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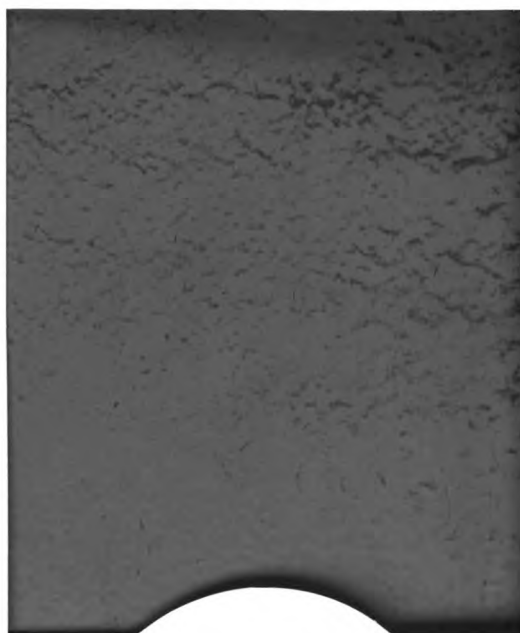
IRAQ:  
(November 2001-November 2002)  
AMERICA'S CHECKS AND BALANCES  
PREVAIL OVER UNILATERALISM

*Ron Huisken*



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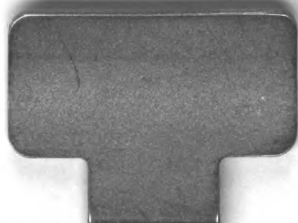
Strategic and Defence Studies Centre

The Australian National University

Canberra ACT 0200

Australia

Tel: 02 62438555 Fax: 02 62480816





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**Iraq: (November 2001-November 2002)****America's Checks and Balances Prevail Over Unilateralism***Ron Huisken***Abstract**

Between November 2001 and September 2002 the Bush administration tried to prepare the US, and the rest of the world, for pre-emptive military action to remove the Iraqi regime and bring that country into full and durable compliance with UN resolutions under a new, democratic government. It was a costly exercise. The US succeeded for a time in making itself, rather than Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, the principal source of international concern. On 4 September 2002, President Bush abruptly changed course, committing his administration to achieving the same goal by the book, both domestically and internationally. What drove the administration down this path and sustained it as the political costs and risks mounted? Was the switch to the UN real or essentially cosmetic, only deferring slightly the intention to secure regime change?

**Background**

The principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states are treasured universally. Although most recognise that these principles are not, and cannot be, absolute, resistance to characterising any qualifications has historically been strong. Over the course of the 1990s, this state of affairs came under critical scrutiny. The notion gained ground that sovereignty and non-interference were rights that states earned through decent behaviour – behaviour that broadly conformed to international norms and standards. In other words, states could deprive themselves of the privileges and protection afforded by these foundation principles of the contemporary international system. It was certainly no accident that this development in thought coincided with the first decade of the post-Cold War era and the advent of unipolarity in the international system. The enforcement of standards at seemingly bearable

cost and risk had become a real option. This new thinking was tested and, by any measure, proven by the action taken in 1999 by a US-led coalition against Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic over ethnic cleansing practices in the province of Kosovo.

By the standards that some had adopted by the late 1990s, Saddam Hussein had deprived Iraq of the rights and privileges of sovereignty even before his invasion and occupation of Kuwait in August 1990. His conduct in the Iraq war with Iran (including the first use of chemical weapons) and his ferocious suppression of internal dissent (including, again, the use of lethal chemical agents) are regarded by most observers as ample grounds for regarding Iraq as a state that had disqualified itself.

Nothing much changed following Iraq's defeat and eviction from Kuwait. The terms of the ceasefire included Iraq's agreement to divest itself of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the means to produce them, as well as of ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150km. The UN inspection process intended to verify Iraq's compliance with these undertakings became instead a process of hunting down these capabilities in the face of systematic obstruction and deception. By 1993, the United Nations Security Council had found Iraq to be in material breach of its obligations on seven occasions. Other breaches followed, but the UN stopped formally recording them as such, in part perhaps because they generated pressures or expectations on the United Nations Security Council to enforce its authority and there was no consensus in prospect to do so.

This debilitating process came to an end in December 1998 when UN inspectors were denied access to sites of interest and were withdrawn ahead of brief US-UK air strikes (operation Desert Fox). The United Nations Security Council passed a new resolution (its 17<sup>th</sup> on Iraq) early in 1999 reiterating Iraq's obligations. At about the same time, the US adopted regime change as a policy position on Iraq. But the standoff persisted. There was widespread frustration with the status quo, but no consensus either on enforcing UN resolutions or on drawing a line under the whole exercise.

## The Bush Administration

Regime change in Iraq was an administration objective from the outset, and it's not hard to see why. The Vice President, Secretary of State, Deputy Secretaries of State and of Defense, and the National Security Advisor were all in office in 1991 when going beyond liberating Kuwait to occupy Baghdad looked like a piece of cake, militarily, but the President elected not to. A costly and inconclusive decade later, Saddam Hussein was 'known' to be reconstituting his WMD capabilities in the absence of UN inspections and an increasingly ineffectual sanctions regime.

Moreover, the Pentagon had run a number of elaborate simulations of the 1990-1991 crisis, with Saddam Hussein in possession of nuclear weapons and at least medium-range missile delivery systems. UN inspectors concluded that Iraq was 12-18 months away from a nuclear capability in 1991. Unsurprisingly, these simulations indicated that the crisis would have been vastly more difficult and costly to deal with. It fuelled the 'rogue' state and missile defence debates throughout the 1990s, debates that also brought Donald Rumsfeld to the fore as the head of a commission that argued in June 1998 that rogue states could develop long-range missiles much more quickly than the intelligence community believed was the case.<sup>1</sup>

The initial discussions on Iraq within the second Bush administration were apparently driven by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, who floated the concept of building up Iraqi exiles and the Kurdish militia inside Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein with the assistance of US air power.<sup>2</sup> Secretary of State Colin Powell was sceptical, as were many senior military officers, about the capacities of these Iraqi groups and the corresponding reliance on air power. Moreover, as it was not intended to work through the United Nations, it could not be presumed that key neighbouring countries – especially Saudi Arabia and Turkey – would allow air bases on their territory to be used.

The US proposed to the United Nations Security Council in June 2001 to re-introduce inspectors into Iraq in exchange for a more discriminating sanctions regime – looser on civilian goods, tougher on military

imports. The move was blocked by Russia. This impasse invigorated discussions within the administration on military options, but it remained at the level of discussions. Until September 11, 2001.

Although the US, with virtually global support, quickly zeroed in on al Qaeda and its Taliban hosts in Afghanistan, it would appear that many in the administration assumed Iraqi involvement and that country's inclusion in the war against terror when the connection was found. That was not to be. According to a US intelligence official in November 2001, "there's not a drop of evidence linking Iraq to the 911 hijackings".<sup>3</sup>

It was clear, however, that 911 had moved the Iraq issue sharply up the US priority list. Within weeks of the launch of operation Enduring Freedom, signals emanating from the administration that the war would be widened, probably in the direction of Iraq, began to attract caution and criticism. Germany's Foreign Minister said, "Europe would have very, very serious questions about that, to put it diplomatically".<sup>4</sup> Saudi Arabia's recently-retired intelligence chief reinforced the view that there was absolutely no evidence of an Iraqi-al Qaeda link and that US military action against Iraq would be a mistake that his country would not support or facilitate.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, however, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice was saying "the world would clearly be better and the Iraqi people would be better off if Saddam Hussein were not in power" and "We didn't need September 11 to tell us that [Saddam Hussein] is a threat to our interests. We'll deal with that situation eventually".<sup>6</sup>

On 26 November, President Bush casually, perhaps even inadvertently, pushed the Iraq issue into the centre of the war against terror. In an exchange with the press that traversed the economy, Vice-President Cheney's health, and human cloning, Bush was asked what message he would like to send about the scope of the War on Terror, specifically with respect to Iraq:

"Well, my message is that, if you harbour a terrorist, you're a terrorist. If you feed a terrorist, you're a terrorist. If you develop weapons of mass destruction that you want to terrorise



the world, you'll be held accountable.”

