War In Iraq: Selling The Threat

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In efforts to prepare public opinion for extraordinary exertions and potential sacrifice there is a long tradition of overstatement. In 1947 Senator Arthur Vandenberg explained to President Harry Truman that if he wanted to persuade the American people to take on international communism and re-engage with a war-prone Europe he had to 'scare the hell' out of them. The adversary must be painted as black as possible, without any shades of grey let alone glimmers of white. Since then it has been understood in Washington that a high-risk foreign policy requires selling the threat.

Selling the threat, however, has not generally relied on the detail of intelligence estimates. It is indeed remarkable how unimportant such estimates have been in the past in making the case for war. Historically assessments of the enemy have been important in making preparations for war and, on occasion, as with Britain's view of Germany in 1938, in providing arguments for avoiding war, but rarely for actually initiating hostilities. The United States and the United Kingdom have tended to go to war in responsive mode. There was no doubting that Germany invaded Poland in 1939, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, North Korea advanced into the South in 1950, Argentina seized the Falkland Islands in 1982, Iraq occupied Kuwait in 1990 or that terrorists attacked the United States on 11 September 2001. Equally, in more recent times, calls for intervention grew as the scale of the ethnic cleansing underway in the Balkans, the humanitarian distress in Somalia or the mayhem in East Timor became apparent. The story of the developing commitment to South Vietnam during the first half of the 1960s is full of dubious intelligence assessments, but the critical judgements were largely

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political, turning on the anti-communist credentials of the US and the fearful geopolitical consequences of withdrawal.

The prominence of intelligence assessments in justifying a war against Iraq in 2003 was therefore really without precedent. This was by no means the only unusual feature of this case. The relevant assessments emerged through the interaction of two distinct though connected processes: the overt route of UN inspections, by which direct access to Iraqi documents, scientists, facilities and stocks could be demanded; and the standard, covert route of national intelligence gathering, which could both draw on the inspections process and feed into it. To complicate matters further, quite separately from the information gleaned by intrusive inspections, the case for war depended in part on the quality of Iraqi cooperation and the general integrity of the process. Part of the confusion of the debate lay in the question of whether any evidence of non-compliance was, in principle, a casus bellum, or whether a just cause could only be found in evidence that the Iraqi arsenal posed a real threat to the vital interests of the West. Lastly, in both the United States and the United Kingdom the case for war was hotly contested and public opinion took some convincing. As one critical analyst observed, when it came to Iraq, 'War is Sell'.[1]

In January 2004 David Kay, as head of the group surveying Iraq for the evidence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)[2], gave up the search, declaring 'we were all wrong'.[3] President George W Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair both set up commissions to explain where the intelligence agencies went astray and throw some light on the general problems of tracking concealed programmes in closed societies.[4] It is widely believed that such investigations are misdirected, and that the urge to war came first and the intelligence later.[5] Faced with a choice in an international poll, huge majorities assumed that these governments had lied about Iraq rather than being the victims themselves of poor intelligence. On this matter their own countries were evenly split.[6] Even Poland's President Aleksander Kwasniewski, while acknowledging that it was best for Iraq to be rid of Saddam Hussein, added 'of course I am uncomfortable with the fact that we were deceived by the information on weapons of mass destruction'.[7]

The war was widely denounced even when it was assumed that the intelligence claims were largely correct. The accumulation of evidence that American and British government claims were, in crucial respects, in error has drained legitimacy from an enterprise which from the start had been surrounded by doubts concerning its wisdom and legality. In effect, the United States and the United Kingdom stand accused of having waged an aggressive war against Iraq, exactly the same crime of which

Iraq was accused in 1990 following the invasion and occupation of Kuwait. International law protects the sovereignty of disagreeable regimes. Just as it did not matter in 1990 whether Kuwait was well governed, so it was irrelevant to this indictment that the governing regime in Iraq in 2003 was deeply unpleasant and might well cause trouble sometime in the future. Few opponents of the war would wish to return Iraq to Saddam Hussein, but many charge that the 'real' purposes of the war were to support Israel, control oil markets and even look after some of the leading companies associated with the Bush administration (such as Haliburton).[8] Prime Minister Tony Blair's position is assumed by some to reflect a sincere belief in the rightness of this cause and by others a slavish readiness to follow an American lead.

Thus, at issue is not only what was really going on in Iraq, but also what was really going in the United States and the United Kingdom. Making sense of policymaking in supposedly open societies can sometimes be as hard as penetrating the mysteries of closed societies. This article examines the use of intelligence during the policy debates that led up to the invasion of Iraq on 20 March 2003. The basic proposition supporting the case for war was that at some point there could be a link between Iraqi WMD and Islamic terrorism. An effort was made to demonstrate that such a link already existed, which by itself in the post-11 September atmosphere would have sufficed as a casus bellum, but no such link could be proven. Instead, to prevent such a link developing in the future, the coalition governments decided to revive the established process, based on a series of UN resolutions, designed to ensure the definitive disarmament of Iraq. This approach was adopted on the basis of widely held judgements that Iraq had taken advantage of a hiatus in the process to reconstitute its WMD programmes. It was only after this approach had been adopted that the quality of the available intelligence came to be addressed, and it was only after the effective decision to go to war that doubts started to gather around hitherto uncontroversial claims about Iraqi capabilities.

The decline of containment

Policy towards the Iraqi regime and its predilection for WMD has passed through distinct stages. Attempted accommodation during the 1980s was followed by containment in the 1990s and concluded with the more belligerent approach of the 2000s. During the first phase Western countries, without exception, sought good relations with Iraq, and, in doing so, showed no inclination to respond to evidence of Iraqi WMD. Israeli pre-emption, when it destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor at Osiraq, was deplored in 1981 by the Security Council, but Iraq's aggression

against Iran the previous year was not. Use of chemical weapons to deadly effect, against the Iranians and the Kurds, was regretted but not to the point of interfering with what was generally perceived to be

The inclination was to sideline the WMD issue

constructive and lucrative relations with the Iraqi regime. At the time, NATO still reserved for itself the option of using nuclear weapons first in the event of an otherwise irresistible Warsaw Pact offensive. The inclination therefore was to sideline the WMD issue as a temporary inconvenience, a result of the dire position in which the Iraqi regime found itself, and

likely to go away once the war with Iran was over. This was the first of many misreadings of the direction of Iraqi policy.

This had become apparent even before the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The momentum behind the WMD programmes was starting to cause friction in relations with Western countries: there were too many clues as to what Iraq was really doing to be ignored. Although the rationale for the 1991 Gulf War was firmly based in international law, the WMD issue was also to the fore. The administration of George Bush senior was concerned that principled opposition to aggression was insufficient for the American people, and so alternative rationales were explored. Of these by far the most effective was the prospect of Iraq's acquisition of nuclear weapons.[9] Dealing with WMD became an additional war aim to the liberation of Kuwait and was at the centre of the post-war settlement.

Yet the regime itself was allowed to survive. Iraq was not to be liberated along with Kuwait. This reflected a series of judgements about what was likely to happen with or without a move to topple the regime. In an interview for a January 1996 documentary, Richard Cheney, secretary of defense in 1991 and vice-president in 2003, provided a candid account of these judgements. He began with the next of the critical misreadings on Iraq. The US did not expect to need to do anything to be rid of the Iraqi leader: 'The assumption from the experts was that Saddam would never survive the defeat'. This reduced the incentive to force the matter by trying to 'topple the regime'. Cheney was wary of such a course because of the danger of getting 'bogged down in a long drawn out conflict'. This was a 'dangerous, difficult part of the world', and there were concerns that Iraq might come apart. Changing a war aim from the one agreed with Congress and the American people, and for that matter the UN, would have been problematic. When asked whether he found Saddam's continuation in power frustrating Cheney answered that he did not, that 'if Saddam wasn't there that his successor probably wouldn't be notably friendlier to the United States than he is'.

He was just one among a 'long list of irritants in that part of the world'. To get rid of him would have required 'a very large force for a long time into Iraq to run him to ground' which could have taken many weeks and casualties. 'And you then have to accept the responsibility for what happens in Iraq, accept more responsibility for what happens in the region'. It would have been an all-US operation; 'I don't think any of our allies would have been with us, maybe Britain, but nobody else'.[10]

The post-war policy was described as 'containment', but it went further by including a significant coercive element. The regime was allowed to survive, but only if it met a series of demands set out in UN Security Council Resolution 687 of April 1991. This became most associated with the mechanisms for dealing with Iraqi WMD, but it also dealt with such issues as terrorism, the resolution of the border with Kuwait and reparations. A further resolution of that month, UNSCR 688, condemned the ongoing oppression of Iraqi Kurds and Shi'ites, and, although it did not specify any measures, it was used to justify the protection of the Kurds in northern Iraq and the later establishment of a no-fly zone. Enforcement of UNSCR 687 could draw on the previous November's resolution, UNSCR 678, which permitted the use of 'all necessary means' to manage the conflict with Iraq. The pressure was maintained through continuing economic sanctions and a substantial American military presence in neighbouring countries.

There remained a presumption that at some point Saddam Hussein would have to go. Prime reliance was played on members of the Iraqi elite, if not the population as a whole, to depose him in the face of the humiliation of the 1991 defeat and the country's isolation and privation. The problems with the policy flowed inexorably from Saddam's tenacious hold on power, and his conviction that this hold depended on acting as if there had been no defeat. Instead of acceding to the Security Council's coercive demands, he resisted all the way. Attempts to destroy stocks of WMD weapons, along with materials and facilities for their production, met with consistent obstruction. The UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) established to implement the disarmament demands of UNSCR 687 made progress despite Iraqi resistance, often with the help of informers and defectors. Only when the Iraqis were caught out cheating would they normally retreat, for then UNSCOM could expect to be backed by the Security Council and the threat of American power. Those who assumed that there were more WMD than declared were rarely proved wrong.

By 1997, however, this system was coming apart. Saddam was still in power and as defiant as ever. Although Iraq had been substantially disarmed, in addition to large questions still unanswered about chemical weapons, Iraq was suspected of hoarding a biological weapons

production capacity and stockpile. Unfortunately, unlike nuclear weapons and missiles, these items were potentially portable and concealable. This led to demands that UNSCOM be able to visit any site any time when there were grounds for suspicion. When these demands were resisted, the head of UNSCOM, Richard Butler, found that the Security Council was no longer so supportive.[11] Russia and China were challenging

The sanctions regime provided Iraq with a propaganda gift

his judgement at every turn, while France seemed to share their view that the 1991 policy had been taken as far as it could go, and that it was necessary to end sanctions and just hope that Saddam would not be so bold as to flaunt any residual capacity for mass destruction. America and Britain were therefore already becoming isolated. The sanctions regime no longer had any evident coercive effect, but was being subverted through smuggling and corruption.[12] It also provided Iraq with a propaganda gift, allowing the regime to blame others for the suffering of its people. The Iraqi opposition was a thin reed upon which to rely, divided and ineffectual, while Saddam Hussein

had written the textbook about how to survive in power against the odds, thwarting plotters even before they had begun to plot. In 1996, 120 were executed after a group of ex-officers planning a coup were infiltrated by his secret police. The allies were left trying to deal with the distinctive symptoms of Saddam's rule – internal persecution, an instinct to aggression, the acquisition of military strength – all at the same time, without being able to get at the man himself.

