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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AMERICAN MILITARISM: THE MILITARY-
INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, POWER ELITE,
AND THE 2003 INVASION OF IRAQ

by

Randy S. La Prairie

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Sociology
Western Michigan University
June 2021

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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AMERICAN MILITARISM: THE MILITARY-
INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, POWER ELITE,
AND THE 2003 INVASION OF IRAQ

Randy S. La Prairie, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2021

Sociologists have paid little attention to the structural causes of American participation in wars. Consequently, the discipline offers few theoretical perspectives on American war making. Sociological theories that do exist fall under two headings: state-centric and Marxist theories. Both lack *prima facie* plausibility. In this dissertation, I advance a unique, alternative theoretical framework that I argue offers a more tenable theory of American militarism in the post-World War II period. The elite model of war mobilization, as I refer to it, consists of five interrelated structural causes of American participation in wars: (1) state-capitalist imperialism; (2) elite control of public policy; (3) imperial ideology; (4) elite control of the mass media; and (5) elite influence on academia. The foundations of the theory are a military-industrial complex theory and a power elite model of politics and culture.

Most recent theoretical work on the causes of American militarism focuses on the 2003 Iraq War. In this study, then, I present a process tracing analysis of the invasion of Iraq that demonstrates that an elite model of war mobilization provides a fuller, more historically accurate explanation of the Iraq War than either state-centric or Marxist theories. The elite model suggests

that two pressures for war emerge from the military-industrial complex: a drive for concentrated decision-making power in the executive branch, and profit-making opportunities for private defense firms. A major finding of this study is that the Bush administration's internal reasons for invading Iraq correspond to these two imperatives. In turn, the power elite social status of key administration officials largely explains why they accepted and acted on these imperatives. A virulent form of imperial ideology also contributed to their decision to invade Iraq. As also predicted by the model, the Bush administration controlled the mass media marketing of their war campaign, successfully mobilizing public support for the war. And though the war was not widely accepted among academics, many prominent academics supported the war on the basis of neo-Wilsonian assumptions that were popular in the academy in the 1990s and which also informed the administration's worldview and Iraq policy.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee for their patience and guidance as I carried out the research for this dissertation and wrote up the results. It was an ambitious and challenging project that required crossing disciplinary boundaries and employing unconventional methods for a sociologist. So, thank you to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Ronald Kramer, to Dr. Barry Goetz and Dr. Gregory Howard, and to Dr. Paul Clements, who, for an outside committee member, played an especially large role in shaping this dissertation.

I must also recognize and thank my partner, Jessica, for her tremendous support and affection while I wrote this dissertation. It would not have turned out as well as it did without her.

Randy S. La Prairie

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL SOCIOLOGY OF WAR AND THE INVASION OF IRAQ

The American Sociological Association's Peace, War, and Social Conflict section website states that its purpose "is to encourage the application of sociological methods, theories, and perspectives to the study of peace and war." Interests of section members are said to include "the causes and dynamics of war" and "military institutions" (American Sociological Association 2021).

The study of military institutions and the causes of war is therefore not foreign to sociology. It is also not new. Every professional sociologist has read C. Wright Mills, who wrote about the military-industrial complex in his classic work, *The Power Elite*. Mills (1958) argued that the ascendant post-World War II military-industrial complex and the ascent of militaristic ideology among the power elite were likely to bring the United States to war with the Soviet Union.

Yet, Mills's classic studies of militarism have not had a strong influence on subsequent sociological research on the topic. Given the ASA's commitment to the study of war and peace, and Mills's classic exemplars, it is a remarkable fact that sociologists have rarely studied American militarism or the causes of wars between the United States and other countries. And given the United States' unmatched record of military mobilization and aggression in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this fact is even more remarkable. While sociologists have often studied the causes of war at a very broad level of analysis—across many countries and many years—the study of the causes of war for the United States remains under-investigated and under-theorized.

In the early 2000s, once it became clear that the George W. Bush administration was going to start an illegal war of aggression against Iraq, there was a swell of interest among sociologists in American military imperialism. The ASA issued a statement against the war (American Sociological Association 2006). My dissertation advisor, Ronald Kramer, coauthored articles and book chapters with Raymond Michalowski explaining why the Iraq War was a form of state crime and why it was illegal under international law (Kramer and Michalowski 2005, 2006). Michael Mann, a distinguished historical sociologist at University of California Los Angeles and University of Cambridge, and John Bellamy Foster, carrier of the monopoly capitalism tradition of Marxist social science and editor of the influential *Monthly Review*, also wrote notable books and articles about the war and American imperialism. Sociologists Michael Schwartz (2008) and James DeFronzo (2010) also wrote books about it.

That the 2003 US invasion of Iraq was a criminal act—so far one of the most significant and transformational international crimes of the twenty-first century—is today hardly a matter of dispute. But efforts by sociologists to explain why the war happened at all, and more importantly, how it was to be understood as a product of American institutions and traditions, did not produce satisfactory or convincing results. And after this resurgence of interest in the early 2000s, more recent contributions also have not greatly advanced our sociological understanding on these questions, either due to basic factual or conceptual errors, or failures to consider relevant factors. To be sure, edifying accounts of why the Iraq War happened do exist; sociologists, political scientists, historians, journalists, and other intellectuals have written perceptively on this and related questions. But a sociologically informed account of the Iraq War and American militarism more broadly ought to properly consider, among other factors, the class structure of American society and the particular ways that it interacts with the US military-

industrial complex (MIC). Sociologists and non-sociologists alike have not adequately considered these factors in explaining the Iraq War.

Sociologists have advanced mainly two kinds of theories of American war making, or military imperialism, and the theoretical explanations they have offered for the Iraq War fall into one of these two categories of explanation. They are what I refer to as state-centric and Marxist explanations. For their part, Marxist sociologists have not brought to bear persuasive class analyses, in spite of the centrality of class conflict to Marxist theory, and Marxist and non-Marxist sociologists alike have not grasped the sociological significance of the MIC, which is too often only employed as a buzz word or as a synonym for the defense industry. Such conceptualizations are not in accord with the best literature on the topic.

In this dissertation, I assess the viability of these two theories for explaining the Iraq War. It is my contention that they do not provide adequate explanations for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and for American military imperialism more generally. Drawing on my own studies of American history and institutions, I offer instead an original theoretical framework called an “elite model of war mobilization,” which incorporates insights from Mills’s classic theory of the power elite, and from a wide range of theoretical and historical literature. This theory is intended to provide a framework of analysis for American war making in the entire post-World War II period, though the focus of my dissertation is a case study of the 2003 invasion of Iraq in which I demonstrate the explanatory efficacy of the model. As a case study, the Iraq War is significant, given that it has received more attention from sociologists than any other war in recent history, and because sociologists have used it to advance different general theoretical claims about American militarism and imperialism. Generating cogent theoretical propositions about American war making is necessary, however, for drawing out lessons and policy prescriptions about American

foreign and defense policy. This is especially true if the structural social causes of the Iraq War are similar to those that have led the United States to war in or with other countries.

The research question of this dissertation, then, is: How well does the elite model of war mobilization explain the 2003 invasion of Iraq compared to state-centric and Marxist theories? Because the literature I draw on in developing the elite model of war mobilization suggests different theoretical possibilities that may be compatible with my explanation, I also include in this comparison an assessment of what is called the Open Door theory of American imperialism. I conclude that an Open Door theory, at least as advanced by scholars more recently, is also inadequate as a general explanation of war making viz-a-viz the elite model.

The Argument

In the literature review (chapter 2), I outline the arguments advanced by state-centric and Marxist theorists, and compare these to a host of other sociological explanations that have been offered by scholars belonging to what I refer to as a broad, cross-disciplinary “anti-war scholarly tradition.”

In brief, state-centric theorists tend to emphasize the agency of historical actors in explaining decisions to go to war. Wars are too causally complex to permit systemic, or structural, explanations, according to state-centric theorists. If there are structural factors that explain the consistent outbreak of war between states, it is the state system itself, and the geopolitical struggles between competing states that are endemic to this system. Marxist explanations, by contrast, tend to emphasize the structural imperatives of capitalist state development. Advanced capitalist states either need natural resources (such as oil and other raw

materials) to sustain capitalist growth, or they need to create new opportunities for economic growth by forcefully opening foreign markets. Since states are managed on behalf of capitalist classes, capitalists push states to war in order to achieve these objectives.