Asked a little later whether Saddam Hussein would have to agree to let inspectors back in:

“Saddam Hussein agreed to allow inspectors in his country. In order to prove to the world he's not developing weapons of mass destruction, he ought to let the inspectors back in.”

On the consequences of a refusal:

“That's up for ... he'll find out.”

When asked whether he had expanded his definition of international terrorism since his key speech to Congress on 20 September 2001 to include states developing WMD:

“So part of the war on terror is deny terrorist weapons getting – I mean, weapons be used for means of terror – getting in the hands of nations that will use them.”

“Have I expanded the definition? I've always had that definition as far as I'm concerned.”<sup>7</sup>

These were clearly unscripted remarks, but all the more revealing for it. They represent the key impressions, or conclusions, that had registered in the President's mind at that point from all the briefings and lobbying to which he had been subject. Two stand out. First, that resuming UN inspections was a necessary first step in dealing with Saddam Hussein. Second, and more important, Bush was persuaded that the US had to worry seriously about the threat of a 911 with WMD and that, somehow, Iraq was the principal source of that threat.

Iraq had been a costly irritant for 10 years, but the US had concluded that containment and deterrence kept the risk to acceptable levels. This

judgement was actively contested by senior figures in the second Bush administration, and overturned after 911. Most of the key figures in the new Bush administration had already concluded in 1991 that, as the sole superpower, the US could and should, unilaterally if necessary, deal conclusively with challenges like Iraq. They were of the same view in 2001 and pressed from the outset to commit the US to regime change in Iraq. Washington's sharply reduced tolerance of risk following 911 tipped the scales emphatically. President Bush's remarks on 26 November indicated that the US debate on Iraq had shifted from whether to how to engineer a regime change.

### **Shaping the US Approach to Regime Change**

The import of Bush's comments was not lost on audiences at home or abroad. Domestically, even those who had been urging caution and patience in discussions within the administration knew that the President had opened the door and committed the US to resolving the Iraq question. Richard Armitage, the plain-speaking Deputy Secretary of State put it best: "The president said it, so that's that – it's back".<sup>8</sup> Powell, though himself genuinely conservative on security and defence issues, was at the dovish end of the spectrum in the administration, and would now have to work even harder to engage his President. Moreover, Powell's credibility had been damaged because he had always cautioned against over-reliance on air power and the campaign in Afghanistan was raising the effectiveness of this tool to new heights. Powell, however, did have the President's reference to inspections, which meant the UN, diplomacy and coalition-building.

The allied reaction was swift. Within days of Bush's comments, French and German ministers had signalled clearly that widening the war in this way was fraught with danger and was not an approach that their countries shared.<sup>9</sup> It is important to be clear on what Bush's comments meant to the NATO allies in particular. The war on terror is peculiar in the sense that the US has not formally declared war on anyone. At the same time, the European members of NATO did invoke Article IV of the treaty (for the first time in the history of the alliance) and thereby formally declared

themselves to be belligerents in this “war”. The “war” that the allies signed up to was defined by President Bush as finding and destroying all terrorist groups of international reach. In his comments on 26 November, Bush was unilaterally changing the objectives of the “war” the allies had agreed to fight, and doing so just six weeks after the fighting started.

This was not a smart move from the standpoint of coalition management. Instead of fixing the damage, the rival camps in Washington squared off to shape US policy. It was an uneven contest. The dominant strategic impulse in the Bush administration was that unipolarity was a historic opportunity. To an extent unprecedented in history, the US did not have to pursue objectives gradually or indirectly. Nor did it have to bother very much about tensions between objectives, abandoning or deferring some to facilitate others. On the core issues, the US could define absolute solutions and make them happen. Over the period December 2001 – August 2002, the debate on Iraq was noisy and confusing. But the dominant message emanating from Washington was that the US could and probably would just do it – without the UN, without inspections and, if necessary, without allies.

In the last months of 2001, Russia had considerable leverage in Washington. Russia’s prompt and unqualified offer after 9/11 to become an ally in the war on terror had translated into practical support for Enduring Freedom of great value to the US. More broadly, Bush appears to have prized the status of becoming the US President who secured a deep and irreversible transformation in US-Russia relations. More selfishly, Bush still hoped (through the Crawford summit in November 2001) to persuade Putin to join him in a graceful exit from the ABM treaty. In one of the clearest examples of the ‘we can do it all’ philosophy, Bush announced America’s unilateral withdrawal from the ABM treaty on 13 December 2001. This action made it much harder for Putin to sustain his closeness to the US against his domestic opponents (and poked a finger in the eye of close allies like France and Germany who were also attached to the ‘regime’ underpinned by the ABM treaty).

There was more to come. Undaunted by the resistance to his

unilateral extension of the war on terror to include Iraq, Bush used the State of the Union address on 29 January 2002 to declare that Iraq, together with Iran and North Korea, constituted an ‘axis of evil’. All three were deemed to be states that were seeking WMD, which they could use to threaten US allies, or which they could transfer to terrorist groups. This arresting characterisation cut sharply across established policy settings for a number of key allies – the Europeans in the case of Iran, and Japan and South Korea in the case of North Korea.

Bush also used the State of Union address to hint strongly that the US would – possibly even already had – endorse a doctrine of pre-emptive defence:

“I will not wait on events, while dangers gather ... The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.”<sup>10</sup>

Senior administration officials quickly carried this new doctrine to wider audiences. Speaking at the National Defense University in Washington DC, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld said:

“Defending against terrorism and other emerging 21<sup>st</sup> century threats may well require that we take the war to the enemy.”<sup>11</sup>

In Munich, Germany, Rumsfeld’s deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, told a security conference:

“Our approach has been to aim for prevention and not merely punishment. We are at war. Self-defense requires prevention and sometimes pre-emption.”<sup>12</sup>

Russian, German and Chinese ministers also attending the conference all signalled strong reservations about widening the war on terror, as well as doing so pre-emptively.<sup>13</sup> Japan joined the chorus somewhat later, in early May. A senior Japanese politician signalled that

the political courage and energy displayed to send a naval flotilla into the Indian Ocean to provide rear-echelon support for Enduring Freedom would not be repeated for any operation against Iraq – unless it was proven that Iraq was implicated in 911.

Immediately after the State of the Union – and some two months after initially demanding the return of inspectors – Bush said publicly that he was not “impatient” to deal with Iraq, a position that would become very familiar over the ensuing months.<sup>14</sup> The continuing divisions within the administration, essentially between State and Defense, were undeniable. The media had begun to cast Powell as the misfit in a very hawkish administration. On Iraq, however, the pendulum had swung a little in Powell’s direction. The President had focused on the return of inspectors; he was not in a hurry, and the cost of the unilateral regime-change approach in terms of international relationships was mounting fast.

In testimony to Congress early in February 2002, Powell stressed the goal of regime-change and the wide range of options under consideration in the administration to bring that about. Press commentary suggested Powell was cementing his credentials as a team-player, but also as a player per se. At the same time, articles appeared suggesting that the option gaining favour most quickly was the diplomatic one – working through the Security Council.