Containment was becoming increasingly problematic. Internationally, the trend was to loosen the pressure on Iraq. In the United States there was a growing view that it should be stepped up. Particularly notable, because of the individuals involved, was the 'Open Letter to the President' of January 1998. The letter was produced under the aegis of the neo-conservative think-tank, 'Project for a New American Century', and the signatories included Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, later respectively Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense under George W. Bush. This letter described the continuing danger posed by Saddam Hussein and the erosion of containment. A new policy was required with the aim of 'removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power'. This would 'require a full complement of diplomatic, political and military efforts'. The signatories expressed themselves to be 'fully aware of the dangers and difficulties in implementing this policy', but they believed 'the dangers of failing to do so are far greater.' Existing UN resolutions provided the authority for the necessary steps. 'In any case,

American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council'. [13] The next month, the same two addressed another letter to the president, this time with a wider group of signatories who were part of the Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf, established in 1990 to back action against Iraq. Warning that 'sanctions and exhortations' were inadequate, this letter called instead for 'a determined program to change the regime in Baghdad'. This would require support for a 'broad-based insurrection', to be led by the Iraqi National Congress (INC), which had been formed in 1992, bringing together the two main Kurdish militias, Shi'ite Islamist groups and a variety of other opposition parties. It would still need to be backed by a systematic air campaign against the pillars of the regime's power ('the Republican Guard divisions which prop him up and the military infrastructure that sustains him') and, in the last resort, by US ground forces.[14]

Clinton was unwilling to contemplate any direct American support of an insurrection, after the messy failure of the attempted coup in 1996, but he nonetheless responded to the pressure sufficiently to sign, that October, the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, supporting 'those elements of the Iraqi opposition that advocate a very different future for Iraq than the bitter reality of internal repression and external aggression that the current regime in Baghdad now offers'.[15] In the event, Clinton spent little of the money available, reflecting scepticism about the capacity of the INC to make much difference unless backed by direct American force. The difficulty was that without the INC there was no strategy at all for toppling Saddam. At the same time, Clinton was prepared to use limited force to back UNSCR 687. The context to these debates on Iraqi liberation was a series of attempts to sustain the UNSCOM process. In December 1998, it collapsed after Richard Butler reported to the UN on continuing Iraqi obstruction, and was immediately followed by American and British air strikes (*Operation Desert Fox*).

These strikes were only advertised as helping 'degrade' Iraq's WMD capabilities. The operation was largely justified in terms of reinforcing the policy of containment, reminding Saddam that the coalition was prepared to act if he attempted to break out of the boundaries set for him. Clinton said that containment required 'a strong military presence in the area, and we will remain ready to use it if Saddam tries to rebuild his weapons of mass destruction, strikes out at his neighbors, challenges allied aircraft, or moves against the Kurds'. In addition, the sanctions regime would be sustained, denying Iraq funds that might otherwise have been used to rebuild his armed forces. Prime Minister Tony Blair defended the action, criticising those who argued that because it was not possible to

'get rid of Saddam Hussein there is no point … in trying to contain him'. Just 'because we can't get in the cage and strike him down it doesn't mean we should leave the cage untouched and the bars too fragile to hold him. What we have done is put him back securely and firmly in the cage'. This was achieved without any coalition casualties, whereas removing Saddam would have involved a 'land war in Iraq with literally hundreds of thousands of allied troops engaged'. At the same time, 'Had we simply allowed the inspection regime to be reduced to impotence and done nothing, then he would have known that we were not serious, he would have felt unrestrained and able to work his will on the outside world again'.[16]

A policy poised between passivity and greater belligerence was difficult to sell. Consider an American poll of mid-November 1998 when the crisis was coming to a head. It confirmed a view from the previous February that Saddam Hussein had been the winner in the confrontation between the US and Iraq in the 'last year or so', and doubted that any attacks on Iraq would achieve significant goals for the US. If force was to be used then the majority by far wanted it to overthrow Saddam rather than support the UN (70% as against 25%). When *Desert Fox* began, polls showed general support for the military action, with approval levels of about 70%, even though most assumed that this would be at best a temporary solution to the Iraq problem. These numbers would have been higher if the main aim had been to remove Saddam from power.[17]

The structure of the problem that manifested itself in 2001–03 was therefore well established. It was hard to see how Iraq could ever be rehabilitated internationally so long as Saddam Hussein remained in power, but there was reluctance to take direct action against him,

Containment continued to erode

especially in the absence of an authentic and resolute anti-regime movement in Iraq. The only basis for containment lay in Saddam's continued defiance of UN resolutions on no-fly zones and particularly on disarmament. In practice containment continued to erode. Whatever the deleterious impact of *Desert Fox* on Iraqi capabilities, which were possibly more severe than appreciated at the time, the Security Council was now divided on the issue and Saddam took the opportunity to end inspections. He raised the stakes further by continuing to challenge US and UK air activity over the northern and southern no-fly zones. Iraqi air defences were regularly, albeit ineffectually, activated, while the sanctions regime's impact on the health and well-being of the Iraqi population was used to demonstrate the inhumanity of his international opponents.

Before 11 September

The view that containment was not working was, as already noted, the accepted view among many of the key members of the incoming Bush administration. Although the Republican Party platform in 2000 had called for 'a comprehensive plan for the removal of Saddam Hussein', this did not specify a method. It was not a big issue during the campaign. Vice-President Al Gore presented himself as ready to go further in giving 'robust support to the groups that are trying to overthrow Saddam Hussein';[18] Bush promised that if Saddam was caught 'developing weapons of mass destruction in any way, shape, or form, I'll deal with that in a way that he won't like'.[19] The thoughts of his main advisor on national security, Condoleezza Rice, were notably relaxed on the assumption that even with WMD Saddam would be deterrable.[20] While Wolfowitz asserted his support for regime overthrow during his first months as Deputy Secretary of Defense, he observed that there was 'no cost-free or risk-free option in dealing with that regime'. He gave the impression that the preferred option involved working with the internal opposition.[21] During his confirmation hearings, he said that he had not yet seen a 'plausible plan' for changing the regime.[22]

In Rumsfeld's and Wolfowitz's testimony to Congress prior to 11 September, Iraq is barely mentioned and only then as a long-term threat that might justify the investment in ballistic missile defence, at the time, their top priority. The possibility that Iraq might acquire an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) over ten years had been part of the case made by Rumsfeld in his influential report of 1998 arguing for a major investment in missile defence.[23] Meanwhile, the State Department continued to pursue the old policy, including the possibility of lifting sanctions if inspections resumed. The immediate issue was the precipitate decline of the sanctions regime, with the Saddam International Airport in business once again, Syria reopening its pipeline with Iraq and Jordan no longer cooperating with monitoring trade. A Brookings study spoke of a move from 'sanctions fatigue into sanctions defeatism'.[24] The most authoritative statement by the Secretary of State Colin Powell, in March 2001, described sanctions as a past success. 'Even though we know he is working on weapons of mass destruction, we know he has things squirreled away, at the same time we have not seen that capacity emerge to present a full-fledged threat to us'.[25] For this he gave credit to the Security Council, but now argued for reviving sanctions by eliminating items of civilian use that benefited people in order to focus exclusively on WMD and items that could be directed toward their development. He reported that this effort was finding favour among allies and in the Middle East. This policy did serve to produce a greater degree of

unanimity on the Security Council, including the Russians, and by November an agreed policy on smarter sanctions.

With regard to getting rid of the regime, which Powell described as a separate policy and a secondary priority, the idea was still to support the INC, although he quickly skipped over their role, sharing apparently the widespread doubts about its effectiveness.[26] Little was going on behind the scenes. Vice-President Richard Cheney had raised the issue with the new president in January 2001, and it had been discussed at an early National Security Council meeting, but thinking within the administration, which led to a paper being presented to the principal policymakers in August 2001, was phrased in terms of a developing strategy of putting pressure on Saddam. In this, the INC still had a crucial role to play. There was nothing in a form suitable for presentation to the president.[27]

After 11 September

The change in Iraq policy began with the terrorist attacks of 11 September. The president later observed that prior to this day 'we were discussing smart sanctions … After September 11, the doctrine of containment just doesn't hold any water … My vision shifted dramatically after September 11, because I now realize the stakes, I realize the world has changed'.[28] The answer to the question as to why an attack from a terrorist group based in Afghanistan should lead to regime change in Iraq is by no means straightforward.

The basic answer is that worst-case analysis had suddenly gained a new credibility. The line of reasoning that developed is well documented and was expressed consistently. If there was now a group of terrorists who were determined to inflict mass casualties on the United States and its allies, then it was natural for them to seek the most efficient means of doing so. This was confirmed by hard intelligence that al-Qaeda had an interest in all types of WMD, which does not appear to be in doubt, even if it had made limited progress in this direction. If al-Qaeda acquired the capability it would use it, and so the United States had to be ready to act before such a tragedy could be inflicted upon it. This led to the adumbration of a doctrine of pre-emption during the course of 2002.[29] It would not be surprising if al-Qaeda looked for assistance to a state that already had or were developing such capabilities and shared its hostility to the United States. Three were identified in President Bush's State of the Union address of January 2002. Iran and North Korea were joined with Iraq as an 'axis of evil'. The other two

Worst-case analysis gained a new credibility

were included to avoid singling out Iraq, although only Iraq was really in the frame at this time. This dread scenario of a coalescence of al-Qaeda and Iraq was at the heart of the case for war, and can be found regularly in the speeches of both Bush and Blair. Bush said in his October 2002 Cincinnati speech: 'Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof – the smoking gun – that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud'.[30] In February 2004, the president was still making this the key rationale for the war: Saddam 'had the capacity to make a weapon and then let that weapon fall into the hands of a shadowy terrorist network'.[31] Similarly, in his speech of March 2004 justifying his stance on the war, Blair restated his pre-war position: 'it is a matter of time unless we act and take a stand before terrorism and weapons of mass destruction come together, and I regard them as two sides of the same coin'.[32]

As a speculative hypothesis this could not be proved or disproved. The issue was not so much al-Qaeda's aspirations, for which there was evidence, nor of Iraq's involvement in weapons of mass destruction, which was more or less taken as read, but the possibility of a link between the two. Most dramatic of all would be proof that the link had already been forged, that Iraq was culpable for 11 September. It is well documented that in the immediate aftermath of the attack, the question of Iraqi responsibility was raised, on the grounds that the attack was too sophisticated to have been undertaken without the backing of a state.[33] There also appears to have been an inclination to go for Iraq whether or not there was a direct link. One report suggests that barely five hours after the Pentagon building itself was struck on 11 September, and having been told of al-Qaeda's likely culpability, Rumsfeld requested plans for striking Iraq. The Secretary of Defense's reported comments were that he wanted 'best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H [Saddam Hussein] at same time. Not only UBL [Osama bin Laden]'. He was quoted as saying, 'Go massive … Sweep it all up. Things related and not'.[34] His deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, made the case for Iraq to be an early target, even before Afghanistan, where the terrain was difficult and the risk of getting bogged down was high, as Saddam's regime was brittle and might fold without a long drawn-out fight.

