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Mistakes Were Made: How Not to Conduct Post-Conflict Management And Counterinsurgency

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The Statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events. Antiquated War Offices, weak, incompetent, or arrogant Commanders, untrustworthy allies, hostile neutrals, malignant Fortune, ugly surprises, awful miscalculations - all take their seats at the Council Board on the morrow of a declaration of war. Always remember, however sure you are that you could easily win, that there would not be a war if the other man did not think he also had a chance.

--Winston Churchill

You can always count on the Americans to do the right thing, after they have tried everything else.

--Winston Churchill

We are awash in how-to manuals on stability operations, counterinsurgency, and how we should successfully do the next Iraq or Afghanistan, presumably because we got the first attempt wrong. While the various manuals, hints, cheat sheets, doctrines, wiring diagrams, proposals for the reform of the 'whole of government', and all the paraphernalia of post-conflict management pouring forth from every think tank, government research institute, and now-knowledgeable 'expert' are not totally useless, they are virtually impossible to make sense of or implement if one could. If for no other reason than they are mutually exclusive, navel-gazing, self-referential, and voluminous. But they also miss the point, misdirect, misinform, and muddy the waters. They are all after the fact, what we should have done not what we did. So, what follows is a 'How Not To' manual. As such, it will have no audience, no following, no conclusions, and no effect.

The first part of what follows is a quasi-case study of decisions to invade Iraq and to a lesser degree the evolution of responses there and in Afghanistan. It concentrates on the context for war with Iraq and the Bush Administration's arguments for war with Iraq. This is not a study in lessons learned. Partly because I was not involved in the processes leading up to the invasion of Iraq, although on the margins I was one of those voices that questioned the thinking behind the

decision making. I am also not a big believer in ‘lessons learned’. History is not kind on the subject. Long experience in government in playing in and watching similar efforts as well as a lifetime scholarly interest in how governments screw up guide my thoughts and have ‘taught’ me that we do not learn lessons. We might identify them, but if they do not coincide with our prejudices and inclinations and skill sets, we discount the lesson or fail to take it into account or enlist the wrong ones. And lastly, there are significant cognitive obstacles to learning lessons from complex events that are inherent and unavoidable and whose operation at a given moment and throughout is beyond awareness before the fact and recondite at best afterwards.

The old anecdote about the blind philosophers and the elephant hints at the problem. Anyone familiar with conflicting eye witness reports after having viewed the same accident knows how hard it is to rely on any such report, the event and the accounts of it coinciding, if at all, in odd ways. It should not be hard to grasp then how ever so much harder it is to understand truly complex events stretching over long periods, involving tens if not hundreds of variables, many hidden or later obliterated by events, and hosts of actors taking a kaleidoscope of actions—many they cannot recall or that memory adjusts. We engage complex events with complex organizations, which are themselves unknowable, involving an interplay of factors and actors inaccessible to theory or wiring diagrams or anecdote. Reality is lost in analysis. We know it only through theory, crude approximations that too often reflect our prejudices. We used to have theory. Now we have ‘narrative’. Not an improvement. Reality is what counts but it is analysis that shapes our understanding, with the occasional rude interruption by a recalcitrant real world. Reality is non-rational, at times irrational, and always non-linear. Analysis is always rational and linear.¹

The second part of this essay looks at how not to do in complex circumstances. Since the prejudice, for Americans particularly, is to do something even if it’s wrong, knowing what not to do seldom signifies. And doing nothing can also be wrong. Counsels of prudence have no shelf life in the world of getting things done. Yet, since all the outpouring of advice on what to do and all the best-intended actions to do have brought us endless unintended consequences, often painful and deadly, a mild, cautionary tale might have some role as light diversion. You may want to sit down.

A word on methodology. Since complex events flow in many channels at many levels, it is not possible to capture them all or to adequately represent them. So, one is left with creating a sense of complexity. Or advancing a theory that attempts to reduce it to a few understandable and

¹ That said, much of the discussion on the decision to invade Iraq could use a dose of the type of complex analysis found in Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, second edition, NY: Longman, 1999. This edition because it reflects the debate that followed the original publication and questioned some of the basic assumptions and assertions. Still, the limits of rationality are of major concern in the literature on organizational theory and behavior. One need not delve into the mysteries of post-modernism to find it. It is a mainstream concern as outlined in the works mentioned in the notes to follow. The problem, for all approaches, is that the richness of reality means that one is likely to find ‘evidence’ for any view regardless of how contradictory those views may be. Reality encompasses contradiction. Theory permits a level of abstraction, reducing variables to a manageable consistency, that reality does not permit. But there is a further, deeper issue. Virtually without exception, theories in the so-called social sciences are normative, that is that do not seek simply to describe an ‘is’ but to determine an ‘ought’. An issue raised by Hume, you cannot derive an ‘ought’ for an ‘is’. In trying to do so, they change the reality they are describing, trying to make it conform to the theory.

manipulable variables. The former is episodic the latter quixotic.² I hope to capture some sense of the layered nature of the situation by introducing a series of themes, threads or channels, that flow and follow, now independent, now intertwining, now wandering off into silence or obscurity but contributing, playing a part, speaking their lines. Mixed metaphors. In the tradition of Aquinas, I will, where I am presenting an argument or view that I reject, try to give it the strongest case possible in its defense. Not to refute it later—few ideas are entirely wrong or wrong every time—but to contrast in a way to illustrate why not to do. I will also seek to challenge certain assumptions. Logic, syllogisms, and the train of thought that flow from them are among the most powerful tools we have in coming at the world, trying to understand it. Yet, if the premise is wrong, even slightly, the conclusions are wrong or drift from true, sometimes by wide margins.³ Unfortunately, logic is almost always wrong in trying to come to grips with complex events and in understanding or explaining human action. Deductive logic, one of the most powerful analytical tools we have, is virtually useless before the fact and subject to misalliance after; while inductive logic is little more than soothsaying, even when it proves right. This is not an argument against logic but about its limitations. We cannot avoid it, but caution is advised.

Some assumptions. In discussing the case of Iraq, the underlying assumption is that the Bush Administration got it wrong, but not because of an ‘axis of evil’ between the actors—Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz—which seems to be the prevailing ‘narrative’ of many critics and the noisy press. The second assumption is that initial conditions are important, often determining of what follows: begin on the wrong foot and tripping over feet will be a regular feature of what follows. Third, drawing on insights from the scholarship on organizational behavior, particularly the works of Charles Perrow and Scott Snook, that when complex institutions engage complex situations confusion and muddle are inherent to the process and powerfully influential in actions and outcomes unintended by actors and decision makers.⁴ Fourth, the fact vs. ‘fact’ trap. While

² Here I side with the godfather of much modern thought on ‘bureaucratics’, James Q. Wilson: ‘I wish that this book [*Bureaucracy*] could be set forth in such a way that proved, or at least illustrated, a simple, elegant, comprehensive theory of bureaucratic behavior. I have come to have grave doubts that anything worth calling “organizational theory” will ever exist. Theories will exist; but they will usually be so abstract or general as to explain rather little. Interesting explanations will exist, some even supported with facts, but these will be partial, place- and time-bound insights.’ Quoted in *The Public Administration Primer* cited below, p. 2. See Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*, NY: Basic Books, 1989. Good theory is parsimonious. Reality is profligate. At some point, in social terms, the latter will overwhelm the former. If one accepts the implications of chaos theory and Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle—as analogies transferable to social realities—then the problem lies in the fact that chaos obeys rules that are knowable but, and here is the rub, only after the fact. Chaos theory does not have predictive value, in fact, it makes it impossible to do more than guess at possible futures, determined by knowable rules but only understood in retrospect. It makes the study of history imperative, but as historians have long averred, it makes learning from history dodgy. But this is not an essay on philosophy or history. The reader is invited to read the perceptive essay ‘Realism in Politics’ by Isaiah Berlin in *The Power of Ideas*, edited by Henry Hardy, Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000, for a more in-depth take on the analytical and heuristic issues involved in dealing with complex events, multiple actors, and certainty.

³ Which, one would think, would cause people to pay more attention to the premise, but so eager are people in most cases to get to the fruit of their argument that they forget the seed, perhaps never realizing that while they think they have been eating apples they have been growing oranges.

⁴ Scott Snook, *Friendly Fire: The Accidental Shootdown of U. S. Black Hawks over Northern Iraq*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000; Charles Perrow, *Normal Accidents*, NY: Basic Books, 1984. The literature on organizational behavior is extensive. For a shortcut, see George Frederickson and Kevin Smith, *The Public Administration Theory Primer*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 2003.

facts exist, they do not abound. Assumptions about the facts, however, and what constitute a fact are legion, individually and institutionally. Facts or opinions about facts can differ, collide, contradict. Which one is reliable? A fact may be accurate without being true. It may be true without constituting evidence. Facts also come with nuance, ambiguity, and fuzzy edges. In many cases, it is assumptions about the facts or what makes something a fact that is more decisive than the fact itself.⁵ Not infrequently advocacy disguises itself as analysis, presenting itself in the garb of objectivity but pushing an agenda. If this were always obvious, it would be easy to discount. It isn't. Moreover, in a political environment, advocacy **is** the agenda and an acceptable one on its own terms.

Fifth, and closely related to the preceding assumption, facts for intelligence purposes and facts for policy and policy makers are not synonymous. Nor are they mutually exclusive. Neither is immune to political inference, prejudice, or the pressure that comes from a mutual dependence. Intelligence analysis and reporting are not neutral exercises. Especially in tense times and political environments. Intelligence information is meant to, well, inform policy, but it can also influence policy. It should not come as a surprise that the relationship is reciprocal. In a politically charged environment, intelligence, or disputes over its meaning and import, can also become a tool to understand or to destroy opponents. Further, intelligence information is not fact, although it is sometimes a substitute for facts. It is also not the truth, which is harder to come by than facts. Facts are not straightforward. Analysis based on facts is equivocal, debatable, and often wrong, even when deeply believed. And no policy maker of any duration has not been misled, at some point, by intelligence, a fact that makes policy makers skeptical. Everyone is also his own analyst in an environment where information and experience come into play and clash. Thus, intelligence is not neutral nor definitive; and policy decisions and policy makers rely on more than reports to inform actions, rightly and wrongly. As Charles Duelfer notes in his admirable book, *Hide and Seek*, 'Complete answers are not simple, nor static, nor certain.'

Finally, while cause and effect, along with the play of facts and mere facts, are critical, they too are not easily identified or dissociated from the events that they are part of. Borrowing from the hard sciences, where cause and effect are determinable, decisive, and replicable, the tendency in analysis is to seek analogous circumstances in complex human interactions to explain them. But this is not the case with complex human events, where cause and effect are intimately intertwined with process and context not with precipitants and specific conditions. Nor are they replicable. It is thus not possible to pinpoint specifics in terms of cause and effect, or to hold them to too serious a hard, fixed abode. It is possible, but it is generally wrong and misleading. Informed thusly, what follows is an attempt to lay a context—note, not a framework—for understanding what happened, why and how. The aim is not, solely, to second guess after the

⁵ The literature on strategic surprise or intelligence failure is important to grasp this point, particularly the works by Roberta Wohlstetter, Richard Betts, and Michael Handel. Any student of philosophy will not be surprised to learn that the besetting problems are ones of epistemology—how one knows what one knows—whether one speaks of individuals or institutions. See Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*, Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1962; Betts, Richard K. "Analysis, War, and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures Are Inevitable." *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (Oct. 1978): 61-89.; also in *Power, Strategy, and Security*, ed. Klaus Knorr, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983; Michael I. Handel, "Intelligence and Problem of Strategic Surprise", in *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in Honor of Michael I. Handel*, edited by Richard Betts and Thomas Mahnken, London: Routledge Press, 2003.

fact the wisdom of invading Iraq but to discuss the outpouring of ‘lessons learned’, the doctrinal and policy import, of this and similar engagements. That critique cannot make sense without a discussion of what went before.

Right Intentions

Why was going to war in Iraq wrong? To understand that, it is necessary to understand why it was right. The reasons for going to war were compelling, almost overwhelming. To understand that, it is necessary to go to initial conditions, and understand that the decision for war, the conditions making it compelling, did not begin with the Bush(43) Administration. Nor does the subsequent history in Iraq substantively alter the sound reasons for the steps that were taken.

The reasons advanced by the Bush(43) Administration for regime change—based on longstanding US policy aims from the two preceding administrations, one Republican the other Democratic, and heavily influenced by the events of 9/11—included the following main arguments:

- Iraq, by invasions of Iran and Kuwait, proved that it was a significant threat to its neighbors and to regional peace and stability.
- Iraq was in material violation of an endless series of UN Security Council Resolutions that followed the invasion of Kuwait and that committed Iraq to full disarmament of its WMD and ballistic missile programs, full disclosure of its past efforts, full access for unlimited inspections, an end to any and all contacts with terrorist organizations or involvement in state-sponsored terrorism.
- The Saddam Husayn regime was a major violator of the human rights of its citizens.
- The Saddam Husayn regime had links to al Qai'da and international terrorist organizations.⁶

President Bush and other officials also indicated the need to promote democracy in the region as a way not only to make Iraq a more reliable player in regional politics but as a way to ensure the future rights of people there and elsewhere in the region—an argument that preceded Bush's stress on democratization in his second inaugural. Together these constitute the principal rationale for the decision to proceed with military means to effect regime change in Iraq.