The target at that time was the Security Council deadline in May 2002 to review/renew the sanctions regime against Iraq. Powell and his British counterpart, Jack Straw, discussed this deadline as an opportunity to propose smarter sanctions – tougher on military goods, more lenient on civilian imports – and issue an ultimatum to Iraq to allow the inspectors back. The broad expectation – assuming Security Council agreement – was that Saddam Hussein would either refuse point blank to admit inspectors, or let them back in, but continue to frustrate their efforts as in the past.<sup>15</sup> This approach might consume 5-6 months, but it would set the stage for more direct action before the end of 2002, with substantial international support, or at least acquiescence.

This game plan ran aground on the increasingly ugly confrontation

between Israel and the Palestinians. Vice-President Cheney took the pulse of 12 countries during a whirlwind tour in March 2002 and found either strong nervousness or outright opposition to military action against Iraq.<sup>16</sup> For regional states, the pre-conditions were not just the Security Council and inspections, but also defusing the Israeli-Palestinian war. Following Cheney's return to Washington, the spin fed to the media, in not-for-attribution comments, was that the key regional players were privately supportive and that this would emerge once it was clear that the US was determined to act and see the task through.<sup>17</sup> The diversion of regional interest and concern toward Israel (and the US) led the US to postpone plans to present an intelligence briefing on Iraq to the Security Council.<sup>18</sup> This had been seen as an important precursor to the debate on sanctions and inspections, but the judgement was made that, in the prevailing climate, it would be a waste of good ammunition. Britain had a similar briefing, but also elected to defer its presentation.

By the end of April 2002, it would appear that debate within the administration accepted a significant delay in engineering a decision-point on Iraq.<sup>19</sup> Earlier schemes on formenting a coup or an operation similar to Afghanistan, with US air power sharply multiplying the effectiveness of indigenous armed opposition groups, had been effectively countered as not sufficiently certain to succeed. The risks – greatly enhanced by the poisonous state of Israeli-Palestinian relations – that an early strike against Iraq would be seen simply as a confrontation with Islam, weakening the war on terror and possibly destabilising key regimes throughout the Arab world, were more widely recognised as serious.

Iraq, in the meantime, in early April, had signalled its interest in renewing dialogue with the UN, initially insisting that renewed inspections would not be on the agenda. Very quickly, on 1 May, this became talks on inspections but, in Iraq's view, as part of a definitive package including an end to sanctions and no-fly zones.

From May through July, with the sense of immediacy substantially evaporated, and with growing international interest in renewing inspections, Washington continued to debate all the options canvassed above, and to

expose lingering divisions within the administration. In early June, the Washington Post disclosed that Bush had authorised the CIA to conduct covert operations in Iraq: gathering intelligence, assessing the strength and commitment of opposition groups and the like.<sup>20</sup> Plans for a US invasion force were characterised in the press, often leaked by those who had different ideas.<sup>21</sup> The initial round of Iraq-UN talks concluded at the end of June without agreement on new inspections.

On 8 July, Bush reiterated both the goal of regime change and his patience in exploring the alternative ways of bringing this about. The weeks of semi-public airing of preferred options, the resilience of the groups favouring unilateral pre-emptive action, and the administration's inability or unwillingness to put some kind of framework around all the options and to shape the debate, began to take its toll. By mid-July, Congressional impatience with being left out of the loop began to find public expression, and from both sides of politics.<sup>22</sup> The message here was a critical one: Iraq should not be viewed as a simple extension of the war on terror that Congress had authorised the administration to wage. The lawmakers felt the administration had yet to make the case for military action against Iraq. Why was Saddam Hussein an urgent priority? If regime change was the objective, who should replace Saddam Hussein and how should this be engineered? Given the risks of inflaming Islamic feelings against the US, how could the US minimise this risk both to the progress of the war on terror and to America's compelling interests in the stability of the wider Gulf/Middle East region?

In the allied community, any comfort established back in April, when the US conceded a longer timetable for resolving the Iraq question, had begun to dissipate. The US 'obsession' with Iraq and its unvarnished commitment to regime change clashed with European perceptions that ending the war between the Israelis and the Palestinians and consolidating stability in Afghanistan were critical pre-conditions for managing the risks associated with bringing the Iraq question to a head. Moreover, the US focus on regime change was seen as virtually guaranteeing that Iraq would see no benefit in resuming inspections. Even the UK made it clear that the objective was ending the threat from Iraqi WMD.<sup>23</sup>

From late July, the battle in Washington to shape US strategy on Iraq intensified quite dramatically. The Senate conducted its first hearings on Iraq in the last week of July.<sup>24</sup> Although Republicans and Democrats differed on whether the administration had the authority to wage war on Iraq without new authorisation from Congress, both sides stressed the importance of involving Congress (and, indirectly, the public) to project American unity. A new variation on a military strategy that did not require a massive invasion force emerged. This “inside-out” or “Baghdad first” option envisaged going directly for Saddam Hussein and his senior command, severing their links with the armed forces and, in particular, with the regime’s WMD capabilities.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, a well-sourced article in the Washington Post reported that many senior military officers did not consider that Iraq posed an immediate threat and that the current policy of containment and deterrence remained viable.<sup>26</sup> The leaders of France and Germany went on the record with the plain message that an attack on Iraq could not be justified unless decided by the Security Council.<sup>27</sup>

In politics, as in everything else, timing is everything. A key indicator that administration policy toward Iraq was approaching the crunch point, and that Washington insiders were aware of this, was a series of articles in the second half of August by ‘old guard’ Republicans advising caution and more careful deliberation. Henry Kissinger argued that the US would be judged by how it managed Iraq after deposing Saddam Hussein, and that this could be a lengthy commitment. He also contended that the administration should think more deeply about the doctrine of pre-emptive action and to package this concept more carefully to protect US interests over the longer term.<sup>28</sup> Brent Scowcroft, National Security Advisor to President Bush Senior, caused an even greater stir a few days later because of the possibility that the former president shared the views he expressed. Scowcroft questioned the urgency of any WMD threat from Iraq; queried the logic that unilateral use of any such capabilities, or transferring them to terrorist groups, would be attractive to Iraq; and contended that action against Iraq would shatter the international coalition on terror and spark an Arab backlash against the US (because the US would be seen as turning its back on the Israel-Palestine dispute).<sup>29</sup>



Ten days later, Bush Senior's Secretary of State, James Baker, reinforced all these arguments.<sup>30</sup> Baker's main message, however, was that although the UN already had the authority in a technical legal sense to take action against Iraq, the US should regard securing new authorisation for the Security Council as a political and practical necessity.

In a sense, the administration's goose was cooked at this point. The domestic debate had reached boiling point with the war sceptics very much in the ascendancy, while the proponents of direct action were not ready with a plausible and coherent alternative. On vacation in Texas, Bush tried to hose down the "churning" speculation on US plans by reiterating that he remained patient and emphasising that diplomacy was among the options.<sup>31</sup> A consideration of some importance would have been evidence in public opinion polls that many Americans thought it very important for the US to act with the support of its allies. A poll in mid-August showed support for military action against Iraq with and without allied support at 69% and 54% respectively.<sup>32</sup> In another poll at the end of August, only 20% of Americans supported a strike without allied support.<sup>33</sup>

Vice-President Cheney chose this improbable moment, 26 August 2002, to make the most coherent, comprehensive and forceful statement of the view that the US had little choice other than to remove Saddam Hussein through pre-emptive military action.<sup>34</sup> Cheney declared bluntly that Saddam Hussein had chemical and biological weapons, and that he would have nuclear weapons "fairly soon". The latter made an Iraqi nuclear threat seem significantly more imminent than others in the administration had been prepared to assert. He also stated bluntly that Saddam Hussein "was prepared" to share WMD with terrorists (contesting widely-held views to the contrary) and considered that new inspections "would provide no assurance whatsoever" of Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions. Far from interfering with the war on terror, Cheney argued (or rather declared) that regime change in Iraq would be of major benefit, including enhancing US efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Cheney's speech could not stem the tide. International resistance appeared to stiffen and, to judge from editorials in the major US newspapers,

Americans continued to feel that the risks in taking early, direct action were too great. Three days later, on 29 August, Cheney put exactly the same arguments to a meeting of Korean War veterans, except for one telling adjustment. Renewed UN inspections were no longer dismissed as providing “false comfort”, but had to be rigorous enough to “compel Iraqi compliance with all UN Security Council Resolutions”.<sup>35</sup> Clearly, the Vice-President had been spoken to regarding limiting the President’s options.

