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‘Our Responsibility and Privilege to Fight Freedom’s Fight’:
Neoconservatism, the Project for the New American Century, and the Making of the
Invasion of Iraq in 2003

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

by

Daniel McCoy

B.A. St. Edward’s University, 2011

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Finally, I thank my parents for their unwavering encouragement in seeing that I persevere through my graduate studies at the University of New Orleans. Also, to all my friends outside the realm of UNO far and wide and close by with whom I discussed thesis ideas and strategies. My heartfelt admiration and appreciation to you all for listening, participating, and suggesting.

What's still more awful is that the man with the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not renounce the ideal of Madonna, and in the bottom of his heart he may still be on fire, sincerely on fire, with longing for the beautiful ideal, just as in the days of his youthful innocence.
Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880)

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Key Players

George W. Bush- 43rd President of the United States (2001-2009)

William J. Clinton- 42nd President of the United States (1993-2001)

Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti- 5th President of Iraq (1979- 2003)

Richard B. Cheney- 17th United States Secretary of Defense (1989-1993) and 46th Vice President of the United States (2001-2009)

Lewis “Scooter” Libby- Chief of Staff to the Vice President of the United States (2001-2005)

Colin L. Powell- 12th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1989-1993) and 65th United States Secretary of State (2001-2005)

Richard L. Armitage- 13th United States Deputy Secretary of State (2001-2005)

Paul H. O’Neill- 72nd United States Secretary of the Treasury (2001-2002)

Condoleezza Rice- 20th United States National Security Advisor (2001-2005) and 66th United States Secretary of State (2005-2009)

Donald H. Rumsfeld- 13th and 21st United States Secretary of Defense (1975-1977 and 2001-2006)

Paul D. Wolfowitz- 4th Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (1989-1993) and 25th United States Deputy Secretary of Defense (2001-2005)

Douglas J. Feith- 7th Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (2001-2005)

George J. Tenet- 18th Director of Central Intelligence (1996-2004)

Richard N. Perle- Chairman of the Defense Policy Advisory Committee (2001-2003)

Irving W. Kristol- public intellectual credited with being a pioneer in the school of American neo-conservatism (1920-2009)

William Kristol- Founder of *The Weekly Standard* (1995-) and Founder of the neoconservative think tank the Project for the New American Century (1997-2006)

Robert Kagan- Founder of the Project for the New American Century (1997-2006)

Zalmay Khalilzad- member of the Project for the New American Century and Director of the Strategy, Doctrine, and Force Structure at the RAND Corporation (1993-2000); Afghani expatriate; US Ambassador to Afghanistan (2003-2005); US Ambassador to Iraq (2005-2007)

Al-Qaeda- a global, militant Sunni Islamist organization founded by Osama bin Laden principally headquartered in Afghanistan (1988-)

Abbreviations
and Acronyms

| | |
|---------|--|
| 9/11 | Terror Attacks of September 11, 2001 |
| BWA | Biological Warfare Agent |
| CBW | Chemical and Biological Weapons |
| CENTCOM | US Central Command |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| CJCS | Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff |
| NIC | National Intelligence Council |
| NIE | National Intelligence Estimate |
| NSA | National Security Agency |
| PNAC | The Project for the New American Century |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNSCOM | United Nations Special Commission |
| WMD | Weapons of Mass Destruction |
| WS | <i>The Weekly Standard</i> |

Abstract

The Project for the New American Century (PNAC) was a neoconservative Washington, D.C. foreign policy think tank, comprised of seasoned foreign policy stalwarts who had served multiple presidential administrations as well as outside-the-beltway defense contractors, that was founded in 1997 by William Kristol, editor of the conservative political magazine *The Weekly Standard*, and Robert Kagan, a foreign policy analyst and political commentator currently at the Brookings Institution. The PNAC would shut down its operations in 2006. Using *The Weekly Standard* as its mouthpiece, the PNAC helped foment support for the removal of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein beginning in 1998, citing Iraq's noncooperation with UN weapons inspections. The PNAC became further emboldened in its urgency and rhetoric to quell the geopolitical risk posed by Hussein after the 9/11 terror attacks. The only justifiable response the George W. Bush Administration could play in thwarting Hussein, the PNAC argued, involved a military action.

Keywords: The Project for the New American Century; Iraq War; Saddam Hussein; *The Weekly Standard*; The Vulcans; weapons of mass destruction

Introduction

This thesis aims to examine the role played by the architects of the Iraq War of 2003 both inside and outside the Bush Administration with specific focus on the analysis and insight posited by the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) as part of a larger plan of strategically asserting American interests in the Middle East before and after the 9/11 terror attacks. In the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of Communism, neoconservatives exalted America's elevated position as the lone superpower in a unipolar world. With unrivaled US hegemony heralding with it added global responsibilities, neoconservatives including the PNAC stressed on America reenergizing its military might to ensure the security of US strategic interests abroad with specific attention placed on dislodging Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime in Iraq. This thesis will also attempt to translate both the political and world philosophies related to foreign policy and US international relations that the PNAC ideologues held vital to the mission of the PNAC as well as how those philosophies manifested into the Bush Administration's rationale to go to war against Iraq in 2003.

The Iraq War of 2003 and the subject of the PNAC remain a rather contemporary area of study. Notwithstanding, the areas of focus in this thesis related to the run-up to war and the consequential fallout from the Iraq War have been deeply researched by academics, public policy thinkers, political scientists, and politicians. The vast majority of source collections and secondary literature used in the production of this thesis was published after the 2003 invasion. However, the scope and reach the PNAC had in motivating the Clinton and Bush administrations to heed the PNAC's arguments for waging regime change in Iraq has gone largely understated. The memoirs analyzed for this thesis, many written by PNAC members who also served on President Bush's cabinet, do not mention the presence and, furthermore, relevance the PNAC

wielded in the run-up to the Iraq War. Influential media outlets such as the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, through op-eds written by key members of the PNAC including Paul Wolfowitz and Zalmay Khalilzad, echoed the PNAC's arguments to a wider audience in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but never mentioned the PNAC outright. The two newspapers facilitated as outlets for neoconservatives, Republican hawks, and policy thinkers to vent their frustrations in what they perceived as the Clinton Administration's tepid inaction regarding Iraq in addition to the United Nations' stagnant containment strategy over Iraq's WMD (weapons of mass destruction) programs. While the advocacy journalism of the PNAC's neoconservative mainstays is revealing, their memoirs are exercises in covering their tracks.

The two primary source archives utilized for this thesis, the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Archives, provide intelligence and analysis concerning Iraq's WMD programs in addition to the evolution of US war plans and strategies against Iraq stretching from the 1990s into the 2000s. The role of the CIA, in tandem with the Bush Administration's argument for war against Iraq, was to gather and dispense credible intelligence highlighting the scope and scale of Iraq's WMD programs to the Bush Administration who, in turn, would mold the intelligence-reporting into policymaking. Former CIA Director George Tenet stressed throughout his memoir that CIA intelligence-gathering is not structured around nor caters to any biases toward specific US policy.¹

Some valuable scholarly writing is available on neoconservative influence. Whereas Justin Vaïsse maps out the trajectory of the neoconservative movement through three distinct waves, journalist James Mann and historians Terry Anderson and Richard Immerman detail the meteoric rise to political power experienced by members of the PNAC and the second Bush

¹ George Tenet with Bill Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007).

Administration.² Vaisse lays out the philosophy of neo-conservatism and the traction that it drew through the second half of the 20th Century in the same way that Mann, Immerman, and Anderson analyze the personal philosophies that drove PNAC members and Bush Administration officials to keep striving for greater influence and weightier decision-making. Richard Perle, William Kristol, Paul Wolfowitz, and Robert Kagan, meanwhile, expound upon their own personal weltanschauung while delving deep into their public recommendations for enhanced geopolitical security with their own writings that read more like biased foreign policy manifestos than balanced perspectives rooted in academic empiricism. Little useful literature is available on the role of think tanks as related to the foreign policy formulated by the George W. Bush Administration.

The Mission Statement of the PNAC

On June 3, 1997, the Project for the New American Century published a document entitled “PNAC- Statement of Principles.”³ From its outset, the document was critical of Clinton-era American foreign and defense policies, labeling them as “adrift.”⁴ The PNAC viewed the Clinton Administration as lacking in confronting present threats and thereby jeopardizing American security interests in the long run. Included in the criticism were conservatives whom the PNAC deemed as not having voiced and advanced a strategic vision of America’s role in the world. The aim of this document was to make the case for fostering and rallying American global leadership.

² James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush’s War Cabinet* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2004); Terry H. Anderson, *Bush’s Wars* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011); Richard H. Immerman, “Paul Wolfowitz and the Lonely Empire,” in *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 196-231.

³ Project for the New American Century, “PNAC----Statement of Principles,” *rrojasdatabank.info*, 3 June 1997 <<http://www.rrojasdatabank.info/pfpc/PNAC---statement%20of%20principles.pdf>> (3 May 2015), 1-2.

⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

A big question looming over the PNAC when it created their “Statement of Principles” was where did America stand at the present time as the world’s preeminent power after having won the Cold War? In highlighting their concern of diminished US preeminence, the PNAC cited cuts in defense spending, inattention to state diplomacy, and unreliable leadership as all being hindrances to appropriate US foreign influence. The main purpose that the public policy organization established for itself was to provide a perspective built upon the belief that US “military supremacy trumped everything” geared toward the strategic, military, and diplomatic role the United States ought to play as the lone superpower in a unipolar, post-Cold War global political landscape heading into the 21st Century with overwhelming emphasis placed on military strategy.⁵ Echoing the achievements of the Reagan Administration, the PNAC expressed prudence in establishing a foreign policy that both boldly and purposefully promoted American principles abroad. The PNAC warned that shrinking from American responsibilities invited challenges to American fundamental interests.⁶ The overarching mission the PNAC undertook for itself was to “preserve and reinforce ‘America’s benevolent global hegemony.’”⁷

The “Statement of Principles” concluded with the PNAC stressing four lessons along with their associated consequences that all Americans ought to be made aware of. Firstly, the pursuance of US global responsibilities by a modernized military equipped for 21st century warfare would be achievable only if defense spending increased significantly. Secondly, diplomatic ties with allies must be strengthened and regimes hostile to US interests and values must be challenged. Thirdly, the US had to promote political and economic freedom abroad. Lastly, America needed to recognize its responsibility and unique position in preserving and

⁵ Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 218.

⁶ Project for the New American Century, “PNAC----Statement of Principles,” 1.

