billion between 1996 and 2000 (Segal, 2015). This downward trend in military spending was noticeable in other nations such as France and Germany whose budgets decreased between 1991–1999 from $52 billion to below $47 billion and $52 billion to below $40 billion respectively (Kassimeris and Buckley, 2013, p. 158). This downward trend in military spending and the decreasing number of interstate wars in the post-Cold War period arguably reflected the preponderance of US power exhibited by many states due to the emergence of US uniploarity (Ripsman and Paul, 2010, pp. 36–37). This period of relative peace had a positive effect on the American psyche enabling them to feel safe and secure. This perceived safety would be shattered on the 11th September 2001 causing the American people to feel vulnerable (Bongar, 2007, p. 228) for the first time since the Cold War.

Humanitarian Intervention

The US was not acting alone when it invaded Iraq in 2003. The invasion of Iraq was undertaken by a small coalition of nations, which comprised of the US, the UK, Australia and Poland (Mosler and Catley, 2013, p. 118). David Coates and Joel Krieger assert that 'the most important UK foreign policy initiative that laid the ground for the UK involvement in the Iraqi conflict came in Kosovo' (2004, p. 19). Robin Cook argued in 1995, when expressing his concerns regarding Bosnia, at the Labour Party conference that 'homeland security included the international defence of Britain's values' (Coates and Krieger, 2004, p. 19). When the conflict in Kosovo 'flared up' in 1997, Cook who was now Britain's Foreign Secretary believed it was vital for the 'international community to act to prevent a repetition of what he saw as a failure in Bosnia' (Coates and Krieger, 2004, p. 20). Prime Minister Tony Blair shared Cook's concerns regarding the situation in Kosovo believing that an intervention was 'morally the right thing to do' (Coates and Krieger, 2004, p. 20). Ethnic tension between the Serbs and Albanians within Kosovo

had been rising throughout the 1990s. These tensions were exacerbated by the rise of Serbian nationalism and agitated by the policies of President Milosevic who sought to exploit the growing Serbian nationalism for political gain (Smith and Latawski, 2003, p. 6). Initially, the Albanian population responded non-violently to the discrimination they now faced, however, by the late 1990s the Albanians formed the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, to fight against the oppression they were facing. The KLA clashed with Milosevic's FRY security forces and by 1998 the fighting had intensified and it was estimated that 250,000 Albanians had been forced from their homes (Smith and Latawski, 2003, pp. 6–7). The passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1199 in September 1998, which called for a cease fire and for FRY troops to withdraw, provided a brief respite from the conflict, however, Milosevic redeployed his forces to Kosovo stating the cease fire had merely given the KLA time to consolidate their forces. A last ditch attempt was made to find a diplomatic solution to the growing problem but the proposed plan was rejected by Milosevic as it granted to much autonomy to the Albanians and made the potential secession of Kosovo a realistic possibility (Smith and Latawski, 2003, pp. 7–8). The international community had failed to protect the Muslim population of Bosnia from ethnic cleansing in 1993 (Nowak, 1998, p. 118) and fearing that a similar situation may emerge in Kosovo NATO intervened for 'humanitarian reasons' (Coates and Krieger, 2004, p. 21). From the 3rd to the 10th July NATO forces conducted air raids against tactical targets such as 'military facilities, fielded forces, heavy weapons, and military vehicles and formations in Kosovo and southern Serbia' and strategic targets including 'government ministries and refineries…Serb air defences, command and control facilities, Yugoslav military (VJ) and police (MUP) forces headquarters, and supply routes' (NATO, 2000). The success of this air campaign forced Milosevic's forces to withdraw from Kosovo (NATO, 1999). This intervention demonstrated a 'new approach' (Coates and Krieger, 2004, p. 21) for the British government in that it was prepared to intervene in a state if the ruling regime posed a challenge to basic human rights. Furthermore, this new approach 'insisted that a state forfeited their right to territorial sovereignty when they abuse their own people' (Coates and Krieger, 2004, p. 21). Coates and Krieger argue that the intervention in Kosovo 'legitimated…warlike humanitarianism' as a foreign policy tool (2004, p. 21). The legitimisation and move towards 'warlike humanitarianism' provided by the intervention in Kosovo is important to the outbreak of the Iraq war as it established a precedent for humanitarian interventionist policies which provided a partial justification for the invasion of Iraq and demonstrated a willingness of nations such as Britain to undertake such actions.