The arguments against such a move, at a time when international support was gathering behind the US, were profound. Bush soon decided to concentrate on al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and to postpone the question of Iraq.[35] Nonetheless, the relationship between Iraq and terrorism, which had not been a major issue since the early 1990s, was now on the agenda and the Pentagon had its sights firmly on toppling Saddam Hussein. Contingency plans were requested by the president for an attack on Iraq,

just in case – according to Rice – the investigation pointed to Iraqi culpability for 11 September or in case Iraq attempted to take advantage while the US was distracted by the immediate crisis.[36] That November, Bush set in motion the process that led the Secretary of Defense and the CENTCOM Commander General Tommy Franks to update the military plans for an invasion of Iraq.[37]

Iraq and al-Qaeda

The relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda became a far more sensitive dispute between the intelligence agencies and senior officials than the state of Iraq's WMD. Given their quite distinct philosophies, it would be surprising to find much connection between Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, and this appears to have been the general view within government up to 2001.[38] It was known that there had been desultory contacts early in the 1990s, possibly including an al-Qaeda interest in using Iraq as a safe haven, but without much result. There were also reports of groups based in Iraq with some al-Qaeda associations.[39] Over time, the CIA was prepared to acknowledge, these contacts might get closer. For the moment, al-Qaeda showed little interest. In February 2003, an Osama bin Laden broadcast denounced Saddam as a 'socialist and an infidel', even while urging that any American invasion of Iraq be opposed, while senior al-Qaeda figures in captivity denied that there had ever been consideration of joint operations.[40] After the war more evidence of contacts between al-Qaeda and Iraq was uncovered, but contact is not the same as collusion. There is little that suggests joint operational planning – rather, two distinct entities keeping a wary eye on each other.[41]

The CIA view was that the Iraqis had seen their WMD arsenal as having defensive value, not to be used unless attacked. Making WMD available to an independent and unpredictable group would invite trouble for Iraq: not only would this be an admission that the arsenal existed, but would be sufficiently inflammatory to bring down the wrath of the United States. At most if the regime concluded that the US could no longer be deterred, it would be 'much less constrained' in adopting terrorist means, as it tried to do in 1991, this time possibly with chemical or biological weapons. If close to defeat, anything might be contemplated as a last act of vengeance. But, the CIA judged, the probability of Saddam Hussein 'initiating an attack … in the foreseeable future, given the conditions we understand now … would be low'. The October National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq said that 'Baghdad was drawing a line short of conducting terrorist attacks with conventional or CBW against the United States'.[42]

On 8 October 2002, just four days before a crucial vote in the House and Senate on a resolution granting authority to go to war, President Bush asserted a strong connection between al-Qaeda and Iraq, turning tentative CIA findings based on uncertain sources into proven facts:

> We know that Iraq and the al-Qaeda terrorist network share a common enemy – the United States of America. We know that Iraq and al-Qaeda have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. Some al-Qaeda leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq. These include one very senior al-Qaeda leader who received medical treatment in Baghdad this year, and who has been associated with planning for chemical and biological attacks. We've learned that Iraq has trained al-Qaeda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases. And we know that after September the 11th, Saddam Hussein's regime gleefully celebrated the terrorist attacks on America.[43]

Was there in Saddam's applause more than just pleasure at an enemy's pain? For those who had been drawing up the indictment against Iraq for a number of years, it was not at all implausible that the regime could be implicated in any attacks on the United States. Their immediate reaction to the 11 September attacks was that these were too sophisticated for a terrorist group and must have involved state sponsorship. Laurie Mylroie of the American Enterprise Institute had published a book in 2000, *The War Against America. A Study in Revenge,* that pulled together circumstantial evidence connecting Iraq with the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. The timing fitted in with the second anniversary of the 1991 Gulf War. The April 1993 attempt to assassinate former President George H. W. Bush in Kuwait, where Iraqi culpability was not in doubt, indicated Saddam's lust for revenge (hence the title of Mylroie's book). A key issue was whether the man convicted was an Iraqi, Ramzi Yousef, the name on the passport with which he entered the United States or Abdul Basit Karim, a Pakistani born in Kuwait, the passport with which he fled the United States after the bombing. Mylroie believed that the Iraqis tampered with Karim's file in Kuwait when they occupied that country (although this was over two years before the first WTC bombing) in order to create a false identity for Yousef.[44] The front cover of Mylroie's book contained an endorsement from Wolfowitz ('provocative and disturbing'). Clarke reports him using Mylroie's arguments, which tended to underplay the possibility of terrorist groups operating independently of a sponsoring state, as early as April 2001.[45]

After 11 September, Wolfowitz encouraged James Woolsey, a former Director of Central Intelligence and a long-standing advocate of regime

Bush turned tentative findings into proven facts

change in Iraq, to go to London to meet Iraqi exiles in order to get support for the theory and check with British intelligence, who strongly disagreed.[46] His office also asked the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) to see if it could prove the allegations in Mylroie's book, but the agency's analysts were unable to substantiate them.[47] The other critical allegation was that Mohammed Atta, the ringleader of the attacks, met an Iraqi agent in Prague in early 2001. The support for this allegation was always flimsy, and has now been discredited. Its meaning, even if true, was unclear and by and large, the administration was circumspect in using it, without ever quite denying its possible truth.[48] Cheney remained reluctant to rule out a link between Iraq and 11 September, and it took until September 2003 before President Bush was prepared to say that there was no evidence that Saddam was culpable.

While connections between al-Qaeda and Iraq were asserted with some confidence by administration officials, this was not the case with a precise link to 11 September. It says something for the power of suggestion that, nonetheless, the link took hold with the American public. Right after the attacks, when Americans were asked who they thought was behind the attacks, only 3% mentioned Iraq or Saddam Hussein. By January 2003, one poll showed 44% reporting that either 'most' or 'some' of the hijackers were Iraqi citizens, when the actual number was zero.[49] While the polls never showed any doubt, especially when asked without prompts, that the main culprit was Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, they were also almost unanimous on the proposition that Saddam supported terrorist groups that planned to attack the United States. Bush's post-war confirmation that there was no link came after a poll for the *Washington Post* had led to headlines to the effect that almost 70% of the population believed that Saddam Hussein was involved in the 11 September attacks.[50] This also scored highly as a rationale for war. When voters were asked in August 2002 why the United States might take military action against Iraq, as many believed this was because of terrorism as because of WMD.[51]

The link was reinforced by placing the campaign against Iraq firmly under the heading of the 'war on terror', as well as by constant insistence that Iraq and al-Qaeda were connected. This notion never played well internationally, and was in part responsible for the disconnect in the transatlantic debate. While Blair insisted that the potential links between Iraqi WMD and terrorism were his main concern, his case for war depended less on what Saddam might do with his WMD than the fact that he possessed them at all. This could be presented as an immediate threat to the integrity of the UN itself, through Iraq's continuing refusal to comply with resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter. On 5 February 2003, for example, the BBC reported that an intelligence

report had concluded that there was no close link between Iraq and al-Qaeda. When asked about this in Parliament, Prime Minister Blair said that while there were some links these did not extend to any connection with 11 September, and the government did 'not rest our case against Saddam and Iraq on the basis of links with al-Qaeda'. That case was based on weapons of mass destruction. 'It is perfectly obvious that Saddam has them. The United Nations has said that he has to give them up, but he is not giving them up at the moment'.[52]

Saddam's WMD strategy

This proposition was central to the strategy of building an international coalition against Iraq. It was also wrong. To understand the sources of the error, it is first necessary to attempt to make some sense of what Iraq had been up to from the mid-1990s.

This period, when the Western strategy of containment began to erode, was also a period of crisis for Saddam. Both developments were bound up with the consequences of the defection, in August 1995, of two of Saddam's son-in-laws, Hussein and Saddam Kamel, probably out of fear that Saddam's even wilder son, Uday, was about to turn on them. Although Rolf Ekeus, the head of UNSCOM at the time, stresses that much about the biological weapons programme had already been uncovered,[53]from Hussein came more vital information, sufficient to force Saddam to update his declarations to the UN in a conspicuous and humiliating refutation of previous declarations. This was a time of attempted coups and purges, including the gunning down of the two sons-in-law after they had been persuaded to return, followed by an almost-successful assassination attempt on Uday. Eventually, as a means of reasserting his power, Saddam ordered a plebiscite on his presidency that turned in a modest 99.96% support. By this time, as a result of the efforts of UNSCOM, the whole WMD enterprise had been attenuated. Kamel told the UN that the regime had destroyed all its stocks of chemical and biological weapons in 1991, though this could not be proved.

David Kay, after resigning as head of the Iraq Survey Group at the end of 2003, gave a different view: that it was only after Kamel's defection had disclosed 'their whole past five years of deceit and lying to the UN', that the Iraqis decided to reduce their area of greatest vulnerability – large, retained stocks – especially as they lacked an effective delivery capability for them. Instead, they decided to keep the scientists and the technology in order to resume these programmes when the pressure was off and they could reconstruct a delivery capability.[54] Whatever the timing, Kamel had also confirmed that the interest in acquiring WMD in the future had not been jettisoned along with the old stocks.

Kay's successor as head of the Iraq Survey Group, Charles Duelfer, stated in his first congressional testimony in March 2004 that there was evidence of far greater military procurement from 1996 to 2003, with the Iraqi Military Industrialisation Commission's budget increasing 100-fold, to $500 million by its final year, largely using money from illicit oil contracts. There were still materials that the Iraqis wished to deny to the UN inspectors, because deception techniques were continually being developed and practiced. Preparations were being made to resume chemical and biological weapons production, for which dual-use technologies were being sought. Reconstitution was being held up not only because of the combined impact of UNSCOM, *Desert Fox* and sanctions, but also because there was little point until there was a suitable means of delivering weapons. Their development would take longer than reviving production. In this key area, violations of UNSCR 687 were apparent, in the flight-testing of missiles exceeding the set limits of 150km. Research was underway to extend missile range, and there were discussions with North Korea on the acquisition of the *No-Dong* missile with a range of 1,300km.[55] It has been reported that, given the availability of Russian technical support and the fact that some missile development was permitted, Saddam had pressed to exploit this; efforts began in 2000 to develop long-range missiles, though these were poorly organised and unsuccessful.[56]

It is also important to note that Saddam Hussein did not consider his war with the United States and the United Kingdom over. He had stepped it up after 1998, not only by refusing to allow further inspections, but by challenging the coalition's dominance of the airspace over his country. In the short term, his priority was to find ways of dealing with this immediate threat, which was leading him to expend resources on invariably ineffectual schemes for shooting down American aircraft.[57] Non-cooperation with the UN allowed Saddam to demonstrate that he had not been cowed. If he had appeared to capitulate to international pressure, the great costs associated with sanctions, incurred through defiance, would have been to no purpose.[58] In addition, the awesome capabilities that had set Iraq apart from other regional powers, and upon which the regime had depended at moments of crisis, were no more. If their absence became explicit, Iraq would be more vulnerable to attack, and a lingering element of deterrence would be lost. Iraqi commanders appeared to have been reassured by

Non-cooperation allowed Saddam to demonstrate that he had not been cowed

their availability, even though none had been allocated to their sector. If, as assumed, the inspectors doubled up as American spies, then there were, to a paranoid soul such as Saddam, sound security reasons for preventing them roaming around sensitive installations as widely as they wished and talking to whomsoever they wished. Why make further concessions, when he had to doubt that the US would ever allow the sanctions to be lifted while he remained in power, but could draw comfort from the help that the Russians and French would provide in easing the constraints under which he was operating?[59]

It is unclear that there was any systematic, centrally agreed Iraqi plan behind accepting the loss of what had been built up while retaining some capacity to rebuild. Deception had been so integral from the start that it may well have affected internal as much as external communications. It seems unlikely that any senior Iraqis had a full idea as to what was going on. Record-keeping may have been haphazard and undermined by the loss of documents seized by UNSCOM. Those responsible may have preferred their masters not to know that assets carefully hidden had not actually been properly maintained or that the technical claims behind ongoing programmes had been exaggerated. There are suggestions that Saddam himself was promised that some activities were in good shape when they were not, particularly with regard to the speed with which the production of chemical and biological weapons could be restarted. This leads to the intriguing possibility that Saddam himself was among those surprised by how little the post-war survey group actually found.[60]

Reconstitution: in prospect or in progress

The Iraqis had denied that there was anything left to destroy, but they had been unable to prove their point, with significant question marks against such items as precursor chemicals for the nerve gas VX and growth media for anthrax. These materials were unaccounted for, and given Iraq's record, it was not unreasonable to assume that this was because they had been hidden away.[61] This was, however, still an assumption. The available information could support a variety of propositions.

There were three possibilities in play. The first, which seems to have been correct, was that the Iraqis no longer had any serious WMD capability, but were looking to recover when they got the chance, starting with delivery vehicles. On this basis, UNSCOM and sanctions had achieved more than they were given credit for. Note also had to be taken of the stocks of weapons deteriorating or the hazards of an accident if they were left in populated areas. Ekeus, in 2000, described how the Iraqi arsenal had been effectively eliminated by UNSCOM:

> In my view, there are no large quantities of weapons. I don't think that Iraq is especially eager in the biological and chemical area to produce such weapons for storage. Iraq views those weapons as tactical assets instead of strategic assets, which would require long-term storage of those elements, which is difficult. Rather, Iraq has been aiming to keep the capability to start up production immediately should it need to.[62]

The second possibility was that Iraq had retained some capability, hidden from the inspectors, and were looking to reconstitute, and the third was that reconstitution was well underway. Here it is important to note the distinctive position of Ekeus's successor, Richard Butler, whose own analysis undoubtedly influenced the thinking of the American, British and Australian governments. This was his view as he resigned from UNSCOM, in June 1999.