⁷ Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 220.

extending an “international order” that behooved US security, prosperity, and principles. The PNAC was emulating a Reaganite foreign policy approach that would translate past successes of the Reagan administration into a resurgence of American greatness going into the next century. At the bottom of the document could be found the document’s signatories including Richard Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz.⁸

In the Beginning: A Brief History of Neoconservatism

The PNAC had its foreign policy ideologies and doctrines wedded to the tenets of *neo-conservatism*, a term coined by historian Marvin Meyers as being not a “movement” but rather a “persuasion.”⁹ Irving Kristol, the godfather of advancing the political philosophy of neo-conservatism and father of future PNAC founder and *Weekly Standard* editor, William Kristol, once memorably remarked that neo-conservatives were liberals who had been “mugged by reality.”¹⁰ The champions of neo-conservatism in the 20th century included Theodore Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, who had built their political platforms upon the virtues of hope, progressiveness, and prosperity. As a result, the neoconservatives’ public policies became popular with Republican presidents. Neoconservatives familiarized themselves with intellectual history, recommended large budget surpluses, and favored cutting taxes.¹¹ Specifically, among their list of domestic priorities, was the belief that there should not be an overreliance on welfare services that carried the capability of transforming the nation into a welfare state.¹²

⁸ Project for the New American Century, “PNAC----Statement of Principles,” 2.

⁹ Irving Kristol, “The Neoconservative Persuasion: What it was, and what it is,” *The Weekly Standard* 8, no. 47 (2003): 1-3.

¹⁰ Max Boot, “Neocons,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 140 (January-February 2004): 20-22, 24, 26, 28.

¹¹ Kristol, “The Neoconservative Persuasion,” 1.

¹² *Ibid*, 2.

During the late 1960s and into the early 1970s against the backdrop of nationwide escalating crime rates, the Soviet Union challenged the burgeoning US policy of détente to the utmost with its invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Democrats in Washington were not uneager to tackle those problems head-on. A segment of Democrats even became fed up with the political impotence affecting Washington policymaking.¹³ Irving Kristol had once been a Trotskyist as a student at the City College of New York, while former United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, considered a “hawkish Democrat,” had become disenchanted with the Democratic Party drifting further to the left in the 1970s.¹⁴ Another young Democrat, Richard Perle, who had served as the Assistant Secretary of Defense under President Reagan and later as a member of the PNAC all the while evolving into a leading neo-conservative was once aligned with Henry “Scoop” Jackson, a Democratic senator from Washington State who opposed the Nixon-Ford policy of détente.¹⁵ These are but three examples of neoconservatives originally wedded to the fundamentals of the Democratic Party who later became disillusioned and ultimately abandoned the party.

Before the coalescence of the PNAC and the assemblage of the first installment of the national security team under the George W. Bush Administration, the members comprising both entities had long been carving their niches inside various Washington, D.C. policy circles. The “Vulcans” as James Mann labeled them in his 2004 book *The Rise of the Vulcans* first began trickling into Washington, D.C. in 1968 at a precariously volatile period of heightened national anxieties stemming from the increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam and over the uncertain future of American presidential leadership. The Vulcans all believed in the “importance of

¹³ Boot, “Neocons,” 21.

¹⁴ Ibid; see also Mann, *Vulcans*, 90-91.

¹⁵ Boot, “Neocons,” 22; see also Mann, *Vulcans*, 32-33.

American military power” while concentrating on “traditional national security issues.”¹⁶ The non-negotiable, unifying factor amongst all the Vulcan cohort serving in and alongside the George W. Bush Administration was the belief that “American power and ideals are... a force of good in the world.”¹⁷ The Vulcans chose not to fret nor lament over “America’s abuses of power.”¹⁸ Rather, they prized overt American zeal over an “international order” in direct contrast to a diplomatic goal synonymous with the foreign policy approach of the Carter Administration.¹⁹ The Vulcans aligned with George W. Bush were a “successor generation of foreign policy officials” with scant experience serving in combat roles.²⁰ The exceptions, in this case, were Colin Powell, US Secretary of State from 2001 to 2005, and Richard Armitage, US Deputy Secretary of State from 2001 to 2005, who had both served in the Vietnam War.

William Kristol, son of Irving Kristol, arrived in Washington in 1985 to begin working as an aide to Secretary of Education William Bennett in the Reagan Administration.²¹ Kristol was seen as an “intellectual heir” of one of the most distinguished “icons of the modern conservative movement,” Leo Strauss of the University of Chicago.²² Robert Kagan, son of longtime historian of Ancient Greece Donald Kagan of Yale University, received his PhD in American History from American University in Washington, D.C. Donald Rumsfeld, a Princeton graduate, had served as defense secretary in the Ford Administration before transitioning to president and chief executive officer of G.D. Searle & Company, a leading pharmaceutical company based in Chicago during Rumsfeld’s tenure, in the late 1970s.²³ Paul Wolfowitz, a disciple of acclaimed

¹⁶ Mann, *Vulcans*, xvi.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Mann, *Vulcans*, 39.

²¹ Ibid, 165.

²² Ibid, 26.

²³ Ibid, 101.

University of Chicago political science professor Albert Wohlstetter who was regarded as one of America's leading strategists of nuclear war and deterrence in the 1950s while working at the Rand Corporation in Santa Monica, California, had served as assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific during the Reagan years, reporting to Secretary of State George P. Shultz.²⁴ Prior to Reagan, Wolfowitz had served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for regional planning in the Carter Administration.²⁵ It was while working under President Carter in the Pentagon that Wolfowitz began analyzing the potential geopolitical dangers and "security threats" posed by an "outsized" Iraqi military that dwarfed two neighboring American allies in the Persian Gulf, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.²⁶ Richard Cheney had served as Secretary of Defense under President George H.W. Bush, playing a pivotal role in directing the planning for Operation Desert Storm.²⁷ Colin Powell, a veteran of two tours in Vietnam, had risen to serve as President Reagan's national security advisor and then afterwards returned to military life elevating to the rank of a four-star general in 1989 with the culmination of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1989 to 1993.²⁸

Neoconservatives, according to Irving Kristol, felt more comfortable displaying their American patriotism compared to other conservatives.²⁹ Furthermore, Kristol argued that neoconservatives should not carry one set of foreign policy beliefs and viewpoints. Rather, they should mold their current foreign policies based on the current state of international affairs while staying observant of the outcomes of past US foreign policy endeavors.³⁰ Kristol realized that

²⁴ Ibid, 29-30, 116.

²⁵ Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 204.

²⁶ Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 129.

²⁷ Mann, *Vulcans*, 144.

²⁸ Ibid, 176.

²⁹ Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion," 2.

³⁰ Ibid, 2.

the power the US wielded carried with it serious responsibility, and he reflected that the United States military budget ought to have remained in accordance with US economic growth.³¹ To Kristol, national interests ran parallel with ideological identity always exalting patriotism over the tyrannical threat posed by the installation of a world governing body like the United Nations.³² One critic wrote of neoconservative thought as being:

not so much the product of a particular set of precepts or perceptions about the world and humanity as it is the product of a particular intellectual temperament [my emphasis]. It is a temperament that favors pugnacity, bold thinking, and grand encompassing visions of the world and the future. It is a temperament that shuns complexity, tactical adjustment, and the role of patience in geopolitical maneuverings.³³

William Kristol and Robert Kagan never went through a “leftist phase.”³⁴ They were products of what became known as “third wave neo-conservatism.” In his book *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement*, French political scientist Justin Vaïsse writes that third wave neo-conservatism began in 1995.³⁵ By that time, communism had met its demise in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and a unipolar world with America at the helm had come into effect. The age of asymmetric warfare had dawned with rogue states such as Iran and Afghanistan and well-financed terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda presenting unique challenges to American national security and overseas interests. In the 1990s, neoconservatives positioned themselves on the right of the Republican Party.³⁶

Columnist Charles Krauthammer had suggested that US military intervention would be necessary only where vital American interests were at stake. In 1992, the Department of

³¹ Ibid, 3.

³² Ibid, 2.

³³ Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 209.

³⁴ Boot, “Neocons,” 21.

³⁵ Justin Vaïsse, “The Third Age: National Greatness Conservatives,” in *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 220-270.

³⁶ Ibid, 220.

Defense released its annual Defense Planning Guidance drafted by Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis “Scooter” Libby, and Zalmay Khalilzad that stated that clear American military superiority would deter others from challenging US power abroad. The text in the document laid out the neoconservative agenda towards a cataclysmic event such as 9/11.³⁷

Policy advisors from think tanks, specifically those working for the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush presidencies, were seen as policy entrepreneurs as well as scholars working in alignment with power blocs, foundations, corporations, and partisan politics.³⁸ Richard Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld were labelled as conservative hawks receptive to neoconservative viewpoints though neither of whom would classify himself as a neoconservative. George W. Bush, viewed as a member of the “Christian Right,” and Richard Cheney, seen as a “fiscal conservative,” were in agreement with American-led, unilateral foreign policy initiatives in the neoconservative sense.³⁹ They agreed with neoconservatives in the raising of defense spending; hardline, non-concessionary diplomacy; and military action if necessary. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was the intermediary between neoconservatives such as Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle.⁴⁰ From 2001 to 2003, Perle headed the Defense Policy Board, a “previously obscure body of dignitaries that provided advice (often unheeded) to the secretary of defense.”⁴¹

Neoconservative think tanks received funding from corporations and politicians who were, in turn, supported by multinationals and arms producers keen in seeing their interests voiced through the analytical expertise offered by neoconservative think tanks. Neoconservative

³⁷ Ibid, 224.

³⁸ Kubilay Yado Arin, “The Impact of Neoconservative Think Tanks on American Foreign Policy,” in *e-ir.info*, 26 May 2014 <<http://www.e-ir.info/2014/05/26/the-impact-of-neoconservative-think-tanks-on-american-foreign-policy/>> (19 Aug. 2015).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 56.

think tanks came to be regarded as “architects of an interventionist unilateralism,” endorsing military conflict.⁴² Paul Wolfowitz, who served as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy under President George H.W. Bush and as Deputy Secretary of Defense under President George W. Bush, formulated the Bush Doctrine calling for the employment of pre-emptive attacks in order to protect threatened American interests. The Bush Doctrine was formerly known as the Wolfowitz Doctrine.⁴³

The neoconservative slant of the Project for the New American Century was already evident in 1997, the year of the think tank’s founding. Specifically, PNAC analysis explored the threat Saddam Hussein posed to the United States’ interests in the Middle East, UN weapons inspectors, and to America, itself, if Hussein were ever to acquire nuclear capabilities or have his own nuclear program advanced enough to produce a warhead. This was reason enough for the PNAC to conclude that the United States ought to wage war against Iraq to secure democracy in that country and greater stability in the Middle East. The removal of Saddam Hussein’s dictatorial regime, the PNAC argued, would trigger democracy to ripple across the entire Arab world. Other Arab states emulating American-branded democracy in Iraq would additionally cause Islamic extremism to recede, the PNAC contended. An American military presence, according to neoconservative groups such as the PNAC, would uproot the authoritarianism across the Middle East that had so long been ingrained in the political fabric of that part of the world.⁴⁴

⁴² Arin, “The Impact of Neoconservative Think Tanks on American Foreign Policy.”

⁴³ Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 56; see also Mann, *Vulcans*, 76, 196.

⁴⁴ Mann, *Vulcans*, 76.