Globalisation, 9/11 and the War on Terror

The technologies associated with globalisation relating to transport and communication 'effectively shrunk time and space on a global scale' (Finlan, 2014, p. 112). This contraction of space and time has enabled the transfer of knowledge and ideas to occur much more rapidly across national borders. Furthermore, individuals now had access to 'far-flung destinations around the world' in a matter of hours rather than weeks or even months (Finlan, 2014, p. 112). Computers and flight simulation technology enabled people from diverse nationalities and upbringings to 'master incredibly complex technologies such as modern jet aircraft' with only a few hours of training (Finlan, 2014, p. 112). From a utilitarian perspective technologies are neither good nor bad but rather they are 'value neutral' (Becker and Becker, 2001, p. 1690), how they are used depends on the intent of human beings. The technology of globalisation has enabled democracy to spread throughout the world (Schaeffer, 2002, p. 1), which from a Western perspective can be seen as a 'good' use of these technologies. However, the potential of these technologies to be used for 'bad' was made evident on the 11th September 2001.

The strength of the US military in 2001 created a situation in which other states posed little threat in conventional warfare (Lewis, 2004, p. 9). The only way to challenge the US would be through 'Asymmetric warfare' which Alistair Finlan defines as involving 'warring parties with significant disparities in terms of military power, strategies and tactics' (2014, p. 29). Asymmetric attacks are targeted at areas where the powerful exhibit a weakness or vulnerability (Lewis, 2004, p. 9). The architect of the attacks on 11th September, Osama bin Laden, exploited a weakness that was present in American aviation security. Before the 9/11 attacks occurred US aviation security was focused on preventing aircraft bombings, while the threat of hijacking 'was not seen as significant' and only 33 air marshals were employed to protect 'high risk flights' at the time of the attack (Elias, 2009, p. 100). Bin Laden's terrorist organisation, Al Qaeda, exploited this vulnerability and circumvented the difficulties of 'smuggling explosives into the United States' (Finlan, 2009, p. 112) by turning the aircrafts, which they hijacked 'into large guided missiles' (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004, p. 4). The 19 hijackers (Hoffman, 2002, p. 304) used box cutters (Thornton, 2007, p. 1) to slash 'the throats of certain individuals' (Finlan, 2014, p. 114) and claimed they had bombs to intimidate and control the passengers on board the hijacked aeroplanes. These tactics were successful on three of the four hijacked planes. The passengers aboard 'the fourth aircraft, United 93' (Finlan, 2014, p. 111) fought for control of the aircraft upon learning the fate of the other planes 'by means of mobile telephones' causing the terrorists to crash the plane into a field rather than its original target (Finlan, 2014, p. 113). The other three aircrafts were aimed at 'iconic' symbols of American military and economic prestige as the terrorists believed that hitting these targets would cripple the US in these realms of power (Drinkwine and Army War College, 2010, p. 19). The successful attacks against the Pentagon and World Trade Centres (Finlan, 2009, p. 111) cost almost 3000 people their lives and the Al Qaeda network 'a financial investment of just $500,000' (Finlan, 2009, p. 113) while inflicting $18 billion worth of direct damage (Thornton, 2007, p. 1). The enormous difference between the costs of the attack for Al Qaeda both in

terms of lives sacrificed and financial investment and the damage inflicted upon the US presents the 9/11 attacks as the prime example of an asymmetric attack (Thornton, 2007, p. 1) in the 21st Century. The communications technology of globalisation allowed the rest of America and the world to witness the horrific events unfolding in New York in real time including footage of the attack on the second World Trade Centre. These attacks shattered the illusion that US citizens had regarding their safety from foreign aggression at home (Finlan, 2009, p. 111) and the worldwide circulation of the attacks footage sent a message to the international community that not even their strongest member was safe. The attack on 9/11 was a defining moment in the 21st Century as it demonstrated the potential for the tools of globalisation to be used to coordinate and carry out acts of extreme violence. The profound psychological effect of this attack caused the US to radically alter the international security environment by declaring a war on terror (Finlan, 2014, p. 26) in 'a moment of rage and revenge' (Urban, 2015, p. 51) rather than dealing with these non-state actors as criminals (Finlan, 2014, p. 26).

The 9/11 attacks are the most important cause for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Although there was limited evidence linking Osama bin Laden to Saddam and evidence that bin Laden was actively sponsoring 'anti-Saddam Islamists in Iraqi Kurdistan' (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004, p. 61), the attacks heralded in the war on terror created a permissive environment in which the US was willing to undertake intervention against states that they perceived as a threat to their national security. The second phase of the war on terror would see the US' attention focus on Iraq as the 'gathering threat' posed by Saddam could have 'far more deadly consequences' (Kinder et al., 2014, p. 75). Al Qaeda's attack presented the hawkish members of the Bush Administration such as Rumsfeld, Libby, Wolfowitz, Cheney and Bolton with an opportunity to pursue the regime change they had advocated for in Iraq (Miles, 2012, p. 89).