When did the war with Iraq begin, or when did it become inevitable? One is tempted to argue that it began in 1979 when Saddam Husayn took power and laid the foundations for one-man rule that came to characterize Iraq by 2003.⁷ By 2003, Saddam's character and the nature of his

⁶ This did not involve claims of a direct connection or direct Iraqi involvement in 9/11. As then Secretary of State Colin Powell noted in a speech to the UN in February, 2003, Iraq had committed to cease any and all involvement with terrorist organization, a fact it repeatedly and routinely violated. This included on-going contacts with al Qai'da operatives, such as Abu Musab al Zarqawi. See Micah Sifry and Christopher Cerf, editors, *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, NY: Touchstone Books, 2003, pp 464ff.

⁷ One is tempted to play the infinite regression game. In the larger sense, the evolution of the international system, the emergence of sovereign states as the core reality of that system, and the consequent habits and practices of international law that formed the ground rules are critical elements in the nature of what happened and why. Without that system, the actions of the players cannot make sense. Hold that thought.

ruling style were certainly an element in the judgment of senior US leaders. But for much of the early years of his rule, dominated by the Iran-Iraq war that he started in 1980 and that then lasted until 1988, the United States tacitly supported the regime in its war with Iran, even to the extent of showing flexibility on condemning Iraq's use of chemical weapons in that war. While the relationship was not cozy, the United States did not regard Saddam Husayn as a direct threat to US or international interests. As late as 1989, the Bush(41) Administration was looking for ways to improve relations.⁸ Two years earlier, with the Iran-Iraq war still raging, the United States had accepted Iraqi explanations and apologies for the presumably accidental missile attack on the US frigate *Stark* in the Persian Gulf, killing or wounding 37 seamen. It was not until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August, 1990 that the environment began to change and with it US attitudes and approaches to Iraq and Saddam Husayn, who went from being a potential working partner to a threat to US security and international peace and stability. While the events surrounding the first Persian Gulf war began to reshape attitudes, it was the nature of subsequent encounters over the way that war ended, particularly the UN sanctions regime and the complex nature of its implementation, that solidified perceptions, creating in the process an on-going confrontation.

Not an end, but an endless beginning. An international coalition reversed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait but the war fought to achieve that end ended not with a peace but with a ceasefire. Iraq invaded Kuwait, described by Iraqi declarations as defensive efforts to counter Kuwait's burgeoning threat to Iraqi security, in August, 1990. The international reaction was swift, the United Nations Security Council issuing two resolutions—UNSCR 660 and 661—within days condemning the invasion; calling it a violation of the Charter; insisting on immediate, unconditional withdrawal; and imposing economic sanctions and an embargo to back up its rhetoric. Iraq responded by annexing Kuwait, making it a province of Iraq, implementing in the process a series of brutal repressive measures that characterized Saddam Husayn's overall governing style—vicious, nasty, and murderous.

There followed a rapid series of Security Council resolutions—requiring the unanimous support of the permanent members—each further condemning Iraqi actions and calling for immediate withdrawal. Along with these steps, President George H. W. Bush, in parallel with Security Council actions, issued National Security Directive 45 condemning the invasion and declaring the occupation of Kuwait a threat to US national security. He made it clear that the US would respond as necessary to restore Kuwait's sovereignty and independence in consonance with the UN Charter, as well as protect other regional states, and began the deployment of US forces to the region in partnership with a broad range of coalition allies, including many Arab governments. He also began the effort to build international support to contribute to these defensive moves and laid the groundwork for offensive military operations.⁹

⁸ National Security Directive 26, October 2, 1989, The White House, which argued that, "Normal relations between the United States and Iraq would serve our long-term interests and promote stability in both the Gulf and the Middle East. The United States Government should propose economic and political incentives for Iraq to moderate its behavior and to increase our influence with Iraq." The NSD went on to indicate that Iraqi breaches of IAEA safeguards would lead to sanctions, that human rights considerations had to be an important element of US policy, and that Iraq should be encouraged to play a constructive role in Lebanon and in the Middle East peace process.

⁹ While there was unanimous support in the Security Council for US and international military operations, Bush's efforts to win support for US military operations faced stiff opposition in the US Congress, barely securing a majority in the Senate to support them.

Offensive operations ultimately proved necessary and swift military defeat forced Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait in January, 1991. In a decision that proved endlessly controversial, the President stopped US and coalition forces further advances with the liberation of Kuwait. Many argued, and continue to argue, that it was a mistake to stop the invasion at the Kuwait-Iraq border and that Operation Desert Storm should have gone on to Baghdad with the objective of regime change.¹⁰ Had this been done, the argument goes, the basic problem, Saddam Husayn, would have no longer been around to cause all the trouble that he proceeded to cause. The problem with all such hypothetical arguments, of course, is that they assume the conditions that validate the assumptions that justify them and they can never be tested, and are thus invulnerable to refutation.¹¹ Regardless, such arguments become one of the themes that shaped thinking in the years that followed leading to 2003. Saddam needed to go. The question was how, by whom, and with what means.

With Iraq defeated, there followed a series of UN Security Council Resolutions on the terms and conditions for a return to the pre-invasion status quo, but with significant conditions. The invasion of Kuwait was Saddam Husayn's second adventure in attacking his neighbors, the first having been Iran in 1980. In that first war, Iraq had demonstrably used chemical weapons to blunt Iranian human wave attacks. Rumors abounded that Iraq had used such weapons in Kuwait, and coalition forces in Operation Desert Storm were prepared with counter measures for such attacks. In responding to Operation Desert Storm, Iraq also used long-range ballistic missiles to attack targets in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and, provocatively, Israel, which was not a part of the coalition, with hints of chemical or biological warheads to follow. With this as background, UNSCR 686 of March, 1991, laid down a marker that Iraq needed to account for and remove any chemical or biological weapons in Kuwait. Then followed the more expansive UNSCR 687 of April, 1991. It is altogether a remarkable document and a critical element in all that followed. It deserves noting in detail.

This resolution called upon Iraq to eliminate all chemical and biological weapons in its possession along with the means to produce them, and, for good measure, along with the abolition of long-range missiles and their production, and to cease any efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Section C of the resolution was unequivocal, requiring

8. that Iraq shall unconditionally accept the destruction, removal, or rendering harmless, under international supervision, of:
 - (a) All chemical and biological weapons and all stocks of agents and all related subsystems and components and all research, development, support and manufacturing facilities;
 - (b) All ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometres and related major parts, and repair and production facilities....

¹⁰ See George H.W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, New York: Knopf, 1998, for an explanation on why the decision to stop.

¹¹ It can be argued at least as plausibly that a far less demanding set of post-conflict UN resolutions that did not require the level of subsequent engagement in Iraq might have avoided what ultimately developed with far less anguish and expense in the interim 12 years that preceded the decision to invade.

Further, the Security Council decided

9.... for the implementation of paragraph 8 above, the following:

(a) Iraq shall submit to the Secretary-General, within fifteen days of the adoption of the present resolution, a declaration of the locations, amounts and types of all items specified in paragraph 8 and agree to urgent, on-site inspection as specified below;

(b) The Secretary-General, in consultation with the appropriate Governments and, where appropriate, with the Director-General of the World Health Organization, within forty-five days of the passage of the present resolution, shall develop, and submit to the Council for approval, a plan calling for the completion of the following acts within forty-five days of such approval:

(i) The forming of a Special Commission [ultimately to become UNSCOM], which shall carry out immediate on-site inspection of Iraq's biological, chemical and missile capabilities, based on Iraq's declarations and the designation of any additional locations by the Special Commission itself;

(ii) The yielding by Iraq of possession to the Special Commission for destruction, removal or rendering harmless, taking into account the requirements of public safety, of all items specified under paragraph 8 (a) above, including items at the additional locations designated by the Special Commission under paragraph 9 (b) (i) above and the destruction by Iraq, under the supervision of the Special Commission, of all its missile capabilities, including launchers, as specified under paragraph 8 (b) above;

(iii) The provision by the Special Commission of the assistance and cooperation to the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency required in paragraphs 12 and 13 below....

Moreover, the Security Council, with the unanimous agreement of the permanent members, decided that

10.... Iraq shall unconditionally undertake not to use, develop, construct or acquire any of the items specified in paragraphs 8 and 9 above and requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Special Commission, to develop a plan for the future ongoing monitoring and verification of Iraq's compliance with this paragraph, to be submitted to the Security Council for approval within one hundred and twenty days of the passage of this resolution;

11. Invites Iraq to reaffirm unconditionally its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1 July 1968;

12. Decides that Iraq shall unconditionally agree not to acquire or develop nuclear weapons or nuclear-weapons-usable material or any subsystems or components or any research, development, support or manufacturing facilities related to the above; to submit to the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency within fifteen days of the adoption of the present resolution a declaration of the locations, amounts, and types of all items specified above; to place all of its nuclear-weapons-usable materials under the exclusive control, for custody and removal, of the International Atomic Energy Agency, with the assistance and cooperation of the Special Commission as provided for in the plan of the Secretary-General discussed in paragraph 9 (b) above; to accept, in accordance with the arrangements provided for in paragraph 13 below, urgent

on-site inspection and the destruction, removal or rendering harmless as appropriate of all items specified above; and to accept the plan discussed in paragraph 13 below for the future ongoing monitoring and verification of its compliance with these undertakings....

To carry out these requirements, the resolution further called upon

13.the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, through the Secretary-General, with the assistance and cooperation of the Special Commission as provided for in the plan of the Secretary-General in paragraph 9 (b) above, to carry out immediate on-site inspection of Iraq's nuclear capabilities based on Iraq's declarations and the designation of any additional locations by the Special Commission; to develop a plan for submission to the Security Council within forty-five days calling for the destruction, removal, or rendering harmless as appropriate of all items listed in paragraph 12 above; to carry out the plan within forty-five days following approval by the Security Council; and to develop a plan, taking into account the rights and obligations of Iraq under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1 July 1968, for the future ongoing monitoring and verification of Iraq's compliance with paragraph 12 above, including an inventory of all nuclear material in Iraq subject to the Agency's verification and inspections to confirm that Agency safeguards cover all relevant nuclear activities in Iraq, to be submitted to the Security Council for approval within one hundred and twenty days of the passage of the present resolution;

14. Takes note that the actions to be taken by Iraq in paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the present resolution represent steps towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and all missiles for their delivery and the objective of a global ban on chemical weapons....

The resolution also rescinded Iraq's repudiation of its international debts—an action taken by Iraq during its occupation—required Iraq to pay just compensation for the damages caused by the invasion and occupation, and imposed stringent economic sanctions—exempting medical supplies and food—until Iraq complied fully with all the requirements and stipulations of the resolution. In addition, the terms of 687 also required Iraq not only to eliminate any and all WMD programs but to renounce any intent of reconstituting such programs in any form, leaving open ended if this meant forever. It went further. The resolution required 'Iraq to inform the Security Council that it will not commit or support any act of international terrorism or allow any organization directed towards commission of such acts to operate within its territory and to condemn unequivocally and renounce all acts, methods and practices of terrorism....'

One of the amazing aspects of this document is its absolutist nature. The term 'unconditional' is used repeatedly. Although it was, in effect, a ceasefire instrument, in form and substance it was a requirement for unconditional surrender of Iraqi sovereignty. In the first sense, it invites comparison with the instruments ending WWI. In the second, comparison with the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers following WWII. It was neither. In the minds of the Security Council members, particularly the United States, Iraq's defeat in Kuwait was unconditional and American views and experience sustained an absolutist interpretation and follow through. The problem was that Iraq had lost militarily but had not been defeated, nor the responsible leadership replaced. Iraq's leaders, meaning Saddam Husayn, did not accept an

absolutist interpretation. Nor did they accept that the conditions were perpetual.¹² They, he, were left free to challenge such an interpretation and to pursue actions to actively undermine it. In time, and critically important, some Security Council members, particularly France and Russia, walked away from an absolutist interpretation and began to undermine the thrust of 687, at first in an insouciant, independent-minded way, but later under financial inducements from Iraq.¹³

Thus, the ceasefire/surrender document contained the seeds for endless dispute between Iraq and the UN; between the United States determined to see 687 implemented without reservation and Iraq determined to expand reservations; and among the members of the Security Council, who over time drifted apart in their respective views of implementing 687.¹⁴

While all of this may have been inherent in what ultimately developed, it was not obviously so at the time. Thematically, however, the developing process, the action-reaction cycle of enforcement and prevarication that ensued, created a dynamic of far reaching import, shaping the reality in which the players acted, profoundly influencing their perceptions of what those actions and that reality meant. In the minds of US policy makers, Iraq was consistently non-compliant and dishonest in being so. In the mind of Saddam Husayn, Iraq was reasserting its sovereignty. In the minds of American rivals such as France and Russia, it was important to not let the last superpower act like the last superpower. Enter the next thematic element.