In September 1995, Bill Kristol launched the political magazine *The Weekly Standard*.⁴⁵ Right-wing media mogul Rupert Murdoch initially funded the publication.⁴⁶ Two years later the neoconservative think tank Project for the New American Century was founded by Kristol along with Robert Kagan and Gary Schmitt to advance the neoconservative agenda.⁴⁷ Schmitt assumed the role of think tank director.⁴⁸ During President Reagan's second term, Schmitt had served as executive director of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, a stronghold of neoconservative political ideology. Neocons such as Kristol exuded great political and media savvy.⁴⁹ *The Weekly Standard* served as the perfect mouthpiece for the PNAC to express its firmly held views and recommendations on how the United States ought to conduct foreign policy heading into the 21st century.

Emulating The Gipper's Brand of Weltanschauung

According to Kagan and Kristol, the United States must be in charge of guiding and shaping the world.⁵⁰ To advance its unipolar international presence, the US had to enact a neo-Reaganite foreign policy.⁵¹ This concept was expounded upon by Kagan and Kristol in a jointly written article entitled "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy" that appeared in the August 1996 issue of the elite journal *Foreign Affairs*. The theme of the article can be summed up with a question containing a subsequent, straightforward answer possessing possibly major

⁴⁵ Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 220.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 228.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 220.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 231.

⁴⁹ Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 227.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 232.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 233.

implications. What should America's international role be? The US must assume the role of "benevolent global hegemony."⁵²

"Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy" exalted the current state of American strategic and ideological predominance yet, nevertheless, reiterated that America's preeminence was due to the foreign policies and defense strategies pursued by President Reagan. Americans, Kristol and Kagan argued, had never lived in a world "more conducive" to a "liberal international order" promoting the expansion of freedom and democracy, capitalism, and the security to freely travel and conduct business across the world.⁵³

A resurgent US foreign policy, Kagan and Kristol argued in their 1996 "Neo-Reaganite" article, had to preserve and enhance American predominance in the international arena. This would include strengthening US security, supporting US allies, advancing US strategic interests, and never flinching from the advancement of American principles around the world. The goal of American foreign policy, Kagan and Kristol claimed, was to "preserve that hegemony as far into the future as possible." The US was in need of a neo-Reaganite foreign policy atop the pillars of "military supremacy and moral confidence." The co-authors wanted a stingy Washington, D.C. to increase its present \$260 billion/year defense budget by an additional sixty to eighty billion dollars. To put it another way, at least twenty-three percent of the federal budget, the amount spent on foreign defense in 1978 prior to the Carter-Reagan buildup, would be required to pursue a neo-Reaganite foreign policy at the time of Kristol and Kagan's 1996 article.⁵⁴

"Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy" was a wake-up call for Americans to secure their country's foreign interests with an invigorated resurgence. The United States, Kagan and

⁵² William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (July/August 1996): 18-32.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Kristol argued, had achieved its present position in the world by “actively promoting American principles of governance abroad.” Without a broad, sustaining foreign policy, Americans would be inclined to withdraw from world affairs and succumb to a disinterest in “vigorous” global leadership. Kagan and Kristol pointed to history having shown that Americans have risen to the challenges of global leadership if their political representatives had made a convincing and persistent case for taking action. Victory for American conservatives rested on recapturing former President Reagan’s active foreign policy. Furthermore, Kagan and Kristol asserted that conservatism would come undone without a concerted understanding of America’s interests. Kristol and Kagan summed up their aspirations of unilateral pre-emptive strikes with a construed question along the lines of “Why not go out and search for monsters to destroy?” To them, the alternative would be to let monsters reign freely while Americans idly stood by and watched. To conclude their article, Kagan and Kristol reinforced the notion that a neo-Reaganite foreign policy would be good for conservatives, for America, and, most importantly, good for the world.⁵⁵

Neoconservatives viewed the American “quest for freedom” as a pervading issue throughout American history.⁵⁶ From a domestic angle, the neoconservative approach to foreign policy revealed America’s moral condition as showcasing a “benevolent empire.” Kagan, himself, was a firm believer in the notion that the world benefitted from the United States. In order to progress the preservation of America’s unique standing in the world, neoconservatives such as Kristol and Kagan argued that the US should feel free to act unilaterally. This meant engaging American military resources, flexing American political will and, if necessary, abandoning treaties that might constrain American influence while simultaneously emboldening

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 234; see also Mann, *Vulcans*, 90-91.

hostile powers to cheat their way out of treaties set forth by international law bodies such as the United Nations.⁵⁷ To reduce the possibility of these negative scenarios from coinciding, neoconservatives such as Kristol and Kagan argued for an increase in the US defense budget spending.

The Wolfowitz-Khalilzad Op-Ed that Stressed the Iraq Threat

In November 1997 Paul Wolfowitz, then serving as Professor of International Relations and Dean of the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C., and Zalmay Khalilzad, then serving as the Director of the Strategy, Doctrine, and Force Structure at the RAND Corporation, collaborated on an op-ed piece for *The Washington Post* entitled “We Must Lead the Way in Deposing Saddam.” In the op-ed, Wolfowitz and Khalilzad encouraged the US to consider a “comprehensive new strategy” in the goal of achieving a “regime change” in Iraq that would then allow the country to “rejoin the family of nations” in reference to the United Nations. The co-authors highlighted Saddam’s “stubborn defiance of U.N. inspectors” along with his “attachment to his WMDs.” Wolfowitz and Khalilzad, both members of the PNAC, stressed the continued threat Iraq posed to the security and stability of a strategically pivotal part of the world, the Middle East.⁵⁸

Wolfowitz and Khalilzad wrote that the Clinton Administration claimed to have “all options” open yet that agenda only entailed “impotent U.N. resolutions” to “limited military strikes” with the continued enforcement of US-monitored no-fly zones placed over northern and southern Iraq. Both worried that allies were viewing US policy toward Iraq as being stagnant

⁵⁷ Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 235.

⁵⁸ Zalmay Khalilzad and Paul Wolfowitz, “We Must Lead the Way in Deposing Saddam,” *The Washington Post*, 9 November 1997, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1997/11/09/we-must-lead-the-way-in-deposing-saddam/e7109ca0-6545-459e-b6e2-fd29b7e44e09/>> (28 Aug. 2015).

and without leadership. Wolfowitz and Khalilzad had once been graduate students of the renowned University of Chicago political philosopher Leo Strauss who had impressed upon his students the “moral duty to oppose a leader who is a ‘tyrant.’”⁵⁹ After Operation Desert Storm Wolfowitz, in particular, became an ardent believer in preemption in the quest to eliminate international tyrants before they could export their nefarious agendas abroad. The co-authors worried that Saddam was growing more formidable while the fledgling Iraqi opposition contesting Hussein’s power was weakening. Military action on the part of the US, Wolfowitz and Khalilzad stressed, would only be one component of a much broader strategy in removing Saddam from power.⁶⁰

The main agent of decisive change would come from inside the country via the opposition forces and from a US-backed Iraqi government in exile, the Iraqi National Congress, led by Iraqi defector, Ahmed Chalabi. A sequence of events dovetailing in the transformation of Iraq would include the delegitimation of Saddam’s rule, his subsequent indictment as a “war criminal,” as well as Iraq’s oil wealth being developed by companies working in partnership with the government of a free Iraq. With an emphasis on close coordination with regional allies, namely Turkey, Wolfowitz and Khalilzad reiterated that Iraq’s continued noncompliance with UN weapons inspections should compel the US to take a “strong and sustained but discriminatory military action.” It would take nothing but a “comprehensive strategy,” reasoned Wolfowitz and Khalilzad, to “restore our [US] credibility with the Iraqi people.”⁶¹

The Letter to President Clinton

⁵⁹ Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 216; see also Mann, *Vulcans*, 93.

⁶⁰ Khalilzad and Wolfowitz, “We Must Lead the Way.”

⁶¹ Khalilzad and Wolfowitz, “We Must Lead the Way.”

On January 26, 1998, the Project for the New American Century followed up the Wolfowitz-Khalilzad op-ed with a letter to President Clinton, calling for the president's support of another war with Iraq. The letter denounced Saddam Hussein as a threat to US Middle Eastern security and United Nations' weapons inspectors. The purpose of the letter was to expose to President Clinton the dangers posed by the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq to the international community. The issue at hand in this document, the foundation to the Bush Administration's later allegations, was the argument that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. The document revealed a lack of confidence on the part of the Project for the New American Century in trusting neighboring Persian Gulf states to make certain Hussein continued to uphold sanctions or abide with UN weapons inspectors. In the letter, the principals of the Project for the New American Century asserted that President Clinton had failed to monitor Iraq's noncooperation with UN weapons inspectors and UN regulations. Military action would be required to secure, in part, "a significant portion of the world's supply of oil."⁶²

This document conveyed a shrill tone of urgency, emphasizing that a lack of action on the part of the president was unacceptable. The phrase "we urge you" appeared numerous times throughout the document along with such words as "convinced" and "magnitude."⁶³ These words implied severity and an attention to proper recourse on the part of President Clinton. The document made fervent recommendations and hyped a doomsday scenario if no forceful action was taken.

The signatories of this document carried a large amount of weight in Washington, D.C. policy circles. John Bolton, Elliott Abrams, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard

⁶² Project for the New American Century, "An Open Letter to President Clinton: 'Remove Saddam from Power,'" in *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, ed. Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2003), 199-201.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 200.

Armitage, Paula Dobriansky, Zalmay Khalilzad, Jeffrey Bergner, Robert B. Zoellick, William Schneider, Jr., and Peter W. Rodman all became members of President George W. Bush's administration. All of them were also members of the Project for the New American Century. Other signatories of the document included Richard Perle, Robert Kagan, William Kristol, George Mason University political scientist Francis Fukuyama, former CIA Director R. James Woolsey, Vin Weber, and William J. Bennett, who were also members of the PNAC. The political beliefs of all the signatories of the letter were rooted in neo-conservatism demanding an increased American military presence in the 21st century.

In the 1998 letter to President Clinton, the demand for a declaration of war placed by the Project for the New American Century was explicit with such phrases as "we urge you to seize that opportunity" and "the security of the world in the first part of the 21st century will be determined largely by how we handle this threat."⁶⁴ With no explicitly stated, verifiable sources supporting Saddam Hussein's alleged lack of transparency with chemical and nuclear weapons inspections, the drafters of this document aimed to create an undeniable argument for unleashing war with sought-after approval from the executive branch.