The elite model of war mobilization outlined in chapter 3 is derived in large part from the antiwar scholarly tradition. This tradition includes the contributions of the sociologist C. W. Mills, who advanced a “power elite” theory of American politics, and wrote about the ascent of the military-industrial complex in post-World War II America. According to Mills’s power elite theory, states are not only controlled by capitalists, but a more diverse class of capitalist, government, and military personnel working in conjunction with each other to advance their own interests as managers of their respective bureaucracies. American capitalism, according to Mills, had become a military capitalism, explaining the “coincidence of interest between military and corporate needs, as defined by warlords [e.g. the Joint Chiefs of Staff] and corporate rich” (Mills, 1956:276).

This idea was given more firm empirical grounding in the work of the industrial economist Seymour Melman, who described the “permanent war economy” of the military-industrial complex as a state-managed economy—state capitalism—that bolstered the decision making power of its state managers in the executive branch and the military bureaucracy. American military imperialism, according to Melman, represented an exercise and expansion of power for state managers, and created profit bonanzas for private corporations that benefit from government production contracts. Managerial power and private profits thus explain the reproduction of the permanent war economy, or military-industrial complex, and the state managers’ propensity to resort to war.

The elite mobilization model is also built on the classic work of Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (1979, 2004), who described the cultural assumptions underpinning American imperialism and the origins of this ideological constellation in the American mass media and the broader elite intellectual community, which included eminent university scholars.

In chapter 3, the insights of Mills, Melman, Herman, Chomsky, and other scholars are synthesized and presented as the elite model of war mobilization. The model describes the various avenues by which the power elite control and influence policy and public thinking about national security and the role of the United States in the world. This they do in order to mobilize public support for the military-industrial complex and specific war efforts. Unlike state-centric theories, the theory describes a definite political economy of war operating in American society, but unlike Marxist theories, one that is animated by state power rather than laws of capitalist development. The model has five components: (1) state-capitalist imperialism; (2) power elite control of public policy; (3) elite imperial ideology; (4) elite control of the mass media; and (5) elite influence on academia. The first four factors are held to be necessary conditions for war, while elite influence on academia is held to be an important facilitating condition. The model captures important structural, political, economic, and cultural features of the American permanent war society while leaving room for the agency of historical actors within this system.

In chapter 4, I describe the research design and methodology for the study. As mentioned above, the single case study of the Iraq War is used to illustrate the explanatory utility of the elite model viz-a-viz state-centric and Marxist theories. A form of within-case analysis called process tracing is thus employed to “trace” the hypothetical conditions specified by the theories through history to the outcome of the war. This historical method, often used in international relations scholarship, creates a heavy burden of proof, requiring that hypothetically necessary or sufficient

conditions for the expected outcome (in this case, war) must be present in the case history and must be connected to it in the ways specified by the theory. Process tracing is used to “test” the elite model throughout the empirical chapters of the dissertation, and then to assess the alternative theories in the conclusion.

Chapters 5 through 10 examine the causes of the Iraq War. Chapter 5 outlines the basic history of events leading to the war, contextualizing the more focused analyses that follow in subsequent chapters. Chapters 6 through 10 examine the operation of each of the five components of the elite model as they pertained to the Bush administration’s decision to invade Iraq. These chapters demonstrate the explanatory validity of the model for the case of the invasion of Iraq.

The basic argument presented in chapter 6 is that the Bush administration’s “principal architects” of the war sought to strengthen their own power as managers of the MIC, and accordingly sought to demonstrate the credibility of American military power by conquering Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, overthrowing him, and taking control of the country’s political economy. These motives are shown to be consistent with the organizational imperatives of the MIC described in chapter 3. As shown in chapter 7, within the Bush administration, the principal architects of the war all began their careers in the military bureaucracy or working close to it, largely explaining their personal motives for expanding it, and invading Iraq. In chapter 8, I show that the Bush administration’s foreign policy ideology was consistent with the ideal type imperial ideology that is the third component of the elite model and that in the administration’s specific worldview, Saddam Hussein was seen as an obstacle to US military primacy. Chapter 9 describes the American mass media’s coverage of the debate about invading Iraq throughout 2002 and early 2003, its general failure to challenge the administration’s fallacious claims, and

tendency to serve instead as stenographers for the administration. Finally, chapter 10 considers the role of academia and liberal professors in advancing theories and ideologies that were drawn on by the Bush administration and liberal professors to justify the Iraq War.

In the concluding chapter 11, I assess the explanations for the Iraq War offered by state-centric and Marxist theorists. Here I show that they are not viable explanations, either because of conceptual errors, or because the necessary conditions specified by the theories were absent. In particular, state-centric theorists have not grasped the economic dimensions of military imperialism, maintaining that American military and economic imperialisms are mostly separate processes. They also have not considered the implications of the state management component of the MIC, understanding the MIC only as a kind of lobby, distinct from the government. Marxist theories of the invasion of Iraq are unconvincing mostly because there is no clear evidence that the Iraq War was precipitated by an economic crisis of any kind, or that such a crisis was a reason the Bush administration started the war. By failing to examine the administration's apparent intentions in invading Iraq, Marxist explanations of the Iraq War have been unduly functionalist in reasoning, all but erasing the agency of the key players in the Bush administration. I conclude chapter 11 with several public policy recommendations that might help shift the United States away from a permanent war economy and prevent future war efforts. I also suggest recommendations for future research that can be carried out by sociologists and other social scientists toward the same ends.

Significance of the Research

This dissertation makes an important contribution to the sociology of war, and in particular, the sociology of American militarism and imperialism. It also contributes to the subdiscipline of political sociology, as it weighs in on paradigmatic debates about the relative strengths of Weberian (state-centric), pluralist, Marxist, and elite theories of politics. This project also represents a work of historical sociology, which is the domain of sociology concerned with large scale, substantially important events that unfold over time (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003:4). And as a work engaged with issues that are of great public interest, this dissertation is a work of critical, public sociology, as defined by Michael Burawoy (2005:16, 24) in his classic statement.

Indeed, the questions addressed in this dissertation have profound moral and practical implications, both for Americans and for the global public. The United States has waged war or intervened militarily in more than seventy nations between 1945 and 2000 (Blum 2004), and has fought wars or intervened in several others since then, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Philippines, Colombia, Liberia, Haiti, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Niger. These many wars and interventions have all entailed dramatic human consequences, in terms of lives and livelihoods lost, and in the cases of more protracted involvement, damage inflicted on entire societies and cultures from which it has or will take generations to recover. Moreover, the case of the US-led NATO attack on Libya in 2011 showed that the Obama administration was prone to making many of the same “mistakes” as the Bush administration in Iraq, as that intervention was similarly predicated on false pretexts, could have been avoided through diplomacy, and also left a civil war and the destruction of a viable society in its wake (Forte 2012; Prashad 2012).

In the case of the Iraq War, it may be the cause, either directly or indirectly, of *hundreds of thousands* of Iraqi deaths, according to Brown University's Costs of War project (Crawford and Lutz 2019). Using data from Iraq Body Count, the Costs of War project places the number of civilians killed through 2019 as a direct consequence of the war between 182,382 and 207,156. Millions of Iraqis have also been displaced, and, in spite of \$100 billion committed to Iraq's reconstruction, poverty and unemployment remain high, and many parts of the country suffer from a lack of clean drinking water, electricity, and housing. The 2003 invasion and occupation also caused an influx of terrorists into the country, including members of al-Qaeda, sparked a civil war between Sunni and Shia Iraqis, and led to the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which in 2014 took over large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria (Cockburn 2016).

The number of US military personnel killed in the Iraq War is estimated to be 4,572; American contractor workers, 3,588; and US Department of Defense employees, 15 (Crawford and Lutz 2019). Opposition fighters killed in the war number between 34,806 and 39,881, indicating that Iraqi civilians have borne the brunt of the fighting. Journalist and media workers killed as a result of the war number at 277; humanitarian and NGO workers, 63.

Such numbers cannot adequately capture the degree of suffering that this war has caused, both to Iraqis and Americans, and other nationals drawn into or affected by the conflict. In the United States, for instance, this suffering is reflected in epidemics of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and record suicide rates among veterans.

Considering economic consequences, in the United States, militarism has engendered the decline of industrial production, and after the Vietnam War, contributed to the ascent of neoliberalism and the socioeconomic inequality associated with it (Melman 1974, 2001, 2003; Varoufakis 2015). It has also represented a squandering of national wealth that could otherwise

be fruitfully invested in socially useful initiatives, like alleviating poverty, funding public education and providing free college tuition, providing universal health care, rebuilding a crumbling national infrastructure, or creating viable mass transportation systems and a badly needed “green” economy. The magnitude of opportunity costs is enormous. According to the industrial economist Seymour Melman, for instance, “Every year from 1952 to 1994, the new money made available to the Pentagon exceeded the combined net profits of all American corporations.” “In other words,” he adds, “the combined and working capital embedded in the Pentagon’s budget was great enough to finance the replacement of the largest part of what is human-made of the surface of the United States” (Melman 2001:102). In 2008, Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes (2008) estimated that the Iraq War would cost the United States \$3 trillion. More recently, the Cost of War project estimates that, between 2001 and September 2020, wars have cost the United States \$6.4 trillion (Crawford 2019).