Conclusion

The huge changes in the international environment in the late 20th Century and early 21st Century such as the ending of the Cold War and the rise of US unipolarity created a situation in which the US became less concerned about its security on the international stage. Having emerged from a conflict that had the potential to destroy the entire world, relatively unscathed and holding the dominant position in the global order, the US and many members of the international community began spending less on their defence as the number of interstate conflicts declined. The technologies of globalisation spread democracy and brought the world closer together in a way that had never before been experienced by states. These effects of globalisation caused states such as Britain to pursue multilateral action and engage in 'warlike humanitarianism' in Kosovo to defend the human rights of those suffering under oppressive regimes. It is unsurprising that the

US did not anticipate blowback from their Cold War activities such as Operation Cyclone when the world seemed to be entering a new phase of co-operation and peace. The Al Qaeda terrorist network utilised the same technologies of globalisation, which had enabled the West to propagate democracy on a global scale and physically interact with peoples of various nations. This utilisation was so effective as a weapon that this almost utopian sense of hope was shattered in an instant on 11th September 2001. This asymmetric attack took advantage of America's diminishing concerns over its own security due to the zenith of American power, striking at the time when the nation felt it was most secure. The mass panic and sense of vulnerability that the attack introduced into the American psyche caused the nation to undergo a national psychotic break. Without a clearly defined enemy, President George W. Bush declared a 'War on Terror'. From this point on, the 'land of the free' was willing to forego their personal freedoms with the passing of the Patriot Act in 2001, which 'expanded the power of law enforcement and intelligence' agencies, giving them greater access to 'private communication and personal data' and the ability to conduct 'spying activities' without legal oversight (Smith, 2014, pp. 152–153). The US government sanctioned the indefinite detention of 'enemy combatants' from the war on terror at Guantanamo Bay and extraordinary rendition in which prisoners were transferred to CIA-operated detention centres to be tortured (Butler, 2007, p. 93). In 2002 Rumsfeld authorized the use of 'enhanced interrogation techniques' at Guantanamo (Hancock, 2007, p. 90), a euphemism for torture. This permissive environment in which the US was willing to undertake outrageous actions in the name of their national security made the case for invading Iraq much stronger as the potential threat of Saddam's possible possession of WMDs became too much for the now paranoid nation to handle. The attacks on the 11th September resulted in a war with no clear target and the unlimited aim of eradicating evil (Andréani, 2004, p. 31). The war on terror caused America to become much more reactionary, interventionist and violent. Saddam's constant antagonizing of the US, including the attempt on the life of President George W. Bush's father and the lack of clarity surrounding his potential stockpile of WMDs resulted in the US targeting Iraq in the second phase of the war on terror. Therefore, 9/11 can be seen as the great catalyst that spurred the Bush Administration and their allies to invade Iraq in 2003. It must be remembered that the catalyst was not the cause. The damage to the American psyche caused by 9/11 resulted in the Bush Administration seeking to fight wherever they perceived risk. Unfortunately for the people of Iraq, their leader had been intentionally creating this perception over the last decade.

Section Three: The rise of the Neoconservatives and the road to war

The war on terror did not make the invasion of Iraq inevitable. The lack of evidence linking Saddam to Al Qaeda did not make Iraq a natural target for the second

phase of this war. However, the unlimited aims of this war, to eradicate evil and sources of threat to US national security, created a permissive environment that allowed the US to violate the sovereignty of nations to eliminate targets they perceived as threatening. The final segment of this article will focus on the vested interest that the neoconservative element of the Bush Administration had in regards to regime change in Iraq. It will also focus on the opportunity provided by the early success in Afghanistan, the use of the threat of WMD to justify the war and the role of intelligence in persuading the US to invade Iraq.

The Project for the New American Century

The decision by President George H. Bush to allow Saddam to remain in power at the end of the Gulf War was not a universally popular decision even within his own administration. Paul Wolfowitz was the most senior member of the administration who believed that more should be done to support the Iraqis who rebelled against Saddam after the war (Ricks, 2006, pp. 5–6). Wolfowitz was also highly critical of the containment policy. He believed the policy 'was profoundly immoral, like standing by and trying to contain Hitler's Germany' (Ricks, 2006, p. 16). This emotive argument presents Saddam as a great evil. Furthermore, it also presents the critics of Wolfowitz's aggressive stance 'as the moral equivalent of Neville Chamberlain: fools at best, knaves at worst' (Ricks, 2006, p. 16).

