

# Real Reasons vs. Fabrications: A Case for Action in Dealing with Iraq With War as the Very Last Resort

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Friday, March 14, 2003

Nearly no one except for Saddam Hussein and his elite guards, think that the Iraqi dictator is a good person or a good leader. However, the mere fact that a dictator exists has never been a reason for the United States to take military action against a regime. Times have changed and the G. W. Bush administration has formulated a posture of military and political dominance in the world.

The Bush administration has laid out a storm of reasons for bombing and invading Iraq, overthrowing its government, and commandeering its oil fields. The official reasons have been stated as promoting democracy, working against the terrorism link with Al Qaeda, and protecting America from the weapons of mass destruction that Saddam Hussein is developing.

The problem with the Bush case and the reason why the people of the world outside of Bush's circle of advisors and partisan supporters do not buy the case is the fact that the pro-war arguments have been flimsy and unpersuasive. They have failed to establish any tangible dangers to whatever weapons development Iraq has in progress and they have lost credibility by employing an overdose of disinformation and half truths to make war look necessary.

This does not negate the fact that Saddam Hussein is dangerous and does need to be dealt with to restrict his likely aggression in the future. Like Muhamar Quadaffi of Libya, Hussein needs to be coerced by the

international community to cease his nuclear, biological and chemical weapons development and to move toward democratizing his political system. This is not likely to happen in response to massive bombing and attempted assassination of the leader.

If one believes that the evidence linking Al Qaeda to Iraq presented in the dot-creating and dot-connecting speeches given by Mr. Bush and Colin Powell, one would have to admit that they were connecting the dots before September 11 and could easily have known about Al Qaeda's plans. Intelligence experts tend to argue that in both cases, there was trouble with analysis and concrete interpretations of many loose ends.

## *What Is Our Role?*

A major source of confusion today for the citizens of the world, the people of the United States, and the leaders of the U.S. and other nations is that Americans are uncertain about what role the United States should play in world events.

Bush campaigned as a noninterventionist in the presidential campaign of 2000. But after September 11, 2001, he transformed into a nation builder and began listing duties of the United States to not simply retaliate for the attacks but to annihilate terrorism throughout the world.

While one might argue that Bush has created a foreign policy of preventative strikes against possible aggressor nations, this is hardly what is known as foreign policy. Brute force, fascism, militarism, empire-building, imperialism are power strategies built on a lack of politics and foreign policy. Bush and his advisors began as realists in what looked like the beginning of a foreign policy, but then degenerated in to force-oriented nationalists.

Obviously, they consider this hypernationalism to be a type of new and innovative foreign policy. This is what happens when you don't have a historical understanding of nations and international conflicts.

Many people now believe, based on the progression of rhetoric released by Mr. Bush and Mr. Power, along with the cadre of advisors, that the Bush administration began with war as a first resort and that not matter what occurred in dialogue with Iraq or in United Nations inspections, Mr. Bush would have his war. There is mounting evidence that this is, in fact, the case.

Despite the lack of credibility for Mr. Bush and Mr. Powell at this point in time, there are reasons to confront Iraq as well as other nations which endanger legitimate national interests and national security concerns of the United States. The difficult task for those who seek both peace and action against terrorism is to separate the chicanery of the Bush administration from the real concerns about nations like Iraq. This task must be by sifting out the Bush fictions from the facts about Iraq and the threats it poses to the rest of the world.

### *The Bush Fictions*

Mr. G. W. Bush and company would like the world to believe that Iraq may strike the United States, is developing weapons of mass destruction to threaten or batter its neighbors, is linked to Al Qaeda, and has a

population thirsty for the liberation of the United States.

The absence of hard evidence of aggression or weapons of mass destruction (WMD) development by Iraq in the speeches given by Mr. Bush and Mr. Powell are embarrassing to our nation and have confirmed suspicions that Mr. Bush has wanted to attack Iraq militarily for a long time, with or without significant provocation.

At the very time that American needs to work extremely closely with international coalitions to defeat organized terrorism, Bush and company have alienated our friends and motivated our enemies to fight us hard than ever.

### *An Uncritical News Media*

The U.S. news media have taken it upon themselves to serve the White House interests in promoting a war on Iraq. Evidence how uncritical the news media have been was recently revealed in a New York Times/CBS poll that indicates that 42% of Americans believe that Saddam Hussein is personally responsible for the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001. <sup>1</sup> This was never claimed even by the Bush administration and can only be the product of poor media coverage since Americans depend upon the news media to inform them about world events.