American militarism and the Iraq War have also had profound negative environmental consequences. According to sociologist Kenneth Gould (2007:33), “militarization is the single most ecologically destructive human endeavor.” It appears that the US military in particular is the single largest organizational consumer of petroleum and other nonrenewable forms of energy in the United States and the entire world, and is thus “the largest single source of pollution in this country and the world” (Kramer 2021:174-175). Expanding on his earlier work on the crimes of the American empire, Ronald Kramer argues that US wars in the Middle East are environmental crimes. “Using military force to access and control oil helped fuel the Great Acceleration,” Kramer says, referring to the dramatic increase in economic growth and environmental destruction after 1950. Kramer adds that

It resulted in greater economic growth, consumer consumption, and environmental destruction. And it helped to produce climate catastrophe by

locking in the relentless search for and extraction of fossil fuels, ensuring that cheap but dirty forms of energy would be marketed and burned, resulting in the release of greenhouse gases and the heating of the planet. (Kramer 2021:173)

Finally, American military imperialism has arguably engendered profound moral and intellectual corruption—some of which is documented in this dissertation. According to some writers, it may even entail the decline of American democracy itself (Johnson 2006). Indeed, one can draw a line straight through the Bush administration’s lies about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, to the Republican Party’s climate change denialism, to Donald Trump’s systematic lying and eventual effort to overturn American democracy on January 6, 2021, predicated on the big lie that he had actually won the 2020 elections, and that his victory was stolen from him by the Democratic Party.

Whatever the broader social implications of the invasion of Iraq and American militarism may be, if one only takes the view that committing war crimes with vast and terrible human consequences should be avoided, then understanding the sociological causes of war in the United States may be necessary for preventing such paroxysms of violence in the future. This is especially true if the causes of the invasion of Iraq were systemic and structural, enduring features of our society, the same as at other times when the United States used military force. Indeed, many analysts (e.g. Mann 2003; Dorrien 2004) have insisted or implied that the Iraq War was unique in that the Bush administration’s unilateral assault on Iraq was rooted in a militaristic foreign policy ideology that advocated offensive military aggression and American global domination, whereas American defense policy has traditionally been more multilateral, defensive, and benign. I argue, on the contrary, that the invasion of Iraq sprang from the same impulses of powerful individuals and institutional configurations that have led the United States to war throughout the entire post-World War II period.

Preventing illegal or otherwise unnecessary wars in the future, then, requires at the very least a correct understanding of the patterns of social behavior and institutions that cause them. That is, it requires having the right theoretical explanation at hand to inform public policy and activism.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Research Design

Because understanding patterns of behavior and institutional effects implies a study of multiple cases, one significant weakness of this inquiry is the singular focus on the case of the Iraq War. This study must be supplemented by studies of American involvement in other conflicts to prove the validity of the theory across all or most cases. The aim of this study is only to demonstrate the relative superiority of the elite model of war mobilization relative to the alternatives offered by sociologists. To the extent that this is achieved, this study will at least strongly suggest needed public policy changes and avenues for future research and teaching.

(One more point worth noting on the single case study limitation is that *no* sociologist has advanced detailed studies of more than one war, either as separate or single works of scholarship, which again reflects the state of the discipline.)

The strengths of this dissertation are, however, significant. The elite model of war mobilization is a superior analytic framework to the state-centric and Marxist theories. State-centric theorists rightly call attention to agency in historical studies and are understandably critical of the functionalism of structural Marxist theories. But they are mistaken in rejecting structural explanations entirely. This study examines structural factors—the MIC, the global political economy, the class structure of American society, the media and academia, the

American political system, and elements of American culture (foreign and defense policy ideology)—as well as individual-level factors—such as the social biographies of key Bush administration war makers—and offers a way of explaining the interaction between structure and agency in this context.

This study also employs a more rigorous methodology relative to the studies to which it is compared. The work of sociologists writing about the Iraq War and American empire too often exhibits the characteristics of slow journalism rather than rigorous scholarship or historical social science, at least as this was understood by Weber (see Kalberg 2012; Weber 1949). This is to say that sociologists too often are not explicit, clear, and precise in defining the explanatory factors of their theories, and do not employ rigorous methods of analysis so that readers can easily assess when evidence does or doesn't conform to clearly stated and unambiguous theoretical expectations.

A Note on the Author's Background and Assumptions

It is commonplace in qualitative sociology for researchers to provide a statement about how their social biographies and political orientations may affect their research. Similar conventions are observed in historical scholarship. This allows readers to assess how biases may have influenced the outcome of the research.

For my part, I should say that I became a sociologist because of its receptivity to critical modes of social inquiry. As Michael Burawoy (2005:24) explains, critical sociology is conducted from the standpoint of those within civil society, rather than from the standpoint of the state (as in political science) or business (as in economics). In other words, sociologists have been less

concerned with technical problems of interest to people with power, and more interested in questions that are significant for those who must live with the consequences of the decisions of powerful people. Sociology, then, is a discipline that should, in principle, be hospitable to social scientists whose research questions are, like mine, inspired by a commitment to antiwar activism. Antiwar activism is almost exclusively the domain of a small segment of the general public, with a few supporters in Congress, the media, and progressive think tanks. And, incidentally, unlike feminism, and more recently antiracism, the antiwar movement has relatively little academic legitimacy as a movement that can provide a set of empirically supported background assumptions and desirable objectives to motivate research.

Nevertheless, there have been researchers from many academic disciplines who have advanced arguments that, in my view, seriously challenge the ideologies that motivate American militarism. (Some of these are reviewed in chapter 2.) I am an antiwar activist because I find these arguments persuasive and their implications to be of the utmost importance. But as a social scientist, I remain committed to objectivity as a guiding value. In practice, this means that while the research question of this dissertation was inspired by comparing what sociologists have said about the causes of American militarism to what scholars in the antiwar tradition have said about them, its answer is the result of a rigorous effort toward dispassionate consideration of the available evidence. If evidence adduced in this dissertation does not support the conclusions I have reached, perhaps because of an erroneous interpretation or misunderstanding of the facts, or a jump from a theoretical proposition to an unobservable claim about historical reality, then a competent scholar should be able to see when this is the case. But I have tried to keep such errors and omissions to a minimum, and have tried to let the evidence fall into place as it would. In the end, I believe it supports the contentions of the antiwar scholarly tradition.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review covers three categories of social science and historical research about the causes of American-initiated wars. The first category is the dominant framework adopted by sociologists of war, which I refer to as a state-centric theory. The second category is Marxist theories. I outline the claims of these theories at the most general level of analysis before turning to more specific applications of these theories to the American national context. A third category of literature is one that I call the American antiwar scholarly tradition. This literature encompasses the work of C. W. Mills, and other writers who have developed elite theories of militarism. Also encompassed by this tradition is the “Open Door” theory of American imperialism, and the military-industrial complex (MIC) thesis.

These many theories are assessed according to how well they identify viable necessary or facilitating causes of American participation in wars in the post-World War II period. I argue that, of these three bodies of literature, the scholarly antiwar tradition offers the best explanations for the causes of US wars in the post-World War II period. In particular, the elite theory of American politics, the MIC thesis, conceptualizations of American imperial ideology, and theories about their institutional sources in the media and academia are most likely to provide plausible necessary or facilitating conditions for war. Open Door theories, I argue, suggest facilitating, but not necessary conditions for war. As for state-centric and Marxist theories, I argue that they are not likely to offer viable explanations. With regard to state-centric theories, this is mostly due to a failure to consider the state management component of the MIC and its implications; the MIC, if considered at all, is thought of as a kind of corporate lobby, which is a

limited and incorrect conceptualization. This conceptual error entails an incomplete analysis of the political economy of American militarism and imperialism in the post-World War II period. Marxist theories are hindered by a lack of supporting evidence and functionalist reasoning that does not adequately consider the agency of key historical actors.

Sociological explanations of the Iraq War itself are mostly left out of this review unless the principal expression of a general theory of American militarism or empire was provided with an analysis of that war. Otherwise, a critical review of sociological accounts of the Iraq War is left for the concluding chapter. There is also a vast, multidisciplinary literature on the history of the Iraq War that is left out, for it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, which is concerned principally with theorizations of American war making.