Powell re-entered the debate on 1 September after an absence of some weeks through an interview with the BBC. Referring carefully to the President’s earlier statements, Powell said the US wanted the inspectors to return as ‘a first step’ toward resolving the Iraq issue. He also pointed the US in the direction of a campaign to win back allied and wider international support through making public US intelligence, as well as a commitment to getting the inspectors back in.<sup>36</sup> A couple of days later, with the US media writing up a renewed split within the administration, Powell tried to play the differences down. He characterised the recent claim by Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister that Iraq had no WMD as “nonsense – utter nonsense” and insisted that all the key players in the administration agreed that renewed inspections per se could not make the problem go away.<sup>37</sup>

This account of the US domestic debate coming to a peak during August 2002 is based on what was visible to the media. A recent book by Bob Woodward on the Bush administration since the attacks of September 11, based on interviews with all the key players including the President, provides some intriguing additional insights.<sup>38</sup>

On 5 August 2002, Powell spent several hours with Bush and Rice setting out his views on Iraq. It was the first time, it appears, that Powell had sought such an opportunity, or that Bush had granted it. Powell dwelt on the risk of destabilising the entire Middle East and the possible costs to long-term US interests. He stressed the direct and indirect economic costs and the likelihood that direct action against Iraq would monopolise US political and military energies to the exclusion of everything else. He pointed to the huge imponderables associated with “running” Iraq after Saddam

Hussein had been removed. And he pointed out that the US did not really have a unilateral option: it had to have bases and overflight rights in the region. Powell's conclusion was that the US had to go out and recruit allies, build an international coalition, and that the UN was one way, but not the only way, to go. Bush reportedly indicated a preference for an international coalition and observed that he had derived great satisfaction from building one in the lead-up to operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

On 14 August 2002, with Bush on vacation in Texas, there was a meeting in Washington between Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, Rice and CIA director George Tenet. This meeting agreed that the President's address to the UN General Assembly on 12 September should be specifically about Iraq. It was also agreed that the President could not seek a declaration of war on Iraq, but that he should make clear that the US would embrace the UN option only if it delivered clear, actionable outcomes. The speech would focus on the UN and the challenge that unenforced resolutions on Iraq posed to its credibility.

These two events, not visible at the time, confirm that all of the key players were conscious that the viability of the unilateral, pre-emptive option had eroded seriously over the course of the northern summer. They also suggest that some credence has to be given to the possibility that, at least in the latter part of August, the divisions within the administration were orchestrated to condition Security Council members and Iraq to seek and accept, respectively, a very robust inspection regime, or else.

## Changing Tactics

The administration switched from confrontation to engagement on 4 September 2002, the day the President returned from vacation. The change was wholesale, addressing both Congress and allies and friends, and conceding to both groups that Iraq could not simply be tacked on to the war on terror. Bush told Congressional leaders assembled in the White House that he would engage them (and the American people) in "open dialogue" on the necessity of dealing with Iraq and, in due course, secure Congressional approval to do so. He also foreshadowed imminent meetings

with his British and Canadian counterparts and telephone discussions with China, Russia and France in the lead-up to his speech to the General Assembly on 12 September. Bush made it clear that the focus of this speech would be the credibility of the UN.<sup>39</sup>

Almost coincidentally, a new US poll suggested that just 37% of Americans considered that the President had clearly explained the rationale for war with Iraq. The same poll indicated that the strong in principle support for military action to remove Saddam Hussein (some 65%) shrank to just 18% if it was done without allies and resulted in US casualties in the thousands.<sup>40</sup>

President Bush tried manfully to erase the preceding 9 months of division and confrontation that had produced this outcome, declaring that “today the process starts”<sup>41</sup>. And to underscore the switch, Bush’s chief of staff indicated that Cheney’s speech on 26 August, particularly the remarks on UN inspections, had not been cleared in detail by the White House.<sup>42</sup>

As foreshadowed, on 12 September Bush committed the US “to work with the UN Security Council to meet our common challenge”, but demanded deliberate, decisive action to hold Iraq to account if it again defied the UN.<sup>43</sup>

Two months later, on 8 November, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to give Iraq a final opportunity to demonstrate compliance with earlier resolutions by accepting “immediate, unimpeded, unconditional and unrestricted” inspections. Earlier, on 10-11 October, the US House of Representatives and then the Senate gave strong bi-partisan support to resolutions granting the administration authority to use force to disarm Iraq if necessary.

The intricacies of the negotiations on what became Security Council Resolution 1441 are not particularly germane to this analysis. The main players were the Permanent Five – the five permanent members of the Security Council with the power of veto: the US, UK, France, Russia and China. France emerged quickly as the spokesman and chief negotiator for

the position that ensuring Iraqi disarmament, including through the use of force if necessary, should remain the exclusive responsibility of the Security Council.

France played a difficult hand with great skill, and without causing any souring of its bilateral relationship with the US. Having got the US to take the UN route, it was critical not to drive them away. The French were as conscious as anyone that the credibility of the UN was indeed at stake, and that the UN could not be credible unless the US was involved. France would also have been aware that its negotiating partner, Secretary of State Powell, had a number of senior colleagues who were profoundly sceptical about making fundamental US security interests hostage to the vagaries of multinational diplomacy.

The actual modalities of the inspection regime were settled in a straightforward manner. A regime that left no room for doubt or interpretation was a shared interest. The French were adamant, however, that the US would not be able to use the wording of the resolution to justify taking direct military action against Iraq and claim some measure of UN endorsement. France repeatedly called 'time out' in the negotiations to scour the language on the table, both old and new, for anything that resembled such a 'trigger'. In a word, the French did not trust Washington's assurances that it would not play the game this way.

This impasse was eventually resolved through the notion of a 'final opportunity'. Iraq had repeatedly been judged to be in 'material breach' of UN resolutions. In the view of the US and the UK at least, Iraq was in material breach of these resolutions in November 2002. Resolution 1441, however, provided that so long as Iraq acknowledged, in detail, that this was the case by 8 December, that acknowledgment would not in itself constitute grounds for confronting Iraq with "serious consequences" (UN parlance for possible military force). The resolution binds the US to participate in at least one further Security Council meeting to consider any evidence of Iraqi non-compliance. After that, the US has unilaterally reserved the right to disarm Iraq by force, even if the Security Council cannot agree to take collective action.

The source of this impasse has been a dimension of the Iraqi issue that remained tantalisingly below the surface of the debate. The US and the UK have always been of the view that there was no doubt whatsoever that Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons and was again trying to get nuclear weapons. For these two countries, new inspections could only have two possible outcomes: the inspectors will find these weapons or Iraq will succeed in deceiving them and they will find nothing. Either outcome will confirm the obsessive determination of the Iraqi regime to acquire WMD and beg the question of what to do about it. In contrast, the French and the others insisted on an approach that allowed for the possibility that Iraq would wish to clear the air and come into full compliance in accordance with the procedures set out in the resolution.