This letter presented answers to historical questions that have perplexed the American public since the country's 2003 invasion of Iraq. Firstly, the issue of removing Hussein from power rested upon the actions deemed appropriate by the American military to unilaterally remove the threat posed by Hussein. Telling phrases such as, "it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power" and "That now needs to become the aim of American foreign policy," were especially expressive of the mindset of the framers of this document. They wished to put President Clinton in a need for war with the minimization of any possible friction

⁶⁴ Ibid.

occurring when proposing such a war in the United Nations General Assembly. Secondly, the phrase, “a significant portion of the world’s supply of oil will all be put at hazard,” reinforced the geopolitical importance embodied by Iraq that the US was prepared to defend in the Mid-East region. Thirdly, the ultimatum at the end of the document was nonbinding and a test of a president’s resolve and conviction: either go to war or risk putting American foreign interests in peril.⁶⁵

The Clinton Speech on Iraq

The PNAC letter to Clinton spurred the president to issue a statement regarding the threat Saddam Hussein posed to Iraqis, Middle Eastern stability, and international security. On February 17, 1998, President Clinton addressed Saddam’s long, checkered history of using chemical and biological weapons in times of war with emphasis on the eight year Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s. Clinton also mentioned Hussein’s barbaric style of quelling civil disturbances as in the 1988 Halabja, Iraqi Kurdistan, sarin gas attack upon a segment of the Iraqi Kurdish population. Clinton highlighted how Iraq had revised its nuclear declarations four times within a span of fourteen months and how six different biological warfare declarations had all been rejected by the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM).⁶⁶

In his address before the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Pentagon officials, President Clinton revealed how Hussein Kamal, Saddam’s son-in-law and also chief organizer of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program, revealed in 1995 Iraq’s continuing weapons program and Saddam Hussein’s desire to increase its weapons capacity. Kamal claimed that Iraq had

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ CNN, “Text of Clinton Statement on Iraq,” in [cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), 17 February 1998 <<http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/02/17/transcripts/clinton.iraq/>> (17 Aug. 2015).

admitted to possessing 5,000 gallons of botulinum; 2,000 gallons of anthrax; 25 Scud warheads filled with biological agents; and 157 aerial bombs in its arsenal. To date, UNSCOM had destroyed 40,000 chemical weapons; 100,000 gallons of chemical weapons agents; 48 operational missiles; 30 warheads fitted for chemical and biological weapons (CBW); and a facility that had been equipped for manufacturing anthrax at Al Hakam. While UNSCOM still believed Iraq had more weapons grade materials that it was not disclosing, Clinton reiterated that the UN inspection system had already proved its effectiveness. Furthermore, Clinton stressed, a diplomatic solution to Iraq's obfuscation of its weapons programs hinged upon the outcome laid forth by clear, immutable, and reasonable standards imposed by UNSCOM. Iraq had to agree to deliver free and unfettered access to facilities anywhere in the country as stipulated by the United Nations Security Council.⁶⁷

President Clinton concluded his speech with the same ominous foreboding also present in the letter the PNAC had submitted to him one month earlier. "And some day, some way, I guarantee you, he'll use the arsenal," stated Clinton, that would force the UN to amass a coalition of nations against Iraq in a military show of force. Clinton made clear that the US wanted to "seriously" diminish Iraq's WMD program and its capacity to harm its Middle Eastern neighbors. A military operation, Clinton asserted, would not destroy all Iraq's WMD stockpiles but would significantly weaken Saddam's abilities to engage with his WMD. What would not change, Clinton promised, was the continued reinforcement of the no-fly zones imposed over northern and southern Iraq. The threat posed by Saddam Hussein required unwavering vigilance on the part of the US and the UN, Clinton concluded. Clinton closed his speech with the precise

⁶⁷ Ibid.

sentiment the PNAC was hoping he would express. Failing to respond to Iraq today, Clinton warned in closing, would only embolden Saddam tomorrow.⁶⁸

On February 19, 1998, two days after the Clinton speech, most of the eighteen PNAC signatories of the January letter to President Clinton, along with two dozen other State and Defense Department officials, submitted another open letter to the president. The letter, sponsored by a bipartisan group called the Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf co-chaired by former Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, repeated the call for ““a determined program to change the regime in Baghdad.””⁶⁹ Throughout the letter, urgency and excessive hyperbole exclaimed that “Saddam is more wily, brutal and conspiratorial than any likely conspiracy the United States might mobilize against him. Saddam must be overpowered...he rules by terror...makes him hated by his own people and the rank and file of his military. Iraq today is ripe for a broad-based insurrection.”⁷⁰

Repositioning American Hegemony for the 21st Century

“Rebuilding America’s Defenses” was a report issued “solely” by the Project for the New Century dated September 2000.⁷¹ This was a document intended to be made public, written by a public policy group to influence public opinion. The “project participants” on the last page of the published document were labeled as contributors if they had attended “at least one project meeting or contributed a paper for discussion.”⁷² The institutions represented by the contributing

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2008), 195-196.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Thomas Donnelly, "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century," 90, www.informationclearinghouse.info. September 1, 2000
<<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>> (3 Feb. 2015).

⁷² Ibid, 90.

members of the document are magnets of power, influence, and prestige including the U.S. Naval War College, the Project for the New American Century, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Ivy League universities including Harvard and Yale.

The purpose of “Rebuilding America’s Defenses” was clear from its outset: preserving, while bolstering, the military and strategic superiority exuded by the United States heading into the 21st Century. In addition, this document conveyed a mindfulness that the 21st Century would require the United States to reexamine and retune its defining role as the lone superpower in the sphere of world politics. The introduction of the document revealed the intents and purposes that guided the Project for the New American Century while simultaneously laying out the approach the think tank took in the analysis present in the document. From examining the introduction, two glaring motives for constructing the document jumped out: the Pentagon’s Quadrennial Defense Review (May 1997) and the report of the National Defense Panel (December 1997) with also preserving the United States’ strategic position of military preeminence across the globe both today and in the future.⁷³ This report, the document claimed, was the culmination of ten years’ worth of researching and fashioning a defense strategy serving to address the threats to peace and stability in the environment of global security.⁷⁴

The language of the text in the document was hardline, persuasive, and urgent. This document called for an escalation of military strategies to ensure American global dominance in addressing and tackling ever-evolving threats. Phrases brimming with military jargon abounded in the document such as “deterrent capability,” “American security perimeter,” “no-fly-zone

⁷³ Ibid, i.

⁷⁴ Ibid, iii.

operations,” and “American geopolitical preeminence.”⁷⁵ In the context of advocating for a second ground assault on Iraq and perhaps ensuring a reinforced US presence in the Middle East, a quote on page twenty-two of the report proclaimed, “a permanent unit should be based in the Persian Gulf region.”⁷⁶

Bush’s 9/11

The early first term of the George W. Bush Administration was dominated by realpolitik.⁷⁷ Prior to 9/11, the US began mobilizing “all available resources” to overthrow Iraq’s leader, Saddam Hussein, but did not include plans for an actual invasion.⁷⁸ President Bush, espousing his brand of realpolitik, was quoted at the first meeting of the National Security Council on January 30, 2001, as saying, “Sometimes a show of strength by one side can really clarify things.”⁷⁹ At the meeting, President Bush asked, “What’s on the agenda?” to which Condoleezza Rice replied, “How Iraq is destabilizing the region, Mr. President.”⁸⁰ Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill, serving under George W. Bush from 2001 till 2002, walked away from that first principals committee meeting, summing up the collective opinion arrived at by the administration as, “Getting Hussein was now the administration focus.”⁸¹ The ensuing February 7, 2001, Principals Committee meeting focused squarely on Iraq.⁸²

⁷⁵ Ibid, 28.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 22.

⁷⁷ Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 240.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 241.

⁷⁹ Joyce Battle, “The Iraq War-Part 1: The US Prepares for Conflict,” in *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 326*, 2001 <<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB326/IraqWarPart1-Quotes.pdf>> (3 Aug. 2015).

⁸⁰ Anderson, *Bush’s Wars*, 59.

⁸¹ Battle, “The Iraq War- Part 1,” 4-5; see also John Prados, *Hood-winked: The Documents that Reveal how Bush Sold Us a War* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2004), 4.

⁸² Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 303.

Every member of Bush's inner circle was given an assignment related to Iraq at the close of the January 30, 2001, Principals Committee meeting. Colin Powell was to draw up new sanctions on Iraq, CIA Director George Tenet was to improve intelligence on Iraq, Paul O'Neill was to investigate how to financially destabilize the Iraqi regime, and Donald Rumsfeld was tasked with reexamining military options concerning Iraq.⁸³ Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld viewed Iraq as a reason to transform the American military.⁸⁴ 9/11 was the catalyst that transformed President George W. Bush into a neoconservative president.⁸⁵ He became the president the PNAC had always dreamed of.

The war on terrorism launched in the wake of the 9/11 attacks embodied the flourishing neoconservative "Bush Doctrine." This doctrine rested upon a preemptive American military presence in the Middle East to promote democracy and the freedom and peace that came along with it.⁸⁶ Specifically, a regime change in Iraq would serve as a dramatic example of American-branded freedom.⁸⁷ If necessary, America would act alone in this enterprising endeavor conscious of world opinion but not restrained by possible inaction on the part of the international community. The United States, President Bush proclaimed in "starkly moralistic terms" on September 12, 2001, was bracing for "a monumental struggle between good and evil."⁸⁸ The Bush Doctrine also meant that the restraints and limitations the intelligence community was obligated to adhere to prior 9/11 had come off, granting the CIA broader authorization and a wider array of resources to fight the war on terrorism.⁸⁹ The Bush Doctrine, carefully sculpted

⁸³ Anderson, *Bush's Wars*, 59.

⁸⁴ Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 242.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 243.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 244.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Hal Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy?* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 153.

⁸⁹ Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 170.

and cultivated by the neoconservative architects running the Project for the New American Century, applied only to the Middle East with Iraq representing a suitable pretext for the promotion of American democracy and freedom with the larger goal of its implementation across the entire Middle East.⁹⁰

Connecting Dots in the Aftermath of 9/11

Between President Bush's inauguration day of January 20, 2001, and September 11, 2001, the administration had received "44 morning intelligence reports from the CIA mentioning the al-Qaeda threat," and not once did Bush's team take action to thwart the prospect of an attack, according to CIA Director George Tenet, who headed the intelligence agency during 9/11.⁹¹ These intelligence reports are collectively known as the "President's Daily Brief (PDB)," consisting of "a series of six to eight relatively short articles or briefs covering a broad array of topics" chosen at the discretion of the CIA pertaining to subjects the intelligence agency considers "the most important on any given day."⁹² A section in the August 6, 2001, PDB entitled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US," termed by President Bush as being "historical in nature," alerted the president that "al Qaeda was dangerous" with an additional portentousness that "the threat of a Bin Laden attack in the United States remained both current and serious."⁹³ On September 10, 2001, the National Security Agency (NSA) intercepted two emails from a suspected al-Qaeda location in Afghanistan that went untranslated for another two days. The emails respectively read as "The Match begins tomorrow" and "Tomorrow is zero hour."⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 246.

⁹¹ Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 161; see also Anderson, *Bush's Wars*, 64.

⁹² *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*, Official Government ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 2004), 254.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 260.

⁹⁴ Anderson, *Bush's Wars*, 65.