State-Centric Theories of War

State-centric theories of war are by far the most popular theories of war among sociologists. As the name I have given to this kind of theory indicates, states—government institutions—are considered the most important causal factor explaining war. States, rather than competing national economies or other social arrangements, are in some way most responsible for wars. According to Wimmer (2014:186), the elaboration of the relationship between state development and war is sociology's most widely recognized contribution to the study of war.

One of the most important theorizations of this relationship in historical sociology has been offered by Charles Tilley. According to Tilley's (1990) classic formulation, wars helped create modern states, and states went to war as they expanded. In his analysis of early modern European history, war has been a tool whereby states expand their dominion—by disarming

enemies on the peripheries of state territories, for instance, and imposing legal and tax regimes—which in turn enhances a state’s ability to wage war and expand further.

Another sociologist working within the state-centric tradition is Siniša Malešević (2010), who has sought to explain why wars have been so prevalent and deadly in modernity, while at the same time there is an almost universal taboo against killing outside of the institution of war. Malešević argues that the prevalence of war in modernity is principally the result of two interrelated processes: the “cumulative bureaucratization of violence,” and the “centrifugal ideologization of coercion.” The cumulative bureaucratization of violence is essentially Weber’s classical formulation of the state as the institution maintaining the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence. Centrifugal ideologization of coercion refers to “a significantly wider proliferation of ideological discourses that radiate from the centre of a particular social organization (e.g. the state, social movement, religious institution, the military, etc.) but also have strong popular resonances” (Malešević 2010:131). Ideology is necessary in order to dehumanize enemies, which justifies killing them, and provides the collective motivation and moral justification for waging wars on behalf of the state, military, or other centralized organization. Among national populations it promotes solidarity.

According to Malešević, sociologists have tended to underestimate the importance of ideology in promoting modern warfare, and his rich theoretical elaboration of ideology as a form of “thought action” is his major contribution. However, an explanation of war that only focuses on states (or organizational centralization) and ideology is not useful for more than a cursory analytic framework to study specific national historical contexts.

Another leading historical sociologist, Michael Mann (1988), also argues that states, and more particularly, geopolitical conflict between them, are the principle causes of war. Mann’s

major contribution to the study of interstate conflict is a four-part “sources of social power” model, in which states vary in strength and dominance according to their ideological, economic, military, and political power (Mann 2013b). Dominant states throughout history have been strong in each of these dimensions of power. But more interesting for the purposes of this study have been Mann’s claims about the relationship between capitalism and war, and how his assumptions about this relationship have influenced his analysis of American history and institutions.

In the modern period, contrary to Marxist and military-industrial complex theories of war, which he casually dismisses, Mann argues that states, rather than capitalist economies, are the principal causes of war. Wars existed before capitalist states, Mann reasons, and the communist states also went to war; *a fortiori*, capitalism has not been the main cause of militarism and war. Writing near the end of the Cold War, Mann concluded that “nation states are the perpetrators of our era’s extraordinary militarism” (Mann 1988:141), and that capitalism is only “contingently” related to militarism.

Capitalism’s effect on militarism is to make it more lethal, according to Mann, and for capitalist globalization to spread the threat of militarism around the world (Mann 1988:132-133). However, militarism is not necessary for capitalism to function, and in fact is harmful for capitalist development. During the Cold War, militarism was driven by elite ideology (anti-communism), rather than economic necessity. Cold War elites didn’t understand that “class politics and geopolitics are separable,” (Mann 1988:163-164) and the Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union over developing countries was mostly “geopolitical or Western opposition to local reform,” (Mann 1988:162) though he never says what that reform was usually intended to achieve—namely autonomous economic development. Mann also doesn’t consider that

geopolitical conflict with the Soviet Union was rooted in American state planners' fear that communism would undermine the global capitalist order they established after World War.¹ So, it is not clear from these reflections why capitalism was only “contingently” related to militarism during the Cold War.

In his later works about the Iraq War and American imperialism, Mann (2003, 2013a) is also dismissive of explanations of American foreign interventions that consider the influence of capitalism, attributing such arguments to the political “left” (Mann 2003:12). In a 2013 contribution about the relationship between American economic imperialism and military imperialism, Mann finally recognizes the existence of a military-industrial complex, but refers to it as an industrial defense lobby, and dismisses it as a “more conspiratorial” explanation (Mann 2013:240-241). As will be seen below in reviewing the work of Seymour Melman, this is an incorrect conceptualization of the military-industrial complex, which also has an important state managerial component—it is not merely or even primarily a corporate lobby. Like his explanation of the Cold War, Mann explains the Iraq War and the Bush administration's imperialism principally in terms of ideology. I return to his writings about the Iraq War in the concluding chapter 11.

Marxist Theories of Militarism and Imperialism

Marxist sociological explanations of militarism and imperialism are derived from Marx's and Lenin's theories of capitalist development.

¹ See chapter 3, pp. 44-45.

In Lenin's (1917) classic formulation of imperialism, the concentration of capital that Marx explained as a consequence of capitalist development led to a new phase of monopoly capitalism, which entailed a new wave of imperialist expansion of the European states and the United States. The advanced capitalist states needed export markets for capital and sources of raw materials, as investing capital domestically would raise the standard of living for workers, and draw down profits (Lenin 1917:63). The capitalist monopolies then divided the world among themselves with the support of states and state alliances:

The epoch of modern capitalism shows us that certain relations are established between capitalist alliances, *based* on the economic division of the world; while parallel with this fact and in connection with it, certain relations are established between political alliances, between states, on the basis of the territorial division of the world, of the struggle for colonies, of the 'struggle for economic territory'. (Lenin 1917:75)

Then, as the state-backed capitalist monopolies grew, "the more the need for raw materials is felt, the more bitter competition becomes, and the more feverishly the hunt for raw materials proceeds throughout the whole world, the more desperate becomes the struggle for the acquisition of colonies" (Lenin 1917:82), leading to geopolitical conflict and war between states, as seen during World War I.

Lenin criticized liberal and Marxist "reformers" opposed to imperialism. What these reformers all had in common was the view that capitalism did not necessarily need to be violent: free trade between nations would entail peaceful development. For Lenin, this was a "reactionary ideal," as it supported capitalism. It was also naïve because it assumed that capitalist development could revert back to its earlier, mid-nineteenth century phase of more open, free competition between capitalists. The monopoly phase of capitalism, Lenin argued, was the logical culmination of capitalist development. Imperialism could only be stalled by transforming society into socialist societies. Another important insight of Lenin on this topic was his

observation that “Such simplicity of mind on the part of the bourgeois economists is not surprising. Besides, *it is in their interest* to pretend to be so naïve and to talk ‘seriously’ about peace under imperialism” (Lenin 1917:112). Lenin here pointed to an important phenomenon discussed by later writers, namely the intellectual’s ideological function and position in the mode of production.

John Bellamy Foster (2006) and William Robinson (2014) offer more contemporary Marxist analyses of American warfare and imperialism. Foster builds on Lenin’s theory of imperialism and developments of Lenin’s ideas by the Marxist “monopoly capitalism” theory developed by Paul Sweezy and Paul Baran. Foster’s main work on American war and imperialism is *Naked Imperialism: The Pursuit of Global Dominance*, which is a collection of articles written in response to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Foster’s argument is that imperialism has been a longstanding feature of American society, rather than a policy that began with the Bush administration, as argued by Michael Mann, for example. Imperialism, for Foster, as for Lenin, involves a global drive for control of natural resources that are necessary for capitalist development, and as such, it is not explicable merely in terms of state policy, but also involves “the mechanisms of trade, finance, and investment” (Foster 2006:101). Foster asserts that various US military campaigns and foreign policy endeavors were efforts to secure natural resources or exert control over regions outside of U.S. control, such as the former Yugoslavia.

Of the invasion of Iraq Foster says “Viewed from the standpoint of the historical evolution of imperialism, it is clear that the real motive behind Washington’s current drive to start a war with Iraq is not any genuine military threat from that country, but rather the goal of demonstrating that the U.S. is now prepared to use its power at will” (Foster 2006:85). More specifically, Foster argues that Iraq was of interest to the Bush administration and the American

corporate community due to its vast oil reserves, and because military bases there would help surround Iran on all its borders with U.S. military bases. Moreover, the invasion

would make it easier for the United States to protect planned oil pipelines extending from the Caspian Sea in Central Asia through Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Arabian Sea. It would give Washington a much more solid military base in the Middle East, where it already has tens of thousands of troops located in ten countries. It would increase U.S. leverage in relation to Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern states. It would strengthen the global superpower's efforts to force terms favorable to Israeli expansion, and the dispossession of the Palestinians, on the entire Middle East. It would make the rising economic power of China, along with Europe and Japan, increasingly dependent on a U.S. dominated oil regime in the Middle East for their most vital energy needs.