Wolfowitz would become an active member of the neoconservative think-tank the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), which was founded in 1997 (Parmar et al., 2009, p. 97) by Robert Kagan and William Kristol (Morales, 2013, p. 174). In June 1997 the PNAC released a 'Statement of Principles' whose signatories included Paul Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Lewis Libby (PNAC et al., 1997), men who would hold 'pivotal roles' in the administration of George W. Bush (Halper and Clarke, 2005, p. 104). In this statement the PNAC asserted the need for the US to maintain its role as the 'world's preeminent power' through increased defence spending, the promotion of American values abroad, challenging 'regimes hostile to [US] interests and values', preserving and maintaining the dominant position of the US in the unipolar global order and to promote a willingness to undertake pre-emptive action 'before crises emerge' (PNAC et al., 1997). In January 1998 the PNAC sent an open letter to President Clinton 'advocating a military strategy of regime change in Iraq' (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, p. 193). By October 1998 Clinton had signed the bill known as 'The Iraq Liberation Act 1998' which 'declared that it was the policy of the United States to support "regime change" in Iraq' (Shareef, 2014, p. 16). However, the Clinton administration's approach towards 'regime change' was indirect and involved providing covert funding to Iraqi opposition groups rather than the use of American ground forces (Davis, 2006, pp. 46–47).

Despite failing to persuade the Clinton government to undertake the aggressive regime change for which they advocated, the neocons gained another chance to pursue their agenda by virtue of the positions of authority a number of their members would go on to hold in the Bush administration. The attempts to make 'regime change in Iraq' the 'number-one foreign policy agenda' began as early as the spring of 2000 (Ahmad, 2014, pp. 97–98) before George Bush was elected. However, realist voices in the future administration such as Condoleezza Rice refuted this position asserting that 'rogue regimes such as Iraq or North Korea could be easily deterred even if they possessed WMDs' (Ahmad, 2014, p. 98). After the Republican victory in 2001, Bush's Secretary of State Colin Powell supported the containment policy and the sanctions against Iraq claiming that they 'have worked' and that 'Saddam Hussein wasn't a threat' (Ricks, 2006, p. 27). Powell sought to improve containment through 'smart sanctions' which would limit the impact on regular Iraqis while tightening the controls over arms and WMD related materials and 'in the summer of 2001' Powell appeared to be 'winning the internal arguments that would shape the foreign policy' of the Bush administration (Ricks, 2006, p. 28). Furthermore, Powell's policy was well received by the UN Security Council and by November 2001 a policy on 'smarter sanctions' had been agreed (Freedman, 2004, pp. 15–16).

The horrific 9/11 attacks and the ensuing war on terror provided the neocons with the necessary crisis for their ideas to take root within the administration and the nation, as it enabled the neocons to challenge the political status quo (Rosati and Scott, 2010, p. 468) regarding Iraq and present containment as a failure. President Bush observed that '[a]fter September 11, the doctrine of containment just doesn't hold any water … My vision shifted dramatically after September 11, because I now realize the stakes, I realize the world has changed' (Freedman, 2004, p. 16). The neocons were able to use 9/11 to vindicate their claims that decreased military spending, less aggressive foreign policy (PNAC et al., 1997) and hesitance to assert its hegemonic power over the international realm (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, pp. 195–196) had endangered the US. The neocons attacked the strong academic tradition of realism portraying its proponents as 'self-absorbed, inattentive, cynical, and self-interested' (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, p. 219). They presented 'themselves as outsiders shunned and victimized by liberal (and realist) intellectuals in precisely the same way that real people are' (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, p. 218). They presented this intellectual elite as the enemy of the ordinary American citizen due to their egocentric rationalism (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, pp. 211–212) and also the division between morality and foreign policy that realism 'encourages' (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, p. 213). This enabled the neocons to represent these intellectuals as morally decadent (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, p. 219) whilst showing themselves as the representatives of good, hardworking Americans. The neocons 'intentionally inflamed' the 'climate of fear' that existed in the US after 9/11 (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, p. 197) as it enabled them to convince the public that pre-emptive action must be taken against the evil

'rogue states' to prevent the use of WMDs on US soil (Schmidt and Williams, 2008, p. 197). The vulnerability that 9/11 introduced into the American psyche arguably made the public more susceptible to these arguments. Furthermore, in the wake of 9/11 the US public wanted revenge. In this climate of fear the intellectual calls for rational thought from 'morally decadent' realist opponents to the war fell upon deaf ears. The neocons were able to use emotive language and fear mongering to convince America that the only way to ensure its safety was to take decisive and aggressive action. It is important to remember that 9/11 did not make the invasion of Iraq inevitable. The position of influence and authority held by the neocons in tandem with the permissive environment created by 9/11 is what made the invasion more likely to occur. It is reasonable to argue that without 9/11 the prospect of regime change was highly unlikely. In this same vein it is fair to argue that without the neocons the desire to see Saddam removed from power during the war on terror would have been greatly reduced. Therefore, though 9/11 created a permissive environment for regime change, it was the placement and personal motives of the neocons that can be seen as making the invasion more likely because they actively pursued this policy.