An ABC poll recently showed that 55% of Americans believe that Hussein gives direct aid to Al Qaeda. Bush has contributed to the problem of who aids Al Qaeda by referring to "Al Qaeda-type groups" in relation to Iraq. Such weasel terms serve to perpetuate fictions believed by an uninformed public and an army of lazy journalists.

Molly Ivins argues that it is alarming that Americans may enter a way in a state of misinformation. <sup>2</sup>

### *U.S. Motives for Past Interventions*

The United States generally acts on the basis of national interests and those interests are primarily related to its economic investments and developments. In colonial days, the nation was primarily interested in protecting its trade.

Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821. Texas broke away from Mexico in 1836 and was made a state by the United States Congress in 1845. The doctrines of manifest destiny, racial superiority, and expansionism led to the U.S. war with Mexico that took about one half of Mexican territory and made it part of America. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 made it clear that the U.S. considered the nations of Latin America to be part of its national interests.

By the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, American leaders were looking for new markets for the sales of mass produced products in the U.S. “Open door” policies were encouraged to gain entry into markets – by force if necessary. The war with Spain in 1898 was clearly done in order to secure American economic and military influence in Cuba and other colonies of Spain.

### *How America Lost the Respect of Other Nations in the World*

The United States began with a political and moral leadership that made it a beacon of hope for other nations who sought to also democratize their nations and live in peace. This began to change with the Cold War and has become extreme today with the Bush doctrines of imperial unilateralism.

In March, 2003, National Public Radio reported that despite the leadership of Spain being part of Bush’s “coalition of the willing,” only about 2% of the Spaniards respect the United States. They noted that

the old slogan used by Americans to start the war against Spain in 1898 is now used by Spanish peace activist to rally opposition to the United States – “Remember the Maine!”

By the 1890s, the United States had expanded outward to most of its present borders and had taken lands from Mexico and indigenous Americans. But expansionism had begun earlier in distant places as with U.S. partnership with the British and Germans in ruling Samoa, intervening in Hawaii, and some early ventures in Asia. In 1898, the American ship, the USS Maine exploded in Havana, Cuba.

There were strong U.S. business interests in Cuba and the Spanish appeared ineffective in controlling rebellion on the island.<sup>3</sup> There was also rebellion against Spain in the Philippines which became America’s first colony. The Spanish Empire came to an end as America took her colonies one by one.

### *Making the World Safe for National Interests*

President Woodrow Wilson gave the standard line about making the world safe for democracy and how it was the theme for American foreign policy, but the term democracy was sugarcoating on the terms actually guiding our policies – national interests.

The main national interests of the United States are security, geopolitical power, and economic protection and expansion. If this simple fact were acknowledged by the White House, all of the nations of the world and all of the factions within our nation could have an open and honest debate about how to deal with Saddam Hussein.

### *Losing Credibility*

The credibility of the United States has been in grave peril ever since Mr. Bush gave his speech listing nations in an “axis of evil”

and the homeland security planning of the federal government spun out of control and began to jeopardize Constitutional freedoms of the American people. In essence, America, through the worlds of Mr. Bush and Mr. Powell, sounded like a garrison state ordering the rest of the world to obey its commands.

Bush began is war with Iraq rhetorically by calling for a “regime change” and then doing everything possible to define every move by Iraq to comply with UN demands as deception. He also changed the meaning of “regime change” to fit circumstances.

The air has been saturated with mixed messages from the Bush administration and it has confused everyone by having no coherent foreign policy for grounding.

In such a confusing communication environment, the world could witness Mr. Bush always saying he was tired of Iraq not complying, unconcerned about international opinion, and oblivious to the growing anti-war movements throughout the world.

In time, the failure to communicate and persuade intelligently and diplomatically led political scientists in other nations to note that Europeans do not dislike the American people; they dislike President Bush.<sup>4</sup>

In moments of desperation, Bush is now getting his pictures in news magazines praying and posturing himself as a president in direct communication with God Almighty and making his political decisions in correspondence with such communication.

This is an affront to many people who have world history and know that despots of all kinds have claimed to have had divine guidance and right to do their political deeds. What greater insulation from political criticism than to claim that your policies are sanctioned by the Lord! Of course, Mr. Bush released the word that he would be hospitable to the Pope’s emissary (who would tell him on March 6 that his planned

war was immoral), but already knew that his war is a just war.