In short, "Control of oil through military force would thus translate into greater economic, political, and military power, on a global scale" (Foster 2006:93).

While control of oil and consolidation of military power were in fact that motivations of the Bush administration for invading Iraq, Foster provides little in the way of documentary evidence to support this conclusion. Instead of focusing on key planning documents for instance, Foster seems to infer motives from his assumptions about the relationship between the capital class and the state, namely that capitalist control of the state necessitates military aggression to achieve geopolitical objectives that sustain capitalist growth. Overall, Foster's analyses of American imperialism suffer from a lack of historical detail and read more like journalistic accounts.

The sociologist William Robinson offers a much more detailed Marxist contribution to the sociological study of war and militarism. Robinson's "theory of global capitalism" departs from classical Leninist-Marxist theories of imperialism in arguing that capitalism in the neoliberal phase is no longer characterized by imperial rivalries between nations. According to Robinson, the reason for this is because transnational capitalist corporations now prevail as the predominant form of capitalist enterprise. These corporations cannot be meaningfully thought of

as belonging to one nation state because their owners, managers, and investors are dispersed across many countries. These capitalists constitute a “transnational capitalist class” that pursues its own interests in the global capitalist economy. There are now no longer distinct, nationally specific capitalist classes, but one predominant transnational capitalist class. Any imperial rivalries that now exist are between competing factions of the transnational capitalist class, not between nation states.

Robinson argues that as opportunities for new investment of surplus capital have been exhausted, the transnational capitalist class has turned to “militarized accumulation” in order to create new markets and investment opportunities to stave off the crises that are endemic to global capitalism. Military spending and war achieve these ends in two ways. One is that wars serve to open new markets for capital investment, in construction and oil exploration, for instance. The other is that state military spending itself creates new opportunities for capitalist investment, since in the United States, state-managed military production is carried out by private (and transnational) firms (Robinson 2014:151-152). The 2003 Iraq War perfectly illustrates this overarching function, according to Robinson, since the war “violently opened up the country to transnational capital and integrated it into new global circuits,” and “at a time when the global economy was showing serious signs of stagnation” (Robinson 2014:123).

While Robinson is careful to say that “militarized accumulation” and particular military interventions do not have singular causes and do not serve singular purposes (Robinson 2014:149), his argument does strongly suggest that both U.S. military spending (and wars) and increased global military spending are functions of the inescapable logic of capitalist development. This is implausible, for reasons I return to below. Robinson also overstates the agency and solidarity of transnational capitalists. “There is little disagreement among global

elites, regardless of their formal nationality,” Robinson says, “that U.S. power should be rigorously applied (e.g., to impose IMF programs, to bomb the former Yugoslavia, for ‘peacekeeping’ and ‘humanitarian’ interventions, and so on) in order to sustain and defend global capitalism” (Robinson 2014:122). Robinson may be correct that one purpose of these actions has been to sustain global capitalism, but he does not provide enough evidence to warrant this conclusion. In any case, there are several instances when other powerful nations have opposed US-led military interventions in the UN Security Council—UN Security Council Resolution 1970, pertaining to Libya, for instance. And regarding the invasion of Iraq, Robinson says that France and Germany opposed it only on tactical and strategic grounds, but, again, without providing evidence (Robinson 2013:123). It is also difficult to understand how loose strategic alliances against the United States (say between Russia, China, Syria, and Iran in the 2010s) are explicable within this framework, unless these are taken to be competing factions within the transnational capitalist class. But that such capitalist rivalries take such distinct national forms makes it difficult to see what Robinson’s theory explains that older Leninist-Marxist theories don’t.

In general, both Foster and Robinson’s explanations of war are implausible for at least two reasons. The first is that they do not pay close enough attention to the actual intentions of state planners and elites to the degree that these can be known. Elite agency is almost wholly absent in the Marxist accounts reviewed above, which make them appear as unwitting tools of the ineluctable logic of capitalist development. Foster, as discussed above, attributes all manner of economic benefit to the Iraq War, but without showing that these benefits ever actually entered into the calculations and plans of the Bush administration. Similarly for Robinson—only he goes further, subordinating the myriad interests of the entire global elite to the logic of

capitalism. In these accounts, moreover, elite false consciousness does not seem possible—that elites may pursue policies that do not, in fact, lead to greater economic growth.

That elites may be pursuing militarism contrary to their own interests (i.e. the pursuit of surplus value or profit, *ex hypothesi*) is related to the second major problem with these explanations. The classical Marxist theory that informs Foster and Robinson’s arguments assumes that capitalist expansion is propelled by the market competition of private capitalists. Military production in the United States, however, does not depend on competitive markets. Rather, private military-industrial production in the United States depends on direct government subsidy rather than market mechanisms for its growth (Melman 1974; 2001). Thus the growth dynamics of military production are different from those described by Marx. If the assumptions of Marx’s theory are increasingly less relevant as elites turn to “militarized accumulation,” then the theory is to that extent potentially incoherent. And because military production may be ultimately less profitable than civilian industrial production, a different explanation must be found for state-directed militarism in the United States and other capitalist economies.

The American Anti-War Scholarly Tradition

A loose network of scholars emerged during and after the Vietnam War who opposed US involvement in Vietnam and, more generally, what they argued was ongoing American imperialism. Historians, economists, sociologists, linguists, and other professional academics, they wrote sophisticated social and historical analyses of American foreign policy on which they based their principled opposition to American militarism and imperialism. Like Foster and Robinson, who may also be included in this tradition, they explained war in terms of the

domestic social, political, and economic structures of American society. Yet, their contributions have been mostly ignored by political scientists and mainstream sociologists. (See for example, Mann 1988, 2003; Wimmer and Min 2006; Kestnbaum 2009; Wimmer 2014; West and Matthewman 2016. None of these authors mentions any of the authors reviewed in this section.)

Several theoretical currents are exhibited in this scholarly tradition besides Marxism. One is referred to as the theory of “Open Door” imperialism, which is a political-economy thesis similar to Lenin’s, but one predicated on social psychology rather than economic theory in Williams’s classic formulation. Another is the military-industrial complex thesis, which is also a political economy theory, but one that differs from both Marxist and Open Door theories in important ways. Yet another theoretical current, one that has been synthesized with both military-industrial complex and Open Door theories, is the power elite theory. I will review scholarly treatments of American militarism and imperialism that illustrate each of these theories.

Open Door theories.

William Appleman Williams was a leading historian of American diplomacy. His theory of Open Door imperialism influenced a generation of historians and social scientists seeking to explain American foreign policy. The Open Door theory is a fundamentally sociological explanation of the history of American foreign policy, based as it is on a class analysis of American society. According to Williams, imperialism is the American “way of life.” By “way of life,” Williams means a worldview—or what other writers call an ideology—that motivates collective social action (Williams 1980:12). At the core of this ideology is the belief that

prosperity is not possible without economic expansion that creates wealth opportunities for the populace—thereby diffusing class conflict—and without necessitating a redistribution of wealth. However, the failure or unwillingness to recognize that social and economic inequality is actually endemic to capitalism, or, otherwise, to seek a durable solution for it in wealth redistribution, has led the elite to seek solutions to what are actually domestic social problems in foreign economic expansion.

By the end of the nineteenth century, according to Williams, the form of empire adopted by the United States was one premised on liberal free trade rather than colonial possessions. This caused the United States to oppose foreign economic nationalism and, later, communism, since American elites believed such political movements would harm American prosperity in closing off foreign markets that might otherwise be available. Williams saw the post-World War II growth of militarism in the United States as a natural consequence of American economic expansionism, but not one that was functionally necessary for capitalist development. Rather, in Williams's analysis, imperialism is motivated principally by cultural and psycho-social factors. It is a "way of life,"—an ideology—but one that Americans could, in theory, disavow in favor of social democracy.

Williams's theory of American empire is effectively a political social psychology of war in the United States. However, as Williams's method depends principally on analyses of what American elites have themselves said and believed, it does not move beyond ideological analysis, to an analysis of institutions and structures. If agency has been subordinated to historical, structural developments in Marxist theories, Williams does not offer a structural-institutional analysis that explains how elite decisions are formulated and constrained.