> I believe they have worked hard on increasing their missile capability, the range of those missiles and probably the number of them. I'm sure they've asked their nuclear team to start meeting again, and I feel certain, too, that they have commenced work again on making chemical and biological warfare agents.

While he did not think that they would find nuclear progress straightforward, he judged the Iraqis to be quite skilled in the chemical and biological areas. He therefore agreed that the priority would be missile delivery systems, but disagreed over the possibility of Iraq waiting before it rebuilt its chemical and biological weapon stocks.[63]

The bulk of the available information had been produced by UNSCOM. For all post-1998 developments, and in particular, evidence of reconstitution, governments had to rely on their own intelligence. There was not much to go on. In 1998, two separate US government panels reportedly concluded that allegations about the state of Iraqi WMD were based on reasonable suspicions rather than hard facts.[64] In late 1999, the CIA acknowledged in its biannual report to Congress on the acquisition of WMD that little could be said about reconstitution since *Desert Fox*.[65] It remained reluctant to declare categorically that Iraq had WMD. In the late 2000 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), for example, it assessed Iraq to have retained a small stockpile of CW agents (not warheads), and possibly precursors for more, while it continued development work.[66] Yet the trend, including Butler and senior officials from the Clinton administration, was to back their suspicions.[67] In June 2001, the CIA asserted – accepting that it lacked firm evidence – that, 'Given Iraq's past behavior, it is likely that Baghdad has used the intervening period to reconstitute prohibited programs'.[68]

Not only American and British diplomacy, but also their military preparations proceeded from the assumption that Iraq had hoarded

chemical and biological weapons in a deployable form. Their assumptions were largely shared by many opposed to the war, and intelligence agencies around the world seem to have been caught up in a massive exercise in group-think. President Chirac told Hans Blix that he did not share the view of French intelligence agencies that Iraq possessed proscribed weapons. The intelligence services, he observed, 'sometimes intoxicate each other'.[69] Israeli intelligence, for example, has been criticised for incurring heavy public costs in expensive preparations for a gas attack on the basis of assessments that were in the end based on speculation and hearsay.[70]

The IISS Strategic Dossier, *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Net Assessment,* published in September 2002, provided a thorough published guide to the consensus view of the period. Some of the more confident assessments drew on what the inspectors had suspected about what was still unaccounted for since 1991, including substantial growth media and biological weapons agents, and possibly thousands of litres of anthrax. With chemical weapons, retention was suspected of a few hundred tonnes of mustard gas and precursors for a few hundred tonnes of sarin/cyclosarin and perhaps similar amounts of VX. The more speculative area concerned what had happened since 1998. It was possible, but not proven, that production of both biological and chemical weapons had resumed. On the nuclear side, there were no facilities to produce fissile material in sufficient amounts, and these would require several years and extensive foreign assistance to build. Only if Iraq could obtain fissile material from foreign sources could it assemble nuclear weapons. Then it could be done quite quickly.[71]

Even this degree of tentativeness became absent from the American and British intelligence in use by the autumn of 2002 as reconstitution moved from conjecture to fact. According to the British government dossier published on 24 September 2002, not only had Iraq kept stocks left over from before the 1991 war, but it was continuing to research and produce chemical and biological weapons, with previously destroyed production plants rebuilt and previously employed personnel retained. On the nuclear side, while the previous nuclear programme, based on gas centrifuge technology, had been shut down, after the departure of inspectors in 1998, there had been an active effort to acquire the components of this process as dual-use items. Similar judgements were contained in the October 2002 US National Intelligence Estimate, which served as the basis for American government presentations.[72]

On what basis had the estimates become stronger? Because active reconstitution was already assumed, material being gathered by satellites and other technical means was interpreted with this in mind, leading to

more innocent explanations being discounted. There was, in addition, more Iraqi procurement activity underway. Yet, the changing political context was crucial. The issue of Iraqi WMD had not been scrutinised intensely up to this point. The key intelligence debate had been over the putative links with al-Qaeda, and by the fall of 2002 it was apparent that there was no clinching evidence. Woodward reports Rice's view that it would be impossible to get international support for any action on Iraq's

Only the WMD issue had 'legs'

human-rights record, while the terrorism case seemed 'weak or unprovable'. Only the WMD issue had 'legs', because of the violation of many UN resolutions.[73] Wolfowitz later acknowledged that the campaign against Iraq had to move forward on this issue

because it was the only one that everyone in 'the U.S. government bureaucracy … could agree on'. The terrorism issue provoked 'the most disagreement within the bureaucracy'.[74] After meeting Bush on 10 September, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien told reporters that when he asked about links between al-Qaeda and Iraq, the president had replied: 'That is not the angle they're exploring now. The angle they're exploring is the production of weapons of mass destruction'.[75]

This angle had become important as a result of the developing debate over whether or not to take the issue to the United Nations. The two key advocates of this were Blair and Powell. By accepting the objective of decisive action against Saddam, to which he already was attached, the British prime minister hoped to persuade the president that this should be done by maximising international support, which required a clear focus on WMD and non-compliance with UN resolutions. The US Secretary of State was of the same view, and stressed to the president the danger of a unilateral move to war, without the backing of the sort of international coalition that could only be put together through the UN.[76] Bush followed this advice with his speech to the General Assembly on 12 September 2002, which opened up the possibility of a new resolution to give Iraq another chance to disarm.

This move was in itself a symptom of the extent to which the case for taking on Iraq had lost ground during August as the anti-war movement gathered momentum in Europe and North America.[77] The need for a convincing rationale was most keenly felt by Blair. He had found the use of a dossier, which contained the best intelligence that it could safely be revealed, had served him well in arguing al-Qaeda's responsibility for 11 September and the need to be involved in the war in Afghanistan. An equally brief dossier had been prepared for March but not used. Now, having noted the impact of the IISS dossier of early September 2002, Blair asked for the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) to work with his staff to

prepare a substantial public presentation of the evidence, as mentioned already.[78] In Washington, the process was different, in that the key customer was Congress, especially as the president had also determined that he would need both Houses to pass a resolution supporting military action if this became necessary. After a 11 September request from Senator Bob Graham, Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, CIA Director George Tenet refused to provide a broad assessment of the likely impact of the administration's policy but did agree, unusually, to bring forward the next NIE on Iraqi WMD. This was presented to the National Foreign Intelligence Board on 1 October and served as the basis for Bush's Cincinnati speech and a presentation to the Senate Committee a week later.[79]

For the intelligence agencies, this was one of those unique moments when they take centre stage. There is a natural tendency for intelligence professionals to hedge their bets and there is an extensive range of nuanced drafting language available to enable them to do so. In such circumstances, however, equivocation can appear almost a dereliction of duty and risks a loss of influence. Woodward reports the view among the senior officials in the US that in this case, the policymakers were entitled to a strong judgement and so the normal caveats had to be reduced.[80] Yet much of the detail on close examination was tentative and circumstantial. When the NIE came to be declassified, it became apparent that there had been intense debate about a number of controversial issues, for it contained an unusual number of dissenting and qualifying footnotes. Something similar appears to have happened in Britain. The JIC were aware that they had to produce a document that was stronger than normal.

The intelligence agencies, however, were actually following the policy-makers' lead and if they had judged differently, then there would have been great embarrassment, because unequivocal claims had already been made. 'We now know', said Cheney in August 2002, that 'Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons'. There is no doubt', said Powell the next month, 'that he has chemical weapons stocks', followed soon by Bush's claim to the UN General Assembly that 'Right now, Iraq is expanding and improving facilities that were used for the production of biological weapons'.[81] Similarly, in Britain, while it was not the case, to use Lord Hutton's delicate language, that the claims were 'sexed-up' to meet a political need, the prime minister's request for a document 'consistent with the available intelligence' but 'as strong as possible in relation to the threat' may have 'subconsciously influenced' those drafting it to make its wording 'somewhat stronger than it would have been if it had been contained in a normal JIC assessment'.[82]

While there were complaints in the British case that some dissent was disregarded, more serious complaints have been made against the American process. It has been argued that, as the crisis developed, intelligence professionals were put under pressure to conform to the new line and present the Iraqi threat in as lurid terms as possible. Those who failed these political tests found their documents returned on a regular basis, with numerous detailed points on sources and content being raised, until the 'right answer' was reached. Vice-President Cheney made regular and intimidating visits to CIA headquarters. In the Pentagon, a special group was established to disparage and contradict any softness emerging from the CIA and the DIA, and to provide the Office of the Secretary of Defense with material that supported established prejudices.[83]

In terms of the management of intelligence during a highly charged political debate, the obvious parallel was the competitive Team B analysis on Soviet strategic forces of 1976, with which Wolfowitz had been actively involved.[84] In an interview published in 1996, when out of government, Wolfowitz drew the lesson from his experience that uncertainty is unavoidably at the heart of the process, and intelligence professionals cannot dispel it alone. The most useful analysts understand this; the least useful 'trivialize the challenge of uncertainty by burying honest debate in compromise language' and ignore 'high-impact contingencies'. His position was summed up as follows:

> the essential challenge for policy officials is to make sound decisions amidst inherent uncertainty about the character of pending threats to and opportunities for US security interests. To succeed in these circumstances, policymakers must become, in effect, the senior analyst on their core accounts. Above all, they must become adept at the analytic techniques for doing battle with incomplete information and contradictory assumptions.[85]

Against this background, it is not surprising that the Office of Special Plans has attracted attention as the source of intelligence mischief. Those involved have sought to play this down, pointing out that this office largely dealt with post-war planning, and that there was confusion with a separate, small intelligence cell (known as 'Team B'), which was mainly concerned with the relationship between Iraq and terrorism.[86] There was undoubtedly a network of individuals who had worked closely in the past with Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, who at this time was Chair of the Defense Policy Board, and who were working for Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of Defense (Policy) and were also connected with Lewis 'Scooter' Libby, Cheney's chief of staff. It does seem to be the case that their major effort was geared to proving the link

with al-Qaeda, where as we have seen, they had an important influence on shaping the public debate, although less on the internal policy debate.

While these individuals may have contributed to a political climate hardly conducive to dissent, the most important charge is that the Pentagon served as a conduit for dubious intelligence provided by the Iraqi National Congress (INC). Material from this source had not influenced other agencies because they found it to be poor and self-serving, and the INC a dubious organisation, unable to account properly for the funds it received. The Pentagon took over when the State Department ceased supporting the INC's intelligence work. While Wolfowitz denied that he had been 'mainlining' INC-derived material into the intelligence process, intelligence derived from INC-linked sources undoubtedly achieved more circulation than before. The INC's Washington adviser has been quoted as urging 'Go get me a terrorist and some WMD, because that's what the Bush administration is interested in'.[87] Since the war, serious concerns have been expressed that information from dubious defectors, often coached by the INC and subsequently found to be quite wrong, found its way into the estimating process. Because the provenance of some of the material was obscured, and the same sources could appear under a number of guises, at times they were providing self-corroboration.[88] The October 2002 NIE referred to an 'array of clandestine reporting' put forward with 'high confidence'.

Through the UN

In political terms, the shift to a UN strategy in September 2002 meant that the intelligence on Iraqi WMD reconstitution was now serving two objectives – building the case for war and exposing Iraqi deception. Under the new UN Resolution 1441, eventually agreed in November 2002, Iraq had not only to agree to have inspectors back, but also provide a complete and final disclosure of its WMD activities, past and present. The resolution was written in demanding terms, so that a false disclosure would be a material breach, as would a refusal to allow key personnel in the Iraqi programme to be interrogated outside of Iraq. It recalled that the Security Council 'has repeatedly warned Iraq that it will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations'.[89]

When presidential spokesman Ari Fleischer briefed the press on 2 December, he described the trap supposedly set. If Saddam admitted weapons of mass destruction then 'he is violating United Nations resolutions' and had 'deceived the world'; if he said he had none, then he 'is once again misleading the world'. That was because 'we have intelligence information about what Saddam Hussein possesses'.[90] The trap, however, could work both ways, for if the assessments were wrong then the strategy could soon unravel.

Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Cheney had never been happy with a return to the UN and they did not support it. In August, while the issue was being debated, Cheney observed that it 'would be right to question any suggestion that we should just get inspectors back into Iraq, and then our worries will be over. Given Saddam's skill in the art of denial and deception,' rather than provide real reassurance it could instead 'provide false comfort that Saddam was somehow "back in his box"'.[91] A return to the Security Council meant losing control over the process. The scepticism became a recurring theme even after the adoption of UNSCR 1441. Wolfowitz, in a speech on 23 January 2003, noted that it was not the inspectors' job to find anything. 'When an auditor discovers discrepancies in the books, it is not the auditor's obligation to prove where the embezzler has stashed his money. It is up to the person or institution being audited to explain the discrepancy'. They were being expected to search every potential hiding place 'in a country the size of France, even if nothing were being moved'. Yet, he claimed, American intelligence was aware of great activity, involving items from documents to prohibited material, being moved from one site to another where it would not be found, such as private homes, mosques and hospitals. 'It is a shell game played on a grand scale with deadly serious weapons'. In the past, UN inspectors had been recruited as informants. Those Iraqis interviewed by the inspectors could not believe in their confidentiality and risked punishment if they cooperated. The Iraqis were practised liars. His conclusion: 'we cannot expect that the UN inspectors have the capacity to disarm an uncooperative Iraq, even with the full support of American intelligence and the intelligence of other nations'.[92] In the end, if Saddam Hussein was unable or unwilling to prove that his regime no longer had weapons of destruction, there was little choice but to assume that it had. As Rumsfeld later put it, 'absence of evidence' was not the same as 'evidence of absence': but, as Blix observed, nor was it evidence of concealment.

There was a history to the awkward relationship between the inspectors and Western intelligence. When UNSCOM was founded in 1991, it lacked its own intelligence sources and therefore was bound to rely on information from member states, and in particular the US. In return, it was understood that there would be feedback on the reliability of the information received. Because of the Iraqi efforts to thwart the inspectors, intelligence became more important, and in particular, interception of Iraqi communications. Those countries involved were bound to get additional intelligence benefit, including in areas beyond UNSCOM's remit. As the inspections regime collapsed in 1998–99, it was alleged that US intelligence had used the UNSCOM cover to insert

listening devices that went far beyond those needed for UNSCOM purposes, and that this information might have been used during *Desert Fox*.[93] Hans Blix, head of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), the successor to UNSCOM, wished to demonstrate his independence from Western intelligence agencies. He refused, for example, to have an American as his deputy. This was also reflected in Blix's reluctance to interrogate key Iraqi witnesses outside of Iraq. The Americans insisted it would be impossible to rely on their evidence unless they were removed from the country. But it was bound to be difficult to formalise arrangements for

The Americans and British fell into their own trap

such interrogations when the individuals involved had no desire to leave Iraq, and would still be anxious about their families if they were suspected of handing over secrets. The UN was concerned about the legality and morality of what could appear as abduction.[94] Nonetheless, Blix was still expecting to be guided by Western intelligence to the sites where it was assumed incriminating evidence would be found.

Initially, it seemed that Saddam Hussein was playing to the script. The full disclosure required under the resolution was delivered on time, by 7 December 2002, but was no improvement on anything that had gone before. In his first report to the Security Council, on 27 January 2003, Blix reported that 'Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance, not even today, of the disarmament that was demanded of it'. Blix acknowledges that his line was hawkish, but he still had his own 'gut feeling' that the Iraqis were hiding some WMD and he wanted to bring home to them the danger they faced. Combined with his direct encounters with Iraqi officials, his report to the Security Council may have had the desired effect, and thereafter Iraqi cooperation improved.[95]

By this time, it was too late. The immediate Iraqi response had convinced Bush that Iraqi behaviour had not changed and that there would be little reason to wait before overthrowing the regime. 'Time is running out on Saddam Hussein', remarked Bush on 14 January. 'He must disarm. I'm sick and tired of games and deception. And that's my view of timetables'.[96] The start of 2003 was a fateful time: this was not only when Bush appears to have decided to go to war, but French President Jacques Chirac decided to oppose it. The evidence of American forces moving to the Gulf ready for an assault may have had a coercive effect, but it also suggested that the Americans had given up on coercion and were bent on invasion.[97] These positions were taken before the claims and counter-claim had a chance to be tested via the inspections. The Americans and British were responding to Iraqi behaviour, not UNMOVIC evidence. Thus, they

fell into their own trap. Their unqualified and strident assessments had raised the stakes, yet even they were becoming uncomfortably aware that they were on less than firm ground. Blair is said to have had his doubts that the evidence was 'rock solid'. But he did not dare to share these doubts because that would make war 'harder to sell'. One of his entourage recalled, 'We hoped we were right ... We *felt* we were right'.[98]

In December, when Bush received a full briefing on the quality of the intelligence, he was reportedly unimpressed. 'I don't think this is quite – it's not something that Joe Public would understand or gain a lot of confidence from'. He asked Tenet if this was the 'best we've got' and was told: 'It's a slam dunk case'.[99] Even as the case began to look ragged, there was to be no backtracking. If anything, policymakers became prone to seize any piece of corroborative evidence, even before it had been properly evaluated.[100] The claim that uranium was being sought from Niger, which embarrassingly made its way into Bush's 2003 State of the Union Address, was based on a forged document and had not been supported in the NIE. Retired Ambassador Joseph Wilson had been asked to travel to Niger to see if this was true and he had reported that it was not.[101]

Wolfowitz had sought to play down what could be provided. 'American intelligence capabilities are extraordinary', he acknowledged, 'but they are far from the omniscient, all-seeing eye depicted in some Hollywood movies. For a great body of what we need to know, we are dependent on traditional methods of intelligence – that is to say, human beings, who either deliberately or inadvertently are communicating to us'. If this was the case, however, why were the Americans so sure of their ground?

The vulnerability of the US on this score explains Colin Powell's address to the Security Council in February 2003.[102] Considerable care went into this speech. Powell felt that his credibility was being put on the line. His task was to demonstrate that the case against Iraq held up, despite the growing doubts, and that the inspectors were being fooled. All accounts of the preparation of this speech convey a growing sense that the case lacked a hard core of fact, and in key respects relied on inference and innuendo.[103] Powell did the best with what he had, toning down rather than discarding allegations, but highlighting areas where he felt the evidence strongest. Most importantly, he refused to include the bulk of the material provided to him on the relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda, although he did include some. He offered evidence that the Iraqis were still playing games with the inspectors, and also made some specific claims about capabilities, of which the most important related to the identification of two portable laboratories which, it was claimed,

could be used for biological weapons.[104] This speech had the paradoxical effect of undermining the American and British position, for UNMOVIC was not able to validate these claims. Blix reports being surprised at the modesty of this new material from Powell. When he gave his second report, on 14 February, he conveyed not only doubts about some of Powell's allegations but his view that Iraq had decided to cooperate with inspectors. By now, UNMOVIC inspectors were starting to visit sites identified by the British and Americans and were finding little,[105] while the International Atomic Energy Authority was able to declare that Iraq was not in the process of reconstituting its nuclear programme.[106] In areas where the October NIE had been challenged from within the intelligence community, the dissents turned out to be correct. Attempts to obtain aluminium tubes for centrifuge rotors had been accepted as evidence of a uranium-enrichment programme, except by the State Department and the Department of Energy (who might have been assumed to be in a position to know). The doubts about Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) as offensive weapons rather than means of reconnaissance, apparently shared by the US Air Force, were reinforced even as Blix was being chastised for not making more of this issue. Dramatic revelations turned out to have been clutching at straws.

The whole post-1998 reconstitution hypothesis was now looking fragile, although full answers to the pre-1998 questions on the old chemical and biological inventories had yet to be answered. The only area where the American and British claims stood up at all was in the area of delivery systems, which would be consistent with the view that this would be the first priority for the regime if there had been any hope of reviving a deployable capability. UNMOVIC revealed that there had been 'a surge of activity in the missile technology field in the past four years', and began to destroy *Al-Samoud* 2 missiles.[107] These were not 'toothpicks', Blix reminded Powell, when the significance of this move was played down. It was not surprising that in these circumstances there was a developing view in the Security Council that, at best, the case was not proven and that the inspectors needed more time.

The riposte was that it was not up to the coalition to prove anything. There were still many reasonable suspicions and Saddam had done little to dispel them. Key witnesses had not been interrogated outside of Iraq. An interview given by Vice-President Cheney on the eve of war indicates the reluctance of the Bush administration to accept the judgements of the inspectors or even a completed disarmament process. The problem was, as before, that Saddam would still be in power. '[E]ven if he were tomorrow to give everything up', Cheney remarked, 'if he stays in power, we have to assume that as soon as the world is looking the other

way and preoccupied with other issues, he will be back again rebuilding his BW and CW capabilities, and once again reconstituting his nuclear program'. He explicitly disagreed with the IAEA's view on the lack of a nuclear programme:

> if you look at the track record of the International Atomic Energy Agency and this kind of issue, especially where Iraq's concerned, they have consistently underestimated or missed what it was Saddam Hussein was doing. I don't have any reason to believe they're any more valid this time than they've been in the past.[108]

The move to war

For quite distinct military and political reasons, the timetable had begun to point to war sometime in March 2003. Part of the problem was concern about sustaining forces overseas and the imminent hot weather. Another difficulty was that Blair had been convinced that he could not get parliamentary and public support for war without a second UN resolution. When this diplomatic effort was launched it seemed that Saddam's failure to cooperate with UNMOVIC indicated that there

The rush to war had other damaging effects

would be an undoubted material breach, and so another resolution might pass, but it soon ran into trouble as the arguments for giving up on UNMOVIC weakened. Possible compromises, involving an extended timetable with clear benchmarks for compliance and the possibility of a UN-sanctioned war at the end, failed because of the French and German refusal to contemplate force under any circumstances. Whether Blair could have persuaded Bush to accept a further delay was never really put to the test. The breakdown of good working relations between American and Britain on one side and France and Germany on the other was both a symptom and a cause of the mismanagement of the UN process.[109]

The rush to war had other damaging effects that were compounded by the breakdown of those working relations and in the long-term, may prove to be the most serious of all. Far more effort was going in to making the case for regime change in Iraq than assessing its consequences. The impact on the country would go well beyond confirmed disarmament and achieving compliance with the UN. Yet while worst-case analysis was rampant on the subject of Iraq, WMD and terrorism, best-case analysis was equally dominant as to what would follow Saddam. A picture was painted of the inevitable triumph of democracy and prosperity.