Distrust. Shock greeted the various inspection regimes that came into being as a result of UNSCR 687—UNSCOM and IAEA inspectors—in 1991. In the former case, inspectors, knowing Iraq had and had used chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles, the shock came in the extent of Iraqi efforts. In the latter case, the shock came from discovering that Iraq had, in fact, an on-going, sophisticated effort to acquire nuclear weapons after years of denying it and in violation of international agreements Iraq was party to not to do so. Further, the IAEA inspectors uncovered to the collective amazement of the UN, particularly the United States, a well-developed deception campaign behind which Iraq hid its nuclear program and its systematic lies about it. Iraqis were shocked that international inspectors had learned so much so quickly and moved to disrupt inspections. This produced UNSCR 707 in August, 1991. This resolution found Iraq in material breach of virtually all the stipulations laid down in 687 and called for an immediate end to Iraqi prevarication and obstruction, with further means to implement full, complete, and uninhibited inspections of all relevant documents and immediate access to any and

¹² This point is well documented from the Iraq Survey Group's report in the section on regime intent on WMD.

¹³ The history of the financial aspects of this process is painfully documented in the Report of the Iraq Study Group commissioned in 2004 by the Bush Administration to examine the circumstances and background of Iraq's efforts to acquire, use, and conceal weapons of mass destruction.

¹⁴ The background to this is most usefully discussed in Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq: The Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction*, NY: Pantheon Books, 2004; and Charles Duelfer, *Hide and Seek: The Search for Truth in Iraq*, NY: Public Affairs Press, 2009. Blix's memoir tells the story as seen from and by a non-American perspective and actor, Duelfer's as a Washington insider. Duelfer adds an important perspective on the evolution of internal American thinking on 687 and the sanctions regime, especially as it evolved between the Bush and Clinton Administrations. He notes that while the Clinton Administration remained committed to full compliance by Iraq in principle, it became increasingly uninterested in enforcing compliance, or less willing to sustain the effort within the Security Council. The Bush Administration inherited a policy that would not retreat on the essentials of 687 but which had no adequate means to enforce it in an environment that increasingly undermined the policy while it exposed the failure publicly.

all facilities of whatever type wherever located. Being in ‘material breach’ of the ceasefire was grounds for a resumption of military operations, had there been any enthusiasm in the US or the UN for such dramatic actions. There was no stomach for a full resumption of hostilities but options short of all our war began the rounds of consideration, particularly the use of air power.

Faced with some form of armed retaliation, Iraq began a grudging acceptance of the need to appear to comply while searching for means to avoid compliance; or—and this becomes important—to appear to evade compliance in such a way as to preserve a sense of Iraqi sovereignty while actually complying. This was a subtlety lost outside of Iraq, where what was known was a history of prevarication and deception. This dance came to characterize the whole regime of compliance between 1991 and 1998, when Iraq ordered inspectors out.¹⁵ Over that time, a subtle change overtook the nature of inspections. At the beginning the purpose was to unequivocally prove that Iraq had WMD and to dismantle the capability for and the intent to have them. In time, the purpose evolved into the Iraqis having to prove that they did not have WMD or the intent to have or use them. The first is demonstrable. The second is trying to prove a negative, which if not impossible is at least elusive. A resolution had to be based on trust. There was none.¹⁶

Regime Change. While the US-led international effort to liberate Kuwait ended at the border with Iraq, accomplishing the stated war aims under UN mandate, there was awareness in various policy quarters, particularly in the US, that Saddam had to go. One of the underlying assumptions was that with military defeat, and given the nature of fissures within Iraq/Baathist circles and major social divisions within Iraqi society generally, Saddam’s days were numbered. With a Kurdish revolt prospering in the north, Shia opposition exploding into armed resistance in the South, internal rivalry within Iraqi governing circles festering below the surface, and little understanding of how skillful and ruthless Saddam truly was, it was not a stretch to expect regime change, at least at the top, in Iraq. Nudges in the right direction—such as encouragement to the Shia—should do the trick.

Instead of dutifully disappearing, however, Saddam consolidated his hold on power and ruthlessly suppressed the Shia revolt—largely abandoned by international support—and either coopted Kurdish opposition or used a still-powerful military to blunt much of the threat from that quarter, resorting to the use of chemical weapons again. Success meant Saddam’s survival and therefore the evolution of the environment noted above. It also introduced the US-led air interdiction zones that came to represent the truncated international response to repeated Iraqi violations of various UN resolutions. Air power and limited bombing campaigns came to substitute for a renewal of full scale hostilities to enforce full or, as it turned out, partial compliance. This fighting without war, or war without fighting and the intricate political maneuvering and calculations that came with it became the pattern for Iraq’s engagement with the international community and the US, not ending until 2003.

¹⁵ This history is conveyed by the endless series of UN Security Council Resolutions after 707 documenting Iraqi attempts to evade the terms and conditions of 687 and the international effort to force compliance. See UNSCR 1060, 1115, 1134, 1137, 1154, 1194, 1205, 1284, and 1441 between 1991 and 2002.

¹⁶ Duelfer skillfully describes this environment. See *Hide and Seek*.

The Clinton Administration inherited this mare's nest from Bush 41. The Clinton Administration was in no better position than Bush to resume full scale conflict, nor was it in any mood to accept Iraqi defiance of an endless stream of UN resolutions, and was just as convinced as its predecessor that the only solution lay in regime change. The problem was how to make all these contradictions add up to a workable policy leading to a welcome outcome. Periodic air and cruise missile attacks and various attempts at clandestine support to internal opposition were little more than irritants to Saddam while being a source of frustration to the US, its allies, and increasingly its opponents in the UN. Clinton had more success in securing congressional support, however, for regime change. This was a bi-partisan position in Congress, where in 1998 an overwhelming majority in the House and a unanimous Senate passed the Iraq Liberation Act making regime change in Iraq the stated goal of US policy. Having failed to find or adequately support internal opposition to oust Saddam, the Act proposed funding for a number of external opposition groups, predominately the Iraqi National Congress headed by Ahmed Chalabi, while it called for continuing US and international efforts to force—short of full scale military intervention—Iraq to comply with UN resolutions and explore means to oust Saddam. It was in this continuing environment of hostility that Saddam ordered all UN inspectors out of Iraq in 1998, relying on deteriorating support on the Security Council—in part secured by liberal bribes to some member states under the guise of the UN-sanctioned food for oil program—to frustrate any vigorous actions against Iraq.

Oil for Fraud Program. The cornerstone of Iraqi policy was to circumvent UN sanctions if it could not end them. The United States and the UN itself provided one of the most effective mechanisms for advancing that goal—the oil for food program. Conceived by the Clinton Administration, it was designed as a humanitarian gesture permitting Iraq to use some of its embargoed oil to purchase food and medical supplies for relief of public suffering caused by sanctions. Instead, the Iraqi regime used it cynically to undermine the consensus among the Permanent Five as a way to drive a wedge between them.

Saddam Husayn hoped to use this wedge to reassert Iraqi sovereignty, with the eventual goal of reconstituting Iraq's WMD efforts. The means was a massive bribery campaign using the money derived from selling oil to buy food to buy influence in Russia, France, the UN, and elsewhere to undermine sanctions and to secure French and Russian support in the Security Council against the United States.¹⁷ Although the full details of the scheme only emerged after the invasion of Iraq, the effort by Saddam Husayn to sow discord within the Security Council was apparent and its success one of the factors in the growing frustration within the Bush Administration in trying to work with the United Nations.

The Bush Administration's pique with the UN involved more than just a prejudice against multilateral efforts. Iraqi success in undermining UN resolve—funded by corruption—made effective, multilateral action against Iraq increasingly impossible. Faced with this growing resistance, the Bush Administration felt increasingly released from any obligation to use a flawed mechanism that was proving unable or unwilling to enforce its own mandates as expressed in a host of UNSCR resolutions going back 12 years.

¹⁷ After the war with Iraq, the story, mooted before, began to come out in embarrassing detail. This resulted in an independent inquiry, the Volcker Commission, and was also heavily documented in the IGS study noted above. The US Congress and the British Parliament also conducted independent investigations. It is a depressing story.

The Requirement to Intervene. The international environment changed. In point of fact, the international environment, or better the international system in that setting, is always changing. Sometimes the changes are incremental, accumulating transformative outcomes in little movements over long periods. Sometimes in tectonic, abrupt shifts. The international system itself, arising from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, was one such change. The essence of that system derived from the existence of separate, sovereign states and the mutual recognition by them of that sovereignty, itself the result of the ability of those states to assert their independence and territorial integrity against threats foreign and domestic. While this is not the place to recapitulate the history of the international system or the evolution of the concept of sovereignty, it is important to recognize it as a factor in this context. Equally important is the shift in understanding in recent years away from the notion of the inviolability of sovereign states to external interference in purely internal matters—a concept honored in the UN Charter—to a concept of certain transnational concerns that abridge sovereignty.¹⁸

Rwanda in 1994 and Kosovo in 1999 were critical situations that introduced, or solidified, the idea of the necessity of the international community to intervene in the affairs of individual states—in this case for humanitarian causes—to uphold principles greater than sovereignty when individual states either violated those principles or proved incapable of maintaining them. While not universally accepted, the necessity-to-intervene argument has entered modern notions of international law as a justification or a requirement for action, even if that leads to armed intervention.

Such arguments formed part of the Clinton Administration's justification for intervening in Kosovo, without UN authorization, where the concept remains unsettled as an accepted principle. The concept is also controversial in the US context, where many Republicans, including George W. Bush, questioned the use of American power in such a cause—arguing in part that it was a cover by Clinton to justify military action to distract public attention from Monica Lewinsky. This contention is without merit, but the resort to it highlighted differing interpretations of emerging international themes if not norms. But for 9/11 it is doubtful that the incoming Bush Administration would have made much use of the argument for humanitarian intervention, an approach it rejected. The events of 9/11 changed many things, among them the context for interpreting the on-going trouble over Iraq and the idea of regime change. Those events also brought into sharp relief the frustrations over the failing 687 regime, a situation that might have limped along to no one's satisfaction if terrorists had not attacked the United States so dramatically.

¹⁸ There never was an absolute concept absolutely accepted that sovereignty was sacrosanct. Britain in the Nineteenth Century intervened on behalf of Greek subjects of the Ottoman Empire to protect them from oppressive measures to suppress rebellion. Similar events dot the landscape of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, but the prejudice was to respect sovereignty as a barrier to external meddling. Such meddling could be considered a justification for war or other retaliatory responses. The war crimes trials following WWII helped to foster the notion that sovereignty was not absolute, but it took many years for this idea to move from being applied in exceptional circumstances to being a formative idea of international practice. The concept has received added emphasis in an international environment that hosts an assortment of weak, failing, or failed states that require varying degrees of international support or engagement.

All terrorism all the time. There is no question that Saddam Husayn's Iraq supported terrorist organizations and maintained contacts with many of them. Iraq provided aid and comfort to Abu Nidal, before killing him; allowed the Mujahidin-i Khalq Organization to use Iraqi territory for operations against the Islamic Republic of Iran; had sent assassins to Europe to eliminate regime critics; gave material support and training to Ansar al Islam, Jayash al Muhammad, and other groups on the US list of terrorist organizations, including some assistance to Osama bin Ladin. Support included training, logistical support, safe haven, and in some cases contact with scientists in Iraq's chemical and biological weapons research programs.¹⁹ Familiarity with this history after the first Gulf war helps to explain the inclusion in UNSCR 687 of paragraph 15 enjoining Iraq to stop any and all support of whatever kind to terrorist organizations or in support of acts of terrorism.

Such support, whether to al Qai'da or any of its operatives or not, would constitute a material breach by Iraq of the terms and conditions of the ceasefire. Continuing intelligence after 1991 indicated that Iraq, or Iraqi intelligence services, maintained contacts with and provided some level of support to various terrorist organizations in contravention of 687. Unlike Iraq's failure to comply with the other terms of 687, where the emphasis was on the inspection regime, little further was done to hold Iraq in material breach of the UN mandate on paragraph 15, even though Iraq made a reappearance on the State Department list of state sponsors of terrorism after the invasion of Kuwait, where it remained until 2004. Thus, while not a focus of international attention, Iraq remained on the minds of US policy makers—and intelligence analysts—as a state sponsor of terrorism despite requirements to cease and desist. As with its attitude in other areas, Iraq denied any contacts with terrorism, despite the evidence—including credible reporting of efforts to support the assassination of then ex-President George Bush—adding to US doubts about Iraqi honesty. Doubts abounded. The events of 9/11 transformed the environment.