Dutch political scientists Bastian van Apeldoorn and Naná de Graaff (2016) have given the Open Door thesis a more contemporary social science expression, adding a structural political economy analysis that was missing from Williams's theory. Their version of the argument also differs from Williams's in that they postulate that it is objective economic pressures that lead to American foreign military interventions. Wars are intended to open foreign markets for American, and more specifically transnational, corporations, whose representatives tend to staff the foreign policy bureaucracy, as van Apeldoorn and Nana de Graaff show in rigorous network analyses of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations. Their theory is thus a combination of an Open Door and power elite theory. Their explanation of the Iraq War is considered in the conclusion.

About the Open Door theory more generally, one should ask whether desired access to or control of foreign markets is a necessary condition for US military interventions. A cursory review of history suggests that it is more likely a facilitating, but not necessary condition. Consider the 1991 Gulf War, which is usually held to be a war about access to Persian Gulf oil (e.g. Bacevich 2016). In fact, while the war is widely believed to be about preventing Hussein from securing control of Kuwaiti oil, non-military diplomatic options were open to the United States that could have resulted in Iraq pulling out of Kuwait, and the United States keeping existing oil contracts with Iraq (see chapter 5). It seems that there were other factors pushing the H. W. Bush administration to war, namely the need to demonstrate US military credibility and power in the new post-Cold War environment, institutional imperatives associated with the MIC, as explained below. Other US interventions, such as the one in Somalia in 1993, do not appear to be linked to Open Door imperatives at all.

Power elite theories.

The sociologist C. Wright Mills was a contemporary of William Appleman Williams. His “power elite” theory encompasses a structural analysis missing in Williams’s Open Door thesis. Mills (1956, 1958) explained the direction of post-World War II foreign policy in terms of the management of society by the power elite—the core of high-level state, corporate, and military officials and managers, whose political interests tend to converge due to shared social backgrounds and institutional functional interdependence between the government, economy, and military. What was most distinct about the immediate post-World War II period, Mills argued, was the ascendancy of the military elite, and the growth of a “permanent-war economy.” “American capitalism,” Mills explains, “is now in considerable part a military capitalism, and the most important relation of the big corporation to the state rests on the coincidence of interest between military and corporate needs, as defined by warlords and corporate rich” (Mills 1956:276).

According to Mills, the military elites were increasingly influential in politics and government, “accepted by other members of the political and economic elite, as well as by broad sectors of the public, as authorities on issues that go well beyond what has historically been considered the proper domain of the military” (Mills 1956:205). Thus military men were replacing career diplomats, serving as college administrators, and selected increasingly for corporate leadership because of institutional knowledge that helped secure government contracts in the militarized post-World War II economy. This tendency was dangerous, according to Mills, because the military elite espoused a military “definition of reality” that subordinated diplomacy to military solutions in international conflicts. Moreover, increased government research and

development spending on the military was leading to “the militarization of science” at the relative expense and neglect of basic research, constraining the autonomy of scientists and researchers in the universities (Mills 1956:216-17).

Unlike Marxists, Mills emphasized that there was a degree of autonomy between political, economic, and military sectors of society; all decisions of consequence were not merely the choices of business elites (Mills 1956:277). Yet, Mills was perhaps the first sociologist to call attention to the militarization of the American economy, an important subject taken up in later studies, to which I return. And, like Williams, Mills influenced a generation of social scientists (mostly sociologists) though they have largely ignored his analysis of militarism in the United States.

A leading historian of American foreign policy, Gabriel Kolko, combined elements of both Williams’s theory of imperialism, and Mills’s power elite theory. On the basis of his own analysis of the power elite, Kolko argues that Mills “slighted the economic bases of American politics and exaggerated the causal and independent importance of the military” (Kolko, 1969:16). And contrary to Mills, he argues that shared social backgrounds are less important than fixed bureaucratic objectives that do not allow for dysfunctional decisions. The bureaucratic structure of the state is ultimately one that serves elite interests, particularly that of big business. In an analysis of 234 high-ranking government officials working in the State, Defense or War, Treasury and Commerce Departments, between 1944 and 1960, Kolko observes that

foreign policy decision-makers are in reality a highly mobile sector of the American corporate structure, a group of men who frequently assume and define high level policy tasks in government, rather than routinely administer it, and then return to business. Their firms and connections are large enough to afford them the time to straighten out or formulate government policy while maintaining their vital ties with giant corporate law, banking, or industry. The conclusion is that a small number of men fill the large majority of key foreign policy posts. (Kolko, 1969:17)

The government draws on business so extensively because, as Kolko shows in detail, the US industrial economy depends on raw materials imports from formerly colonized, developing countries. Trade policy, the Marshall Plan, and Export-Import Bank loans were all designed, according to Kolko, to facilitate raw material imports to the United States. These policies and institutions, in turn, comprising a form of neocolonialism and imperialism, undermine the development of these countries and create the structural conditions that lead to widespread discontent and rebellion against the *comprador* elites supported by the United States, in turn spurring US military interventions against independent nationalist and left-wing political movements. US interventions in the 1950s and '60s in Cuba, Indonesia, Peru, Argentina, and Brazil were all related to US business interests that were threatened in this way, according to Kolko. In advancing a theory of the United States global role, Kolko argues that

In today's context, we should regard United States political and strategic intervention as a rational overhead charge for its present and future freedom to act and expand. One must also point out that however high that cost may appear today, in the history of United States diplomacy specific American economic interests in a country or region have often defined the national interest on the assumption that the nation can identify its welfare with the profits of some of its citizens—whether in oil, cotton, or bananas. The costs to the state as a whole are less consequential than the desires and profits of a specific class strata and their need to operate everywhere in a manner that, collectively, brings prosperity to the United States and its rulers (Kolko, 1969:84)

It is in these terms that Kolko explains the US intervention in Vietnam.

Kolko's later writings emphasize that the motivation of American foreign policy remains control of natural resources and the global economy (see Kolko 2002:109, where he cites a 1996 Pentagon defense report to this effect). Unlike Mills, then, Kolko sees militarism as the consequence of specific economic interests in the natural resources of developing countries, and unlike Williams, articulates a structural basis for elite power in the government bureaucracy.

To return to the military-industrial complex thesis, Seymour Melman (1974, 2001, *inter alia*), persuasively argues that the post-World War II economy of the United States must also be understood as a state-managed permanent war economy, echoing Mills. The central institution in the permanent war economy is the Pentagon (the Department of Defense), which Melman argues was transformed under Robert McNamara's leadership into a central administration office for a massive, centrally managed military economy. McNamara standardized a form of cost management that emphasized *increasing*, rather than decreasing, production costs for industrial military contractors. This system enables military contractors to consistently increase profits without economizing production since the federal government provides almost unlimited subsidies through the national defense budget. According to Melman, this system constitutes a form of state capitalism that operates in tandem with the private capitalist economy of the United States, but according to a different logic of capitalist development than described in classical and standard economics, for it does not depend on market mechanisms for growth, but public subsidy.

Melman recognizes that the military economy serves foreign policy aims similar to those described by Kolko (Melman 1974:284), but emphasizes the profit incentive for private military contractors who stand to benefit from a militarized foreign policy, and the power that accrues to the top military officials, particularly the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Melman, 2001:105) and the president, who, as commander in chief, is the top manager of the Pentagon system. Melman argues that these latter factors were the principal causes of US involvement in Vietnam, and that Kolko was mistaken in taking at face value claims made in the Pentagon Papers about raw materials in Indochina (Melman 1974:266-267). Thus, Melman emphasizes the independent causal influence of the military-industrial complex as a force in American foreign policy.

Any review of writers in the American antiwar scholarly tradition would be incomplete that did not include a discussion of Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's co-authored works. These two authors collaborated on several books and articles about American foreign policy and war. What is distinct about their analysis is a consistent principled or moral critique of American foreign policy and the ideology that underpins it. Chomsky has regularly asserted that US leaders have never been seriously concerned with promoting democracy or protecting human rights, in spite of what they say, as evidenced by consistent support for anti-democratic, authoritarian regimes in Europe and formerly colonized countries, efforts to overthrow democratically elected governments, and the repeated humanitarian crises entailed by US war efforts. Herman and Chomsky's earlier works documented US support for authoritarian governments in countries including the Philippines, Indonesia, South Vietnam, Guatemala, El Salvador, Brazil, and Chile, among others (Herman and Chomsky 1979). Like Kolko, they often explain this support, and corresponding lies and mystifications to justify it, in terms of American economic interests in these various countries and surrounding regions.