Afghanistan
The permissive environment of the war on terror and the desire of the neocons to remove Saddam from power did not guarantee the invasion of Iraq. The CIA 'were convinced that Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network, based predominantly in Afghanistan, were the cause of the attacks' (Finlan, 2009, pp. 116–117) and Paul Wolfowitz's attempt to connect 9/11 to Iraq during a planning session the day after the attack was not well received by President Bush. Condoleezza Rice claims to have 'overheard the President tell Andy Card to call Paul aside and tell him not to interject in that way again' (Finlan, 2014, p. 114). However, this refutation by the President did not prevent Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld from actively pursuing the planning and implementation of a plan that stretched 'well beyond Afghanistan', a plan that earmarked Iraq as 'the next phase in the Bush administration's self-declared global war on terror' (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, pp. 3–5). Despite these steps taken by Rumsfeld, which constitute the necessary 'hostile intention' (Clausewitz, 2005, pp. 7) for a war to occur, whether or not he could initiate these plans depended upon the success of the Afghan campaign. The war in Afghanistan had to be successful, fast and have limited US casualties for the invasion of Iraq to remain a possibility. These prerequisites for the invasion of Iraq were a result of the lessons learned from the Vietnam War. Had the war in Afghanistan cost the lives of many US soldiers, the US public would likely have developed 'body bag syndrome' (Sobel et al., 2003, p. 220) reducing the likelihood that the US public or their representatives in government would support further conflicts in the war on terror. The same applies to both the speed and success of the operation. A drawn out war would likely create an environment in which critics of the

war itself and further conflicts could rise to prominence. The initial fears created by 9/11 and the support of citizens for military action would begin to diminish over time. The Soviet military lost the support of both the public and government after its long and unsuccessful campaign in Afghanistan and an official resolution was passed in 1990 recognizing the decision to invade as 'a moral and political mistake' (Danilova, 2015, p. 123). If the same fate befell the US, then Rumsfeld's plans for Iraq would never come to fruition.

The decision to intervene in Afghanistan against the Taliban was 'met with little international criticism' (Cox and Stokes, 2012, p. 140). The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1368 on the 12th September 2001 expressing the view that the 9/11 attacks constituted 'a threat to international peace and security' (Aoi, 2010, p. 164). This resolution 'declared the Council's determination to combat by all means threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts and recognized the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with the Charter' (Aoi, 2010, p. 164). On the 28th September the Council passed Resolution 1373 which obligated states to 'deny financing, support and safe haven to terrorists' and 'reaffirmed the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence' (Aoi, 2010, p. 164). With the backing of the international community the US and the UK began their campaign against the Taliban and Al Qaeda on the 7th October (Finlan, 2009, p. 120).

The invasion of Afghanistan, dubbed Operation Enduring Freedom (Finlan, 2014, p. 51), successfully 'toppled the Taliban regime without a large US ground force commitment' (Biddle, 2005, p. 161) with 'breathtaking speed' (Finlan, 2014, p. 51). The combination of Special Forces, airpower and indigenous allies (Biddle, 2005, p. 161) managed to bring about 'the fall of the Taliban in December 2001' (Finlan, 2014, p. 52) just two months after the operation began. The rapid initial success of this largely ad hoc operation caught CENTCOM off guard as they had predicted that 'the decisive phase of combat wouldn't take place until the following summer' (Finlan, 2014, p. 52). Although the operation was successful in removing the Taliban from power, it failed to fulfil CENTCOM's 'most important strategic aim: the capture or killing of Osama bin Laden and his core followers in the Al Qaeda network' (Finlan, 2009, p. 132). American and British Special Forces successfully tracked bin Laden to the mountains of Tora Bora and 'fought some hard engagements…against Al Qaeda' in an effort to fulfil this objective (Finlan, 2009, p. 134). However, bin Laden was able to escape his pursuers and would remain at large for another decade until he was killed by SEAL Team Six on the orders of President Obama (Schmidle, 2011). Despite this failure, the initial success and speed of the Afghan campaign provided Rumsfeld with the opportunity needed to refocus the war on terror onto Iraq. The prerequisites for the invasion of Iraq previously identified were satisfied beyond a doubt and the sense of victory accompanying this rapid success arguably created a wave of pro-war sentiment that Rumsfeld and his fellow neocons were able to channel towards Iraq. Had

the campaign in Afghanistan resulted in a defeat or the initial success accomplished at a much slower rate, then it is likely that the neocons would have been unable to generate the support necessary to focus the government and the nation's attention on Iraq.