These clashing perspectives on the Iraq question were not reconciled in any depth by Resolution 1441. They will resurface as the inspection process unfolds. The Iraqi regime will have to demonstrate that it has genuinely and irreversibly turned over a new leaf and changed its nature. That is asking a lot.

### **Australia and a Wider War**

Since coming to power in March 1996, the coalition government has moved Australia significantly closer to the US. In doing so, the government acted on its assessment that its predecessors had pursued an 'Asia-only' foreign policy and had allowed relations with the US, especially the security relationship, to drift. Even so, Australia's support for the drive to regard Iraq as a prime target in the war on terror, alongside the Taliban and al Qaeda, has been remarkably strong and unqualified. Australia aligned itself quickly with the most conservative faction in the Bush administration, and maintained this position longer than any other country. It did so, however, largely by default, by not saying much at all, rather than by declaring and justifying its position.

A month after 9/11, Prime Minister Howard characterised the objectives of the war on terror in the following terms:

**“The capture and bringing to justice of bin Laden and all those responsible for the terrorist attacks on the US, and also the broader extermination of people who would launch terror attacks on other people around the world.”<sup>44</sup>**

This was a broad characterisation of the objective, broader arguably than the objective set by President Bush for the purposes of assembling the widest possible international coalition to prosecute the campaign.<sup>45</sup>

As far as considered government statements are concerned, this was about it for the next six or seven months. There was no reaction to President Bush’s remarks on 26 November 2001, expanding the objectives of the war to include states, specifically Iraq, that developed WMD with which to terrorise the world, a position he extended in January 2002 to include Iran and North Korea (the “axis of evil”). The government did not commit itself on whether evidence of Iraqi involvement in 911 was important. Nor did it address the issues of the impact an extension of the war to include Iraq might have on the campaign against international terrorism or the implications of the spiralling Israeli-Palestinian conflict for both these objectives.

All these issues were attracting a great deal of attention in the US and shaping the views of many in the international coalition. When pressed, the government simply stated that any request for Australian help in a wider war would be considered on its merits. The Prime Minister did so in March 2002.<sup>46</sup> A week later, Defence Minister Hill said that, while there was no evidence of Iraqi involvement in 911, Australia, like the US, regarded Iraq’s WMD as a “major concern” that it wanted to see reduced and ultimately removed.<sup>47</sup> As late as May 2002, the Foreign Minister could deliver a major address on Australia’s foreign policy without mentioning Iraq or its relationship to the war on terror.<sup>48</sup>

In April 2002, the opposition released a carefully worded statement on the criteria against which it would assess any Australian involvement in a war to change the Iraqi regime and eliminate its WMD. This statement

echoed the themes of the international debate, and the positions of a number of prominent allies. The statement by no means precluded Australia's participation, but it was marred by a conflation of issues that should be clearly separated: whether Australia should join such a campaign and the size/nature of the force that we would contribute. By suggesting that our contribution would have to be minimal in any event, the statement implied that Australia could say yes ambivalently.

The Government criticised the statement strongly, but declined to be drawn into a comparable presentation of its position. As a result, the international media characterised Australia and the UK as the only two confirmed supporters of pre-emptive action against Iraq. As the Blair government encountered growing domestic opposition and began (around April 2002) to stress that Iraqi disarmament was the core objective (not regime change), Australia was for a time the only government regarded as fully behind regime change through a pre-emptive strike.

One commentator pointed out in July 2002 that the positions of the Government and opposition on Iraq were all but identical, on paper.<sup>49</sup> And one can, of course, find reference to support for the UN process and the return of inspectors.<sup>50</sup> To the best of my knowledge, however, the government did not in the first half of 2002 set out clearly the considerations that would shape its position on military action against Iraq. The impression left by occasional remarks by the Prime Minister and senior ministers was one of unqualified resolve to back the US on Iraq. This impression was far too clear to be regarded as accidental or inadvertent.

This posture reached its peak in July 2002. Following meetings in Washington on 12 July, Mr Downer declared that it would be an "act of appeasement" to allow Iraq to continue to resist disarmament in the context of new inspections, adding the view that Australians were not inclined to support such an approach. Also at this time, Senator Hill cryptically gave "in principle" support to the doctrine of pre-emptive military action, and Iraq cancelled some significant purchases of Australian wheat.



After this flurry, the government began to tone down its rhetoric, a process that accelerated as it became clearer that domestic and international opposition was eroding any option the US had to act pre-emptively and outside the UN framework.

Senator Hill, on 6 August, described three conditions for any commitment of Australian forces: (1) all options short of war had been exhausted; (2) assurances that a new regime in Iraq would be genuinely different from that of Saddam Hussein; and (3) involvement would be in Australian as well as US interests.<sup>51</sup> The Prime Minister similarly changed from talking about the strong possibility of war to war being the last resort, something to be avoided as strenuously as possible. Mr Howard also indicated that any Australian commitment would be debated in Parliament. Looking back on 21 August, Australia's leading political commentator could observe that "Australia should have sought answers from the US to the questions Republican elders (Kissinger, Scowcroft, etc) now raise".<sup>52</sup>

The wisdom of stepping back from prominent support for early military action against Iraq was confirmed as domestic opposition to this stance mounted. Newspaper editorials, commentaries by prominent figures (including a former CDF) and a formal statement by the RSL counselling restraint confirmed the government in its new approach. In the context of reporting in Australia on Vice-President Cheney's robust speech on 26 August, Senator Hill pointedly told the Senate that what Australia wanted was the re-introduction of inspectors to provide confidence in Iraq's compliance with UN resolutions.<sup>53</sup>

Mr Downer made a major statement in Parliament on 17 September setting out the history of the Iraq issue and confirming that Australia had been pressing at the UN for a tough new resolution on inspections and reliable disarmament.

The devastating bombings in Bali on 10 October sharpened Australia's policy dilemmas across the board. Although the government had softened Australia's exposure on Iraq, the politics of alliance management in general,

and its record of close identification with the US posture through July/August in particular, meant that Washington's expectations of full political and military support were high. In June/July, the government was already focused on the forces that it would contribute to the campaign in Iraq (although, in an uncharacteristic lapse, it spoke of an armoured brigade that the ADF did not possess). Separately, Defence Minister Hill - with Afghanistan and, prospectively, Iraq in mind - had been signalling for months that one of the tenets of Australian defence policy - that developments close to Australia mattered most - was obsolete.<sup>54</sup>

There was little overlap between the security capabilities relevant to combating terrorism in Australia and its immediate region and the forces that might be contributed to a more conventional military campaign in Iraq. Inevitably, however, the already significant reservations about going to war against Iraq increased strongly with the perception of both a threat close to home and, for the first time, of Australians being targeted specifically. The government manoeuvred gingerly around this dilemma. It told domestic audiences that Australia's immediate security interests would always be paramount, but contended that Iraq and the war on terror were "not unrelated" (a gesture to Washington but a far cry from the administration's contention that they were inseparable).<sup>55</sup> In a speech on 20 November, the Prime Minister noted that any contribution to a new theatre like Iraq would be subordinate to Australia's immediate needs.<sup>56</sup> As foreshadowed by Defence Minister Hill some weeks earlier, the Prime Minister announced the withdrawal of the SAS regiment from operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

In a secondary but clear signal to Washington that it would count on some Australian support, he also noted that Australia's contribution to operation Enduring Freedom had passed the priority test.<sup>57</sup> A month later, in the context of widespread disappointment and concern about the thoroughness of Iraq's declaration on WMD, the Prime Minister continued to keep a low profile, urging perseverance with the UN process. On the US assessment that the shortcomings in Iraq's declaration constituted a "material breach" of Resolution 1441, the Prime Minister in fact went so far as to say that "we don't unilaterally accept the assessments of other

countries".<sup>58</sup>

## Some Conclusions

### On America

What was this noisy debate really about? On which issue(s) did the US and its major allies and friends part company? Were the divisions within the administration orchestrated or substantive and, if the latter, what was the key point of difference?