James Fallows, in a forceful critique of planning for post-war Iraq, concludes that: 'Almost everything, good and bad that has happened in

Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime was the subject of extensive pre-war discussion and analysis'. These studies included the State Department's massive 'Future of Iraq' project, and major exercises by the CIA and the Army War College. If these studies had been followed carefully, it would have been apparent that winning the war would be easier than occupying the country, and that there were severe risks: a breakdown in public order, disrupted electricity and water supplies, and a mismanaged process of 'de-Ba'athification' and demobilisation of the Iraqi military, especially as the Sunnis in particular would not be inclined to see US forces as liberators. Many troops and substantial resources would be required. Why then were these studies not acted upon? Fallows suggests that the Office of the Secretary of Defense disliked them because of their negative impact at a time when the decision to go to war was not yet firm. If post-war planning was replete with warnings of a costly and difficult enterprise then this would be 'an impediment to war'.[110]

A more influential factor was probably the Pentagon's assumption, as the provider of forces and infrastructure, that it should control their use. On 20 January 2003, somewhat late in the day, the president signed National Security Directive 24, giving post-war control of Iraq to the Pentagon. Again Wolfowitz preferred to use the Office of Special Plans. It appears that even the man appointed to head the post-war effort in Iraq, Jay Garner, was unaware until February of the work of this office. Its role sustained the INC, who remained close advisers. While Bush recognised that a much more broadly based coalition would be needed on the Iraqi side, the Pentagon still flew Chalabi, the INC leader, into Iraq as soon as possible after the start of hostilities to help him establish himself as a possible future leader.[111]

The INC's optimism about the enthusiastic Iraqi welcome awaiting their American liberators contradicted the advice coming from more detached Iraqi experts.[112] Most seriously, the CIA had been 'utterly consistent in arguing that reconstruction rather than war would be the most problematic segment of overthrowing Saddam', pointing to the probability of 'obstruction, resistance and armed opposition'.[113] This potential tension between the needs of war, which Rumsfeld correctly judged to require modest numbers of troops, and the post-war period, which he incorrectly judged to require fewer, became evident in congressional hearings in February 2003, with the war less than a month away. Army Chief General Eric Shinseki, when pressed by the Senate Armed Services Committee on troop requirements for the occupation of Iraq, suggested 'something on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers'. Wolfowitz, before the House Budget Committee, described

such 'higher-end predictions' as 'wildly off the mark'. It was hard to conceive that more forces would be needed to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq than to conduct the actual war. He cited northern Iraq, although here the local population had good reason to be friendly towards the US, and the lack of the sort of ethnic rivalries that had caused so much trouble in the Balkans. The Iraqis would provide troops themselves and so would other countries. He was aware of the danger of being viewed as occupiers, but concluded that was best dealt with by an early departure. Meanwhile, he was confident that, in the first instance, US forces would be greeted as liberators.[114]

The main concern, reflecting the assumptions that Iraq not only had chemical weapons but might use them, combined with a general apprehension that fighting in urban areas could be vicious, might prompt many Iraqis to flee from the cities, thereby triggering a major humanitarian crisis.[115] The fact that one did not emerge, though predicted by the NGOs, had important consequences, for the coalition had made elaborate preparations for this contingency. Against the Pentagon's best case, the anti-war worst case was less the sudden lawlessness and subsequent resistance likely to accompany the collapse of the old order but rather, massive casualties and humanitarian distress.

Retrospective

The advantage of intelligence as a promotional device lies in the authority derived from a secretive process that supposedly can draw on special and increasingly intrusive sources of information that cannot be revealed lest they be closed off by the targets. Yet the inherent uncertainties and ambiguities of the process by which this information is turned into assessments for policy purposes can never be an exact science or immune to political and institutional bias. There is nothing particularly unusual about the discovery that intelligence estimates produced in good faith have been flawed, or that they had become further exaggerated during the course of a policy debate. Dossiers and speeches drafted for presentational purposes are bound to lose subtlety.

Stark evidence of the regime's cruelty was all too easy to find

Intelligence assessments, however, are not by themselves threat assessments. On some matters there was general agreement, even though different policy conclusions were drawn. The repressive character of the Iraqi regime was acknowledged, and here, compared with the frustrating nature of the post-war search for WMD, the stark evidence of the old regime's cruelty was all too easy to find. More than 270 mass

graves have been reported in Iraq, and such graves are believed to contain between 300,000–400,000 bodies.[116] This has come to be presented as reason enough for regime change, though this was always only a secondary rationale prior to the war.[117]

In addition, many of those who questioned the wisdom of military action against Iraq still assumed some Iraqi WMD capability, while many proponents did not argue that Iraq was an imminent threat. The closest was the claim made in the British government dossier that Iraq had the capacity to deploy chemical weapons in 45 minutes. This was not central to the British case for war, and gained salience largely because of the political impact of the erroneous suggestion, in a fateful early-morning broadcast by the BBC in May 2003,[118] that it had been inserted against the wishes of the intelligence professionals.[119]

This is a further example of why statements of capabilities do not necessarily imply any particular policy. If it had been easy for Iraq to use chemical weapons, then this could have been an argument for or against war. On the one hand, Saddam was ready to use the most obnoxious weapons. On the other hand, this created an added danger for troops engaged in operations in Iraq (and coalition forces operated under the assumption that chemical weapons could at any time be used against them).[120] The reported view of the CIA was that available WMD would only be used in the event of an attack on Iraq. That would have fitted in with the Iraqi strategy of 1990–91 when there was some link between chemical weapons and direct threats to the regime.[121] The case for believing that Iraq might be reckless with its WMD, even in the absence of a direct attack, assumed that Saddam Hussein and his regime were inherently unpredictable and aggressive, so that this was a man in some sense beyond deterrence. Kenneth Pollack wrote how this would be 'unusually difficult' because of Saddam's 'pathologies' – 'fundamentally aggressive', an 'inveterate gambler and risk-taker who regularly twists his calculation of the odds to suit his preferred course of action'. After the war, the same author was arguing that reducing WMD to the bare minimum without letting on was another one of Saddam's 'famous gambles'.[122] Such character traits might explain why Saddam was hard to read, but they did not put him beyond deterrence.[123]

Whether Saddam's personality was reckless or cautious and therefore deterrable, it was his persistence in power that meant that the 1991 war could not be considered truly over. Iraq was left in a continuing dispute with the UN over a range of issues that could not be readily resolved. Containment eroded during the 1990s because members of the Security Council became increasingly unwilling to sustain a porous and counter-productive sanctions regime and endorse enforcement action that

appeared to be more punitive than decisive. Because the pressure had been ratcheted up, containment returned as an option, but only fleetingly, because the main effect was to bring the crisis to a head. The regime was still cheating, in which case it should be overthrown, or it was not, in which case sanctions should end. Unfortunately the crisis came to a head before the claims could be properly evaluated. If the pressure had not been ratcheted up in 2002, the most likely prospect was of the regime feeling increasingly unconstrained, until at some point Iraq's inherent fragility would have produced yet another crisis, perhaps involving the Kurds or real evidence that WMD programmes were being reconstituted. The Iraq problem was the Saddam problem and one was not going to be resolved without the other.

The threat that drove policy after 11 September was that the Saddam problem would merge with the Osama bin Laden problem in a catastrophic, super-terrorist big bang. This provided the rhetorical framework through which the case for war was made. Incoming intelligence supported this in the sense that al-Qaeda wanted to get its hands on the deadliest possible weapons, while reports from the undergrowth of international politics spoke of networks of nuclear smuggling, of terrorists and criminal gangs and rogue states interacting in complex but indubitably malign ways. Concerns, based on intelligence linking al-Qaeda to key figures in Saudi Arabia, or the possibility that Russia might, inadvertently, come to be a source of WMD for terrorists, did not acquire the same purchase in Washington. It was hard not to believe that the greatest rogue of them all would stand apart from all this and not exploit these networks to direct blows at his sworn enemies. In the face of constant assertions that this was all in train, the American people accepted war in Iraq as the next stage of the war on terror. It was hard to disagree with statements such as Rice's: 'We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud', but no probabilities were attached that might help distinguish a real risk from a fantastical nightmare. Indeed, the occupation of Iraq would arguably ease al-Qaeda's access to Iraqi WMD.[124] This reflected a wider view, prevalent in Europe, that the net result of an invasion of Iraq would be to boost support for al-Qaeda.

This was not therefore an intelligence-driven crisis. The attacks of 11 September 2001 affected policy on Iraq. This was not because of the unsupportable thesis that Iraq was culpable, which, if believed, would have led immediately to war. Rather, the attacks changed the terms of the security debate by establishing the notion that potential threats had to be dealt with before they became actual; also, the consequential power shift within Washington strengthened the hand of those who had long

sought to topple Saddam Hussein. When the decision was made to go to the UN in September, the quality of the supporting intelligence on Iraqi WMD was taken for granted and was not subjected to any critical reappraisal. When the decision was made to demand that the Security Council endorse the move to war in January 2003, it was before the inspectors had a chance to say anything of substance on the state of Iraqi WMD. For their part, the French asserted publicly that they would never endorse such a move, accepting privately that this position would hold

This was not an intelligence -driven crisis

whatever discoveries were made by the inspectors, while the view in UNMOVIC was that the Iraqis were still being uncooperative. There is much to be said for Thomas Power's view that the most remarkable aspect of the crisis was 'the degree to which it has been driven by theory – general ideas about things that might or could happen'.[125] The case for war moved forward on a series of propositions – about the nature of the Iraqi regime, its interest in deadly weapons and ability to deceive inspectors, its readiness to cooperate with terrorists of a different philosophical hue, even to the point of handing over instruments of mass destruction, the fragility of its popular base and the consequences of its overthrow for Iraq and for the wider Middle East. These propositions drew on intelligence information, but they could rarely be refuted or confirmed in a definitive manner until they faced the supreme empirical tests of war and its aftermath. Some of these propositions, for example, about the likely course of an Iraq still governed by the old regime, will remain forever matters for conjecture. In the end, this war was something of an experiment, an unusual example of Western countries taking the initiative rather than responding to events, and as with many experiments, the results have been both surprising and disconcerting.

Because the picture to emerge after the war was nothing at all like the one predicted by the coalition governments, Iraq will be presented as a cautionary tale for some time to come. While there might be widespread agreement that in principle it is always better to act before a potential threat becomes real, in practice higher standards of proof will be demanded than were offered in the run up to the 2003 war. Intelligence agencies do themselves no favours when they appear to fall into line and they do governments no favours when they fail to draw their attention to real doubts and uncertainties in the evidence. The war has taken a heavy toll on Iraq itself and those sent to fight there, and on the credibility of both the British and American governments. There is anger that they sought to hoodwink both national and international opinion, but the real problem was that first they hoodwinked themselves.

Notes

1   Laura Miller, 'War is Sell', *PRWatch*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2002 http://www.prwatch.org/prwissues/2002Q4/war.html. This describes the various organisations and individuals lobbying for war.

2   The acronym 'WMD' is employed in this article although it is inherently misleading. It brings together types of weapons that are quite distinctive in the severity of their physical and possibly strategic effects. Chemical, biological and nuclear weapons all raised quite separate intelligence issues in the Iraq case. Their routine elision, which is now so ingrained as to be beyond remedy, encourages carelessness in public debate in failing to distinguish between systems that cause containable tragedies to those that would lead to the most unimaginable catastrophe.

3   Kay Testimony, Hearing Of The Senate Armed Services Committee, *Iraqi Weapons Of Mass Destruction Programs*, 28 January 2004.

4   On 2 February 2004 President Bush established a bipartisan special commission headed by a conservative former judge, Laurence Silberman, and a moderate former Democratic senator, Chuck Robb. Senator John McCain was appointed as one of the five additional members. Its work was not to be completed until 2005 and its remit was broad, as it would look more generally at intelligence on weapons of mass destruction and related twenty-first century threats. In addition to the relationship between what was assessed to be present in Iraq and what has been found since, it would also review intelligence on programmes in other countries, including North Korea, Iran, Libya and Afghanistan under the Taliban. http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/02/20040206-

10.html. The British inquiry, announced the next day, to be chaired by former Cabinet Secretary Lord Butler, was to focus more narrowly on the WMD issue and report by the summer.

5   This thesis is supported by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception: The Uses of Propaganda in Bush's War on Iraq*, (New York: Penguin, 2003) and John Prados, *Hoodwinked: The Documents That Reveal How Bush Sold Us A War* (New York: The New Press, 2004). Prados provides the background to and a forensic analysis of many of the 'intelligence' claims made by the administration.

6   Unsurprisingly the French were most convinced of lying (82%, with 15% opting for 'misinformed'), followed by the Germans (69% to 22%). Majorities in Britain and the United States came in at 48% and 49% choosing 'misinformed', respectively, but with substantial numbers, 41% and 31% still assuming lying. Interviews conducted of 7,500 people in nine countries in late February and early March by the Pew Research Center. *International Herald Tribune,* 17 March 2004. The most important British inquiry (*Lord Hutton's Report of the Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Dr David Kelly C.M.G.*, 28 January 2004), came down in favour of the view that the presentation of the threat in a dossier published by the British government in September 2002 did reflect the views of the Joint Intelligence Committee and had not been doctored or 'sexed up' by the Prime Minister's Office. Similar conclusions were reached by two parliamentary reports: House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *The Decision to go to War in Iraq: Ninth Report of Session 2002-03,* Volume I Report, 3 July 2003

and Intelligence and Security Committee, *Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction – Intelligence and Assessments*, Cmnd 5972, September 2003. Polls after the publication of the Hutton Report found that it was disbelieved as a whitewash by well over 50% of the population. http:// news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/ 3448907.stm

7 *International Herald Tribune* 19 March 2004.