What had been an irritant and further example of Iraqi duplicity now moved into the center of US-Iraqi relations as the US, in shock, began to contemplate responses and to take a close look at friends and enemies through the lens of terrorism and state support to terrorism. This lens did not allow for much ambiguity, although the facts themselves were less than transparent. While there was growing policy certainty, shaped by years of experience that Saddam Husayn was a continuing problem searching for a solution, there was less certainty in the information to support more aggressive responses to repeated Iraqi violations of the spirit and intent of UNSCR

¹⁹ The 'Iraqi Perspectives Project: Saddam and Terrorism: Emerging Insights from Captured Iraqi Documents' vol. 1, Washington: Institute for Defense Analysis, IDA Paper P-4287, November, 2007, based on over 600,00 captured Iraqi documents clearly demonstrates a wide range of contacts between Iraqi intelligence and various terrorist organizations over many years. Similarly, the *9/11 Commission Report* links Iraqi intelligence to meetings with Muhammad Atta, one of the 9/11 attackers, before the first attack on the World Trade Center, see pp 228-29, citing a 70 percent chance that the earlier contacts took place, although being unable to reach any definitive conclusion of similar contacts in 2001. The Iraqi Perspectives Project found no 'smoking gun' linking Iraq to the 9/11 attacks but it documents on-going contacts with a wide variety of terrorist groups with some continuing conversations with al Qai'da, its affiliates, or key operatives. For a comprehensive review of the pre-war intelligence on the issue, see the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's report, *Postwar findings about Iraq's WMD Programs and links to terrorism and how they compare with prewar assessments*, 8 September 2006. The conclusions highlight the inherent ambiguity of intelligence information and assessments based upon them. It also notes that one of the problems for US intelligence on prewar Iraq was the dearth of reporting assets and the dependence upon exiles, a dubious source as it turns out.

687. Unfortunately, there is very little about intelligence information that is definitive. It permits, perhaps informs, judgment, but it does not constitute evidence or eliminate ambiguity.

A more esoteric issue related to the events of 9/11 and how to respond also comes into play. While the vast majority of Americans—apart from those who believed George Bush staged the attacks—were stunned by the attacks and wanted a response, there was no unanimity on what that response should be once the shock began to wear off and policy and political differences began to reassert themselves. The Bush Administration, often without preparing public opinion for actions and changes in time-honored practices, many related to sharp differences over the needs of security versus civil liberties, seemed to assume either that everyone agreed or that they should. Agreed not just on the threat but on the need to respond and on how. The Administration seemed to view questioning of its approaches not just as differences of opinion—we were at war after all—but as signs of ignorance or worse.²⁰

Thus, gradually the Administration became disconnected from the debate on how to respond, against whom, and with what means, often viewing that debate as an obstacle to needed, effective action. It failed to make its case for what to do as if, in the American context, it did not need to explain itself effectively and repeatedly. Expediency, urgency, the nature and depth of the threat overrode politics and the need to articulate publicly what we faced and were about. Or so it seemed to those charged with the responsibility of responding. The nation was shocked into awareness of the nature of a threat from obscure international terrorists with fathomless agendas without the chance to ponder that threat and reach a true and lasting consensus on what to do about it. That much of the reaction to the Administration was raw partisanship pursued intemperately did not improve mutual understanding. It made it increasingly easy for the Administration to dismiss criticism and to pursue a course it knew to be wise and necessary even if others did not see it.

First reports are always wrong. Subsequent reporting may only compound the error. The clandestine collection of useful intelligence—spying—is dangerous work in that the individuals involved risk their lives. Intelligence analysis is even riskier, in that based on it nations can act to put hundreds of lives at peril, which can involve the fate of nations. Timely, accurate information—its carefully assessment turning it into intelligence—is essential to inform policy decisions that can include major initiatives or war. There seems to be a common impression—in public opinion, the press, in Congress, and in Hollywood—that somewhere out there is pure information clearly demonstrating facts or cause and effect waiting to be discovered by unerring hands, and that when this does not happen and blunders follow that this must be the result of incompetence or malice. Incompetence and malice exist and can explain. They cannot be excluded.

²⁰ This reaction was not solely unique to the Bush Administration or unknown in US history. The first example of governing authorities viewing dissent in a time of crisis or war as a threat to security came fairly early in US experience, with the Alien and Sedition Acts in John Adams' administration. There were signs of it in the Lincoln Administration. The two most dramatic examples came in the draconian measures taken by the Wilson Administration to suppress public dissent during WWI; and actions by the Roosevelt Administration during WWII that included the internment of thousands of Japanese and Italian immigrants and citizens.

The problem is that information is not neutral, not definitive, and is fraught with limitations, not the least of which is deliberate efforts by opponents to conceal or obfuscate what might otherwise be merely confusing and conflicting information. Intelligence may be timely but not accurate. It may be accurate but not timely. It may be both timely and accurate and wrong, or wrongly understood, looking like one thing but being something else. It is subject to conjecture, speculation, and interpretation, by analysts or policy makers, each of whom may have assumptions about what the 'facts' mean; each of whom may have a conceptual framework for understanding the facts; each of whom may have a historical context for explaining the facts. Facts may be based on reliable sources unaccountably wrong. They may be based on sources of unknown reliability wrongly reporting, or deliberately providing misinformation for undiscovered motives, either case being hard to establish.²¹ Incompetence and malice are not the only explanations, although in a politically charged environment, they often take center stage.

The difficulty of the environment on Iraq is typified by the National Intelligence Estimate of October, 2002 that gave the intelligence community's assessment to the Administration on Iraq's WMD program. The report made the following key judgments:

We judge that Iraq has continued its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs in defiance of UN resolutions and restrictions. Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles with ranges in excess of UN restrictions; if left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade.

We judge that we are seeing only a portion of Iraq's WMD efforts, owing to Baghdad's vigorous denial and deception efforts. Revelations after the Gulf war starkly demonstrate the extensive efforts undertaken by Iraq to deny information. We lack specific information on many key aspects of Iraq's WMD programs.

Since inspections ended in 1998, Iraq has maintained its chemical weapons effort, energized its missile program, and invested more heavily in biological weapons; in the view of most agencies, Baghdad is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program.

- Iraq's growing ability to sell oil illicitly increases Baghdad's capabilities to finance WMD programs; annual earnings in cash and goods have more than quadrupled, from \$580 million in 1998 to about \$3 billion this year.
- Iraq has largely rebuilt missile and biological weapons facilities damaged during Operation Desert Fox and has expanded its chemical and biological infrastructure under the cover of civilian production.
- Baghdad has exceeded UN range limits of 150 km with its ballistic missiles and is working with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which allow for a more lethal means to deliver biological and, less likely, chemical warfare agents.
- Although we assess that Saddam does not yet have nuclear weapons or sufficient material to make any, he remains intent on acquiring them. Most agencies assess

²¹ Charles Duelfer, among others, notes the over-reliance of key administration policy makers and some in the intelligence community on reporting from Iraqi exiles, some of whose motives were tied to their own political agendas to replace Saddam Husayn and who were not too careful with the facts. See Duelfer, *Hide and Seek*.

that Baghdad started reconstituting its nuclear program about the time that UNSCOM inspectors departed--December 1998.

The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research dissented from some of these judgments at the time, though not all, and some CIA analysts have since argued that the Administration forced these conclusions out of the intelligence community, deliberately politicizing the product.²² The problem is intelligence analysis is meant to inform policy not make it. If intelligence analysis and analysts and their parent institutions were always right, clear, and unequivocal in their judgments, accountable for mistakes, and lacked any political motivations of their own with a view of influencing policy then policy makers might deserve to be pilloried for ignoring their judgments—they tend to shy away from recommendations—and deserve charges of politicizing intelligence when they question those judgments and seek other opinions or reconsideration of them. Intelligence analysis, however, is not pure as the driven snow, is less than infallible, and is in bed with policy makers when it suits. It wants plausible deniability when accountability enters the picture. Nor was seeking a better answer from the intelligence process to conform more with policy and understandings derived from other considerations unique to the Bush Administration. The environment is not straightforward.

A case in point is the controversy surrounding yellow cake, or Iraq's supposed effort to acquire the ingredients for nuclear weapons from Niger or some country in Africa, one of the arguments used by the Bush Administration to justify war with Iraq.

There are two certainties: either Iraq did try to obtain yellow cake from Niger, or it did not. Unfortunately, there is no way to reliably establish the certainty of either case. Initial intelligence indicated the likelihood of such an effort, while subsequent information tended to discount the likelihood, although in neither instance was the case entirely clear. Still isn't. What became clearer later was not certain at the time. It is important to keep in mind not what policy makers or intelligence officials might have known or even should have known, with hindsight, but what they knew or thought they knew when decisions were taken.

²² See, for example, Paul Pillar, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2006). Pillar has been a critic of the Administrations decisions on Iraq. In the piece above he argues that, 'The most serious problem with U.S. intelligence today is that its relationship with the policymaking process is broken and badly needs repair. In the wake of the Iraq war, it has become clear that official intelligence analysis was not relied on in making even the most significant national security decisions, that intelligence was misused publicly to justify decisions already made, that damaging ill will developed between policymakers and intelligence officers, and that the intelligence community's own work was politicized. As the national intelligence officer responsible for the Middle East from 2000 to 2005, I witnessed all of these disturbing developments.' In his view, the Administration distorted intelligence to justify invading Iraq when intelligence did not support such a decision. The Senate's investigation of the intelligence process did not support this conclusion, nor it seems did Pillar exactly share this view earlier. In 2001, in his book *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC: Brookings, 2001, he notes on Iraq that it 'qualifies for continued listing [on the State Department's list of state-sponsors of terrorism] because of the safe haven that it gives to Palestinian rejectionists such as Abu Nidal and to the Mujahedin-e Khalq. It also still appears to be involved in assassinating opponents of Saddam Hussein. Terrorism is by no means the main U.S. concern regarding Iraq. The main immediate concern is to limit Saddam's means for military aggression, particularly by curbing his special weapons programs. The longer-term concern is over who rules Iraq, with the ultimate U.S. goal being Saddam's departure.'

Initial reports supporting the contention that Iraq was seeking WMD materials in Niger turned out to be based on a forged document, by whom is unknown, provided to US intelligence by Italian intelligence. The fact of forgery, discovered later, is not, however proof that Iraq was not, in fact, seeking to evade UN 687 requirements. Controversy erupted when Joseph Wilson, a former US ambassador with experience in the region, began accusing the Bush Administration of deliberately lying about the intelligence based on his mission—chartered by the Central Intelligence Agency—to Niger to try to ascertain the facts or at least gather more details.²³ In Wilson's view, he went, he saw nothing, reported the same, and Bush then lied about it to justify war with Iraq. Subsequent reporting and a US Senate Intelligence Committee investigation have not resolved the question definitively, although this and other reporting questioned many of Wilson's assertions, proving them wrong or shy of the facts.²⁴ Political and policy differences fueled the controversy not sober, impartial discussions of the facts or their interpretation. In Washington? Go figure.

In this environment, interpretation turned partisan. This partisanship has tended to be retroactive, that is, requiring people to assume that the later knowledge was actually known and deliberately concealed. In one view, intelligence clearly indicated a negative—Iraq did not try to acquire nuclear materials, had no intent to do so, and any argument to the contrary was prevarication. That the Bush Administration knew this to be the case and still argued for the fact proves malice and lying. The motive being a desire to go to war with Iraq, per se—not that there were supportable justifications for war with Iraq or a war on terrorism but out of a simple desire to have a war, perhaps as some argued to justify an effort to end civil liberties in the United States and establish a perpetual Bush dictatorship. This is a rather large claim and needs rather large proofs. There are none, proof lying in the eyes of the beholder not in the circumstances.

The contrary view was that Iraq had a history of trying to acquire nuclear weapons or to insure the ability to reconstitute a WMD program and that one did not need a definitive smoking gun to establish intent, hence violation of the terms of UNSCR 687 and subsequent UN resolutions. Iraq's repeated violations of these resolutions and a long history of lying and deception themselves constituted sufficient evidence of Saddam Husayn's threat or reason not to believe Iraqi assertions of compliance. Hence, a valid argument, along with others, justifying war for regime change in Iraq. This, however, is interpretation based on context not on direct evidence. Intent, even with putative evidence in hand, is hard to establish, which is why in court the

²³ Joseph Wilson, *The Politics of Truth: A Diplomat's Memoir: Inside the Lies that Led to War and Betrayed My Wife's CIA Identity*, Carroll and Graf, NY: 2004. The story according to Wilson was a cause célèbre in the press before he captured it in a book. It was highly controversial and much of his story changed as he corrected himself after repeated assertions proved 'unreliable'. For one of the most dogged critiques of his errors and changes of story see Christopher Hitchens, 'Plame's Lame Game: What Ambassador Joseph Wilson and his wife forgot to tell us about the yellow-cake scandal', *Slate*, 13 July 2004; or 'Clueless Joe Wilson: How did the CIA's special envoy miss Zahawie's trip to Niger?' *Slate*, 17 April 2006.