Mr. Bush lost credibility as President of the United States in many ways that space and time do not permit a complete description of them. Bush said as a candidate for the presidency that he would be humble, would not want to engage in nation building, and would like to treat other nations with respect rather than arrogance. His performance has dramatically contradicted all three of these assertions and many people wonder if he can be trusted.

The continued charges against Iraq which lack hard evidence have magnified the low credibility of the Bush administration’s claims about Iraq’s alleged WMD arsenal. Mohaed ElBaradei, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has stated that letters which were alleged to show that Iraq was attempting to purchase uranium from Niger were fabricated. In addition, he noted that aluminum tubes which were described as nuclear centrifuge devices were actually used for conventional 81 mm rockets.

#### *What We Know About Saddam Hussein*

Saddam Hussein has a great imagination and it reveals his tendency to over-exaggerate his nation’s military strength and its abilities to hurt anyone other than the citizens of Iraq. Contrary to propaganda for Bush’s aspirations, history shows that Hussein has never been able to unify the Arab world against his enemies.<sup>5</sup>

America was making deals with Saddam Hussein during the Reagan-Bush administration of the 1980s. Before that, the American CIA had worked with Hussein during the Kennedy administration.<sup>6</sup> In both eras, Hussein was used to block other nations or leaders. In 1963, General Abdel Kassem had overthrown the Iraqi monarchy that the U.S. favored. Both Eisenhower and Kennedy saw Kassem as a useful

counterweight to Gamal Nasser of Egypt. But Kassem was too ambitious and threatened Western oil interests and U.S. dominance in the Middle East. America, Britain and Israel collaborated on a plan to overthrow Kassem. The U.S. armed Kurdish rebels and the CIA unleashed its “Health Alteration Committee” to send Kassem a poisoned handkerchief.<sup>7</sup> The monogrammed gift did not reach Kassem and his foes led a coup in Baghdad. After a trial, he was shot and his body was displayed on Iraqi TV. America and the CIA had been backing the anti-Communist Baath Party.

Saddam Hussein was part of the anti-Kassem forces and had participated in a failed assassination in 1958. With lists of Communists provided by the CIA, the Baathists proceeded to murder hundreds of people, many of who were very educated and included physicians, teachers, and other professionals. The United States then sent armaments to the new regime. Hussein was not yet in power but this was his party that American supported. Hussein became part of the ruling administration when Baathist general Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr took over Baghdad. General al-Bakr was backed by our CIA.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1980s, the United States used Iraq as a counterweight against Iran. Again, Hussein received material support from the United States government. Since he took power, Hussein has dominated Iraqi politics for over thirty years. In this time span, he has started two wars – one with Kuwait in 1990 and the other with Iran in 1980. Some other Middle East nations, which we do not target for bombing, have similar track records.

Iran had meddled with the Iraqi Kurds before the 1980 war. Iraq was pleased when the Shah of Iran was overthrown by the Ayotollah Ruhollah Khomeini. But Khomeini planned to extend his fundamentalist revolution into Iraq. By the end of 1979, the Iranians were encouraging the Kurdish and Shiite populations of Iraq to

overthrown Saddam Hussein. Iranian agents also tried to assassinate Iraqi officials. The war broke out in 1980 and lasted for 8 years. Iraq received support in this war from the United States, France, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. All of these nations sought to block the expansion of Khomeini’s revolution.<sup>9</sup>

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is a strange case of gross oversimplification by journalists and politicians who would have everyone believe that Hussein invaded Kuwait simply to be cruel. In fact, there were calculations made by the Iraqi as to whether he should and could get away with such an invasion. Hussein believed that Kuwait needed to help his country more than it did for fighting Iran and that Kuwait was tapping into some of Iraqi’s oil. Worse than this is the famous conversation between Saddam Hussein and U.S. ambassador April Glaspie in which Glaspie told Hussein that America had no position on the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait.<sup>10</sup> Glaspie correctly noted that the U.S. had no security interests in Kuwait.

The United States and its coalition rightfully stopped Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1991. There is no parallel between today’s situation and that crisis, however, and it is remarkable that the first President Bush ended his invasion when the mission as narrowly defined was accomplished. In contrast, his son appears dedicated to a never ending war and expansion of American dominance in the region.

Hussein did not use biological and chemical weapons on American troops in 1991 although it was suspected that he could have deployed them.

### *The Dangers of Preventative Aggression*

There is no doubt that Mr. Bush has launched some major changes in how America relates to the rest of the world and how it treats the tension between individual freedom and national security. The problem

is that the Bush directions augur less commitment to democracy than to security.