On that very next day, a crystal blue early autumn morning, Mohammed Atta and four other hijackers boarded American Airlines Flight 11 in Boston bound for Los Angeles scheduled to depart at 7:45 AM.⁹⁵ Also present at Boston Logan International Airport was another group of five hijackers, led by Marwan al Shehhi, who boarded United Flight 175 bound for Los Angeles with a scheduled departure time of 8:00 AM.⁹⁶ A third group of hijackers, led by al-Qaeda operative Ziad Jarrah, departed from Newark International Airport in New Jersey on United Flight 93 bound for LA at 8:00 AM.⁹⁷ At the same time farther south, a fourth group of five hijackers led by Hani Hanjour boarded American Airlines Flight 77 at Washington Dulles International Airport bound for LA. By 8 AM, nineteen men affiliated with al-Qaeda had boarded four cross-country flights. Their actions would irreversibly change the trajectory of future American international relations and the strategic placement of US military emphasis.⁹⁸ On September 11, 2001, America's War on Terror was ignited by hijacked airliners crashing into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and, by accident, an abandoned strip mine near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Thousands of innocent civilians went to their deaths in the worst attack on American soil since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Five hours after American Airlines Flight 77 had crashed into the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld called for retaliatory strikes on Iraq. Aides who had worked alongside Rumsfeld in the National Military Command Center on September 11 later corroborated this instinctive reaction. On 9/11, hours after the attacks had occurred on New York City and the Pentagon, the NSA intercepted a phone call from an Osama bin Laden

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 66.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

operative in Afghanistan to a number traced to the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, warning of more attacks to come on the United States. Upon learning of that intercepted telephone call, Rumsfeld ordered strike planning. Concerning the issue of Saddam Hussein possibly having played a leading role in the 9/11 attacks, Rumsfeld was quoted in a memo instructing General Richard Myers, the acting United States Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) on 9/11, to amass the ““best info fast. Judge whether good enough to hit S.H.”” and bin Laden ““at same time...””⁹⁹ Notes also revealed Rumsfeld adding, ““Go massive,”” and ““Sweep it all up. Things related and not.””¹⁰⁰ The events of 9/11 spurred the formation of a group of top advisors whom President Bush later referred to as his “war council.”¹⁰¹ This group “usually included” Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Powell, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, CIA Director Tenet, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Myers, Attorney General John Ashcroft, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Hugh Shelton, FBI Director Robert Mueller, National Security Advisor Rice, and Chief of Staff Andrew Card.¹⁰² One of the assignments for this upper echelon group of advisors, as urged by Secretary Rumsfeld, was to “think broadly about who might have harbored the attackers [of 9/11], including Iraq...”¹⁰³

Iraq had been a hot topic of conversation and an issue of fluid deliberation both inside the Bush Administration and within the PNAC before 9/11. On 9/11, and in the days immediately following the terrorist attacks, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice was quoted as remarking to Sir Christopher Meyer, the British ambassador to the US, on the day of the attacks:

⁹⁹ Joel Roberts, “Plans for Iraq Attack Began on 9/11,” in CBSNews.com, 4 September 2002 <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/plans-for-iraq-attack-began-on-9-11/>> (28 Aug. 2015); see also *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 334-335.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 330.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

“We are just looking to see whether there could possibly be a connection with Saddam Hussein.” On the evening of 9/11, Donald Rumsfeld was quoted as saying “You know, we’ve got to do Iraq—there just aren’t enough targets in Afghanistan.” Richard Clarke, the National Security Council counterterrorism advisor, tepidly expressed on September 12, 2001: “Having been attacked by al Qaeda, for us now to go bombing Iraq in response would be like our invading Mexico after the Japanese attacked us at Pearl Harbor.”¹⁰⁴

On September 12, President Bush observed to his cabinet and the intelligence community: “Look, I know you have a lot to do and all...but I want you, as soon as you can, to go back over everything, everything. See if Saddam did this. See if he’s linked in any way...Look into Iraq, Saddam.”¹⁰⁵ Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, while not directly implicating Iraq in the 9/11 attacks yet obscurely implying through a filter of jingoism that Iraq, too, served as a bastion of terrorism that must ultimately be neutralized, observed on September 13, 2001: “I think one has to say it’s not just simply a matter of capturing people and holding them accountable, but removing the sanctuaries, removing the support systems, ending states who sponsor terrorism.”¹⁰⁶ In the days immediately following 9/11, Secretary of State Powell noticed how fervent Wolfowitz was in pursuing possible Iraqi ties to terrorism and 9/11. Years later when testifying before the 9/11 Commission, Powell explained how ““Paul was always of the view that Iraq was a problem that had to be dealt with.””¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, Defense Department Undersecretary for Policy Douglas Feith, keeping in lockstep with Wolfowitz in the days following the terror attacks, stated his own target of interest to Lieutenant General Greg

¹⁰⁴ Battle, “The Iraq War-Part 1,” 6.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁰⁷ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 335.

Newbold (US Marine Corps), the Director of Operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in the days following 9/11: “Why are you working on Afghanistan? You ought to be working on Iraq.”¹⁰⁸

By September 15, 2001, George W. Bush had decided whether or not he wanted to pursue Saddam: “We will get this guy but at a time and place of our choosing.” An unnamed CIA analyst retorted a few days following 9/11 with this biting statement of there needing to be concrete evidence linking Hussein to 9/11 and not just kneejerk, unfounded American-led accusations: “If you want to go after that son of a bitch to settle old scores, be my guest. But don’t tell us he is connected to 9/11 or to terrorism because there is no evidence to support that. You will have to have a better reason.” Finally, the PNAC issued this statement on September 20, 2001, that even if Iraq was not directly tied to 9/11, the US should support an Iraqi opposition aimed at toppling a source of terrorism, namely Saddam Hussein:

Even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack, any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq The United States must therefore provide full military and financial support to the Iraqi opposition. American military force should be used to provide a ‘safe zone’ in Iraq from which the opposition can operate. And American forces must be prepared to back up our commitment to the Iraqi opposition by all necessary means.¹⁰⁹

The Letter to President Bush

September 20, 2001, was also the day the PNAC submitted a letter to President Bush with one direct, yet overarching objective: “lead the world to victory” in the war against terrorism. In the letter, the PNAC voiced agreement with the sentiment of Secretary of State Colin Powell in that the US “must find and punish the perpetrators” of 9/11, namely Saddam Hussein who Powell pointed to as being one of the “leading terrorists” in the world. The PNAC

¹⁰⁸ Battle, “The Iraq War-Part 1,” 7; see also Feith, *War and Decision*, 104.

¹⁰⁹ Battle, “The Iraq War-Part 1,” 6-7.

outlined a series of steps it deemed as “necessary parts of a comprehensive strategy” in carrying out the “first war of the 21st century.” The PNAC was not concerned if evidence did not link Iraq to the events of 9/11. Removing Hussein from power, the PNAC argued, would be a part of any strategy in eliminating global terrorism.¹¹⁰

The PNAC September 2001 letter to President Bush delivered a striking message: a failure to oust Saddam Hussein from power would be tantamount to an early surrender in the war on terrorism. The PNAC encouraged the Bush Administration to pledge full military and monetary assistance to the Iraqi political opposition, while also establishing a “safe zone” for the Iraqi opposition to operate within. American forces would provide assistance to the Iraqi opposition by “all necessary means” as stressed by the PNAC. The letter to Bush was not confined to solely taking action upon Iraq. The PNAC, through the letter, motivated the Bush Administration to expand its use of force in the region to Iran and Syria, both of whom, as emphasized by the PNAC, were “known state sponsors of terrorism.” The PNAC, through its letter to the president, also strove to remind Bush of America’s commitment to rally behind our “staunchest” ally in the Middle East, Israel, in supporting the Jewish state to defund the Palestinian Authority of any further assistance until the organization combatted terrorism within its own borders of influence. The PNAC wanted the Bush Administration to think and act globally in its fight against terrorism.¹¹¹

The PNAC concluded its September 2001 letter to President Bush with a reminder to the administration that fighting terrorism required the US to “remain capable of defending our [America’s] interests elsewhere in the world.” Additionally, the PNAC stressed that there ought

¹¹⁰ Project for the New American Century (PNAC), “Lead the World to Victory,” in [globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca), 20 Sept. 2001 <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/NAC304A.html>> (25 Aug. 2015).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

to be “no hesitation” in funding the war on terror. The PNAC rationalized that all the steps outlined in its letter to Bush “constitute[d] the minimum necessary” in order to win the war on terror. The purpose the PNAC upheld in writing its letter to Bush was to guarantee the think tank’s support and confidence in President Bush knowing “what must be done to lead the nation to victory in this fight.”¹¹²

The Threats Posed by Iraq

In his memoir, *Known and Unknown*, Donald Rumsfeld argued that Iraq was the only nation in the world to attack the US military on a daily basis over internationally recognized “no fly” zones in the northern and southern portion of that country.¹¹³ There were more than two thousand recorded confrontations from January 2000 to September 2002 involving American and British aircraft having faced Iraqi fire from the ground. In July 2001, Rumsfeld submitted a memo to Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice that presented two troubling scenarios if Iraqi aggression was not curtailed: a nuclear power-seeking Iran could trigger a possible region-wide arms buildup and the elimination of a Gulf state royal family could affect the Iraqi regime and, furthermore, the political balance of the Middle East.¹¹⁴ Rumsfeld on July 27, 2001, said that American influence in the Middle East would rise if Saddam Hussein were to be ousted: “If Saddam’s regime were ousted, we would have a much-improved position in the region and elsewhere...A major success with Iraq would enhance U.S. credibility and influence throughout the region.”¹¹⁵

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Group, 2011), 418.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 419.

¹¹⁵ Battle, “The Iraq War-Part 1: The US Prepares for Conflict,” 5.

In dealing with Saddam, Rumsfeld presented a “range of possibilities for consideration.” These included ending President Clinton’s policy of containing Saddam, a “robust” policy of serious regime change among “moderate Arab friends,” and the third, less popular option of initiating direct contact with Saddam. The possibility of the third option coming to fruition was slim and would have potentially resulted in American allies in the Middle East becoming disenchanted with American policy toward Iraq.¹¹⁶

UN weapons sanctions against Iraq established in the 1990s after Iraq’s defeat in Desert Storm were clearly crumbling.¹¹⁷ Weapons violations as well as Iraq’s alleged links to terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda were of mounting concern to the US. The US also worried that Iraq’s sustained defiance of UN sanctions would further erode the credibility and resolve of the UN while also encouraging other regimes to follow Iraq’s lead.¹¹⁸ This led to President Bush’s doctrine of preemptive attack resting upon the notion of “anticipatory self-defense.”¹¹⁹ A preemptive action involves a willingness to commence a war only if the instigator thinks it is likely to face an attack or if it feels threatened by the prospect of attack.¹²⁰ Douglas Feith presented a memo in 2002 entitled “Sovereignty and Anticipatory Self-Defense” that called for “an aggressive diplomatic effort coupled by a threat of military force” with the aim of convincing Saddam Hussein to seek exile or be forcibly removed by either the Iraqi army or the US.¹²¹

In the winter of 2001-2002, the National Security Council drafted its annual National Security Strategy report, and Iraq was not mentioned once. Despite this, connections were

¹¹⁶ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 420.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 422.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 423.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*.

¹²⁰ Mann, *Vulcans*, 327.

