

Advanced Institute, Winter 2017
THE WAR IN IRAQ: A STUDY IN DECISION-MAKING
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Washington, D.C.

History takes on a different aspect when viewed not from years removed and with the consequences of decisions taken known, but from the viewpoints of the actual policymakers as decisions approached and as unexpected events, rivalries, counter-moves, mistakes, and imperfect understandings intervened. Moreover, judging historical events requires an exploration of what might have happened over time if different decisions had been made. This course explores these themes in light of one of the most dynamic confrontations of the late 20th and early 21st centuries: the U.S. and Iraq.

Twice in the last quarter century America has gone to war with Iraq, and the two were in a state of low-level conflict during the interim. Both times America went to war with Congressional authorization, at the head of an international coalition, and in support of U.N. Resolutions. The 1990–1 Persian Gulf War ended quickly with minimal U.S. casualties, but left a brutal dictator in place and American interests at risk. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 quickly removed the regime that had repeatedly defied America and gave Iraqis a chance to devise their own future. However, the war soon devolved into a messy combination of insurgency and sectarian fighting that brought thousands of U.S. casualties, sapped American will and credibility, and worked to the benefit of America's other regional nemesis, Iran. These events occurred not in isolation, but against the backdrop of broader international developments, particularly the ending of the Cold War, the attacks of 9/11/2001, and the on-going U.S. confrontation with radical Islam.

This weeklong seminar examines some key strategic decisions made at critical phases of that long confrontation. It will briefly review the first war and its ending, but the course will focus most heavily on the second war, its justification, pre-invasion planning, conduct, and the post-invasion phase. It will be led by Paul D. Wolfowitz, who served during the Persian Gulf War as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and as Deputy Secretary of Defense during the first years of the Iraq War, and by Lewis Libby, who served during the first war as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and during the Iraq War as Chief of Staff and National Security Adviser to Vice President Richard B. Cheney.

Thursday, January 5, 2017

8:30 am to 9:30 am: *What is Strategy?*

Reading:

- Excerpts from Churchill, Reagan, and Others
- Iraqi Perspectives Report (2006)
- OPTIONAL: "Tales of the Tyrant" by Mark Bowden

9:30 am to Noon: 1990–1: *Confronting Invasion & War Termination*

Reading:

- *The Generals' War* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor
- UN Sec Res 660
- *A World Transformed* by George H. W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft
- "The Great American Screw-up" by Paul Gigot
- *In My Time* by Richard Cheney
- *War of Necessity, War of Choice* by Richard Haass
- *Republic of Fear* by Kanan Makiya
- Chapter 10, *Maximalist* by Stephen Sestanovich
- OPTIONAL: Iraq Survey Group Report (1991)
- OPTIONAL: New World Order Speech
- OPTIONAL: SOTU, 1991
- OPTIONAL: Excerpts on Amb. Glaspie's meeting with Saddam

Discussion Questions:

1. What were the Bush Administration's foreign policy/defense policy priorities in early 1990? Where did the Middle East fit in? How did the U.S. see Iraq? How well had the Bush Administration anticipated a possible crisis in the area and positioned itself to address it? What process did the Bush Administration follow to resolve these issues? What additional steps might it have taken?
2. What were Iraq's goals in early 1990? How did Kuwait possibly fit in? How did Saddam perceive U.S. interests and the likely response of the U.S.? What was Saddam trying to achieve with his invasion of Kuwait?
3. Why did Bush decide to confront Saddam? What U.S. interests were at stake? What were the concerns of other countries in the region?
4. What courses of action were available to Bush? What potential benefits, costs, and risks did Bush and others see for different courses of action? What other problems should he have considered, if any? What might have happened if Bush had not acted? What positions did his advisers take, and how did they work out their differences? What factors or arguments seem to have carried sway with Bush? With others who opposed him?

1:30 pm to 3:00 pm: 1990s: *Contain, Compel, or Withdraw?*

Reading:

- *America Between the Wars* by Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier
- *The Greatest Threat* by Richard Butler
- *Maximalist* by Stephen Sestanovich
- *Republic of Fear* by Kanan Makiya

Discussion Questions:

1. What were U.S. interests in Iraq and the region once Kuwait was liberated? How did Saddam and Iraqis see the situation? How did other regional players see the situation

- and their interests? What did President Clinton and his team need to know about Iraq and the region? What did he know?
2. What were the options for dealing with Saddam in the mid-1990s after the Desert Storm ceasefire was in place? What else was happening then? What did President Clinton choose to do? What did President Clinton expect would happen over the next 5–10 years? Were his choices sound ones?
 3. Had U.S. interests changed by mid-summer 1999, after the inspectors had been ejected from Iraq? What had President Clinton tried, and how had he fared? What else was happening then? What were his options then? What course did he choose, and how did he expect it to unfold? How would you assess President Clinton's chosen course?