Weapons of Mass Destruction and Preventative War

The absence of a link between Saddam and Al Qaeda required a reframing of the war on terror in order for the Bush administration to undertake action in Iraq. President Bush established these new parameters in his State of the Union Address on the 29th January 2002. In this speech Bush claimed that the recent US victory in Afghanistan unearthed evidence that their terrorist enemies possessed 'detailed instructions for making chemical weapons' (Bush, 2002). This first remark established the link between terrorism and WMDs. He went on to assert that America 'must prevent the terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world' (Bush, 2002). With this statement Bush reaffirmed the connection between terrorists and WMDs and created an association between terrorists and regimes that pursue WMDs. Bush went on to claim that Iran, Iraq and North Korea 'and their terrorist allies' constituted an 'axis of evil' due to their pursuit of WMDs (Bush, 2002). Iraq was singled out as a supporter of terror and furthermore as a nation that was willing to use chemical weapons against its civilian population. Saddam's brinkmanship and 'deterrence by doubt' provided the cornerstone of Bush's view that Iraq was evil. He referenced Saddam's expulsion of UN weapons inspectors and claimed that over the previous decade Saddam had 'plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons' (Bush, 2002). He claimed that Iraq was 'a regime that has something to hide from the civilised world' (Bush, 2002). The lack of US HUMINT in Iraq prevented the US from knowing that rather than hiding WMDs from the international community, Saddam was actually hiding their absence in an effort to deter his enemies through doubt. Bush claimed that the pursuit of these weapons presented a significant and increasing danger to the US and its allies. He claimed that these nations 'could provide these arms to terrorists...attack our allies' or use them to 'blackmail the United States' (Bush, 2002). The American public had learnt on the 11th September 2001 that terrorists were capable and willing to inflict huge damage against civilians. This devastating attack was achieved by using only airliners. The idea of similar attacks carried out using WMDs was a terrifying prospect for the American public. This line of argument was not without its critics. Thirty-three scholars of international relations 'took out an ad in *The New York Times*' on the 26th September 2002 (Sagan and Waltz, 2012, p. 181), asserting that Saddam could not use nuclear weapons without facing serious reprisals and that he was not preparing to attack the US or its allies (Sagan and Waltz, 2012, pp. 181–182). Kenneth Waltz refuted the claim that a regime would willingly hand over its weapons to terrorists as it would be irrational to hand over weapons

which required a significant financial investment over to a 'irresponsible and uncontrollable party' whose use of the weapons would result in reprisals against the state that provided the weapons (Sagan and Waltz, 2012, pp. 183–184). These objections would go unheeded, firstly, because these academics did not inhabit the positions of authority that their neoconservative opponents did and, secondly, because the neocons had characterised these intellectuals as cynical elitists who were out of touch with real Americans. Bush would warn the American people that indifference towards these regimes seeking WMDs would have 'catastrophic' consequences and argued that 'time is not on our side'; that he would strike first before another tragedy could unfold (Bush, 2002). In this speech Bush created a casual association between Iraq and terrorists. What is more important is the emphasis placed on the dangers of 'rogue states' possessing or acquiring WMDs. This shows that the focus of the war on terror was no longer terrorists but also regimes that posed a threat to the US due to the potential WMD capabilities. Bush established that the US was willing to undertake preventative measures against these perceived threats.

Bush was not speaking about pre-emptive action during this speech but preventative action. Pre-emptive action is understood as taking place between the point when an enemy decides to attack or is 'perceived to be about to… and when the attack is actually launched' (Renshon and Suedfeld, 2013, p. 202). In essence, it is a first strike carried out to defend a nation against an attack. Preventative action 'is commonly defined as a war fought to forestall an adverse shift in the balance of power between two states' (Renshon and Suedfeld, 2013, p. 176). The invasion of Iraq is preventative because geographic realities prevented Saddam from posing a threat to the US. Saddam did not possess the ICBM technology that the US did that could potentially endanger the US. Furthermore, preventing Iraq from acquiring nuclear weaponry prevented Saddam from posing a challenge to the status quo. By contrast, North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons has prevented attempts at regime change due to the deterrent qualities of these weapons. As a result, North Korea does not conform to the international status quo and chooses to defy rather than to accept the influence of American power. Pre-emptive war is reactive by nature whereas preventative war is proactively aggressive. It is important to note this distinction because it highlights that the US was now willing to undertake aggressive action to ensure its predominant position in the international system rather than wait for events to dictate its response. Bush signalled a commitment to maintaining the unipolar system by actively combatting potentially balancing capabilities such as nuclear weaponry. This stance reflected the neoconservative position that the US should use its pre-eminent position to shape the international system rather than allow the return of a balance of power, which would in turn shape the US. This willingness to undertake preventative action made the invasion of Iraq far more likely to occur. Saddam's brinkmanship and ambiguity regarding his possession of WMDs throughout the years of containment provided the context necessary for the

US to actively seek regime change in Iraq. The 'relative weakness' of Saddam's conventional forces and his lack of nuclear weapons presented Iraq as a 'vulnerable adversary' which 'opened up a strategic window' for regime change (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 150). Saddam's alleged possession of WMDs, specifically chemical weapons and his purported attempts to acquire nuclear weaponry made the US feel justified in their invasion in 2003. The US wanted to keep this destructive capability out of the hands of 'evil' and thus it is arguably one of the prime causes for the invasion.