On March 7, 2003, the UN Security Council again met to discuss what to do about Iraq. Colin Powell sounded off with repetitions about Iraq being deceptive, having had enough time to disarm, and continuing to be in noncompliance with council resolutions. The previous night, Mr. Bush had held a press conference in which reporters sat quietly and respectfully addressed the president in soft tones about his plans to deal with Iraq now that they have not complied. The president argued for war and said that he hates war...

At the Security Council meeting of March 7, France argued the exact opposite of Colin Powell and said that Iraq was complying with UN demands by allowing inspections and destroying missiles. Russia argued that war was not necessary and other nations appeared in favor of giving Iraq more time for compliance.

In a recent interview with Tim Russert on C-NBC, journalist Thomas Friedman argued that the United States must consider the dangers of acting without a strong coalition against Iraq.<sup>11</sup> Friedman believes that the United States can harm its role in world politics if it does not take this seriously. He correctly notes that Bush thumbed his nose at international community will with issues like environmental protect and now wants that community to join him in lockstep warfare against Iraq. Obviously, Bush burned the political capital our nation had acquired after World War II and the successful prosecution of force against Serbia.

In his interview, Friedman also made the point that Bush cannot successfully take our nation into war "on the wings of a lie" meaning the continuous and refuted assertions by Bush and Powell that Iraq and Al Qaeda are significantly linked. Apparently, White House political advisors discovered public opinion poll data which

indicated that public support for the war effort increases if the public thinks there is such a link.

#### *Methods for Containing Saddam Hussein*

Good propagandists know that if you repeated a lie over and over enough, it will begin to sound true. Bush has been trying to accomplish this with his statements about Hussein not being containable. This is flatly false since he has been contained and continues to be right now. If we can sweep away the Bush propaganda about the uncontainability of Hussein, we can face the daunting challenges of containing him and see that meeting these challenges is far more rational than launching a war against him.

A united front against Iraq is likely to be capable of coercing the nation to comply with UN demands for disarming its weapons of mass destruction. A fractured set of national views as the Bush administration has created, is likely to provide Saddam Hussein a way of escaping, delaying, and helping along the confusion that Bush and company initiated. Bush and his team acted in ways that alienated nations that could be allies but now are critics of the United States.

#### *Working with Policy Rather than Roulette*

The Bush administration is not revealing details, even to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about what costs are involved with rebuilding Iraq after Bush's War is concluded.<sup>12</sup> It is also not revealing how it intends to deal with multiple possible flashpoints of conflict that may ignite with a United States invasion.

The Kurds and the Turks, for example, while both being will to fight the Iraqis also want to kill each other. Both sides wish to claim the territory and oil in Kirkuk and Mosul in Iraq. Turkey wants to stop the Kurds from forming an independent

Kurdistan and from activating other Kurds in Turkey.<sup>13</sup> The U.S. is telling Turkey that they will be permitted to enter northern Iraq. Making things even more dangerous is the emergence of Iranian fighters ready to fight both Iraqis and Turks.<sup>14</sup>

If the Bush administration has done anything right in dealing with Iraq, it has been in using military force to pressure Hussein to account for weapons and begin disarming. This has been effective. The sustained pressure is likely to continue to be effective and there is no clear and present danger at this point in time that justifies a war.

History and current events show that it is possible, not just imaginable, that military force, diplomacy, and coercion can be used in conjunction to compel Iraq to diminish its WMD development and to get back to rebuilding its economy. This strategy can work for any type of weaponry that Iraq begins to develop. Contrary to the rhetoric of Bush and company, containment worked not only to block aggression of the gargantuan USSR, but also the tiny power known as Iraq.

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<sup>7</sup> Morris, R.

<sup>8</sup> Morris, R.

<sup>9</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J., and Walt, S. M. (2003). An unnecessary war. *Foreign Policy*, January/February, pp. 50-59.

<sup>10</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt.

<sup>11</sup> March 8, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> National Public Radio news, March 12, 2003

<sup>13</sup> Kristof, Nicholas (2003). Hatreds steeped in blood. *New York Times*, March 11, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Kristof.

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<sup>1</sup> New York Times, March

<sup>2</sup> Ivins, M. (2003). Misimpressions. Syndicated column, March 13, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts, J. M. (1993). *History of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. News, March, 2003, pp.

<sup>5</sup> Roberts.

<sup>6</sup> Morris, R. (2003). A tyrant 40 years in the making. *New York Times*, March 14, 2003.