¹²¹ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 424.

drawn between Iraq and Al-Qaeda by the Bush Administration with added stress placed upon uncovering Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the possibility of such weapons falling into the hands of extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda.¹²² President Bush, in his January 2002 State of the Union Address, uttered the phrase that would come to define much of his presidency: “Axis of Evil.”¹²³ In fact, the countries comprising the Bush Administration’s “Axis of Evil” (North Korea, Iran, and Iraq) were cited as early as 1998 in a speech delivered by Donald Rumsfeld before the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States.¹²⁴

In a January 2002 issue of *The Weekly Standard*, PNAC mainstays Robert Kagan and Bill Kristol co-wrote an article entitled “What to do About Iraq” that unequivocally stated that “any attack on Iraq must succeed quickly” with added stress placed on a long-term commitment on the part of the US to rebuild Iraq post-Saddam Hussein.¹²⁵ A successful American invasion of Iraq, the pair argued, was “capable of reverberating around the Arab world.”¹²⁶ Kagan and Kristol clamored for the US to finally recognize its role as “global leader” and to “use the events of 9/11 as an igniter and reminder to never have that event reoccur.”¹²⁷ To Kagan and Kristol, the US’s deliberation on whether to invade Iraq was a non-issue by January 2002. The two fully expected President Bush to remove Saddam’s regime. To make the matter more pressing, the pair warned through their article that the “clock is ticking in Iraq,” referring to the notion that with each passing day Saddam Hussein was closer to acquiring a nuclear weapon.¹²⁸

¹²² Mann, *Vulcans*, 317.

¹²³ Robert Draper, *Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2007), 174-190.

¹²⁴ Mann, *Vulcans*, 318.

¹²⁵ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, “What to do About Iraq,” in *The Weekly Standard*, 21 Jan. 2002 <<http://www.weeklystandard.com/article/2064>> (19 May 2015).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

What Kagan and Kristol meant by their ticking clock comment in their January 2002 article was that no one in the international community disputed the “nature of the Iraq threat.”¹²⁹ German intelligence had predicted in December 2000 that Iraq possessed the capability of having three nuclear weapons by 2005. Furthermore, Kagan and Kristol pointed to the speculation that Iraq had forty-one biological warfare agent (BWA) production sites scattered throughout the country.¹³⁰ This was knowledge that had been brought to the attention of the international community as early as 1998. The pair cited the Federation of American Scientists who warned that Iraq was capable of producing “350 liters of weapons-grade anthrax” a week.¹³¹ Kagan and Kristol struck hard with a question and an accompanying answer to reinforce the message of their article. In a post-9/11 world, Kagan and Kristol wondered what if Saddam provided anthrax or VX gas or a nuclear warhead to a group such as al-Qaeda. In turn, the pair reminded their audience that “we do know” that Saddam is an ally to terrorists, that it is inconceivable to imagine a world in which Saddam possessed WMDs, and that the US would prefer to act in cooperation with the international community in defeating Saddam.¹³² Nevertheless, the US would be willing to attack unilaterally if necessary.

In his 2002 State of the Union Address, President Bush pointed to Iraq as “a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.”¹³³ Bush’s “Axis of Evil” speech was heavily laden with neoconservative ideology including this telling view of America’s global responsibility: “History has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom’s fight.”¹³⁴ Vice President Richard Cheney

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Draper, *Dead Certain*, 175.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 176.

presented the nightmare scenario with pressing urgency of WMDs falling into the hands of terrorists: “If you wait for intelligence to drive policy, you will have waited too long.”¹³⁵ The Bush Administration regarded WMDs as a grave and growing danger. Preventing rogue states such as Iraq from making and acquiring WMDs became a major focus of the administration.¹³⁶ Clearly, the White House was not waiting on the intelligence community to present its findings on Iraq.

The burgeoning Bush Doctrine advocating preemption and unilateral American resolve to rid the world of the evils of terrorism was on full display. President Bush elevated the tone and urgency of the doctrine when he delivered the commencement address to graduates at the US Military Academy at West Point in June 2002. The president specifically called upon the graduates to answer the call of history to fight a war on terror that had only begun with the president’s assurance that US military victories outside of the successful campaign in Afghanistan were due to follow. President Bush repeated his 2002 State of the Union Address that Americans carried with them the “opportunity” and “duty” to lead the rest of the civilized world in spreading a “just peace” across the world by eviscerating threats from both terrorists and tyrants abroad.¹³⁷ However in a calculated, subsequent statement designed to silence critics wary of a potentially protracted conflict, Bush made clear that American commitment to eradicate terrorism did not carry with it a desire to spread an American “empire” or propagate an American-centric “utopia.”¹³⁸ Bush warned that if “chemical and biological and nuclear weapons” fell into the wrong hands “even weak states and small groups could attain a

¹³⁵ Ibid, 175-176.

¹³⁶ Mann, *Vulcans*, 318-319.

¹³⁷ “George W. Bush Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York—June 1, 2002,” in *presidentialrhetoric.com*, 1 June 2002 <<http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/06.01.02.html>> (11 Jan. 2016).

¹³⁸ Ibid.

catastrophic power to strike great nations.”¹³⁹ America, the president declared in moral terms, was locked in a “conflict between good and evil” requiring a “firm moral purpose” in “opposing [and] confronting evil and lawless regimes.”¹⁴⁰ Bush left the West Point graduates with this revealing view of 21st Century America’s duty to follow the neoconservative-laden Bush Doctrine: “we must take the battle to the enemy.”¹⁴¹ The Bush Administration was inching towards war with Iraq.

America: The Sheriff-Europe: The Hall Monitor

In his widely-read 2002 article, “Power and Weakness,” Robert Kagan wrote of a Europe suspended in a “Kantian paradise of perpetual peace” with the US consciously and purposely taking on global security issues unilaterally.¹⁴² Years before the crystallization of foreign policy rigidity defining the relationship between the United States under President George W. Bush and European allies, the Clinton Administration had grown distressed and impatient with “European timidity” in Europe’s unwillingness to confront Saddam Hussein alongside the United States.¹⁴³ The split in the European/American alliance, Kagan claimed, came in 1997 when the US was at odds with France and Great Britain in the United Nations Security Council over how to respond to the growing threat the US perceived Saddam Hussein to be.¹⁴⁴ Kagan argued that Americans were more militarily formidable than their European counterparts and, as a result, less tolerant of Saddam and the threat he posed with his alleged weapons of mass destruction.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 236.

¹⁴³ Robert Kagan, “Power and Weakness,” *Policy Review* No. 113 (June/July 2002): 3-28; Kagan later developed this article into a book-length essay entitled *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 10.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 13.

“Power and Weakness” was a well-constructed argument at a low point in European-American diplomatic relations over how to address the threat of Saddam Hussein. Kagan crafted the argument of America, not Europe, knowing what was best to ensure the safety of the Western world through unilateral American might, not through a transatlantic coalition defined by political bargaining and foreign policy impotence. America, Kagan asserted, was the world’s lonely behemoth that historically, unlike Europe, did not have to justify its actions by *raison d’état*.¹⁴⁶ The guarantee of American security enjoyed by Europe was a “disparity” in psychology and power between the two, Kagan noted.¹⁴⁷

Iraq posed a different threat level to the US than to Europe, Robert Kagan wrote in his 2002 article, “Power and Weakness.”¹⁴⁸ At the time of this article’s publication in the summer of 2002, over seventy percent of the American public believed the US could successfully invade Iraq, topple Saddam Hussein, and secure Iraq.¹⁴⁹ Kagan proclaimed the US had to act as the “international sheriff, self-appointed perhaps but welcomed nevertheless, trying to enforce some peace and justice” in a world Americans viewed as lawless, overrun by outlaws that needed to be “deterred or destroyed.”¹⁵⁰ Expounding upon this sentiment, Kagan admitted that Europe was still dependent upon American willingness to employ force to deter or defeat those in the world while still espousing to the belief of “power politics.”¹⁵¹

When dealing with rogue states, Robert Kagan in “Power and Weakness” quoted British diplomat and advisor Robert Cooper as saying, “we need to revert to the rougher methods of an

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 10-11.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 14.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 14.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 13.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 14.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 24.

earlier era of force, preemptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary.”¹⁵² The US had created a post-World War II paradise for Europe but could not enjoy its splendors alongside the Europeans because America was the world’s watchdog, remaining “stuck in history” of defending itself in the “dangerous, Hobbesian world” existing outside Europe.¹⁵³ Speaking for all of America, Kagan resoundingly asserted that in a post-9/11 world Americans appeared willing to bear the burden of overseeing global security for a “long time to come.”¹⁵⁴ Kagan also spoke for the entirety of America when he admitted that “Americans are idealists.”¹⁵⁵ However, in Kagan’s opinion, they are inexperienced in the promotion of their ideals in a successful way without exerting power. As time goes along, Kagan concluded, the United States would become “less inclined to listen” or even “care” what Europe thinks of its military actions.¹⁵⁶

In the 1990s, neoconservatives ignored the threat posed by terrorism.¹⁵⁷ The four priorities emphasizing American national interests at the dawning of the new millennium included the deterrence and disarming of rogue states, the containment of a rising China, renewed vigilance over Russia, and the maintenance of international order.¹⁵⁸ The events of September 11, 2001, bolstered two arguments neoconservatives had long posed: America had not been displaying a sufficient show of force over the preceding two decades, and 9/11 had undoubtedly marked the commencement of the “4th World War” with the Cold War having been the third world war neocons had argued.¹⁵⁹ The events of 9/11 ignited the American global war against “militant Islam.”¹⁶⁰ Neoconservative groups such as the PNAC viewed the scourge of

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 25.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 26.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 27.

¹⁵⁷ Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 238.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 239.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

terrorism as a consequence from a lack of democracy in the Middle East rather than as a result of the region's economic underdevelopment. Paul Wolfowitz went so far as to say that states like Iraq should be "ended."¹⁶¹

October 2002: A Hive of Freneticism in D.C.

On October 9, 2002, *The International New York Times* published the transcript of a letter exchanged between Senator Bob Graham (Florida-D), serving as Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and CIA Director George Tenet. The letter detailed decisions to declassify materials sensitive to the Iraq WMD investigation. An unfettered US-led attack, the letter argued, would reduce the probability of Saddam Hussein using chemical and biological weapons (CBW) against the US, either by his own accord or with the help of a terrorist group. In its story, the newspaper also featured a declassified dialogue between Senator Carl Levin (Michigan-D) and an unnamed senior intelligence witness that had taken place on October 2, 2002. Levin asked if Saddam Hussein would initiate a WMD attack to which the intelligence witness replied that the probability was low. Levin followed up asking what the "likelihood" was that Hussein would respond to a US attack with CBW to which the witness simply replied "pretty high."¹⁶²

The International New York Times article from early October 2002, in addition, highlighted unclassified discussions related to Senator Evan Bayh's (Indiana-D) line of questioning related to Iraqi links to Al Qaeda that senators could have drawn upon. These included sources of "varying reliability" in examining the relationship between Iraq and Al-

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² *International New York Times*, "C.I.A. Letter to Senate on Baghdad's Intentions," in *nytimes.com*, 9 Oct. 2002 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/09/international/09TTEX.html>> (15 Aug. 2015).