²⁴ In an editorial in the *Washington Post*, which initially accepted many of Wilson's assertions, the editors back tracked: 'Mr. Wilson chose to go public with an explosive charge, claiming — falsely, as it turned out — that he had debunked reports of Iraqi uranium-shopping in Niger and that his report had circulated to senior administration officials. He ought to have expected that both those officials and journalists such as Mr. Novak would ask why a retired ambassador would have been sent on such a mission and that the answer would point to his wife. He diverted responsibility from himself and his false charges by claiming that President Bush's closest aides had engaged in an illegal conspiracy. It's unfortunate that so many people took him seriously.' 'End of an Affair', 1 September 2006.

prosecution does not have to establish motive to make its case, although it may be expected to do so. The Iraq Survey Group's findings after the war make it fairly clear that the regime had every intention to reconstitute its WMD program once sanctions were lifted, the lifting of which was the main aim of Iraqi policy. But this was known after the fact. Bush Administration officials let their understanding of the context of Iraq's past actions determine interpretations of present actions and the subsequent responses. Part of that understanding was that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction in fact. In that environment, the lack of direct evidence was not proof of Iraq's good intentions but of a successful ability to hide the true facts. Interpretation by context was the sovereign answer to ambiguous information, or its lack. But, making such judgments is what policy making is about and what policy makers must do.

The lack of reliable intelligence sources in Iraq combined with a known history of deception and lying allowed for interpretation that was fact free, or at least fact light.²⁵ Interestingly while criticism of the Bush Administration has tended to focus on the fact that post-invasion efforts could not find actual WMD in Iraq such critiques have tended to ignore the fact that Iraq was committed to reconstituting such programs, which the ISG convincingly established as a deliberate policy goal by Saddam Huasyn, thus in breach of 687, and thus a justification for the war that followed.

Afghanistan and Politics as Usual. Within less than a month after 9/11, the United States, with assistance from Great Britain and elements within Afghanistan, identified Taliban-al Qai'da connections and the presence of bin Ladin and associates under Taliban protection; and then launched an invasion that in a matter of weeks destroyed the Taliban and put al Qai'da on the run. It was a resounding success. As with many successes it tended to influence thinking on other issues, perhaps related but not synonymous. The very success encouraged a can-do attitude in other circumstances that the effort to go after international terrorism, particularly al Qai'da, argued for and justified. Action. Decisive. Immediate.

Many of the critics of the invasion of Afghanistan, who predicted outright failure and humiliation, lost credibility with speedy success there and made it easier for the Bush Administration to dismiss criticisms of a possible repeat in Iraq, especially since many of those critics seemed to harbor a deep resentment of Bush personally, going back to the circumstances not of 9/11 but of his election in 2000, rather than any serious assessment of the threat from Iraq or the Administration's discussion of that threat. Thus, discussions of regime change in Iraq, which Congress had called for in 1998 by overwhelming majorities, took on a distinctly partisan flavor by 2003, especially as it became more likely that the United States contemplated forced regime change on the wings of an invasion. While partisanship is inherent in the American political dynamic, even essential to it, it does not necessarily lead to sound judgment or the consideration of alternatives. It tends to lock people into their convictions making them even more certain of their assessments and the righteousness of their views. The Bush

²⁵ The lack of adequate human intelligence sources in Iraq or the Administration's reliance on Iraqi exiles, particularly those associated with Ahmad Chalabi, is noted in the Senate Intelligence Committee's report and most poignantly in Duelfer, *Hide and Seek*. For an insider's view, or skepticism, of intelligence and its reliability see Doug Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism*, NY: Harper Collins, 2008. Also see Jeffrey Goldberg, 'The Unknown: The C.I.A. and the Pentagon Take Another Look at Al Qaeda and Iraq', *The New Yorker*, 5 February 2003.

Administration, charged with responding to 9/11 and on a roll from Afghanistan, was inclined to dismiss critics as misinformed, wrong headed, or malicious. Critics reacted by becoming even more strident and accusatory, ignoring facts on the ground and seeing all evil not in the enemies near and far who had attacked the United States but in the actions of the Administration. Some of these critics went so far as to accuse the Administration of having deliberately orchestrated the attacks on 9/11 so as to suspend civil liberties in the United States. A vast conspiracy.²⁶

Buying and Selling. US foreign policy and policy makers are not for sale. They are not up for grabs. But the habit in American politics is to listen and among policy makers to listen to many sources not just to official ones to form impressions about the world and US responses to it. This is realistic and rational, a process justified by long experience. The United States has been home to a long list of exiles and freedom fighters who have come to these shores to seek aid and comfort for adventures or liberation efforts in their respective countries. From Citizen Genet to Kosciuszko, to Afghans, to Irish rebels, to Latin American freedom fighters, to a host of others from every corner of the world throughout its history, the United States has been accepting of individuals and movements hoping for change on distant shores.

It is not unusual then, and not a so-called neo-conservative phenomenon, that Iraqi exiles, most prominently Ahmed Chalabi, should seek out key opinion makers on behalf of an effort to liberate Iraq from the likes of Saddam Husayn and his cohorts. Indeed, Chalabi worked for many years on a wide range of influence makers in the United States and Great Britain on behalf of his Iraqi National Congress to free Iraq. This was a bipartisan effort on his part and included many influential congressmen and Senators.²⁷ These efforts were only marginally successful until 9/11 transformed the environment in Washington and began to make regime change in Iraq move from a desired outcome to a deliberate policy. Agendas began to coincide.

In this environment, Chalabi's years of cultivating opinion makers—in the process making himself the face of Iraqi resistance—changed its character. Suddenly Chalabi was not just another voice crying in the wilderness but a prophet. Not just a disembodied critic but the leader of a well-established, seemingly so, organization positioned to provide essential information of conditions in Iraq and poised to become the leading element in a new regime brought to power on the wings of American military force. Given the environment in Washington and the dearth of reliable information from inside Iraq, Chalabi became the one-stop center for key Bush Administration officials on what to do in Iraq and on what was possible to do there. That he, his

²⁶ This is not the place to sink into the fever swamp of conspiracy theories. For that see Mathais Broeckers, *Conspiracies, Conspiracy Theories, and the Secrets of 9/11*, CA: Joshua Tree Publishing, 2006; or the even crazier Thierry Myessan, *9/11: The Big Lie*, UK: Carnot Publishing, 2002. For a partial response see David Dunbar and Brad Reagan, editors, *Debunking 9/11 Myths: Why Conspiracy Theories Can't Stand up to the Facts*, NY: Hearst Books, 2006.

²⁷ See Aram Roston, *The Man Who Pushed America to War: The Extraordinary Life, Adventures, and Obsessions of Ahmad Chalabi*, NY: Nation Books, 2008, which purports to document the life and time of Chalabi and his influence inside Congress, the Bush Administration, and among US political elites. Also see John Dizard, 'How Chalabi conned the neo-cons', *Salon*, May 2004. For other, but related views, see the piece by Franklin Foer, 'The Source of the Trouble', *New York Magazine*, 31 May 2004, for the role that the reporter Judith Miller played in helping to make a story rather than just report it, including adding credibility to Chalabi and Iraq's links to terrorists and efforts to acquire WMD.

organization, and other exiles had no credibility in Iraq itself was either missed or dismissed as unimportant. A fateful oversight.

The stage is set, the actors assigned their roles, the curtain rises. While it is not possible to say definitively, unless out of prejudice or some special relationship with the spirit world, when war with Iraq became inevitable, by late 2002, with the ramping up of an international coalition to deal with regime change in Iraq, and solid information, so it seemed, of Iraqi deception, it was going to take a revelation of dramatic and unequivocal proportions to stop the logic that had governed US-Iraqi and international engagement with Iraq for a dozen years from becoming an issue decided by war. Such a revelation was not forthcoming before the event, and little that has come out sense changes the basic rationale.

Events after war and occupation established that Iraq did not have, in hand, weapons of mass destruction, but their possession was not the sine quo non for war. Nothing after the invasion altered the other justifications for war and a good deal of information subsequent confirmed the validity of the decision. There was no absolute point where war became inevitable, and there is no information, although a lot of wild speculation, that supports the idea that Bush or the Administration came into office with an agenda to make war on Iraq, or intended to use the pretext of 9/11 as the spring board for such a war. There was no such point but there was a context. The interplay of a variety of factors, only partially captured above, produced an environment for war. The events of 9/11 gave these disparate elements a commonality that made the outcome more likely. A fateful intersection.

Two Rights Make a Wrong

By any measure the regime of Saddam Husayn was monstrous, a threat to its neighbors, forcibly demonstrated, and to its own people, who vanished in large numbers into unmarked, mass graves or died writhing from chemical weapons. The evidence of every sort of violation of human rights, of the flouting of international principles, of failure to honor agreements, of corruption—personal and institutional—of staggering proportions was incontrovertible and provided ample grounds for regime change in Iraq. If the connections to international terrorism—particularly al Qai'da and the events of 9/11—were far less clear, enough presumptive evidence existed to add weight to any decision to pursue military options for regime change, especially given the years of failure that preceded and the climate after 9/11. And if later circumstances did not demonstrate that Iraq had actual weapons of mass destruction—the most recalled reason for the invasion—it did have the intent to reconstitute those programs the moment circumstances permitted—a less noted rationale for the invasion.

The grounds for forcible regime change in Iraq were substantive, compelling, and wrong. Not wrong because of a lack of justification, but wrong because it was not possible that such forcible change, which was imminently doable, would provide the means to control the circumstances after such change, which was distinctly not doable. This would have been the case if the Bush Administration had taken greater pains to plan for and deal with the post-conflict environment. It did not. Or, rather it did but pushed such planning to the margins in order to get on with the military effort, especially if that planning raised concerns about the efficacy of military operations. It substituted wishful thinking for planning. It assumed solutions to problems of a

political nature that it did not believe existed, dismissing concerns that military operations would create such problems. It assumed a speedy war and a quick withdrawal. The worst anticipated was that the invasion would be like some sort of natural disaster that the Iraqi government—reconstituted magically without Saddam Husayn—could deal with, perhaps with disaster relief support for a short time. As one major after-action critique argues, ‘To date, the war in Iraq is a classic case of failure to adopt and adapt prudent courses of action that balance ends, ways, and means. After the major combat operation, U.S. policy has been insolvent, with inadequate means for pursuing ambitious ends.’²⁸ As Joe Collins, the author of the forgoing comment notes, the prejudice in the Department of Defense, principally held by the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, was for a postwar strategic concept characterized by a light footprint, quick occupation, and the avoidance of a long-term US presence. Saddam needed to go, the US would facilitate, and quickly leave it to the Iraqis, with Ahmed Chalabi and company the post-war management solution.

The literature on what went wrong in Iraq is now a growth industry, proving that hindsight is a wonderful analytical tool.²⁹ Based on what happened, it is easy to see now what was wrong then. The question is, was it possible to see then what would be made wrong by what happened later. The next question is whether any of the after-action assessments and proposed changes will operate next time to make things go better—which begs the question of whether we should try to do so. The answer to the first question is a very qualified ‘yes’. To the second a ‘maybe’ tending to doubtful.

The arguments for military operations to effect regime change in Iraq were weighty, and any impartial assessment would give them serious consideration. On one side of the scale of judgment, the arguments for action were overwhelming and substantive, both in reality—the thuggish nature of the Saddam regime—and apparently—the solid but ultimately flawed intelligence on Iraq’s WMD programs. Although it is hard to remember now, there was considerable bipartisan support for a policy of regime change in Iraq for years before the events of 2001 and later. Those events strengthened the general consensus for regime change, if not agreement on the particular means.

²⁸ See the altogether insightful study by Joseph Collins, an eye witness to the train wreck, *Choosing War: The Decision to Invade Iraq and its Aftermath*, Washington, DC: NDU Press, INSS Occasional Papers #5, April, 2008. Collins offers that the war became inevitable by November, 2002, when various factors came together to push for a decision and others failed to coalesce in a way to eliminate doubts about Iraqi intentions.

²⁹ There is a steady flow of works from think tanks, journalists, former officials, policy analysts, and the lunatic fringe on what went wrong and what to do. See for example Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004, or Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, New York: Penguin Press, 2006. Also Thomas G. Mahnken and Thomas A. Keaney, editors, *War in Iraq: Planning and Execution* New York: Routledge, 2007. In addition see the RAND study by Nora Bensahel, et. al, *After Saddam: Pre-War Planning and the Occupation of Iraq*, RAND, Arroyo Center, 2008. On lessons learned on reconstruction in Iraq and on CPA see the congressionally mandated Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction report, *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*, Washington: GPO, January, 2009. It is available online at <http://www.sigir.mil/hardlessons/Default.aspx>. The insights from Duelfer’s *Hide and Seek* are particularly pertinent here. There are myriads proposals for institutional changes, reform of the whole of government, and a cottage industry in doctrine writing and policy recommendations on stability operations, post-conflict management, peacekeeping, and putting the world right.