Intelligence Failure and Selective Interpretation

The invasion of Iraq failed to uncover any hidden caches of WMDs. The head of the ISG David Kay and his successor Charles Duelfer both concluded that the containment policy had drastically reduced if not entirely destroyed Iraq's capacity to develop WMDs and furthermore, they found that Saddam possessed no chemical, biological or nuclear WMDs 'prior to the US invasion' (Fisher, 2006, p. 68). However, before these revelations came to light the Bush administration was willing to violate the sovereignty of Iraq to find these weapons. It would be fair to believe that the Bush administration believed that Saddam possessed these weapons, as they were willing to invade Iraq on the ground that they would find these weapons, thereby retroactively justifying their actions. To understand how the US and its allies came to believe that Saddam possessed these weapons it is necessary to examine the intelligence environment leading up to the invasion.

During the years of the containment policy the CIA did not have any spies working within Iraq's weapons programmes, instead they relied on reports from UN weapons inspectors (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 143). This reliance on UN reports would become problematic after Saddam expelled the UN weapons inspectors in 1998. Saddam refused to readmit the inspectors after Desert Fox, depriving the international community of an accurate on the ground assessment of the damage caused by this US led operation. With no source of HUMINT the CIA was 'forced to develop its assessments based on satellite photographs, the occasional defector, and extrapolation from past experience' (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 143) which caused the 'quality of its information on Iraq' to decline (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 143). In February 1999 the CIA incorrectly concluded that Desert Fox had failed to damage the facilities associated with Saddam's chemical weapons programme. They believed that Iraq still possessed stockpiles of poison gas and 'had the capacity to quickly resume the production of chemical weapons' (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 143). The growing sense of fear surrounding Saddam's weapons programmes were heightened when 'an Iraqi defector code-named Curve Ball' reported to German intelligence, who shared this information with the CIA, that Iraq had biological weapons labs installed 'in trucks and rail cars so they could be moved around the country to elude detection' (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 143). The intelligence agencies of the US produced a National

Intelligence Estimate titled 'Iraq: Steadily Pursuing WMD Capabilities' based on their assessments in December 2000, which concluded that Iraq possessed a substantial quantity of mustard gas and Sarin nerve agents. The report also claimed that Iraq's civilian chemical industry had been expanded to support a 'clandestine weapons programme' (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, pp. 143–144) and that the nation had the ability to produce vast quantities of biological agents for military purposes. In regard to Iraq's nuclear capacity, the report stated that Iraq 'did not appear to have reconstituted' this programme (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 144). This report was in alignment with what the neocons of the Bush administration believed about Saddam and so they did not request a new estimate to be produced (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 144). Congress did however request a further NIE and in September 2002 a new NIE titled 'Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction' was produced (Ricks, 2006, p. 52). The major difference between this new NIE and the one produced in 2000 was that the new one claimed that Iraq was 'reconstituting its nuclear program'. The report appeared more definite in its conclusions than previous assessments, however, this estimate was 'a serious misrepresentation of views in the intelligence community, maximizing alarming findings while minimizing internal doubts about them' (Ricks, 2006, p. 52). Usually, 'when information is passed upwards' its 'level of certainty is diluted', however, the information in the NIE 'was treated as more definite' and by the time it reached 'the unclassified public portion, all the… doubts were washed out' (Ricks, 2006, p. 55). The information provided by low-level analysts was 'cherry-picked' (Ricks, 2006, p. 55) to support the foregone conclusions held by the Bush administration. The administration saw the 'qualifiers' dropped and information distorted to make it seem 'even more alarmist and dangerous' (Ricks, 2006, p. 55). The 'doubt-free summary' of the NIE provided to Congress and the President was misleading and gave the false appearance of consensus within the intelligence community (Ricks, 2006, p. 54). This document convinced both the President and Congress that 'going to war was the right thing to do' (Ricks, 2006, p. 52).

Many of the neocons were distrustful of the intelligence analyses of these agencies believing that they 'underestimated threats to US security' (Gordon and Trainor, 2007, p. 145). The failure of these agencies to prevent 9/11 further 'tarnished the credibility of the intelligence professionals' (Ricks, 2006, p. 54). In this climate of mistrust and without the evidence the neocons wanted the Department of Defence had a small team under Douglas Feith re-examine the available intelligence to find links that the intelligence agencies had 'failed' to notice (Ricks, 2006, p. 53). The neocons believed that the analysis provided by the 'fresh, unbiased eyes' (Ricks, 2006, p. 53) of Feith's team was superior to that of the professional intelligence community (Ricks, 2006, p. 54). When these professionals rejected long lists of 'individual factoids' compiled by Feith's department the neocons would leak these lists to friendly journalists (Ricks, 2006, p. 54) to convince the public that the link

existed. The actions of the neocons in regard to the intelligence community demonstrated that they were not looking for information to help them determine whether intervention in Iraq was necessary but rather that they were searching for evidence that would justify their predetermined decision to invade. The failure of the US to find WMDs in Iraq should not be blamed upon the intelligence community but rather on the neocons that actively selected and exaggerated the information that suited their agenda. The information provided in the 2002 NIE arguably convinced the President and congress that the invasion was necessary and is an important cause of the war despite the misleading information it contained.