Chomsky and Herman's analyses focus largely on the intellectual culture and mass media in the United States. The mass media, policy-oriented intellectuals, and professional academics serve to disguise the real class interests that guide American foreign policy and take the United States to war (Chomsky 2008). Professional academics and journalists are ensconced in institutions that, because of their structural connections to the state and corporate economy, promote conformity to official state ideology—in particular, American exceptionalism. Between Herman and Chomsky, their most well-developed arguments regarding these tendencies were made about the media. Their “propaganda model” (Herman and Chomsky 2002) predicts that the corporate media will conform to elite perspectives of the world, and marginalize views that fall

outside of the range of elite opinion. Thus, Herman and Chomsky explain the media's tendency to limit criticism of American foreign policy to questions of strategic success and failure; the actual morality of foreign policy is virtually never questioned in the media, Herman and Chomsky show. The United States may occasionally fail to achieve allegedly benevolent intentions, as in Vietnam, but its policies are never held to be wrong, and that its foreign policy may be motivated by material interests rather than noble ideals is virtually never entertained by the media.

Herman and Chomsky's arguments are well-supported with rich documentary evidence about many cases and their scholarship shows a sensitivity to historical detail that is less common in academic sociological research about war. Yet, while they often seem to imply that their propaganda model does influence public opinion, they are careful to avoid drawing this conclusion, maintaining that the public at times may not be aligned with elite perspectives, even if the media do not offer alternatives. However, other scholars have shown that in important cases, public opinion does tend to correspond to the range of elite opinion on foreign policy (e.g. Western 2005). Moreover, the two authors never provided a model that adequately describes the institutional constraints and incentives in academic institutions that mute moral criticism of foreign policy and promote instead a tendency to reinforce elite ideology. Still, Herman and Chomsky enable us to better understand why Americans have been unable to confront the reality of American imperialism—the fundamental problem of American imperialism identified by William Appleman Williams.

To mention just one more writer belonging to the antiwar scholarly tradition, political scientist Carl Boggs has written several works about American militarism and empire. In a more recent contribution, *Origins of the Warfare State*, Boggs (2017) synthesizes many of the theories

outlined above, particularly regarding the military-industrial complex, the power elite, and the militarized culture in the United States, tracing the origins of these to World War II, and examining their implications. Boggs (2017:xiv) regrets that more scholars have not taken up these subjects, and sees his work as an update to the classic but dated contributions of Mills, Melman, Kolko, Chomsky and others. Boggs (2017:10) seeks to provide greater conceptual clarity and theoretical insight about the American “warfare state,” a “broad ensemble of structures, policies, and ideologies: permanent war economy, national security-state, global expansion of military bases, merger of state, corporate, and military power, an imperial presidency, the nuclear establishment, [and] super-power ambitions” (Boggs 2017:3). But while his syntheses of history are masterful, and his descriptions of American foreign policy, institutions, and culture are informative, Boggs’s analyses read more like journalism in that these many concepts are often used without precise definitions, and are not always clearly linked to US warfare in a clear cause-and-effect analysis. Rather, the character of his analysis is more anecdotal and polemical than social scientific, intended more to elucidate the moral hypocrisy of historical American policies and wars than to provide an analytic framework useful for social scientists.

Conclusion

With regard to the research question of this dissertation, what does this review show?

State-centric theories are inadequate on two counts. The major problem associated with them is a false state-economy distinction. States and economies are intimately linked in ways not recognized by state-centric theories. In the United States, the state is intimately linked to the

economy through personnel (the power elite) and through state-capitalist economic arrangements, particularly the military-industrial complex, which isn't recognized by state-centric theorists, or is wrongly conceptualized as a corporate lobby. State-centric theories are also too broad in scope to be analytically useful for studying specific national contexts and specific wars.

The Marxist theories reviewed are functionalist in reasoning, and do not adequately incorporate agency and decision-making processes that are causally relevant. And because Marxist theories are built on Marx's theory of capitalism, they do not explain the logic of state-managed economies such as the American military-industrial complex, which does not depend on competitive market mechanisms.

The non-Marxist American antiwar scholarly tradition presents at least four distinct theoretical possibilities. The first is a military-industrial complex thesis, whereby war and mobilization for it serve to enrich capitalists who profit from government subsidies, and concentrate decision-making power in the president's office. The Open Door theory, on the other hand, is an economic expansionist thesis, whereby war serves to secure markets and resources for American capitalists when these are threatened by populist or nationalist movements. Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model and a more general elite theory of American politics are both compatible with these two theories. In the last analysis, however, because there are war efforts in post-World War II American history in which maintaining access to foreign markets does not appear to be a relevant factor, the MIC seems more likely to be a necessary condition for war than pressure to open foreign markets. The latter factor may often be a facilitating condition, but not a necessary cause.

On balance, therefore, the MIC, power elite, and ideological management functions of the mass media and academia are more plausible necessary causes of American war making than those that have been identified by state-centric and Marxist sociologists. However, two problems exist. One is that the way university intellectuals sustain militarism needs a stronger, more detailed theorization than has been provided by Chomsky. Another is that these various components have not been well-integrated into a single, coherent explanatory framework useful for social scientific analysis. In the next chapter, therefore, I show how the MIC, the power elite, elite ideology, the mass media, and academia can be integrated into a single elite model of American war making.

CHAPTER 3

MILITARISM, IMPERIALISM, AND THE AMERICAN SOCIAL SYSTEM: A SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION OF WAR

In this chapter, I present an elite model of war mobilization. War mobilization refers to the processes whereby Americans are socially conditioned, called on, and motivated to wage wars in a social and political system that is dominated by a power elite. The power elite refers to the decision-making class constituted by the intersection of the social elite, corporate rich, and high-level employees within political policy-planning organizations like think tanks. I argue that this power elite, in virtue of the control they exert over major political, economic, and cultural institutions, are able to mobilize the public for wars that they wage for their own special interests, which are not consonant with the subjectively perceived or objective interests of general public, and are different from their official, public declarations about their intentions and purposes.

The model is intended to apply to the post-World War II period to the present. It is based on the fact that by the end of World War II, the United States had become a global empire. Empires are forms of global or semi-global governance in which other territories are controlled either directly or indirectly by a country (McCoy 2017:40; cf. Mann 2013:214-217). Because the term “empire” has long had a negative connotation in American political discourse, Americans do not commonly understand the United States as an empire or perceive that an American empire exists. The invisibility of the empire is also a consequence of the related fact that it is an informal empire that does not depend on direct territorial administration, as with the large European empires that collapsed after World War II.

The American empire exists to realize the power elite's interests in a global capitalist order that privileges American business and sustains a domestic military-industrial complex (MIC)—a permanent war economy and the global military apparatus it sustains. Throughout the post-World War II period, the military-industrial complex expanded to meet the foreign policy objectives of successive presidential administrations. Among these objectives, opening the world's nations and people to a US-led capitalist global economy has been one of the most important and enduring (see van Apeloorn and de Graaff 2016, chapter two, for a thorough review of the historical literature). As challenges to this world order proliferated throughout the twentieth century, and the permanent war economy expanded, American elites became increasingly fixated on projecting power, for the sake of power itself and for the profits that accrued to them as managers and owners of military industrial firms, or civilian businesses linked to them. Wars have been a principal means for projecting this power throughout the world and reinforcing elite control over political and economic life at home.

Of course, American war efforts are explained quite differently by the power elite themselves. US government officials and opinion leaders in the media explain wars in terms of the defense of “national interests” or “national security” rather than the base desires for economic domination or geopolitical power, which are held to be illegitimate causes both in international politics and by American citizens. This is especially important since American citizens are needed to support war efforts by offering their service as soldiers and in other capacities. Perceived threats to their power are therefore translated by the elite into material threats to Americans themselves, and broadcasted to the public as such. Sometimes, these threats are real, as in the cases of al-Qaeda's attacks on the World Trade Center. In these cases such translations are not necessary. However, the historical origins of such threats in American

imperial ventures are hidden from Americans so that their outrage is directed at the official enemies rather than at elites who may bear responsibility for making enemies in the first place.

In order to explain why and how the United States wages war, then, requires understanding how such transformations of reality occur in the minds of Americans. I argue that this is accomplished principally through the education system and mass media, which produce and disseminate a worldview that causes Americans to believe that the United States is a morally exceptional nation with a history of defending righteous causes, such as defeating the Nazis and Communism and fighting al-Qaeda. War and the military are thus associated with promoting world peace, freedom, and national security. The less exceptional and ideologically useful parts of American history are filtered out of the education system and media discourse (or otherwise justified as clumsy deviations from our righteous path), along with sociological analyses that challenge the notion that the American political system is an open, democratic one in which foreign policy is formulated according to a democratically achieved consensus.