Qaeda as provided by detainees, “solid reporting” over the course of a decade conducted by senior level contacts between Iraq and Al-Qaeda, and “credible information” of Iraq and Al-Qaeda discussing a “safe haven.” Since Operation Enduring Freedom had begun in October 2001, declassified discussions had shown “solid evidence” of an Al-Qaeda presence in Iraq and “credible reporting” that leaders of Al-Qaeda had sought Iraqi contacts in acquiring WMD capabilities. As a lasting point deemed suitable for a declassified discussion detailing Iraq’s links to extremist Palestinian groups as well as a strengthening relationship with Al-Qaeda, the newspaper article concluded by “suggest[ing]” that Baghdad’s links to terrorism would continue to increase.¹⁶³

In the fall of 2002, *The Weekly Standard* accelerated and sharpened its critique of US intelligence agencies and their gathering of evidence to mount the argument to go to war with Iraq. A bitingly urgent piece came from a Middle Eastern political analyst writing for the political magazine, Reuel Marc Gerecht, entitled “A Necessary War” published in the October 2002 issue. Gerecht opined that a war against Iraq would reinforce, not weaken, “whatever” collective spirit existed amongst intelligence agencies working against Islamic radicals. Gerecht wrote of “self-interest” and a “fear of American power” binding together any lasting international efforts against terrorism. American intelligence agencies sharing evidence with one another in mutual cooperation would make the European community more confident in accepting the evidence presented by the US before the UN, Gerecht wrote. The future success of countervailing international terrorism depended upon the American and European intelligence communities working alongside one another, Gerecht noted. The least desirable scenario for all transatlantic allies, Gerecht concluded in his piece, would be a reversion back to a pre-9/11 status

¹⁶³ Ibid.

quo, and that meant not going to war with Iraq.¹⁶⁴ While Kagan was dismissing the United States' European allies for their weakness, Gerecht was advocating continued close cooperation.

US Intelligence: Making the Case for War Against Iraq

Over in Langley, Virginia, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) under Director George Tenet released a multi-page document detailing the extent and sophistication of Iraq's current weapons of mass destruction programs in October 2002. The document revealed the continuation of Iraq's WMD programs "in defiance" of UN rules and regulations of chemical and biological weapons. If left unchecked, Hussein's programs could culminate in Iraq acquiring enough "weapons-grade fissile material" to produce a nuclear weapon by the end of the decade.¹⁶⁵ In particular, the CIA highlighted that "high-strength aluminum tubes are of significant concern," and speculated that these tubes contained lethal agents including "mustard, sarin, cyclosarin, VX."¹⁶⁶ The document stressed that all aspects of Iraq's offensive biological weapons program were active, large-scale, mobile, equipped to evade detection, highly "survivable," and thought to exceed the production rates prior to the Gulf War that lasted from August 1990 until February 1991.¹⁶⁷

The discussion swirling around the CIA in the fall of 2002 as presented by its October 2002 document revolved around Iraq's "determination to hold onto a sizeable remnant of its WMD arsenal." Some analysts within the CIA were uncomfortable with not being capable to provide "credible proof it [Iraq] has completely destroyed its weapons stockpiles and production

¹⁶⁴ Reuel Marc Gerecht, "A Necessary War," in *The Weekly Standard*, 21 Oct. 2002
<<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/001/768lyuyh.asp>> (13 Aug. 2015).

¹⁶⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs," in *cia.gov*, 1 Oct. 2002
<https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/iraq_wmd/Iraq_Oct_2002.htm> (25 July 2015).

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

infrastructure.”¹⁶⁸ The agency demonstrated through “substantial evidence” as provided by the “UN Security Council Resolutions and Provisions for Inspections and Monitoring Theory and Practice” that Iraq was “reconstituting prohibited programs” demonstrating the country’s “extensive efforts...to deny information” pertaining to its weapons programs since the end of the Gulf War.¹⁶⁹ The CIA document also warned that UN sanctions had proven inconsequential in the interest of Saddam Hussein acquiring “tubes” to be used in a “variety of uranium enrichment techniques.”¹⁷⁰

Iraq was known to have used chemical weapons against both the Iranian military during the Iran/Iraq War stretching from 1980 to 1988 and against the marginalized Iraqi Kurdish population in the Halabja gas attack of 1988.¹⁷¹ UNSCOM weapons inspections following Gulf War I revealed that Iraq’s nuclear program had been significantly downgraded, however the intelligence community remained unsure on the level of advancement of Iraq’s biological and chemical weapons programs.¹⁷² Of the fifteen million kilograms of chlorine imported under the Oil-for-Food program since 1997, Iraq was shown to have used ten million kilograms suggesting that some 5 million kilograms were diverted to proscribed activities such as chemical weapons production.¹⁷³ In 1995, the CIA document revealed, the Iraqis had finally admitted to producing and weaponizing biological agents.¹⁷⁴ Throughout its document, the CIA reiterated the “compelling reasons to be concerned of BW [biological weapons] activity” concluding that Iraq’s perceived ballistic missile program was “never fully accounted for” whose capabilities

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 5.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 6-7.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 10.

¹⁷² Williamson Murray and Major General Robert H. Scales, Jr., *The Iraq War: A Military History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 41.

¹⁷³ Central Intelligence Agency, “Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs,” 13.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 15.

exceeded the limitations established under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 believed by most analysts to be “intended for delivering warfare agents.”¹⁷⁵

Concurrently as the CIA was presenting its findings and analysis on Iraq’s WMD programs, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) presented its National Intelligence Estimate (NIE). These classified documents related to Iraq’s continuing programs for WMDs and were intended for policymakers on Capitol Hill in October 2002. NIEs give senior policymakers a consensus of the American intelligence community on a given subject while portraying “honestly dissenting and alternative views.”¹⁷⁶ The documents were approved for publication by the formerly named National Foreign Intelligence Board under the authority of the Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet.¹⁷⁷ The NIE was purposed to answer two key questions on nuclear weapons as they related to Iraq: 1) Did Saddam have them? 2) If not, when could he acquire them?¹⁷⁸ Robert D. Walpole, National Intelligence Officer for Strategic and Nuclear Programs, oversaw the documents’ preparation.¹⁷⁹ The documents pertained to the NIC pointing to Baghdad as having mobile facilities equipped for manufacturing bacterial and toxin biological weapons (BW) agents capable of evading detection and being highly survivable.¹⁸⁰ The document, in turn, speculated that within three to six months the active and highly advanced mobile units could produce the amount of agent equal to the total amount that Iraq had produced in all the years of the program leading up to the Gulf War.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 19, 20, 24.

¹⁷⁶ Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 321.

¹⁷⁷ National Intelligence Estimate, “Iraq’s Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction,” in *nsarchive.gwu.edu*, 1 Oct. 2002 <<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB129/nie.pdf>> (25 July 2015).

¹⁷⁸ Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 322.

¹⁷⁹ NIE, “Iraq’s Continuing Programs,” 4.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 1.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

The NIC judged the Iraqi WMD program as being in continual defiance of UN weapons rules and regulations.¹⁸² Despite the “lack [of] specific information on many key aspects of the Iraq WMD programs,” the NIC observed that Baghdad was “reconstituting [its] nuclear weapons programs” funded, in part, by the sale of Iraq’s soaring illicit oil production.¹⁸³ The document reported that Saddam did not yet have nuclear weapons or sufficient material for manufacturing nuclear weapons, yet he remained “intent” on acquiring them.¹⁸⁴ Without the sufficient amount or grade of foreign material instrumental in a nuclear weapon’s manufacture, the NIC declared that Iraq would not attain a nuclear grade weapon until 2007 to 2009.¹⁸⁵ In addition to aspirations for nuclear devices, the NIC warned that Iraq had been renewing its production of mustard, sarin, GF (cyclosarin), and VX nerve gas.¹⁸⁶

Despite their warnings of the growing threat Saddam posed with his WMD programs, the NIC truthfully admitted to a “low confidence” in their ability to assess when Iraq would use its WMD stockpiles.¹⁸⁷ Conjecture marked by such keywords as “probably,” “believes,” and “could” appeared repeatedly throughout the 2002 classified documents including such passages as Iraq “probably” attempting to launch clandestine attacks against the US, if Baghdad feared of an imminent attack, or a reprisal attack in the aftermath of an actual US-led attack.¹⁸⁸ Saddam “could” use Al-Qaeda to launch terrorist attacks in a “life-or-death struggle” against the US. Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research Carl Ford believed that Saddam continued to actively seek acquiring nuclear weapons. However, many of Iraq’s activities as

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 9.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 10.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 11.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 12.

monitored by US intelligence bodies revealed no “compelling case” existed that Iraq was, indeed, acquiring nuclear weapons.¹⁸⁹ The set of classified documents, nonetheless, displayed a “high confidence” that Iraq was continuing to expand its chemical, biological, nuclear, and missile programs and a “low confidence” pertaining to when or if Saddam would attack the US homeland, himself, or if he would employ a rogue, asymmetric outfit such as Al-Qaeda to strike for him.¹⁹⁰ At one particular moment characterized by clarity Bob Walpole, managing the NIE, after having been given the coordinating assignment candidly expressed to George Tenet, “Some wars are justifiable, but not this one.”¹⁹¹

In February 2003, a month before the invasion of Iraq, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz squared off against General Eric Shinseki, the presiding US Army Chief of Staff, over the number of troops needed to secure post-war Iraq following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. In a hearing on Capitol Hill, Wolfowitz called the troop estimate of several hundred thousand recommended by General Shinseki as “wildly off the mark.”¹⁹² Wolfowitz asserted that it was “impossible” to predict the duration of any war, the extent of destruction in any war, and the extent of the rebuilding process inherent in any post-war strategy.¹⁹³ Wolfowitz went on to state: “we have no idea what we will need until we get there on the ground.”¹⁹⁴ In response Representative James P. Moran (Virginia-D) countered: “I think you’re deliberately keeping us in the dark.”¹⁹⁵ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld supported his immediate underling, Wolfowitz, in describing the requirement of several hundred thousand troops as “far off the

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 13.

¹⁹¹ Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 323.

¹⁹² Eric Schmitt, “Threats and Responses: Military Spending; Pentagon Contradicts General on Iraq Occupation Force’s Size,” in *nytimes.com*, 28 February 2003 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/28/us/threats-responses-military-spending-pentagon-contradicts-general-iraq-occupation.html>> (12 Aug. 2015).

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

mark.”¹⁹⁶ Meanwhile, Rumsfeld was pushing Commanding General Tommy Franks of US Central Command to apply “precise, overwhelming...U.S. military power... [that] would exploit speed, surprise, and pinpoint firepower not just to defeat Saddam with far fewer troops...but essentially to decapitate the Baathist regime without destroying economic infrastructure.”¹⁹⁷ Wolfowitz described a smaller coalition peacekeeping force as “sufficient to police and rebuild postwar Iraq,” a nation according to Wolfowitz as having “no history of ethnic strife.”¹⁹⁸ Regarding the rebuilding process, Wolfowitz was confident that “nations that oppose war with Iraq would likely sign up to help rebuild it.”¹⁹⁹ Wolfowitz was quick to downplay the multi-billion dollar estimates that would be needed to rebuild Iraq. He said, “Estimates were almost meaningless because of the variables,” claiming that a ninety-five billion dollar rebuilding price tag would be an overestimate.²⁰⁰ Rumsfeld advanced that notion, repeating that cost ranges were pure speculation. To put cost-relative matters to rest, Wolfowitz conclusively highlighted that Iraq’s wealth measured in oil exports valued between fifteen and twenty billion dollars per year and could help pay for the nation’s rebuilding efforts.²⁰¹ A month before the invasion of Iraq, Wolfowitz and his superior at the Department of Defense, Rumsfeld, dismissed the recommendation of adequate preparation for the possibility of a protracted occupation phase as advised by the top brass of the US Army.