Friday, January 6, 2017

9:00 am to Noon: 2001: *Continue Inspections or Remove Saddam?*

Reading:

- *Decision Points* by George W. Bush
- Saddam's Letter to the American People, Sept. 2001
- *At the Center of the Storm* by George Tenet
- NIE Key Judgments
- *War and Decision* by Douglas Feith
- "Iraq: An Illustrative List of Potential Problems to be Considered and Addressed" by Donald Rumsfeld
- *Hide and Seek* by Charles Duelfer
- Speech to the Labor Party, Feb. 2003, Tony Blair
- Speech to Parliament, Mar. 2003, Tony Blair
- "Don't Attack Saddam" by Brent Scowcroft
- Remarks against the Iraq War, Oct. 2002, Barack Obama
- *The Foreigner's Gift* by Fouad Ajami
- Robb-Silberman Report
- *Cobra II* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor
- *War and Decision* by Douglas Feith
- OPTIONAL: Duelfer Report
- OPTIONAL: *Maximalist* by Stephen Sestanovich
- OPTIONAL: Floor Statement, 2002, Carl Levin
- OPTIONAL: Floor Statement, 2002, Russell Feingold
- OPTIONAL: UN Speech, Feb. 2003, Colin Powell
- OPTIONAL: "A War to Be Proud Of" by Christopher Hitchens
- OPTIONAL: *Iraqi Perspectives Report*

Discussion Questions:

1. What were American interests in Iraq and the Middle East in the summer just before 9/11? Just after? What was President George W. Bush's strategy for the "War on Terror"? Should 9/11 affect presidential decisions on Iraq? Was Iraq a problem for the U.S. in January 2002 after the fall of the Taliban? What did President Bush "know"?

- about Iraq? What did he need to know? What were the risks or opportunities for the U.S. or U.S. allies?
2. What were President Bush's options? What role, if any, should the U.N. or coalitions play? What were other parts of his Administration advising? What was the position of the Congress and of Americans? What is the President's responsibility for foreseeable, but uncertain risks?
 3. Why did President Bush decide to go to war? When did he settle on his strategy? What strategy did President Bush choose to follow? What were the prospects for Bush's strategy in fall 2002? What else could he have done? What were the prospects for such courses?

1:30 pm to 3:00 pm: 2003: Occupy or Liberate?

Reading:

- *Endgame* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor
- *Decision Points* by George W. Bush
- *My Year in Iraq* by Paul Bremer
- *War and Decision* by Douglas Feith
- *At the Center of the Storm* by George Tenet
- *Cobra II* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor
- "The Learning Curve" by Kyle Orton
- *Endgame* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor
- OPTIONAL: *Iraqi Perspectives Report*
- OPTIONAL: *Endgame* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor
- OPTIONAL: Letter from Zarqawi, Feb. 2004

Discussion Questions:

1. What were U.S. interests in Iraq, the region, and the War on Terror after Saddam was toppled? What risks and opportunities did Bush see? How did he weigh them? What were the interests of Iraqis (including elements of the Sunni, Shia, and Kurds) and of regional players and states? What did the President know about these risks, opportunities, and interests? What did he need to know?
2. Before the invasion, what political and military strategies had he planned to employ once Saddam's regime fell? Why had he chosen that course? What were his options after the invasion? What advice was he receiving? How well prepared was he to choose a course? What did President Bush need to know? What did he know? What, if anything, could have been done before hand to improve his position? How well did the departments and interagency serve him?
3. What political and military strategies did he choose, and how did he come to choose them? What did he expect to happen after he chose his political and military strategies? How would he know if they were succeeding or failing?
4. What course or strategy did Iraqis, or groups of Iraqis choose? What strategy did Iran and other regional players choose?
5. Were events six months later in line with President Bush's expectations? What about the expectations of others for their strategies? What about one year later? Two years? If so, why? If not, why not? What events may have affected success or failure? Had other

- nations' positions and interests shifted? How did his strategy look at these times? What positions were his advisers taking in these periods? What did President Bush know, or need to know, on these questions? Looking forward, what did he expect to happen? What were the reasons to stick with or to change his strategy? What did he do?
6. How was President Bush's strategy faring just before the bombing of the Golden Mosque in early 2006? Just after? Had U.S. interests changed?

Saturday, January 7, 2017

9:00 am to Noon: 2006: Surge or Hand Over?