In balance, on the other side of the scale, the only real counter argument—before the event—was based on a counsel of prudence: can you accomplish your goals and deal with the situation after you have done so. In the former case, there was real, concrete evidence, even if some of it was only seemingly so, for action. To be balanced not with solid, concrete evidence to the contrary but with a weak philosophical assertion—made suspect by a bitter partisanship—that we, the United States, did not have the means, the staying power, or the political will to do what invasion would require us to do post invasion. In many minds, the fact of Chalabi as the basis for a new government, however much based on naïve assumptions, answered this concern from prudence. Asked and answered. Further, if you accepted the argument from prudence, what policy flowed from it, all other options having been tried before, repeatedly. More of the same? With similar results? When reason and capability stood in stark relief before the bar of judgment? That subsequent events gave weight after the fact to arguments from prudence before the fact is next to meaningless. Prudence is weightless. And lessons learned exercises that ignore this fact and rush to judgment on what to do next time, even if they are on the mark, should be embraced with great circumspection and not the enthusiasm that seems to now govern the process. But more on that below.

If there was a knowable understanding before the event that should have counted and did not, it was this: the decision to replace Saddam was a political one; the means chosen to do so were military. In such cases, political judgment needs to control military action. Before, during, and after. This did not happen. Instead, military plans and necessities, the Department of Defense, dominated the process throughout, with political judgment forced to play a supporting role. And when such judgment clashed with the driving military logic, it was marginalized. Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, their strategic concepts and supporting military plans, took center state, with Colin Powell and Rich Armitage and the Department of State increasingly regarded as obstructionists for raising doubts.

Policy Mismatch. Thus, gradually, and operating in an environment of urgency characterized by the different elements noted above, the Bush Administration began to move towards a decision on Iraq. Or rather, it began the move to implement a position that had characterized American views since Bush 41, namely regime change. With 9/11, certainty had replaced ambiguity. In a time of certainty, doubts and doubters are a liability. The need for decisive action not half measures became the imperative. Whatever had been was now changed. Everything changed with 9/11, or so the argument went. America was at war. Not a war of its choosing but a war forced upon it in a dastardly, cowardly attack aimed at civilians on American soil. It was the new Pearl Harbor. The cause was just, the need immediate, the threat only too real, and winning a mandate. It was a war the nation had to fight with friends and allies if possible, alone if necessary, with determination unclouded by second thoughts, with whatever means circumstances demanded, for as long as was necessary. In a long war, who knows when that will be.

The problem for responses in this circumstance is that there is now a large disparity between the capabilities needed to respond and the institutional arrangements available to respond. Habits, ideas, and organizations brought into being by the Cold War have created a systemic dynamic that does not match the changed circumstances we now face, the war we are now in. We are

responding with a set of legacy institutions and mindsets derived from one context trying to apply them in another, much changed. This has been a long time in coming.

In the past, the American habit, the American way of war, at least as conceived by the military, is to reverse Clausewitz's argument that war is politics by other means and to subordinate political questions to military means and necessities until the fighting is over and control can be returned to the politicians.³⁰ A political process that subordinated the military to civilian control contained this habit and the lack of a large, standing military meant that after a conflict affairs returned to normal. That has now changed.

In the context we now find ourselves in, a concept of civilian control of the military has come to be the key understanding of civil-military relations rather than, as it was for much of our history, a question of how the military is to be viewed in support of civil society. The creation of the Department of Defense allows for people to conclude that civilians and civil concerns dominate. In fact, the size of the Department in the overall US government, its budgetary clout and lobbying influence, mean that it and military issues have come to be drivers behind a façade of civilian control. Policies implemented perhaps by civilians but reflecting strategic concepts and a framework of understanding derived from a military or militarized context. The form not the substance. Thus, we have an exceptional capability to fight a war but little to no capability to wage a peace if, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, that means some form of 'nation building', even if we or any one understood what that term means.

There has been a long march through the institutions to reach this point. With the Cold War, the United States embarked on something alien to its history, namely the creation of a large standing military and a permanent support infrastructure to maintain it. Established to confront the existential threat posed by the Soviet Union, the effort created a persisting bureaucratic architecture for national security, dominated by defense spending and procurement. The unintended consequence of this was the promotion of what President Eisenhower termed the military-industrial complex, an integrated, interlocking, symbiotic relationship of the military and the civilian contract supporting environment that eventually extended into every congressional district in the country. This interconnectivity meant jobs and political influence as the Department of Defense and the civilian support sectors used the economic clout of massive defense budgets to lobby for more. In the process, the non-military elements of the national security system declined, in real terms of money and people, but in the more esoteric areas of influence and credibility as well. The consequences of this became glaringly apparent in the post-conflict environments in Afghanistan and Iraq. The speedy military operations and stunning successes testified in terms of shock and awe the efficacy of American military power and prowess. We discovered, which should not have come as the surprise it did, that the lack of investment in all those other non-military means now required but not available meant our ability

³⁰ For an insightful discussion of this point, see the classic, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, by Russell Weigley, who provides a useful background to traditional American thinking about strategy, both by politicians and by the military. While it covers a multitude of issues, the one to single out here is the US military view of strategy for much of its history. As Weigley demonstrates, '...it is true that during 1941-45 and throughout American history until that time, the United States usually possessed no national strategy for employment of forces or the threat of force to attain political ends, except as the nation used force in wartime openly and directly in pursuit of military victories as complete as was desired or possible.' (xix)

to do what post-conflict environments required was simply not there. The lack is made obvious by Iraq. How we got to this situation is less so. This has a subtle dimension.

In responding to the nature of present threats to US interests, virtually everyone, often the military most loudly, argues that we need to respond with the full range of the means of national power, in which the political must predominate over military, kinetic means. This is always true but even more so in circumstances, like stability operations or aspects of counterinsurgency, where direct action is not obviously called for and is often counter productive. That is all well and good and no doubt true, but like many formulaic expressions, it is a mantra repeated without meaning or understanding. The requirement is not some deep mystery, nor was an awareness of these realities disguised by a mute history. Repeated studies in US experience going back a generation or more, to Vietnam and before, had stressed the non-military, political nature of dealing with similar situations. The mystery is, with that background, why it came as a surprise in Afghanistan or Iraq that this should be the case and that we should have to learn it after the fact rather than recognize it beforehand. The fact that it was a surprise tells us something of importance about the system we have developed to respond to such situations.

Exactly what does it mean that the political should predominate? If it is to have substance it must have content and that cannot be met by simply having civilians in charge of the defense establishment while letting military concepts and ideas determine thinking, drive budgets, and define the elements of national security responses. Yet, that is the situation we have created. This was the result of deliberate actions but unintended consequences. We designed for one circumstance, the Cold War, but in doing so created a system that plotted its own course. In essence, this comes down to a question of culture. Not national culture but institutional culture and how that plays in determining context and understanding.

It is tempting to relate this discussion to rivalry between the Department of Defense and the Department of State, a bureaucratic confrontation. That certainly is an element, but it is to miss something deeper. There is a significant difference in perspective, in how to look at, understand, and respond to the same set of facts and circumstances. There is something in the instinctual nature of perspective that in part determines the nature of the institution and in turn shapes the habits and practices of the inmates. Career State Department personnel, or those who choose such a career, have certain characteristics. Similarly, those who choose and grow up in military establishments have theirs. These differences have been documented—the military's favorite instrument, the Myers-Briggs personality test, sorting the world out into a matrix of four major characteristics and their subsets.³¹

One can take such instruments—which have the feel of the personality profiles in your average horoscope—with a grain of salt, but they do illustrate in a gross way very different mind sets, some of which may be personally innate, some selected for by institutions, and some taught by those institutions as it trains and rewards individuals during their careers. The operation of these characteristics takes on institutional reality as a culture, as a particular way to understand the world, to organize perception, and on the basis of it to look for ways to deal with reality. In the

³¹ Named after Isabel Myers-Briggs and based on Jungian concepts, it has been used by the military, particularly the Army, since WWII. This issue is taken up in some detail by Col Rickey Rife, 'Defense is from Mars State is from Venus', available on line in the *Small Wars Journal*, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/marsvenus.pdf>.

grossest terms, it means, on the one hand, a can-do attitude to problem solving, a habit of seeing the world and responses to it in a linear, straightforward, direct action mindset that is impatient with ambiguity and is concerned with designs for responses and how to organize and orchestrate them logically—characteristic of the career military and those in industry and business; and on the other, by a non-linear, intuitive ‘feel’ for things, that looks for context and avoids direct action and linear responses that do not ‘seem’ to fit the environment—characteristic of politicians, non-scientific academics, and individuals attracted to institutions like the State Department. A sort of Mars versus Venus dichotomy. One can make too much of this, but one needs not to make too little of it.

Difficulty arises when situations are not congenial to linear thought and direct action, especially when the counsel is to wait or do nothing or accept the necessity of waiting and doing nothing. As it happens, almost all political questions fall into this category. Political environments, like the larger social environment we humans occupy, are not logical and categorical, but contingent, variegated, complex, and muddled. They involve ambiguity, uncertainty, and nuance, none of which are reducible to simple, linear understandings and approaches or four-color PowerPoint slides and PERT charts. It is not that linear analysis is not possible or direct action employable, sometimes with telling result. It means that complex events are not captured by such reductionist approaches; and accounts, in part, for why results often do not match intentions—the unintended consequences that play such a part in human designs. Quite often political judgment counsels prudence.

To devise policy on the basis of something as vague as ‘intuition’, to wait upon events, to be patient and take counsel from prudence, however, is to invite policy to be vague, a sort of a seat-of-the-pants approach, infinitely flexible and nuanced, adjusting to changing conditions. Politicians can do that. But you cannot design a military program to do that. You cannot run a business that way. You cannot train, equip, or employ a force differently every day based on shifting perceptions, moment to moment. That is a formula for failure. Or frustration. Nor is it always fair to wait and then find action is necessary and that waiting, as it seems, makes responding harder and riskier. That is a judgment call. Increasingly the prejudice is to reduce the risk in such judgments by making them rational and linear. The trick, then, is to figure out how to balance intuition on the one hand and rational, linear thought on the other. A theory of irrational management. The problem is, after years of Cold War and an existential struggle, the United States has invested heavily in institutional arrangements that favor the latter mindset over the former. The former has been heavily discounted, is suspect, squishy, ‘academic’, and certainly not direct. Over time, we have invested in one capability at the expense of others. We have created an unbalanced organization where the lead element, DoD, now drives understanding and policy, and shapes strategic thought while it also provides the principal means for executing policy and strategy.

The consequence in building a large standing military and the supporting infrastructure is that a particular cultural viewpoint has come to dominate the national security policy making environment. A viewpoint with bureaucratic clout. It is a viewpoint that offers the feeling of being decisive, organized, and logical. It is tangible and something that many objective circumstances validate, such as responding to natural disasters or organizing for combat. What it has meant in practice, however, is the gradual elimination from policy of the political, of that

intuitive grasp and flexibility that must guide thinking and determine responses. Institutionally, it has meant the steady erosion of the role of the State Department or diplomats in the formation of policy and the ascendancy of the Department of Defense and its myriad analytical components capable of detailed planning and exquisite execution of complex plans. The erosion has not been simply in the relative size of budgets or the bureaucracy but in the nature of influence and how different viewpoints are accommodated in decision making, in the processes by which decisions are framed. There is a systemic reality and corporate mindset or culture that determines how to rate and rank what is considered or to be excluded. It is an unconscious mental framework with a very concrete approach. That this has been gradual has accustomed politicians to accept it as normal and not as something unusual and something certainly at odds with most of the history of the United States. It is at odds with trying to make use of all the instruments of national power, both because we have not invested in non-military means but because of the mindset that got us here.

This is illustrated in an indirect way by one of the major after action reports on planning for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and its problems. After highlighting those problems it concludes that the circumstances warrant greater military involvement:

It is not the case that no one planned for post-Saddam Iraq. On the contrary, many agencies and organizations within the U.S. government identified a range of possible postwar challenges in 2002 and early 2003, before major combat commenced, and suggested strategies for addressing them. Some of these ideas seem quite prescient in retrospect. Yet few if any made it into the serious planning process for OIF. They were held at bay, in the most general sense, by two mutually reinforcing sets of assumptions that dominated planning for OIF at the highest levels. Although many agencies and individuals sought to plan for post-Saddam Iraq, senior policymakers throughout the government held to a set of fairly optimistic assumptions about the conditions that would emerge after major combat and what would be required thereafter. These assumptions tended to override counterarguments elsewhere in the government. Meanwhile, senior military commanders assumed that civilian authorities would be responsible for the postwar period. Hence they focused the vast majority of their attention on preparations for and the execution of major combat operations. That both sets of assumptions proved to be invalid argues for the development of a new and broader approach to planning military operations, and perhaps a louder military voice in shaping postwar operations.³²

Given the premise with which it starts, and based on how one gets to the premise, the conclusion is stunning. That this study was done by a DoD-sponsored think tank working for the Army, it should not come as a surprise, but it still takes the breath away. It is not unique.

Few things better illustrate the consequences of the climate discussed above than how the United States structured its immediate post-conflict management efforts in Iraq.