During the two months of negotiations on Resolution 1441, the US encountered something unusual and sobering: it was not trusted. All the main parties to the negotiations agreed on the objective of devising an inspection regime that Iraq could not subvert. The parties other than the US, however, also harboured a deep suspicion that Washington had been less than totally sincere in committing itself to addressing the Iraq question through the UN. For these countries – led by France – a second objective was to ensure that the resolution had no hidden triggers that Washington could exploit to justify direct military action, and do so broadly in the name of the UN. This suspicion had both proximate and deeper, more general roots. The proximate cause was Washington's unilateral expansion of the war on terror to include Iraq (and, in due course perhaps, Iran and North Korea) and its broad posture, for months afterwards, that to question this development was to renege on commitments given to be part of the coalition against terror. This experience, however, reinforced a cumulative impression of a US that had become distant and aloof, disdainful of compromise and given to presenting the world with 'take it or leave it' policy settings. High points along this road included the Kyoto Protocol, the verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, the ABM treaty and freezing the allies out of operation Enduring Freedom in the early weeks.

In the atmosphere of accumulated frustration and discontent with unipolarity, Washington and its major allies and friends never got on to the same wavelength on a crucial dimension of the Iraq issue: Why did the earliest possible removal of Saddam Hussein abruptly become such a driving preoccupation? Both sides appeared to have a common sense of the

formidable risks involved:

- to the critical perception that the ongoing war was directed at international terrorism, not Islam;
- to the stability of the wider Arab world already under worrying pressure as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict spiralled toward total war, seemingly with Washington's blessing;
- to the huge economic interests all the major powers had in the Arab world, not to mention the direct and probable indirect costs of a war against Iraq and the significant risk that these would put the global economy into a tailspin.<sup>59</sup>

For Washington, these risks were to an extent exaggerated, to an extent susceptible to management and attenuation, but for the rest were simply outweighed by the risks of accepting the status quo. The issue for the rest of the world always remained why these risks had to be taken now. There was no evidence that Iraq was associated with al Qaeda or involved in 911. There was no evidence that an Iraqi breakout on the WMD front was imminent. Whenever it appeared that either the US or UK would release their intelligence dossiers on Iraq, spokesmen noted carefully not to expect new revelations or 'smoking guns': the force of the dossiers lay in the cumulative evidence of Iraqi misbehaviour. This was confirmed when the UK released the dossier in September 2002.

These circumstances bred some damaging perceptions. One was that the dominant group in the administration wanted to leverage the atmosphere and momentum generated by 911 to rectify the error of judgement or loss of will in 1991 in deciding to stay within the UN mandate and to simply evict the Iraqis from Kuwait. This was a group that, by 1990/1991, had already thought deeply about what unipolarity meant for the capacity of the US to shape the contours of the international arena directly and definitively. In the view of this group, the US had hesitated in 1991 when it didn't have to. It already had the national capacity, and the absence of international constraints, to resolve problems completely and directly. In the event, Iraq had lingered on as a costly and embarrassing

irritant ever since.

Another perception was that the administration was not ready to accept its own rhetoric that the war on terror would be a different kind of war – long, mostly invisible, mostly non-military. Removing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan came more easily and quickly than expected and the administration's domestic standing soared to unprecedented heights. On the other hand, visible successes against al Qaeda evaporated almost as quickly, inclining the administration toward new concrete goals that played to America's most conspicuous strength – breathtaking conventional military power.

One does not have to dismiss these motives out of hand to acknowledge that there had to be other considerations, important considerations. One of these may have been the deep conviction among a number of key players that Saddam Hussein was involved in 911. In other words, a conviction strong enough to support a presumption of guilt and listing alongside al Qaeda. There are certainly ample references in the media to the fact that the US intelligence community mounted a major sustained effort devoted specifically to establishing that link. Identifying all the perpetrators of 911 was, of course, important and legitimate, but the persistence shown in the case of Iraq in the face of a nil return suggests that there may have been more to it.<sup>60</sup> The one tantalising tidbit - that 911 hijack leader, Mohammed Atta, met an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague in June 2000 – could neither be confirmed nor added to. In October 2002, it was reported that Czech President Václav Havel had discreetly informed the Bush administration that there was no evidence to confirm such a meeting.<sup>61</sup> As late as October 2002, Rumsfeld established a new unit in the Pentagon to re-examine all the intelligence related to 911 to see if a link to Iraq had been missed, a step naturally resented by the major agencies, especially the CIA.<sup>62</sup> In short, a motive for switching the focus from al Qaeda to Iraq that cannot be dismissed is that a critical mass of senior figures in the administration are simply convinced that Saddam Hussein was involved and that this will be proven in due course.<sup>63</sup> This somewhat speculative consideration is linked to a second, more clearly persuasive one.

September 11 stunned the entire world. It first devastated and humiliated, and then enraged, the US. The Bush administration, however, even as it launched the war on terror, moved on intellectually beyond events like 911 very quickly - much more quickly than the rest of the world - and became totally preoccupied with the threat of a 911 with WMD. The conviction that Saddam Hussein was linked to 911, and all that conviction implied about how the administration viewed Saddam Hussein, meant that the consuming threat of terrorism with WMD had Iraq as its most likely source. <sup>64</sup> Arguments that Iraq and al Qaeda were, if anything, ideological enemies, or that rational assessments of Iraqi interests discounted such a threat, were inclined to be dismissed as too clever by half. In short, Washington had become, and remains, genuinely afraid of Iraq. The political spectrum on Iraq is not very wide.

Fears of a devastating terrorist strike or strikes on its homeland with WMD, probably made possible by Iraq, were made all the more compelling for Americans because these were so novel. Complete annihilation in a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union during the Cold War was probably easier to cope with in the sense that such an event defied the imagination and became genuinely 'unthinkable'.

Despite the acute nature of these concerns in the post-911 climate, the checks and balances on US policy settings eventually prevailed over unilateralism. These checks and balances originated predominantly within the US, although international pressures were also important (even though, as noted below, Australia's contribution was minimal). With the embrace of the UN process in September 2002, Iraq became an issue of compliance with international law. The several other probable or possible drivers of US policy – for example, pre-empting what Iraq might do with weapons that it may have; correcting a conspicuous blemish (Iraq 1991) in the (Republican) US record of dealing with security challenges decisively and completely; creating a new long-term basis for US control of international energy – did not disappear, but they no longer needed to be the pivotal rationales for US action.

History may show that the Bush administration's actions between

November 2001 and September 2002 were always intended to bring the Iraq question to the point of decision and definitive action, by the United Nations. But this is doubtful. The US in fact paid a significant price for the manner in which it went about pushing Iraq to the top of the international agenda. Despite 911, the US was on a roll by the end of 2001. The world was all but spellbound as it set about the task of crushing international terrorism, in the process confirming spectacularly and consolidating yet further its unmatched and unprecedented power and influence.