Reading:

- "Saddam's Greater Game" by Gary Anderson
- CJTF-7 Memorandum, November 2003
- *The Strongest Tribe* by Bing West
- *The Insurgents* by Fred Kaplan
- "The Right Fight Now" by Gary Schmitt and Tom Donnelly
- *The Story* by Judith Miller
- *Known and Unknown* by Donald Rumsfeld
- *The Envoy* by Zalmay Khalilzad
- *The Insurgents* by Fred Kaplan
- *The Surge* by Kim Kagan
- *In My Time* by Richard Cheney
- Foreword to *Surge*, David Petraeus
- *Endgame* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor
- OPTIONAL: *Cruelty and Silence* by Kanan Makiya
- OPTIONAL: Memo to Some Concerned Parties, Derek Harvey
- OPTIONAL: Press Conference, July 2007, George W. Bush
- OPTIONAL: "A War We Just Might Win" by Michael O'Hanlon and Kenneth Pollack
- OPTIONAL: *Endgame* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor

Discussion Questions:

1. From the viewpoint of summer 2006, what U.S. interests were at stake in Iraq? In the region? How did different parts of the Bush Administration see these questions? How did the Congress and public think about Iraq then? What other priorities did Bush have?
2. What were the interests of key groups and players within Iraq? What courses were they following? What courses might they follow?
3. What interests did other states in the region have, and what changes in direction might they follow? How did regional states view the situation if the U.S. withdrew without creating more stability in Iraq? Might their actions affect U.S. interests?
4. What courses were available to Bush? What were the opportunities and risks? What end states would they lead to? How might others react to changes? What were Bush's advisers' arguments concerning continuing along current policy? What were the likely outcomes? What did the Baker-Hamilton report recommend? What were the arguments for shifting strategies and the chances for success?

5. What did Bush do? What was entailed in the counterinsurgency strategy and troop surge? How secure was Bush's course six months into the shift? What was the situation in fall 2007? What made the change "work?" Could Bush have changed strategy earlier? Why didn't he? What were the obstacles to changing to a counterinsurgency strategy?

1:30 pm to 3:00 pm: 2010: Stay or Withdraw?

Reading:

- "My Plan for Iraq" by Barack Obama
- "The Surge, Denied" by Charles Krauthammer
- *Surge* by Peter Mansoor
- "Why We Stuck with Maliki" by Ali Khedry
- *Endgame* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor
- "It's Not Too Late to Reengage with Iraq" by Ryan Crocker
- Speech on Combatting ISIS and Terrorism, Sept. 2014, Barack Obama
- "Going the Distance" by David Remnick
- "The Obama Doctrine" by Jeffrey Goldberg
- "The Aspiring Novelist" by David Samuels
- OPTIONAL: "Missing in Action" by John Hannah
- OPTIONAL: "Obama's Disastrous Iraq Policy" by Peter Beinart
- OPTIONAL: "Something Is Rotten" by Kenneth Pollack
- OPTIONAL: "Relief over US Exit from Iraq Fades" by Peter Baker

Discussion Questions:

1. During the early stages of his presidency, how did President Obama see U.S. interests in the world in general, and in the Middle East and Iraq in particular? What was Obama's strategy for America in the world as he entered into the presidency? How did the Middle East and Iraq fit into his strategy?
2. How did Prime Minister Maliki and different groups in Iraq see America's role and the situation in Iraq in 2009-2011?
3. How did President Obama see the war in Afghanistan compared to the war in Iraq? What was his plan for Iraq? What role did Iran and Syria play in his thinking? How did President Obama's plans work out in 2009-11? What effect has the removal of U.S. troops from Iraq had? Has it advanced or hindered American interests in Iraq or in the region?
4. How did Iraq affect the Arab Spring? How did the U.S. experience in Iraq affect U.S. policy regarding Syria and Iran? How did U.S. policy in Syria affect Iraq?

Sunday, January 8, 2017

9:00 am to Noon: Simulation

Reading:

- See readings from previous section

Monday, January 9, 2017

9:00 am to Noon: Overview and Questions

Reading:

- Foreword to *Iraq after America*, Charles Hill
- “Like It’s 1999” by Fareed Zakaria
- “The Meltdown” by Bret Stephens
- “Who Lost Iraq?” by Charles Krauthammer
- *At the Center of the Storm* by George Tenet (Review Tenet passage from Session 4)
- *Endgame* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor
- “Obama Administration is Pushing Iraq into Further Chaos” by *The Washington Post* Editorial Board
- “Middle East Knows Not to Trust the United States” by David Ignatius
- Testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, May 2015, Gen. Jack Keane
- Excerpts from Churchill, Reagan, and Others (Review reading from Session 1)

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you see U.S. interests and policies regarding Iraq going forward? What do you consider U.S. interests to be in the Middle East in the next 5, 10, 20 years? What effect might changes in technology have? What should the U.S. plan to do?
2. What will history conclude about the U.S. and Iraq over the last quarter century? What were the critical factors in shaping events? What, if anything, should U.S. policymakers have done differently? Might events have turned out significantly differently? What other courses might history have taken?