Policy Mismatch II. Presumably, once fighting stops, politics resumes and post-conflict management becomes the province of civilians and the civilian components of national security. Political concerns return. Again, presumably, those components have been integrated into the

³² Quoted from Behsahel, et al, *After Saddam*, noted above.

whole package of planning from before combat operations, and are robust enough to undertake the tasks that follow combat—and to deal with the unanticipated consequences attending it. In the case of Iraq, the United States had three major responses tried in rapid succession. None reflected the need for or, apparently understood, what political control in the circumstances meant.

As it evolved, all were driven or controlled by the Department of Defense. In the immediate aftermath of fighting, individual combat unit commanders had a ‘swag’ of money to engage in on-the-spot reconstruction efforts to restore at the discretion of the commander civilian facilities destroyed during the fighting. While no individual commander had infinitely deep pockets—or, as it turned out instructions on how to prevent looting and freebooting from destroying infrastructure not damaged during combat—the cumulative sums were enormous. Since there was no control over these funds and no systematic way to account for them or when, where, and how they were used, it is not possible to give a true account of how much was involved or what was accomplished with them.³³ Thus, at the start of reconstruction, such as it was, there was no real guidance, plan, or follow through, and none that was subject to civilian control or oversight in these early stages. Since they were all contingent on circumstances, they formed no part of a coherent effort.

The second major effort, more organized, was the Organization for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). In part, the very name indicated that one of the underlying assumptions guiding US post-conflict goals was a version of disaster assistance, that and dismantling Iraq’s WMD programs, which was a major charge for ORHA. The head of ORHA was a retired Army lieutenant general, Jay Garner, who, ostensibly, was heading up an interagency body to coordinate reconstruction—established in January/February 2003—but who reported to the President through the CENTCOM commander and the Secretary of Defense, the Department of Defense providing most of the staffing and the money for the operation. Garner was also reportedly close to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. Garner did not survive on the ground in Iraq more than two months after the conclusion of military operations, so it is hard to evaluate that effort, although it became fairly clear fairly quickly, leading to his replacement, that Garner and ORHA lacked the manpower, authority, or understanding to accomplish a post-conflict management mission. Still, it was a DoD operation, and though the Defense Secretary was a civilian, the question remains whether that is the place to ensure civilian control of policy development and execution, and the subordination of military plans to political considerations much less control.

The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) replaced ORHA and a former career foreign service officer, Paul ‘Jerry’ Bremer replaced Garner, with a mandate from President Bush to put Iraq on the road to reconstruction, rehabilitation from its Baathist past, and to a return as speedily as possible to self-governance.³⁴ This operation, too, fell under the control of DoD, and Bremer,

³³ This discussion is based on the author’s personal experience in Baghdad as the head of the Information Management Unit in the Coalition Provisional Authority, part of the mission of which was to collect information on all US reconstruction efforts.

³⁴ Bremer provides his own account of this mission in his memoir, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, NY: Threshold Editions, 2006. Also see James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Benjamin Runkle, Siddharth Mohandas, *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority*, RAND, National Security

although theoretically reporting to the President, was expected to respond through Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, whose office repeatedly tried to micromanage affairs on the ground in Iraq often undermining CPA overall. DoD also coordinated staffing for CPA, which never succeeded in manning the effort at levels required.

Thus, the main ‘civilian’ or political effort fell under the control of the DoD with State largely excluded. Even if the Department of State had been in charge, it lacked the capability to establish a new government in and for Iraq. It had no planning staff, no manpower, no resources, no history, and no support to make it effective on the ground. If it had had these things, it might have been more of a bureaucratic player before hand; lacking them it was inert, and would likely have failed, fulfilling everyone’s expectations. Moreover, the US military command structure in Iraq remained outside of CPA authority and was thus never subordinate to political control, a presumptive condition essential to stability operations.³⁵ A similar story applies to Afghanistan.

Much controversy surrounded CPA, particularly the decisions—mandated from Washington by DoD—to disband the Iraqi army and to rigorously de-Baathify the successor Iraqi government, the initial assumption being that the likes of Ahmed Chalabi and Iraqi exiles would quickly reconstitute effective control.³⁶ The point here is not to engage on those issues, but to note that here, in this third effort in Iraq, once again, post-conflict management fell to DoD and to the military. This reality was not part of some neo-conservative plot but the consequence of long-term trends in the evolution of US capabilities for and understanding of how to deal with post-conflict management, the current term of art being ‘stability operations’. No agency of the US government outside of DoD had the manpower, the resources, or the bureaucratic clout to conduct such operations, especially if they engaged at any point questions of providing security to political goals, such as national building and development. No agency had the planning capability for such large scale efforts. These were the result of longstanding processes and bureaucratic realities. Realities that then played out on the ground because of the nature of the means available not the means necessary.

It is hard to know what CPA was. Although it succeeded ORHA, and had a similar charter, and was largely funded through DoD, it was not a US government organization; it was not part of a US diplomatic mission; it was not an international organization; it was not a non-government organization; it was not an Iraqi organization, even one closely linked to exile groups. It was the interim government of Iraq, drawing its authority under the terms of international law on

Monograph MG847, 2009, which observes, ‘The continuing debate over when and by whom a decision was taken to mount an extended occupation reflects the general lack of clarity characteristic of the administration’s planning for and early management of its intervention in Iraq.’

³⁵ Military doctrine repeatedly asserts the importance of unity of command. The military, however, resists unity of command in practice if it is not in charge. The contradiction plays out in countless practical ways on the ground every day in all the situations where the United States engages ‘all the instruments of national power’ in a context in which one of the elements overwhelms all the others.

³⁶ While a disputable point, Charles Duelfer poignantly documents this environment in *Hide and Seek*, especially pp 309ff. Ambassador Bremer also discusses it in more diplomatic terms, and provides important counterpoint to Duelfer. Also see the less reliable *Fiasco* by Ricks. In this vein, it would be a good idea to completely ignore the tendentious and highly inaccurate account of CPA in *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*, by Rajiv Chandrasekaran. For an Iraqi view of the problems with CPA and the US effort see Ali Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*, New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2007, which, despite some major drawbacks, tells an insightful if depressing story.

occupation. As such, its actual mandate was not entirely clear, since it was hard to determine exactly how its authority was derived, to whom it was responsible, and by whom and for whom it was to carry out its functions. Since none of these issues had been resolved before the invasion, they were never adequately addressed after. Nor, as it turned out, was CPA to have enough time to resolve the issues, the determination being made in Washington to liquidate it as quickly as possible and return control to Iraqis by 30 June 2004. While this history was marching to its conclusion, events overcame whatever planning preceded the US invasion and whatever measures CPA and an emerging Iraqi government were contemplating. Iraq descended into chaos. That descent shaped all discussion that followed, had a retroactive effect on all the events leading up to the invasion and how they were seen, and led to the host of doctrinal and policy discussions on how to deal with stability operations, counterinsurgency, and interagency coordination that have flowed forth like Spring floods.

Topsy Turvy. Perhaps nothing illustrates the upside down nature of the current US government approach to post-conflict management than the tale of two documents, the US Army/Marine Corps manual on counterinsurgency and the Army doctrine manual on stability operations, Field Manual 3.07.³⁷ Both documents, wholly the product of the military, repeatedly make the point of the need for comprehensive—meaning whole of government—approaches to dealing with the types of issues encountered on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan without appreciating the irony that they are themselves the products of no comprehensive—read whole of government—approach. Their genesis and execution is based on the experience of US military senior and not so senior officers reacting to evolving circumstances in Iraq, with some inputs from the ground in Afghanistan. While both pay lip service to lessons from the past, both are blissfully ignorant of a long history within the US government to devise policy and doctrine for counterinsurgency and stability operations—once flying under the term ‘low intensity conflict’—as if these recent documents are the first times an effort has been made to comprehend the environment and develop adequate responses. They are wonderfully self-congratulatory.³⁸

The issue is not whether they contain useful insights, they do, but none of those is mysterious. To paraphrase Dr. Johnson, they are both insightful and original; unfortunately the parts that are original are not insightful and the parts that are insightful are not original. They are based on features of insurgent environments that are age old, the methods for responding well tried. All of this was known and knowable before either Iraq or Afghanistan.

The amazing part of the story, the story, is not the development of these manuals in response to real-world circumstances but that the lessons they now attempt to transmit were not part of the repertoire, the doctrine, training, and education of military officers before Iraq and Afghanistan; and that the concept of the subordination of military considerations to political ones should be advanced as a new necessity. None of this is new. But more to the point, these manuals, while paying lip service to interagency requirements, are the products of a strategy thought mill within

³⁷ Both documents are accessible on line. The counterinsurgency manual is available in print, with a foreword by General David Petraeus, from the Univ. of Chicago press.

³⁸ While both documents do acknowledge, in passing, earlier efforts, this is to situate the present effort not to draw upon earlier insights, nor to account for why those earlier efforts failed to produce institutional and systemic changes that would have put the US in a better position to understand what to do and how to do it in Iraq and Afghanistan. Lessons unlearned that might have helped but were not absorbed.

the Department of Defense that dominates the environment shaping strategic thinking; and they give no account to why, institutionally, the United States was singularly unprepared to understand or respond to environments like Iraq. Past efforts to do so had largely come to naught because the military and the Department of Defense wanted no part of those situations especially if they interfered with what was considered the real mission, preparing for major war not sideshows. The issue now, with Iraq and Afghanistan very much on the agenda, is whether that older mentality will reassert itself once we have liquidated commitments on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan. There are signs within the services that such a return to ‘real’ war is in the minds of senior military leaders. Time will tell.

More to the point, the system that develops these doctrinal statements, and now heavily influences the whole process of strategy, is not based on a process involving non-DoD players—what is sometimes called interagency coordination or the subordination of the military component of strategy to political considerations. It has no expression in fact, or when it is, it is more honored in the breach than in practice. The military’s new counterinsurgency manual argues that ‘Military efforts are necessary and important to counterinsurgency(COIN) efforts, but they are only effective when integrated into a comprehensive strategy employing all instruments of national power.’ This is a frequently iterated principle, here and in the now burgeoning family of military doctrine on peacekeeping, stability operations, complex contingency operations, irregular warfare, and the host of other euphemisms used to describe a recurrent reality.

The argument is based on a longstanding insight into what is necessary in conducting military operations in largely civilian contexts, which is characteristic of most small wars. The problem is, the non-military component in developing these thoughts into manuals is absent. When it is finally engaged, it is brought in to comment on a completed thought process and a well-advanced set of papers drafted by the military and its myriad set of contractors and supported think tanks. After the fact. Whatever may be or was the experience of Iraq and Afghanistan by the non-military elements of national power, these are not captured and not reflected in the manuals. The clear message, which is not lost on other departments and agencies, is that they are expected to conform to DoD, military, logic and ideas of how the interagency community is to be integrated into the effort, how to make them DoD compliant. Thus, the current set of manuals is based on the military’s experience of and take on what happened in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are unilateral interpretations that assume the need for unity of effort and then, based on a sense that it is not forthcoming from the non-military players—often seen as derelict in their duty—they are informed what they must do to conform. This is upside down and backwards. But the nature of bureaucratic realities—DoD as the 800 lbs gorilla—and years of relying on DoD and its elaborate planning and execution capabilities—the Goldwater/Nichols reformed joint environment and the Cold War-era legacy combatant command structure that dominates US regional architecture—mean the subordination of political considerations to military doctrine and planning. Even more telling is the fact that these documents are meant to be part of a family of how-to manuals, the theory being that they implement larger, more strategic thinking. In reality, however, that larger family, including so-called interagency concepts, all appeared after the generation of these two manuals. The cart before the horse. Thus, from the start, the system was driven from the wrong way round.

Whines of change. There is some recognition of this problem and feeble efforts to change it. The principal sign of that is the creation in the Department of State of an office to deal with interagency coordination for reconstruction and stability operations, efforts to reform the ‘whole of government’, and an outpouring from think tanks on reorganizing the national security architecture.³⁹ This now includes the idea of creating a full-time civilian response corps to deploy, ala the military, into stability operations environments to do all those non-military missions that experience has proved need to be done that cannot be done by the military. None of these efforts, however, as admirable as they are, has much chance of meaningful effect in an environment dominated by the Department of Defense. Effect in the sense of what the putative goal is: the subordination of military considerations to political control. Not the improvement of interagency coordination. Not the integration of all the instruments of national power. Without a firm commitment to the former, the latter effort amounts to little more than a bureaucratic power grab designed to control the irrational aspects—the non-linear—of policy formation and execution, namely the political.