Gradually, however, Washington's fierce determination to envelop Iraq in the war on terror (and, in the fullness of time, North Korea and Iraq) became a significant diversion and then almost a political and diplomatic quagmire. Washington did change course eventually, and did so emphatically. But one senses that the spell has been broken, the roll at least interrupted.

In the US, the intersection of a grand strategy to perpetuate unipolarity and the sense of singular vulnerability to undeterrable acts of terror by non-state (or rogue-state) actors led Washington to move too fast and too far in articulating how the world had to be changed to protect America and its interests.<sup>65</sup> The scale and savagery of the attacks on 911 were universally accepted to be starkly beyond what the international system could accommodate. No fine judgements along the lines that 'one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter' were required. It was appropriate and important for the US to leverage off the campaign in Afghanistan to reinforce its broader message that a political calculus in any state that led to the sponsorship or tolerance of international terrorism had to be reversed. This was widely accepted as critical to dispersing terrorist groups, making them more vulnerable to exposure to intelligence assets and ultimately to interception and arrest.

In the political-military campaign against international terrorism, conceptual clarity and consistency is as critical as it is difficult. The issues of religion and race lurk just below the surface and represent forces that could be far more destructive if provoked and unleashed. Thinking clearly about the phenomenon of international terrorism and where it 'fits' in the

scheme of things is a critical discipline in a campaign that is fundamentally about a universal minimal degree of order and decency in international affairs. In any dispute or conflict, capturing and holding the moral high ground is advantageous. In the present case, it is probably the very essence of eventual success.

President Bush's apparent declaration in November 2001 that Iraq would be the next front in the war against terror after Afghanistan discomfited most members of the international coalition from the outset. They sensed a diversion from the core mission of disabling international terrorism, and a heightened risk of blurring the crucial distinction between this mission and a 'war' against Islam. There was no evidence of Iraqi involvement in 9/11. Nor did the Iraqi regime present any parallels with the Taliban.

This discomfit grew two months later when Bush appeared to present the 'axis of evil' as a sequence of targets in the war on terror. Later still, in June, Bush presented pre-emption – that is, tackling challenges to US interests when they are still at the potential stage – as a generalised doctrine necessary in the post-9/11 circumstances.<sup>66</sup> This apparent convergence of the US grand strategy of preventing any challenges to unipolarity and of the war on terror stiffened international resolve, in effect, to preempt the US and not concede that Iraq could be regarded simply as the next front in the war on terror.

The first two years of the Bush administration were characterised by the almost complete ascendancy of a group of powerful officials who were convinced that the United States could and should exploit unipolarity to single-handedly shape the international arena decisively and pervasively. The stranglehold that this group had on US security policy has been weakened, at least for the time being.

The perception of a revised balance of power in Washington may have contributed to the timing of North Korea's new attempt at brinkmanship. That's another story. But to the extent that the other interested and influential parties, especially China and Russia, leave it to Washington to dissuade Pyongyang, they will help restore a balance of



political power that subscribes to the view that America has no choice but to go it alone.

## On Australia

Over the period addressed in this essay, the issue of expanding the war on terror to include Iraq was not a distinguished episode of Australian diplomacy and alliance management. Australia created the impression of being a devoted and unquestioning ally. This diminished the value of our support to Washington, not least because it diminished the weight of Australia's stance in the international arena and particularly in Southeast Asia.

Being close to Southeast Asia, possessing a deep understanding of regional dynamics and having some influence on how regional governments perceive and react to events, ranks amongst the most important benefits that Australia delivers to the alliance with the US. Moreover, the alliance has been a significant plus for Australia's regional diplomacy. Essentially all the states of Southeast Asia attach high importance to US engagement in, and commitment to, regional security and recognise ANZUS as one of the anchors of this posture. In addition, these states value Australia's advantage in deepening US understanding of regional developments and in resisting the formidable pressures in Washington to focus its attention elsewhere in the world.

These advantages or benefits are obviously diminished to the extent that Australia's posture is perceived as a passive echo of Washington's, rather than robustly self-determined if still strongly like-minded. Australia's weight and standing in Southeast Asia has diminished markedly in recent years. Some important contributing factors were beyond our control, notably the Asian economic crisis, or unavoidable, like the sharp deterioration in relations with Indonesia over East Timor. Beyond this, however, there has been the cumulative impact of the government's declared intent to undo the 'Asia only' bias that it attributed to its predecessors. Both in Australia and in the region, there was, and is, a sense of greater distance, of stepping

back.

These factors are exacerbated to the extent that Australia is seen as consistently simply identifying itself with Washington's policy settings, as was the case on Iraq. This can only diminish the confidence Southeast Asian states have in Australia's ability to present Washington with a sophisticated but sympathetic assessment of their positions. It also leads, of course, to a subtle discounting of the views Australia puts forward in discussions with regional governments.

All of this meant that Australia was less well positioned after 911 to play any leadership role in developing a regional response to international terrorism. This was in fact a costly failure on the part of all regional states, not just Australia. Evidence acquired in Afghanistan during operation Enduring Freedom reinforced the more scattered picture that emerged during the 1990s, that international terrorist groups, notably al Qaeda, had indeed taken root in Southeast Asia. In the event, terrorism became a divisive factor within ASEAN and, after Bali, between ASEAN and Australia. It was left to the US to do much of the preparatory work for the initiatives taken by the ARF in July 2002. The shock of the Bali bombing was sufficiently great to force effective collaboration between Canberra and Jakarta in tracking down the perpetrators of that atrocity. On the other hand, combating terrorism is a task for the long haul. Success will depend overwhelmingly on strong instincts in all states of the region to cooperate closely and comprehensively across a wide range of government functions, including intelligence, police, migration and financial transactions. Such cooperation requires a quality in inter-state relations that remains regrettably distant in our region. A challenge that should have produced a spate of summits to forge cohesion resulted instead in divisive unilateralism on travel warnings, police and ASIO raids, and speculation on pre-emptive military strikes.

**Notes**

- 1 With impeccable timing, North Korea launched a three-stage missile in August 1998, transforming the political balance in Washington on missile defences.
- 2 Edward Luttwak, 'Goodbye to the Doves and Hello to the Hawks on Iraq?', *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 2002.
- 3 Doyle McManus & Robin Wright, 'After Kabul, Should Iraq Be Next?', *Los Angeles Times*, 22 November 2001. There was one shred, a reported meeting in Prague in 2000 between the leader of the hijackers, Mohammed Atta, and an Iraqi intelligence official. A year later, the President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel, said publicly they had no evidence to support such a meeting.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Douglas Jehl, 'Saudi Sees No bin Laden-Iraq Link', *New York Times*, 22 November 2001.
- 6 Patrick E. Tyler, 'Direction of Global War on Terror Raises Unsettling Questions', *New York Times*, 21 November 2001.
- 7 The full transcript of this exchange with the media appeared in the *Washington Post*, 26 November 2001.
- 8 Patrick E. Tyler, 'Washington Turns Up Volume on Baghdad' *International Herald Tribune*, 1 December 2002.
- 9 John Vinocur, 'Allies Caution Bush On an Iraq Campaign', *International Herald Tribune*, 29 November 2001.
- 10 The President's State of the Union, the United States Capitol, Washington

DC, 29 January 2002.

11 Ann Scott Tyson, 'Where antiterror doctrine leads', *Christian Science Monitor*, 7 February 2002.

12 Steven Erlanger, 'Russian Aide Warns US Not to Extend War to Iraq', *New York Times*, 4 February 2002.

13 Ibid.

14 Daniel Schorr, 'Don't make empty threats against Iraq', *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 February 2002.