On February 5, 2003, the United States represented by Secretary of State Colin Powell with CIA Director George Tenet seated directly behind him appealed to the United Nations to remove Saddam Hussein. Powell came to the presentation equipped with numerous satellite

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy?*, 163.

¹⁹⁸ Schmitt, “Threats and Responses.”

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

photos, claiming the “existence of mobile production facilities used to make biological agents” carrying the potential capacity to “kill thousands upon thousands of people.”²⁰² According to Tenet, the goal the CIA had for the UN speech was to “come up with rhetoric...supported by underlying intelligence and worthy of what we all hoped would be a defining moment.”²⁰³ Also echoed was Powell’s reenergized insistence that Baghdad and Al-Qaeda were cooperating with one another in launching future poison gas attacks on the US with the additional US assertion that it had a decade’s worth of proof that Saddam was “determined to acquire nuclear weapons.”²⁰⁴ In turn, the American media proclaimed Powell’s speech as being “Impressive,” “Masterful,” “Overwhelming,” and “Case Closed.”²⁰⁵ Despite the CIA’s best efforts of monitoring what went into the Powell UN speech, flawed information had made its way into the final draft. George Tenet acknowledged with candid detail in his 2007 memoir that he had overseen an intelligence agency that had allowed for “flawed information to be presented to Congress, the president, the United Nations, and the world.”²⁰⁶

Unleashing War in Iraq

The Second Persian Gulf War commenced on the night of March 19, 2003, with televised coverage of the US military’s aptly named “Shock and Awe” initial bombing campaign over the capital, Baghdad, aimed at eradicating Saddam Hussein while also liquidating principal figures in the Baathist political regime. From its opening shot, the war coverage was filtered through a ceaselessly churning twenty-four hour news cycle designed to keep the American viewer entranced and, moreover, to have the American patriot remain unabatingly supportive of the war

²⁰² Anderson, *Bush’s Wars*, 122.

²⁰³ Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 373.

²⁰⁴ Anderson, *Bush’s Wars*, 122.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 383.

effort. Six weeks later on May 1, 2003, while aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln* with a grandiose “Mission Accomplished” banner hanging behind him, President Bush announced in a nationally televised speech an end to major combat operations in Iraq. He was immediately met with an ensuing round of cheers from the troops in attendance aboard the naval carrier as well as further praise from the pundits embedded within the neoconservative enclave.

By the fall of 2003, the homegrown Sunni insurgency, gaining rapid traction from the demoralization it felt due to the American-controlled dissolution of the Sunni-dominated Iraqi Army in addition to the inopportunity for ex-Baathist officials to participate in the rebuilding of a new central Iraqi government, was steadily escalating its waves of entrenched violence across Iraq marked by more frequent deadly attacks against the Iraqi Shia community in addition to coalition forces. In particular, the August 7, 2003, bombing of the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad sent shockwaves throughout the American military command, a foreboding message of dire times ahead for the strained Islamic sectarian communities in Iraq, and a call for Islamic extremists to flock to Iraq to join groups such as the newly established chapter of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Two months later in October 2003, a neoconservative assessment of the war emerged with Robert Kagan and William Kristol collaborating on an article for *The Weekly Standard* entitled “Why We Went to War.” Kagan and Kristol stressed for the US to remain committed in Iraq for the sake of rebuilding the war-weary country while also reminding Americans of the tyrannical threat the US had disposed of when it removed Saddam Hussein from power.²⁰⁷ The overarching reason Kagan and Kristol provided for the US launching a war against Iraq was to eliminate the

²⁰⁷ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, “Why We Went to War,” in *The Weekly Standard*, 20 Oct. 2003 <<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/003/236jmcbd.asp>> (19 May 2015).

strategic threat posed by Saddam attributed to his track record of aggression and barbarity throughout the Middle East.²⁰⁸

Kristol and Kagan's "Why We Went to War" strove to remind *The Weekly Standard* readership as well as the American public at large of the evidence the co-authors had been pointing to for years in making the case to oust Saddam Hussein from power. The pair painted the case of Iraq as a glimpse into a new century involving a greater number of rogue states armed with WMDs. Had the US not intervened in Iraq, Kagan and Kristol argued, Saddam would have been further emboldened to "act with impunity" while persuading rogue leaders across the world to act with similar flagrancy. In the 1990s, the Iraqis had refused to produce credible evidence of them having "secretly" destroyed chemical and biological weapons. After 1996, Saddam had blocked certain buildings and warehouses to be analyzed by UN weapons inspectors, and at the end of 1997 the Iraqi leader had demanded the removal of all Americans from the UN weapons inspection team. Kagan and Kristol raised these points to remind Americans that Saddam had long been uncooperative with joint American and international efforts to monitor Iraq's weapons programs.²⁰⁹

In their October 2003 *Weekly Standard* article, Kagan and Kristol highlighted Saddam Hussein's isolation of the Clinton Administration. They also coyly credited themselves with spurring President Clinton to act on Iraq by alluding to the PNAC's January 1998 letter to the president as well as mentioning the pivotal February 1998 speech given by President Clinton that spoke to America as to why war against Iraq was proving necessary. The co-authors reiterated how Iraq did not comply with UN Resolution 1441 which demanded that the country clearly detail the layout of its WMD program within thirty days. Kagan and Kristol's article, in effect,

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

was aimed at convincing the “conspiratorialists” and those claiming that Saddam’s removal was fraudulent that the US had waged a proper recourse in subduing a menace in the Middle East.²¹⁰

Conclusion: An Insidious D.C. Soap Opera Reminiscent of a Shakespearean Tragedy

2006 witnessed the termination of the Project for the New American Century while also marking a horrifically violent year in Iraq. By year’s end, the Bush Administration was at a critical juncture with Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, and Colin Powell all having vacated the president’s hawkish inner circle. In turn, Condoleezza Rice assumed the role of US Secretary of State during President Bush’s second term in office. George Tenet stepped down from his post as CIA Director in 2004. The PNAC never provided a set of reasons as to why they were permanently dismantling their think tank. However if one were to glance at the bigger picture playing out with a raging inferno of an insurgency sending Iraq into an abyss, it is easier to surmise why their mission of delivering American democracy to a longtime autocratic state such as Iraq had ultimately failed.

The PNAC’s grand vision of promoting democracy via unchallenged American unilateralism in a country such as Iraq, which had never been accustomed to even the faintest semblance of an Americanized set of freedom and open society principles, had quickly metastasized into a seemingly irreparable, festering black mark on President Bush’s foreign policy record. By 2006, no weapons of mass destruction inside Iraq had been found, and Al-Qaeda in Iraq, then under the command of Jordanian militant Islamist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was stronger than ever. Islamic extremists exploited the already volatile fault lines pitting the Shia and Sunni communities of Iraq against one another. These Iraqi groups had felt exasperated

²¹⁰ Ibid.

by the De-Ba'athification process in 2003 under the direction of the Coalition Provisional Authority under the leadership of Presidential Envoy to Iraq Lewis Paul Bremer III which had liquidated the former Iraqi army. De-Ba'athification, ushering in a gaping absence of Sunni representation in Iraqi civilian affairs, had nefariously manifested the sectarian divide into a pugnacious hotbed of radical Islamic fundamentalism at odds with the Shia-dominated Nouri al-Maliki Administration.²¹¹ In 2006 the Iraq Study Group, a ten-person bipartisan panel, recommended a reappraisal of what was the “fundamental cause of violence in Iraq.”²¹² The group highlighted assessments from multiple American generals who voiced concern that “adding U.S. troops might temporarily help limit violence in a highly localized area.”²¹³ However, if the Iraqi government did not actively strive to foster cooperation between the Shia and Sunni community, “all the troops in the world will not provide security” to an appallingly fractured Iraqi society.²¹⁴

Key figures involved with the PNAC have since moved on to other academic, media, and policy endeavors. William Kristol is still the editor of *The Weekly Standard*, while Robert Kagan currently sits as a senior fellow on the Project on International Order and Strategy at the Brookings Institute. Influential Iraq War promoter, Richard Perle, is currently at the Institute for Policy Studies. All three were contacted for interview requests, and all three either declined or chose not to respond. These neoconservatives, along with many others, have successfully avoided shouldering any of the blame for the quagmire that the Iraq War devolved into due, in part, to their faulty analysis and unbending, impetuous rhetoric in the years leading up to the

²¹¹ James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2006), 3-6.

²¹² *Ibid*, 38.

²¹³ *Ibid*.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 38-39.

commencement of the war. What became quite a noticeable conundrum much to the detriment of the credibility of the Bush Administration's war strategy, especially once the Iraq War had commenced in 2003, was the fact that nearly all of the leading PNAC intellectuals and policy-wielding architects of the Iraq War had never personally experienced combat. This compelled many of their critics to denounce them with the unsavory, political term of "chicken hawks," meaning those who actively strive for war but who avoided military service when they had come of age.

Many of the leading PNAC intellectuals have all since eased into similar positions of relative influence and stature at other policy institutes that currently provide foreign policy advice to many of the 2016 Republican presidential candidates. The neoconservative ideological stalwarts, once comprising the clandestine PNAC spanning two presidential administrations, still wield enormous influence inside and outside the deep D.C. bureaucracy in both the public and private sector. These public intellectuals found their voices at the end of the Cold War, at a time of a rapidly transforming global political landscape, overshadowed by an emergent American unipolarism. They tend to operate with greater efficiency and impunity when their frameworks for foreign policy, chiefly characterized by American hegemony and preemption, continue to go largely unnoticed by the public. They tend to fly (operate) below the radar and not accept any responsibility for their bold, yet often faulty counsel.

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 - This archive provides copies of NIE and NIC estimates and analysis on Iraq's WMD programs. This archive encapsulates a perspective concerned with logistics and credible data from the side of the intelligence community with no biases towards a specific US policy.
- II. National Security Archives
 - This archive, through its many documents related to both the president's administration and the military sector, provides a perspective of the direction and momentum of US policy on Iraq in the 1990s and 2000s with specific attention paid to the development of US war plans and strategies against Iraq as well as detailed reports of Iraq's WMD programs.
- III. The Weekly Standard
 - This database of older WS publications reveals critiques, rhetoric, and suppositions written by many members of the PNAC, highlighting and scrutinizing the threat Saddam Hussein of Iraq posed to US security and strategic interests. Throughout the lead-up to war with Iraq, *The Weekly Standard* tirelessly bolstered its argument to launch war against Iraq to protect America with markedly heightened fervor post-9/11.

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Vita

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