8 A January 2003 opinion poll found that 76% of Russians, 75% of French, 54% of Germans and 44% of British believe that the desire to control Iraq's oil lies behind 'Bush's bellicosity'. *Time*, 20 January 2003, cited by David Hastings Dunn in 'Myths, motivations and 'misunderestimations', *International Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2003, p. 280, which points out just how a limited a prize the dilapidated Iraqi oil assets are.

9 See Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict: 1990-91*, (London: Faber, 1993), p. 224.

10 PBS Frontline: The Gulf War, Oral History: Richard Cheney; http:// www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/ frontline/gulf/oral/cheney/2.html. Similar views are found in other memoirs including George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1998).

11 Richard Butler, *Saddam Defiant: The Threat of Mass Destruction and the Crisis of Global Security*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2000).

12 Under the oil-for-food programme, which ran from 1996 to the 2003 war, Iraq sold more than $67bn worth of oil. It was able to choose its own suppliers and oil traders, although contracts had to be approved by a special Security Council committee. There have been allegations that over this period the regime forced

contractors to kick back more than $10bn, that members of the Secretariat were complicit in this, and that France and Russia were rewarded with contracts for being supportive of the regime. In March 2004, Kofi Annan proposed an independent investigation into these allegations. See Claudio Gatti and Mark Turner, 'Dealing with Saddam's Regime: how fortunes were made in Iraq through the UN's oil-for-food programme', *Financial Times*, 8 April 2004.

13 http:// www.newamericancentury.org/ iraqclintonletter.htm. On the Project for a New American century see Maria Ryan, Inventing the' Axis of Evil': The Myth and Reality of US Intelligence and Policy-Making After 9/11', *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 17, no. 4, winter 2002. For a critique of the various proposals for overthrowing Iraq see Daniel Byman, Kenneth Pollack and Gideon Rose, 'Can Saddam be Toppled?', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 1, January/ February 1999.

14 http://www.security-policy.org/ papers/1998/98-D33at.html.

15 Statement By The President, *The Iraq Liberation Act*, 31 October 1998.

16 *Remarks Of The President On Iraq*, 19 December 1998; *Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair, Assessment Of Operation Desert Fox And Forward Strategy*, Press conference, 20 December 1998.

17 CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup Poll. November 13–15, 1998. N=1,039 adults nationwide. *CNN*/Time *Poll*, Yankelovich Partners. December 17– 18, 1998. N=1,031 adults nationwide.

18 Nicholas Lemann, 'The Iraq Factor: Will the new Bush team's old memories shape its foreign policy?', *New Yorker*, 22 January 2001.

19 Cheney said that 'If in fact Saddam Hussein were taking steps to try to

rebuild nuclear capacity or weapons of mass destruction, we'd have to give very serious consideration to military action to stop that activity'. Lemann, 'The Iraq Factor'.

20 If regimes such as Iraq's acquired WMD, 'their weapons will be unusable because any attempt to use them will bring national obliteration'. Condoleezza Rice, 'Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest', *Foreign Affairs,* vol. 79, no. 1, January/ February 2000.

21 Remarks by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, American Jewish Committee, Washington DC, 4 May 2001. http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/ arms/stories/01050711.htm

22 Lemann, 'The Iraq Factor'.

23 Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: US Efforts to Change the Regime*, report by the Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, October 2002, p. 8.

24 Meghan O'Sullivan, *Iraq: Time for a Modified Approach*, (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 2001).

25 As part of a resolution which renewed the UN oil-for-food programme for the eleventh time since 1996, the Security Council unanimously agreed on 29 November 2001 to adopt a Goods Review List, with the objective of streamlining the process of selling civilian goods to Baghdad. On 2 December Iraqi Ambassador to the UN Mohammed Aldouri signed a memorandum of understanding accepting the resolution. The new procedures were adopted on 14 May 2002 (UN Security Council Resolution 1409).

26 Secretary of State Colin Powell, Testimony at Budget Hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 8 March 2001. http:// www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2001/ 1164.htm

27 Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), pp. 20–22.

28 Remarks by the President and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, White House, 31 January 2003 http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/ releases/2003/01/20030131-23.html

29 The doctrine of pre-emption is discussed in Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence*, (London: Polity, 2004).

30 Remarks by the President on Iraq, Cincinnati, Ohio , 7 October 2002. http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/ releases/2002/10/20021007-8.html

31 Interview with President Bush, NBC, *Meet the Press*, 8 February 2004,

32 Prime Minister, speech on 'continuing global terror threat', Sedgefield, 5 March 2004, http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page5461.asp. He was quoting his own remarks at a January 2003 press conference.

33 Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), p. 32.

34 CBSNEWS.com, 'Plans For Iraq Attack Began On 9/11', 4 September 2002, http://www.cbsnews.com/ stories/2002/09/04/september11/ main520830.shtml

35 Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), pp. 83–84. See also his *Plan of Attack*, p. 25.

36 Rice Testimony, 9/11 Commission, 8 April 2004.

37 *Plan of Attack*, p. 3.

38 Daniel Benjamin, 'Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda Are Not Allies', *New York Times*, 30 September 2002. See also Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 264.

39 Reference was made to the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a leader of an Islamic group in northern Iraq called Ansar al-Islam believed to have links

to al-Qaeda, although his group was unaffiliated and largely based in the Kurdish north. Tenet stressed this link in his testimony to the Senate on 11 February 2003.

40 James Risen, 'Captives Deny Qaeda worked with Baghdad', *New York Times*, 9 June 2003.

41 The argument has been pursued with greatest vigour by Stephen Hayes of *The Weekly Standard*. In 'Case Closed: The U.S. government's secret memo detailing cooperation between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden', vol. 9, no. 11, 24 November 2003, he cites a memo of 27 October 2003 sent from Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith to Senators Pat Roberts and Jay Rockefeller, the chairman and vice-chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, much of which reflects material in use before the war. See also Stephen F. Hayes, 'Saddam's al Qaeda Connection: The evidence mounts, but the administration says surprisingly little', *The Weekly Standard*, vol. 8, no. 48, 1 September 2003.

42 For NIE see http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/pdf/Iraq/declassifiedintellreport.pdf. Also letter to Senator Bob Graham (D-FL), former chairman of the Senate's Intelligence Committee, by George J. Tenet, director of central intelligence, 7 October 2002. Walter Pincus, 'Report Cast Doubt on Iraq-Al Qaeda Connection,' *Washington Post*, 22 June 2003.

43 Remarks by the President on Iraq, Cincinnati, Ohio , 7 October 2002. http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021007-8.html. Similar claims were made in a radio address on 8 February 2003.

44 Another relevant figure, Abdul Rachman Yasin, indicted for his role in 1993, remained a fugitive, and in Baghdad. The book was republished after 11 September by Laurie Mylroie as *The War Against America: Saddam Hussein and the World Trade Center Attacks: A Study of Revenge* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001). She developed her arguments further in *Bush vs. the Beltway: How the CIA and the State Department Tried to Stop the War on Terror*, (Washington DC: Regan Books, 2003). Mylroie was prepared to blame Iraq for the October 1991 anthrax incidents, although the evidence here strongly suggested that they originated in the United States. She put her argument to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States in July 2003, where her claims were challenged directly by Judith S. Yaphe. See their statements, *Third Public Hearing of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States,* 9 July 2003.

45 Clarke, *Against all Enemies*, pp. 30, 232. Clarke describes the Iraqi link to the 1993 bombing as 'a theory that had been investigated for years and found to be untrue'. See also Simon and Benjamin, *The Age of Sacred Terror*.

46 On this visit, and Mylroie's disappointment with British intelligence, as well as a concise statement of her views, see the interview with Mylroie on 18 October 1991 for PBS, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/gunning/interviews/mylroie.html

47 Walter Pincus and Dana Priest, 'Some Iraq Analysts felt Pressure from Cheney Visits', *Washington Post,* 5 June 2003.

48 At the time the FBI and CIA were convinced that the Prague meeting never took place, and that Atta was in the United States at the time. The

Iraqi who allegedly met Atta, Ahmed al Ani, when in US custody, denied the meeting occurred. Mark Hosenball, *Newsweek,* 20 September 2003.

49 Linda Feldmann, 'The Impact of Bush Linking 9/11 and Iraq', *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 March 2003, http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/ 0314/p02s01-woiq.html

50 The poll was published on 6 September 2003. It was conducted between 7–11 August and involved 1,003 randomly selected adults. Of those polled 32% believed this to be very likely (as opposed to 'somewhat'), with larger numbers (51%) believing that it was very likely that assistance was given to al-Qaeda and even more (62%) that Saddam was trying to develop WMD. The numbers also indicated a degree of growing scepticism on this matter. Earlier polls put the combined total (very likely plus somewhat) at as high as 78%. See for example Gallup Poll for CNN/*USA Today* conducted 19–21 August 2002.

51 Gallup poll, 5–8 August 2002.

52 5 February 2003, Hansard, columns 265–66. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/ uk_news/2727471.stm On British scepticism about the al-Qaeda link, see John Kampfner, *Blair's Wars*, (London: Free Press, 2003), p. 164.

53 See Ekeus article in this issue of *Survival.*

54 Kay Testimony, Hearing Of The Senate Armed Services Committee, *Iraqi Weapons Of Mass Destruction Programs*, 28 January 2004.'We have documentary evidence and testimony that Saddam and Uday and Qusay asked in both 2000 and 2001 how long it would take to restart production of mustard and VX nerve gas'.

55 Charles Duelfer, Director of Central Intelligence Special Advisor for Strategy regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Programs *Testimony to the US Congress,* 30 March 2004.

56 James Risen, 'Russian engineers Reportedly Gave Missile Aid to Iraq', *New York Times*, 5 March 2002.

57 John Barry and Mark Hosenball, 'What Went Wrong', *Newsweek*, 9 February 2004. The authors cite this as an example of the readiness of scientists and officials to dupe Saddam into thinking that he was spending money wisely.

58 Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq: The Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction'*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2004) reports the unease felt by Iraqis even in March 2003 about the possibility that the destruction of the *Al-Samoud* missile would be shown in public, which he put down to hurt pride. p. 189.

59 Kenneth M Pollack, 'Spies, Lies, and Weapons: What Went Wrong', *The Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2004.

60 Kay suggests this in his testimony (see note 54).

61 See for example Tony Blair's list of concerns when making the case for *Desert Fox*. *Hansard*, 16 November 1998, column 607.

62 'Shifting Priorities: UNMOVIC and the Future of Inspections in Iraq An Interview With Ambassador Rolf Ekeus', *Arms Control Today*, March 2000. See also his article in this journal. Former inspector Scott Ritter also took the view that UNSCOM's accomplishments in imposing disarmament had not been fully recognised. Although Iraq had not complied with the UN resolutions, often this was the result of unverifiable declarations or peripheral issues, and so need not 'automatically translate into a finding that Iraq continues to possess

weapons of mass destruction and the means to produce them.' Scott Ritter, 'The Case for Iraq's Qualitative Disarmament', *Arms Control Today,* June 2000, pp. 8–14.

63 An interview with Ambassador Richard Butler, 'The Lessons and Legacy of UNSCOM', *Arms Control Today*, June 1999. See also his book, Richard Butler, *Saddam Defiant: The Threat of Mass Destruction and the Crisis of Global Security.*

64 Barry and Hosenball, 'What Went Wrong'.

65 Joseph Cirincione, Jessica Mathews, George Perkovich, *WMD in Iraq; evidence and implications* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 2004). Henceforth referred to as *Carnegie Report*.

66 Woodward, *Plan of attack*, p. 194.

67 See, for example Robert Einhorn's testimony, *Addressing the Iraqi WMD Threat*, Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services, Senate Government Affairs Committee, 1 March 2002.