15 Robin Wright, 'Bush's Team Targets Hussein' *Los Angeles Times*, 10 February 2002 and Michael R. Gordon & David E. Sanger, 'US is weighing options on how to oust Saddam', *International Herald Tribune*, 13 February 2002.

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17 See, for example, Thom Shanker & David E. Sanger, 'US Blueprint to Topple Hussein Envisions Big Invasion Next Year', *New York Times*, 28 April 2002

18 Colum Lynch, 'US Postpones Plans to Reveal Findings on Iraq', *Washington Post*, 7 April 2002.

19 Op. cit. Shanker/Sanger, *New York Times*, 28 April 2002.

20 Reuters, 'Bush's Anti-Hussein Measures Applauded by Lawmakers', *New York Times*, 16 June 2002.

- 21 **Eric Shanker, 'US drafting 3-front attack against Iraq', *International Herald Tribune*, 6 July 2002.**
- 22 **James Dao, 'Congress raises questions on Iraq', *New York Times*, 18 July 2002.**
- 23 **Patrick E. Tyler, 'US talk of Iraq war makes Europe Jittery', *International Herald Tribune*, 22 July 2002.**
- 24 **Calvin Woodward, 'Lawmakers Want Notice Before Iraq War', *Los Angeles Times*, 4 August 2002.**
- 25 **David E. Sanger & Thom Shanker, 'US Exploring Baghdad Strike Option', *New York Times*, 29 July 2002.**
- 26 **Thomas E. Ricks, 'Some Top Military Brass Favor Status Quo in Iraq', *Washington Post*, 28 July 2002.**
- 27 **Carol J. Williams, 'Allies Cool to Striking Baghdad', *Los Angeles Times*, 7 August 2002.**
- 28 **Roland Watson, 'Iraq war could isolate US: Kissinger', *The Australian*, 14 August 2002**
- 29 **Todd S. Purdum & Patrick E. Tyler, 'Top Republicans Break With Bush on Iraq Strategy', *New York Times*, 16 August 2002.**
- 30 **James A. Baker III, 'The Right Way to Change a Regime', *New York Times*, 25 August 2002.**
- 31 **Brian Knowlton, 'Bush tries to cool Iraq war speculation', *International Herald Tribune*, 22 August 2002.**

- <sup>32</sup> Dana Milbank, 'White House Push for Iraqi Strike Is on Hold', *Washington Post*, 18 August 2002.
- <sup>33</sup> William Pfaff, 'The critics might make Bush hurry', *International Herald Tribune*, 29 August 2002.
- <sup>34</sup> Remarks by US Vice-President to the Veterans of Foreign Wars 103<sup>rd</sup> National Convention, 26 August 2002.
- <sup>35</sup> Vice-President Honors Veterans of Korean War, San Antonio, Texas, 29 August 2002.
- <sup>36</sup> Glenn Kessler, 'Powell Treads Carefully on Iraq Strategy', *New York Times*, 2 September 2002.
- <sup>37</sup> AP, 'Powell: Iraqi Offer Is 'Utter Nonsense'', *Los Angeles Times*, 3 September 2002.
- <sup>38</sup> Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, Simon & Schuster 2002. Extracts from the book appeared in the *Washington Post* on 17, 18 and 19 November 2002. The following discussion is drawn from these extracts.
- <sup>39</sup> Text of President Bush's remarks after meeting with congressional leaders to discuss Iraq, *Washington Post*, 4 September 2002.
- <sup>40</sup> Terry M. Neal, 'Bush Faces Daunting Task in Building Public Support', *Washington Post*, 5 September 2002.
- <sup>41</sup> Text of President Bush's remarks, op. cit., *Washington Post*, 4 September 2002.
- <sup>42</sup> Bob Woodward in *Bush at War* indicates that it was Condoleezza Rice who discussed this speech with the Vice President and encouraged the

amendment noted earlier.

- 43 **President's Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 12 September 2002.**
- 44 **Cited in Ian Henderson and Sid Marris, 'PM Sends in the Troops', *The Australian*, 18 October 2001.**
- 45 **In his Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People on 20 September 2001, Bush said: 'Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.'**
- 46 **Mairi Barton, 'Howard signals move to widen terror war', *West Australian*, 13 March 2002.**
- 47 **Lincoln Wright, 'Hill links Saddam to al-Qaeda terrorist network', *Canberra Times*, 22 March 2002.**
- 48 **The Hon. Alexander Downer, MP, 'Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign Policy Challenge', National Press Club, Canberra, 7 May 2002.**
- 49 **Scott Burchill, 'Downer giddy with war spin', *The Australian*, 22 July 2002.**
- 50 **For example, the Foreign Minister's media release on 16 May 2002 on "New 'Smart Sanctions' Regime for Iraq".**
- 51 **Jeff Turner and Ian McPhedran, 'We won't blindly follow US into war, says Hill', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 6 August 2002**
- 52 **Paul Kelly, 'Tangled up in Washington's war scheme', *The Australian*, 21 August 2002.**

- <sup>53</sup> Marian Wilkinson and Craig Skehan, 'We're all the way with Dick', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 August 2002. The title of this article was driven by another observation by Senator Hill endorsing pre-emption in circumstances like Iraq's apparent renewed drive for nuclear weapons.
- <sup>54</sup> I have commented separately on this issue. See Ron Huisken, 'Reviewing Defence Priorities', *Canberra Times*, 1 November 2002.
- <sup>55</sup> John Koren and Matt Price, 'Iraq and bombers linked: PM', *The Australian*, 23 October 2002.
- <sup>56</sup> Prime Minister's address to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, Sydney, 20 November 2002.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>58</sup> 'Howard coy about Iraq's declaration', *Canberra Times*, 21 December 2002.
- <sup>59</sup> For an assessment of some of the figures in circulation see Paul Dibb, 'Even a short Iraqi war will be costly', *Australian Financial Review*, 18 December 2002.
- <sup>60</sup> Jim Hoagland, 'Some get Iraq wrong all the time', *International Herald Tribune*, 22 October 2002. The former top US weapons inspector said in November 2001 that information collected in Afghanistan would make links between Iraqi individuals and al Qaeda 'almost irrefutable'. See Doyle McManus & Robin Wright, 'After Kabul, Should Iraq Be Next?', *Los Angeles Times*, 22 November 2001. Earlier, former CIA Director Woolsey made the same point by recalling that Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, convicted for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, had strong links to Iraq. See, Bob Woodward & Vernon Loeb, 'CIA's covert War on Bin Laden', *Washington Post*, 14 September 2001.
- <sup>61</sup> James Risén, 'Sept. 11 chief didn't meet an Iraqi spy', *International Herald*



*Tribune*, 22 October 2002.

- 62 **Oliver Burkeman, ‘Rumsfeld seeks facts to fit his view on Iraq’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 October 2002.**
- 63 **For a revealing assessment of this general issue, based on interviews with Rumsfeld and a number of other key figures, see Jeffrey Goldberg, ‘The Unknown’, *The New Yorker*, 3 February 2003.**
- 64 **America’s main ally, Britain, did not publicly embrace this thesis until January 2003 when Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said that terrorists and rogue states were part of the ‘same picture’ with the latter constituting likely sources of technology and know-how for the former. See ‘Chance of action against Iraq is falling, says Straw’, *The Telegraph*, 6 January 2003.**
- 65 **In June 2002, President Bush presented this grand strategy in disarmingly simple terms: “America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge thereby making the destabilising arms races of other eras pointless, and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace.” See President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point, 1 June 2002.**
- 66 **See Bush’s graduation speech at West Point on 1 June 2002. This position was formalised in the administration’s *The National Security Strategy of the United States* completed in September 2002. The relevant observations in this document include: “Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. ... We cannot let our enemies strike first.”**

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