The happy assumption seems to be that there are bureaucratic solutions to politics. The thrust of all the talk of reform of the whole of government, or rather its consequence in an environment dominated by the Department of Defense and its host of related think tanks and strategic concept development components, will not be an improvement in political control over the processes but its increased bureaucratization under the influence of DoD. No other agency of the US government has the planning capability—resources, manpower, institutional arrangements—to plan for and execute the type of large-scale efforts called for by situations like Iraq or Afghanistan. This simple, physical, bureaucratic reality shapes the outcome. Lacking any other means, it is the means we must use, which then entails subordinating concerns to what DoD understands and does. It is confirmation of the old saw that when all you have is a hammer all problems look like nails.⁴⁰

The problem with the manuals does not end here. They are based on learning lessons from the US experience in Iraq and Afghanistan on how to do stability operations and counterinsurgency. While learning lessons is important, what is the lesson to be learned? It is not just how to do such things better next time. It is to learn what the US role should be next time. Unfortunately, the manuals assume the condition that makes them. That is, they assume that the United States

³⁹ Organizations such as the US Institute for Peace are also engaging, with substantive policy manuals and various, on-line, how-to training programs on peacekeeping and stability operations. These draw heavily on DoD resources, particularly the US Army’s Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute at the US Army War College but under the control of the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command through the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

⁴⁰ The idea of the need to use and strengthen all the means of US national power is enshrined in law. See Title 22 USC, Chapter 38, section 2656 which notes that “Consistent with the report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, Congress makes the following findings:

“(1) Long-term success in the war on terrorism demands the use of all elements of national power, including diplomacy, military action, intelligence, covert action, law enforcement, economic policy, foreign aid, public diplomacy, and homeland defense.

“(2) To win the war on terrorism, the United States must assign to economic and diplomatic capabilities the same strategic priority that is assigned to military capabilities.

“(3) The legislative and executive branches of the Government of the United States must commit to robust, long-term investments in all of the tools necessary for the foreign policy of the United States to successfully accomplish the goals of the United States. “ The problem is how to move from these sentiments to reality.

will be in charge, and given the military's resistance to guidance from outside its own channels—whether from international bodies or from political leadership in the United States—they presume this condition as a rationale. But should the United States seek to repeat regime change in other situations on the scale of Afghanistan and Iraq, not a foregone conclusion, is it the case that the US and the US military, or some sort of reformed civilian corps, ought to be in charge? If not, where do the manuals take one? In point of fact, any US effort will and must be part of a coalition effort, and the most critical player in that coalition will be the host country. The stability operation or the counterinsurgency effort will be the problem for the host and not for the supporting players. In this environment, the United States does not do counterinsurgency. At least not directly. It must support that effort. What the manuals do, presume and require, though, is US control, with the dominate role reserved for the military. Both in planning and on the ground. The manuals do not reflect an interagency understanding at home and they accept as a given that the US should be in charge abroad. Thus, they are based on a premise that invites trouble from the start and leaves the US, civilian and military, unprepared for the role that circumstances require, namely to be in support. Moreover, they pay insufficient attention to the rude fact that much of US national policy implementation is subcontracted to private firms, supporting DoD and other agencies. Thus, the US support role is missed and one of its now-dominant features is misunderstood.⁴¹

Unlessons: Iraq Redux?

The invasion of Iraq was rational and justifiable. There were compelling reasons to engage, experience and judgment after the fact notwithstanding. Based on the experience after the fact, however, two critical questions emerge: Should we do Iraq again? And, should we do Iraq again, will the means we are now developing make dealing with similar circumstances go better?

While it seems unlikely that the US will seek regime change on the scale of Iraq, or Afghanistan, in the future, the first question is largely unanswerable, since the circumstances leading to the invasion of Iraq were unique; and new circumstances will have their own realities but with the added knowledge of Iraq, or Afghanistan, to influence decisions. If Iraq, or Afghanistan, were *sui generis*, if we will not seek a repeat of Iraq-like engagement—full-scale regime change—then all the current lessons learned exercises for the future are irrelevant. Assuming that we might so engage, the question then is, will all the 'lessons learned' exercises and discussions of the reform of the whole of government meet the case, or are they chasing after the fact, trying to do in retrospect what needed to be done before, making it possible to do better what we should not be doing at all? And proposing to do it on a scale we will not seek in the future? And if that is the case, how likely are they to promote a repetition of mistakes rather than prevent them? Unanswerable perhaps as knowing whether the US will undertake such an exercise again. They look, however, as if they are designs for doing Iraq right after we know that things went wrong, assuming that future events will be like Iraq and we have learned to do better. Not exactly reassuring. Not questions that any of the current efforts are addressing, all assuming the answer.

⁴¹ This issue is sometimes referred to as the 'hollow government' phenomenon, the slow dispersal of normal government functions into disparate hands, in this case, contractors. While many government services can be privatized, the question is whether national security policy can be. See H. Brinton Milward and Keith Proven, 'Governing the Hollow State', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 10, 2, April 2000, pp. 359-79; Frederickson and Smith, *The Public Administration Theory Primer*, as noted above.

Some of the ‘lessons’ are fairly straightforward, such as, know more, assume less. It is clear that we did not know enough about the actual environment on the ground in Iraq, relying on out-of-date information; or information generated from sources with only a partial view on what it was necessary to know; or information trusted from sources with agendas not our own. One always needs to know more, thus it is impossible to know with certainty if one knows enough, but our intelligence collection and evaluation was too removed from ground truth and too prone to fill in the blanks with what was expected, a failing of both policy makers and intelligence analysis. Not easily remedied. But the most difficult lesson in situations such as Iraq—regime change—is a negative one: you cannot do conflict planning without post-conflict planning. They are a package deal, a linked situation.

The only way we will know that we have a robust post-conflict planning capability that is serious—in the only way it matters—is if in the planning for conflict the post-conflict planning raises questions that tell us not to engage in the conflict, at least militarily, and we take the hint. A counsel of prudence. The subordination of military means and considerations to political ones. In the case of Iraq, when post-conflict planning began to raise doubts about the wisdom of the invasion, it was marginalized. Conflict planning drove the process and assumed the best of the rest. Will all the doctrines, lessons learned, and talk of reform change this? But post-conflict planning requires more even should it be taken seriously.

This also argues that one must have not only a serious post-conflict planning capability, with all the necessary means and bureaucratic clout, but with the means to implement plans to re-establish public order, civil society, decent government, and the rule of law in the target country. All things we currently lack. We have the military means, after generations of investment, but not the non-military means, after generations of neglect. The question is, do we have the incentives and the will to develop those capabilities in an environment of constrained budgets with strong players ready to protect what they have?

We built a strong military to engage the Cold War, a powerful incentive at the time supported by a strong national consensus and policy, in part based on the assumption of not using it to fight a major war while developing the capability to do so. Years of investment have created the present Department of Defense in all its myriad incarnations as a bureaucratic reality and political lobbying institution. We now do not have the Cold War but we still have a Cold War-sized military with all the means to advance its interests in political battles in Washington for money, manpower, and influence. While we are not likely to need as robust a post-conflict management establishment, and we are unsure as to what it must look like and do, what is the incentive to build and maintain one? More Iraqs? More Afghanistans? Even after those situations go away, which is the plan?

Since we do not have anything like a national consensus, as we had for the containment doctrine, to guide our post-Cold War policy making and planning, on what basis does one, can one, sustain such a post-conflict planning and implementation architecture against the brute bureaucratic realities with which we now operate? In constrained budget environments without a national consensus to underwrite the effort and without changes to the basic balance in size and mission of the present structure of the Executive Branch, will we, can we build, maintain, and

sustain the non-military means for post-conflict engagement in circumstances were it is unclear if we will call upon such a capability at some point in the future? The odds do not favor a satisfactory answer.

This also begs the question of whether the underlying assumption is sustainable: what all of this effort is leading to is the idea that the United States must engage effectively in nation building. Given the number of failed and failing states, this is not perhaps entirely unreasonable to assume, although the implications of such an assumption—its demands on US resources and will—are enormous. The question is, do we, does anyone, know how to build a nation? We can advise on processes, on institutions, we can help build capacity; but can we give any of them legitimacy or reality in circumstances that we are only intervening in and not part of a history that we have been involved in making?⁴² How long does it take to create a nation? Is that process ever complete? These remain unanswered questions. How, then, do we plan for it? They go to the heart of the matter. It is easy to assume future conflicts and the need to respond, which means appropriate plans and capabilities. It is far less clear that we will engage in, in any depth, nation building, especially on the scale and for the duration that circumstances suggest. What level is appropriate? Where? When? Can any of this be answered in the abstract?

The second question noted at the beginning of this section is not much easier to answer, whether our current responses learned on the job will make next time go better. The discussion above on the doctrine manual suggests a partial answer. Our planning and restructuring effort is based not on the realities of coalition efforts, which will be the dominate reality, but on the preferences of the military and other US bureaucratic players, enshrined in manuals, concepts, and reforms based on the assumption that we will do in the future what we think we have learned from doing Iraq and Afghanistan, and doing them badly.

In addition, for all the talk of whole of government reform, without serious effort to effect a national consensus—one that defines the when, where, and how of employing the instruments of national power—that is sustained by public understanding and commitment, then such reform will fail to effect real change and fail on the ground, as political crisis at home overwhelms policy in the field.⁴³ Bureaucratic reform cannot make up for bad policy. Nor can it insure a proper role for the political aspects of policy and policy making. Interagency coordination of the whole of government is just as likely to reinforce bad policies as it is to implement good ones better, without ensuring that the decisions are right. All the indications for planning for Iraq are that the interagency process functioned as intended. The problems were not ones of coordination but of political decisions by leadership using the system. Bureaucratic reforms will not change that if true.

⁴² A simple test. American preferences when it comes to national building is for democracy. The question is, are there pre-conditions for democracy? If so, is the transference of current US institutional arrangements or similar ideas drawn from the Westminster model sufficient to create a functioning democracy in the target society? If there is a civil society context that precedes such arrangements and validates them—as they did in the long history of the evolution of democracy in the United States that began well before the Constitution—then mere capacity building and rule-of-law instruction will not achieve the goal. What will? One cannot transfer history and context.

⁴³ For a discussion of the necessary ingredients for post-conflict management see Max Manwaring and Wm. J. Olson, editors, *Managing Contemporary Conflict: Pillars of Success*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996, particularly David Miller, 'Back to the Future: Structuring Foreign Policy in a Post-Cold War World.'

The assumption seems to be that if you exert more control over and then through the bureaucracy that this will lead to greater control over reality, making it more predictable and compliant. Risky assumptions.⁴⁴ While it is possible to politicize bureaucracy, it is not possible to bureaucratize politics, at least in the sense of making it rational. And in an environment where one of the bureaucratic players so outweighs and is able to bureaucratically outwit the competition, then reform will only serve to increase the imbalance, strengthening the clout of the Department of Defense at the expense of others. This means more than just a bureaucratic line-and-box arrangement where rearranging the deck chairs will work as reform, but goes to the underlying conceptual realities and priorities that drive thinking, the ultimate consequence in the setting discussed here being the further subordination of the political to military concerns. Hammers and nails. Without an overarching and underpinning strategic concept and consensus to guide reform, reform comes to drive strategic thinking. In an environment where one agency dominates the reform environment that reform is lopsided. Hence the focus here on how not to do. Unlessons.

The principal question that any lessons learned exercise ought to answer, in circumstances where the experience is not shrouded in mystery, is why, knowing what we know, didn't we learn the lesson from last time. Unless we accept the poet Howard Nemerov's view that, 'The reason we do not learn from history is because we are not the ones who learned last time.' There is more involved here than rushing to judgment on learning the putative lessons of Iraq or Afghanistan. They are second order questions, but they are taking pride of place. Without an answer to the first order question, any new effort is likely to be about as durable as past failures, because it fails to grasp its own failure. It is likely to repeat its mistakes. The first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.

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⁴⁴ The underlying rationale is a desire to have clear goals linked to measurable performance based on the idea that this will reduce unpredictability and lead to greater control of circumstances, thus reducing unintended consequences. A thoroughly bureaucratic view in that this is the underlying rationale for bureaucracy in the first place and a strong reliance on it will empower bureaucratic imperatives at the expense of others. It is the analog in public administration terms to a belief in the possibilities of a centrally planned economy in economic terms. It is an illusion in either context. 'If the administrative arm of government is given greater levels of autonomy, and if clearer goals are not forthcoming from the democratic institutions of government, the likely result is the transfer of increasing amounts of policymaking power to the bureaucracy.... Organization helps determine not only how bureaucracies and bureaucrats behave but also how power and influence are distributed among the various actors in the political system.' Frederickson and Smith, *The Public Administration Theory Primer*, p. 56. There is, however, also a deep tradition in the American body politic to oppose a too-independent bureaucracy. The prejudice in American political practice, derived from history and encompassed in the Constitution, is against energetic, efficient government and the concentration of power. There are strong antibodies in the body politic to attack moves to make government more efficient that are ignored at considerable cost. See my 'Interagency Coordination: The Normal Accident or the Essence of Indecision?' in Gabriel Marcella, editor, *The Affairs of State: The Interagency and National Security*, Carlisle, PA: SSI, December 2008, pp. 215-254. The classic study of the tension between the bureaucratic state and the challenges of democratic society—'who should rule'—is Dwight Waldo, *The Administrative State*, NY: Ronald Press, 1948. To be contrasted with Herbert Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, NY: Free Press, 1947. Efficiency is not the goal nor is it a value appreciated in US Constitutional practice. Situational awareness on many of these issues is also found in another public administration classic, Harold Seidman, *Politics, Position and Power: The Dynamics of Federal Organization*, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, third edition, 1998.

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