68 CIA, *Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions*, 1 January through 30 June 2001

69 Blix, *Disarming Iraq*, p. 128.

70 Greg Myre, 'Lawmakers Rebuke Israeli Intelligence Services Over Iraq,' *New York Times*, 29 March 2004.

71 IISS Strategic Dossier, *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Net Assessment,* 9 September 2002

72 http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/ npp/pdf/Iraq/ declassifiedintellreport.pdf

73 Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, p. 220.

74 Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz, Interview with Sam Tannenhaus, *Vanity Fair*, 9 May 2003 http:// www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/ 2003/tr20030509-depsecdef0223.html. The Pentagon released the transcript of the interview after the published version had been erroneously taken as confirmation that the real reason for war was oil.

75 Dana Priest, 'U.S. Not Claiming Iraqi Link To Terror , *Washington Post*, 10 September 2002.

76 Woodward, *Plan of Attack,* pp. 330–34.

77 Prados suggests that the intervention by Brent Scowcroft, the National Security Advisor to Bush senior, was particularly important in prompting the marketing effort (*Hoodwinked*, p. 1). However while this argued that Saddam could be deterred it also argued for taking the issue to the UN, which is what Bush eventually did. Brent Scowcroft, 'Don't Attack Saddam', *Wall Street Journal*, 15 August 2002. Powell used this as his opening to persuade Bush to think through the diplomatic issues. Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, p. 148.

78 Kampfner, *Blair's Wars,* p. 196.

79 Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, pp. 195–97.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 195

81 All examples taken from the *Carnegie Report*.

82 *Lord Hutton's Report of the Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Dr David Kelly C.M.G.*, 28 January 2004, paragraph 228.

83 See Seymour Hersh, 'Selective Intelligence', *The New Yorker*, 12 May 2003. See also Walter Pincus and Dana Priest, 'Some Iraq Analysts felt Pressure from Cheney Visits'; Robert Dreyfuss, 'The Pentagon Muzzles the CIA: Devising bad intelligence to promote bad policy', *The American Prospect*, vol. 13, no. 22, 16 December 2002, http://www.prospect.org/ print/V13/22/index.html; Pollack, 'Spies, Lies, and Weapons: What Went Wrong'; Bryan Burroughs, Evgenia Peretz, David Rose and David Wise, 'The Path to War', *Vanity Fair*, May

2004. Mark Hosenball, Michael Isikoff and Evan Thomas, 'Cheney's Long Path to War', *Newsweek*, 11 November 2003.

[84] In 1976 Wolfowitz, working for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in the Ford Administration, served as the principal adviser to Richard Pipes, who was chairman of the Team B set up to develop a rival estimate on Soviet strategic forces to a Team A led by the CIA. On this episode see Lawrence Freedman, 'The CIA and the Soviet Threat: The Politicization of Estimates, 1966–1977', *Intelligence and National Security*, vol.12, no. 1, 1997. For suggestions that journalists were prey to similar pressures, see Michael Massing, 'Now They Tell Us', *New York Review of Books*, vol. 51, no. 3, 26 February 2004.

[85] Jack Davis, 'The Challenge of Managing Uncertainty: Paul Wolfowitz on Intelligence Policy-Relations', *Studies in Intelligence*, vol. 39, no. 5, 1996.

[86] See, 'Briefing by Douglas Feith, USD (Policy), on Policy and Intelligence Matters', 4 June 2003, reproduced in Prados, *Hoodwinked*, pp. 293–305. This has an extensive discussion of these issues.

[87] Burroughs et al, 'The Path to War'. James Risen, 'How Pair's Finding on Terror Led to Clash on Shaping Intelligence', *New York Times,* 28 April 2004, discusses the two-man Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group working for Feith, and its links, through Perle, with the INC. One member of this team, David Wurmser, had written a book, with a forward by Perle, entitled *Tyranny's Ally: America's Failure to Defeat Saddam Hussein* (Washington DC: AEI Press, 1999).

[88] Douglas Jehl, 'Stung by Exile's Role, CIA Orders a Shift in Procedures', *New York Times*, 13 February 2004.

[89] It remains the case that zero tolerance of non-compliance provides the least shaky legal basis for the war. See the statement by Lord Goldsmith, Britain's Attorney-General, *Hansard*, House of Lords, 17 March 2003, column WA2. For a discussion of the legal aspects of the war see Adam Roberts, 'Law and the Use of Force After Iraq', *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 2, summer 2003, pp. 31–56.

[90] Cited in Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, p. 232.

[91] Remarks by the Vice-President to the Veterans of Foreign Wars 103rd National Convention http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html

[92] Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz, Speech on Iraq Disarmament Thursday, 23 January 2003 (policy address on Iraqi disarmament at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City).

[93] Susan Wright, 'The hijacking of UNSCOM', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* July/August 1999, vol. 55, no. 4.

[94] Blix in *Disarming Iraq* explains his many misgivings on trying to conduct interviews outside of Iraq.

[95] *Ibid.*, pp. 141–42.

[96] Excerpt from Remarks by President Bush and Polish President Kwasniewski, 14 January 2003. According to Woodward, Bush had decided that military action would be necessary. Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, pp. 261, 270–71.

[97] See Philip H. Gordon & Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies at War: America, Europe and the Crisis over Iraq* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2004). On the inept diplomacy on all sides that led to war see also Michael Clarke, 'The diplomacy that led to war in Iraq', in Paul Cornish (ed.), *The Conflict in Iraq, 2003*, (London, Palgrave/Macmillan, 2004).

[98] Kampfner, *Blair's Wars*, p, 207.

[99] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, pp. 247–50.

100 Those scornful of the role of intelligence agencies can note that there is no evidence that new information collected in Iraq was not properly evaluated.

101 See *Carnegie Report*, pp. 23–25. See also Joseph Wilson, 'What I Didn't Find in Africa', *New York Times*, 6 July 2003.

102 Statement by Secretary of State Powell to Security Council, 5 February 2003. http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030205-1.html

103 The most substantial account is in Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, but see also Burroughs et al, 'The Path to War', and Prados, *Hoodwinked.*

104 One source for this may have been Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haideri, brought out of Iraq by the INC in 2001, who claimed to have visited 20 hidden facilities built for the production of biological and chemical weapons, including one underneath a hospital in Baghdad. See Seymour Hersh, 'Selective Intelligence'. Specific reference was made to al-Haideri's material in the mini-dossier, 'A Decade of Deception and Defiance', issued by the US to coincide with Bush's speech to the UN on 12 September 2002. http://whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912.html In a statement to the Security Council in March, on the eve of war, Blix noted that his teams had physically examined the hospital and other sites with the help of ground-penetrating radar equipment and had not found any underground facilities for chemical or biological production or storage. With regard to the trucks to be used as portable laboratories, Powell referred to four human sources and said that Iraq had at least seven such vehicles. After the war two were found, leading Bush to

claim that they were biological laboratories. However detailed investigation revealed that they were not for this purpose but for the production of hydrogen. On 2 April 2004 Powell acknowledged that the information was 'not solid'. Press Briefing En Route to Washington, 2 April 2004. http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/31118.htm

105 Blix, *Disarming Iraq*, pp. 157, 167. See the site maintained by Dr Glen Rangwala of Cambridge University http://middleeastreference.org.uk/iraqweapons.html

106 Mohamed El Baradei, 'The Status of Nuclear Inspections in Iraq: An Update', 7 March 2003, http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Statements/2003/ebsp2003n006.shtml

107 See *Carnegie report*, pp. 38-40. At the same time UAVs under development were confirmed to be for reconnaissance purposes rather than delivery of biological weapons.

108 Interview with Vice-President Dick Cheney, NBC, *Meet the Press*, Transcript for 16 March 2003. That same day, an article appeared in the *Washington Post* raising questions about the quality of the available intelligence. Walter Pincus, 'US Lacks Specifics on Banned Arms', *Washington Post,* 16 March 2003.

109 Blair's increasingly desperate efforts to get a second resolution are discussed in John Kampfner, *Blair's Wars*. Blix's account in *Disarming Iraq* is sympathetic.

110 James Fallows, 'Blind Into Baghdad', *The Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2004, http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2004/01/media-preview/fallows.htm.

111 Peter Slevin and Dana Priest, 'Wolfowitz Concedes Iraq Errors', *Washington Post*, 24 July 2003.

112 For the views of Iraqi specialists on the eve of war see Toby Dodge and

Steven Simon, *Iraq at the Crossroads: State and Society in the Shadow of Regime Change*, Adelphi Paper 354, (Oxford: OUP for IISS, January 2003).

[113] Slevin and Priest, 'Wolfowitz Concedes Iraq Errors'. After the war Wolfowitz acknowledged that Pentagon officials had underestimated the problem, in terms of the readiness of Ba'athists to continue resistance and the reluctance of Iraqis in general to work with the US.

[114] Hearings, *Department Of Defense Budget Priorities For Fiscal Year 2004*, Committee on the Budget One Hundred Eighth Congress: First Session, 27 February 2003. http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/house/house04.html. Cheney took the same view just before the war began: 'The read we get on the people of Iraq is there is no question but what they want to the get rid of Saddam Hussein and they will welcome as liberators the United States when we come to do that'. Interview with Vice-President Dick Cheney, NBC, *Meet the Press*, transcript for 16 March 2003.

[115] On 28 January 2003 a group of UK aid organisations – Oxfam, CAFOD, Christian Aid, ActionAid and Save the Children – published a joint press release warning that military action could trigger a major humanitarian disaster, devastating the lives of millions of people. http://www.oxfam.org.uk/press/releases/iraq28jan03.html

[116] US Agency for International Development, *Iraq's legacy of Terror: Mass Graves* (Washington DC: January 2004), http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/pdf/iraq_mass_graves.pdf. These are also the figures used by groups such as Human Rights Watch.

[117] For a carefully argued case that these abuses did not turn the 2003 war into a humanitarian intervention see Ken Roth, 'War in Iraq: Not a Humanitarian Intervention', *World Report 2004*, Human Rights Watch, http://hrw.org/wr2k4/3.htm#_Toc58744952

[118] It was barely mentioned after the publication of the September 2002 dossier, into which it had been belatedly inserted, and was not mentioned in the Prime Minister's speech of March 2003, which constitutes the most definitive case for war. See references for endnote 6.

[119] There was later a further confusion over whether it had been made sufficiently clear (even to the Prime Minister) that this referred to systems suitable only for battlefield use.

[120] See for example Paul Rogers, *Iraq: Consequences of a War*, Oxford Research Group Briefing Paper, October 2002, p. 2: 'Evidence from the 1991 war indicates that it is highly likely that the regime will use all available military means, including chemical and biological weapons, if its very survival is threatened. Such weapons may be used in tactical warfare to hinder invading forces but may, in extreme circumstances, be used strategically against forces in other countries'.

[121] This is explored, in a not wholly convincing way, in Avigdor Haselkorn, *The Continuing Storm: Iraq, Poisonous Weapons and Deterrence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

[122] Kenneth Pollack, 'Containment, Deterrence, Preemption', *Foreign Affairs* March/April 2002: Kenneth Pollack, 'Spies, Lies, and Weapons: What Went Wrong'.

[123] John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, 'Iraq: An Unnecessary War', *Foreign Policy*, December 2002.

[124] An assessment prepared by Britain's Joint Intelligence Committee on 10

February 2003, entitled *International Terrorism: War with Iraq*, said there was no intelligence that Iraq had provided chemical or biological materials to al-Qaeda, but that, in event of the regime's collapse, there would be an increased risk that terrorist groups would be able to get their hands on such materials. The JIC assessed 'that al-Qaida and associated groups continued to represent by far the greatest terrorist threat to Western interests, and that threat would be heightened by military action against Iraq'. See, Intelligence and Security Committee, *Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction – Intelligence and Assessments*, Cmnd [Command] 5972, September 2003, paras 125–26.

[125] Thomas Powers, 'War and Its Consequences', *The New York Review of Books*, 27 March 2003.