Conclusion

The positions of authority and feelings of hostility towards Saddam held by the neocons were very important factors that account for the outbreak of the war. Had Saddam not engaged in brinkmanship during the containment policy and expelled UN weapons inspectors, the US intelligence community would have been able to provide better analysis in regards to his WMD programmes. The lack of clarity concerning his WMD potential arguably heightened the sense of fear and mistrust that the US and especially the neocons harboured towards him. Furthermore, this lack of intelligence allowed the neocons to doctor the information available to present a convincing case for the US to invade. The NIE convinced Congress and the President that the right thing to do was to take action in Iraq. It is important to note that despite the neocons' desire for regime change in Iraq, had the US not enjoyed the rapid success in Afghanistan, the chances of this invasion occurring would have been greatly diminished. Overall, it is fair to argue that the neoconservative element of the Bush administration was the driving force behind the decision to invade Iraq. Their desire to see Saddam removed from power is a result of the antagonistic actions undertaken by Saddam during the years of containment. However, without 9/11 or the early success in Afghanistan the neocons would not have been presented with an opportunity to see their plans come to fruition.

Section Four: Final Summary

The purpose of this research was to ascertain why Iraq was invaded in 2003. The decision to allow Saddam Hussein to remain in power at the end of the Gulf War and the ensuing containment policy are arguably two of the most important reasons for the war's outbreak. Saddam's 'matadorial' behaviour during the containment period maintained the feelings of hostility between Iraq and the neoconservatives within the US. Saddam's ambiguity over his possession of WMDs and ultimate expulsion of the UN weapons inspectors together with his policy of deterrence by doubt successfully convinced the US that he did in fact possess WMDs. This did not however have the deterrent effect that Saddam envisaged but rather persuaded the neocons that he was too dangerous to remain in power.

The radical changes that took place in the late 20th Century created an environment of American predominance, which in reality enabled the US to take unilateral action against weaker nations. While the US was deterred from taking actions against strong states such as the USSR during the Cold War, Saddam did not possess the same military power that could deter the US. Saddam's failure to produce nuclear weaponry created an environment in which the US could still conceivably remove him from power without the threat of serious reprisals to the US or its allies. Though the US believed Saddam possessed WMDs, these chemical or biological weapons have a far weaker deterrent effect than that of nuclear weaponry.

The election of President Bush would see the neocons given positions of authority within the US government. In the early days of the administration the neocons were unable to pursue regime change, as containment appeared to be working. However, blowback from Operation Cyclone would see the tools of globalisation used to inflict a severe wound on the US not only in terms of loss of life but also in regards to the US psyche. The attack on 11th September resulted in the war on terror, which created the permissive environment in which the neocons had an opportunity to actively pursue the removal of Saddam from power. This permissive environment did not guarantee that the US would go to war in Iraq. However, the early success of Operation Enduring Freedom provided the neocons with the requisite opportunity to actively pursue regime change. Their influence in the upper echelons of US power enabled them to doctor intelligence to present Saddam and his WMDs as a threat to American security and therefore the natural target of the second phase of the war on terror. The neocons successfully exploited the feelings of vulnerability within the US to heighten the perception of threat that Saddam posed. They furthered this by characterizing him as evil, which is the natural enemy of the good that America represents. In this war of good and evil they were able to characterise their critics as part of a morally defunct intellectual elite, which undermined their arguments in the eyes of the wider public. Their position of authority also gave them a natural advantage over these critics. Their selective analysis and presentation of available intelligence in the 2002 NIE enabled the neocons to convince the President and Congress to sanction military action in Iraq.

In conclusion, the war in Iraq occurred because of the continuing tension between the US and Saddam that created deep feelings of hostility. The permissive environment of the war on terror gave those in the Bush administration who had the greatest feelings of hostility towards Saddam the opportunity to seek his downfall. The early successes in Afghanistan further ensured that the neocons would be able to pursue further military action within the parameters of the war on terror. The proactivity of the neocons in seeking the removal of Saddam from power, most importantly the selective interpretation and presentation of intelligence, within this permissive environment enabled the neocons to

finally have the vengeance they had sought since the Gulf War. In the simplest of terms, the invasion occurred because a group with a vested interest in seeing Saddam Hussein removed from power were able to take advantage of the opportunities that presented themselves within the international realm.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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