A power elite model of war mobilization, then, explains American wars—wars and military interventions instigated by the United States, or those in which it participates—in terms of five interrelated structural features of American society. These are (1) state capitalist imperialism, (2) elite control of politics, (3) pro-war, imperial ideology, (4) elite control of the media, and (5) elite influence on academia. This model explains why the power elite wage wars, and how they are able to mobilize the rest of society for war through control of the key institutions of the economy, government, academia (and by extension, public education), and the media. It is through their control of these institutions that they are able to shape the dominant ideology that provides the justifications for war. The remainder of this chapter explains how each of these factors operate and lead to war.

State-Capitalist Imperialism

Scholars identify three phases of American imperialism (e.g., Nugent 2008). The first phase involved continental expansion across North America, the second one overseas expansion that led to US domination of the Western hemisphere, and the final phase, a global hegemony beginning at the end of World War II and lasting to the present day. This section focuses on this third phase of American imperialism and the configuration of institutions that sustain it. I refer to this configuration of institutions as *state capitalism*.

The United States emerged from World War II as the most powerful country in the world, politically, militarily, and economically. The historian Alfred McCoy summarizes the situation this way:

Militarily, Washington had a brief monopoly on nuclear weapons and a navy of unprecedented strength. Diplomatically, it was supported by allies from Europe to Japan, an informal empire in Latin America secured by the Rio mutual-defense treaty of 1947, and an official anticolonial foreign policy that eased relations with the world's many emerging nations. The foundation for this newfound power was the overwhelming strength of the American economy. During World War II, America's role as the "arsenal of democracy" meant massive industrial expansion, no damage to domestic infrastructure given that fighting only occurred elsewhere, and comparatively light casualties—four hundred thousand war dead versus seven million for Germany, ten million for China, and twenty-four million for Russia. While rival industrial nations struggled to recover from the ravages of history's greatest war, America "bestrode the postwar world like a colossus." With the only intact industrial complex on the planet, the US economy accounted for 35% of gross world output and half of its manufacturing capacity. (McCoy 2017:51)

This situation presented policy makers in the United States with a special opportunity to create a new US-led world order. In their position of uncontested global power, they created a set of international institutions that would form the basis of a global political, economic, and legal order intended to prevent the outbreak of another world war and another depression by

stabilizing the global capitalist economy. These institutions were the World Bank, established in 1944; the United Nations, International Court of Justice, and International Monetary Fund (IMF), established in 1945; and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, established in 1947, which later became the World Trade Organization.

The World Bank and IMF were central to the United States' plan for the global economy, developed at the 1944 Bretton Woods conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. Originally called the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank was intended to facilitate the reconstruction of the world economy, though in Europe this was ultimately achieved through grants disbursed as part of the 1947 Marshall Plan. At Bretton Woods, the plan for the global economy—developed by the United States with little input from other countries—was to inject US capital into Western Europe—especially Germany—and later, China, to create along with the United States three industrial-financial anchors for the global economy. (When the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949, US state planners turned to Japan as the country that would serve as the industrial-financial center of Asia.) The Bretton Woods plan also established the dollar as the global reserve currency, and fixed exchange rates between all participating countries. When a country experienced an economic downturn, rather than adjusting its exchange rate to protect its national economy, the IMF would come to the rescue with loans to help the country recover economic strength, preventing the downturn from spreading to the rest of the global economy. This system, it was believed, would prevent both economic depression, but also war, since the system was predicated on open trade and cooperation rather than economic competition between nations.

In the years immediately after the end of World War II, state planners also established permanent military and intelligence institutions within and outside the United States to protect

this global system. Outside of the United States, this included military alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, 1949), Middle East Treaty Organization (1955), the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO, 1954), and bilateral alliances with Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Japan (McCoy 2017:35-36). The United States also expanded its network of global military bases to approximately 300 by 1954, which increased to about 800 by 1988, before declining to the current number of approximately 700 (McCoy 2017:53). Within the United States, The National Security Act of 1947 established the Department of Defense, National Security Council, Central Intelligence Agency, and the Air Force. The National Security Act worked in tandem with Truman's containment doctrine, the purpose of which was to "contain" global communism. Communism was a natural enemy of American state planners, given that they associated American security with the stability and growth of global capitalism. The Soviet Union and the form of political-economic organization it encouraged stood in the way of the plan for the global economy developed at Bretton Woods. Thus after a brief strategic alliance with the Soviet Union during World War II, the United States turned against it again at the close of the war, so beginning the Cold War.

The new military-intelligence apparatus was used to prevent autonomous political-economic development, first in Europe, and then increasingly in developing countries, when it was deemed incompatible with the US-led capitalist world order. Covert military operations in industrialized countries like Italy (1948) and Greece (1946), and developing countries such as Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954), were intended to eliminate both communist parties and other various nationalist political parties and movements that intended to control their own economic development outside of the US global framework. Because this framework relegated many developing countries to the status of neocolonial dependencies, hindering their industrial

development, it bred nationalist resistance to what was perceived as neocolonial imperialism in many of these countries (Kolko 1969). When necessary, US planners falsely characterized such nationalist movements as communist to justify military aggression against them or covert support of military coups. And US opposition to political movements that did not support its interests often meant that the United States was allied with violent authoritarian regimes that would do Washington's bidding, democracy and human rights be damned. Such regimes have typically been recipients of extensive US military aid and training.

Another important institutional development that began during World War II, and which was consolidated under the Kennedy administration, was the development of what is usually referred to as the military-industrial complex. In this dissertation, the military-industrial complex refers to the Pentagon-managed private military industry of the United States and global military apparatus. As described and meticulously documented by Seymour Melman (1974, 2001, *inter alia*), this “permanent war economy” is a state-managed capitalist economy whereby the Pentagon distributes production contracts to thousands of private military-industrial or “defense” firms. While the ownership of these corporations is private, the management of military production within them is centralized in the Pentagon and White House. The sheer size of this industrial system means that it constitutes one of the largest sectors of the entire American economy, and its maintenance has become central to its health. And as a state managed and funded economy, it depends not on market mechanisms for its growth, but government subsidies. Hence the increasingly large national military budgets of the United States for the last 70 years.

Figure 1. United States Military Spending, 1948-2020



The chart shows approximate Department of Defense base budgets between 1948 and 2020, in constant 2020 dollars, adjusted for inflation. After 2001, the Pentagon maintained a base budget in addition to an Overseas Contingency Operations budget. The chart reflects the sum of these expenditures after 2001. Spending on nuclear and other defense-related activities is not included. Sources: McCartney (2015) and Department of Defense Green Book (U.S. Department of Defense 2019).

The military-industrial complex, Melman argued, constitutes a *permanent* war economy for two reasons. One is that immense profits accrue to the major defense firms, which in turn are able to put pressure on policy makers to sustain a large military budget and other policies that protect the defense industry. The other reason is that, as managers of a massive centrally planned economy and military, the President, Pentagon managers, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff accrue tremendous power over economic and political life, both within the United States and abroad. Consequently, as the twentieth century progressed, military force was utilized less often to defend specific economic interests or promote the health of the global economy, but increasingly to demonstrate the “credibility” of US power as military and political defeats by Third World adversaries accumulated. Successive wars in defense of the “national interest” or “national

security” served to continue justifying large military budgets to the American public. Though control of the global economy remained a top priority of state and military planners in Washington, power lust and vested interests in the military-industrial complex became increasingly important factors explaining their motivation to use military force. Thus, when the Cold War ended, and communism largely disappeared as a political force, new justifications for excessively large military budgets and military activism were devised, and a widely anticipated post-Cold War “peace dividend” never materialized. The US focus remained on developing countries, though now the pretexts for military intervention variously included fighting drug traffickers, “rogue states,” and terrorists; human rights and democracy promotion; and genocide prevention. Yet, comfortable alliances with authoritarian regimes remained a feature of American foreign policy.

Another consequence of the expansion of the military-industrial complex is that military spending during the Vietnam War finally ended the creditor status of the United States, which has since become a chronic debtor nation, and which led to the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in 1971, particularly the abandonment of fixed exchange rates and the gold standard (Varoufakis 2015:92-93). Military spending, mostly associated with the Vietnam War, combined with social spending under Johnson’s Great Society programs, caused inflation to increase throughout the global economy in the 1970s. This contributed to a processes of national deindustrialization in non-defense sectors. The United States began importing consumer goods that it once produced from countries like Japan and China, acquiring large trade deficits. However, the United States has been able to sustain massive spending and trade deficits because of the dollar’s continued role as the global reserve currency (Mann 2013; Hudson 2003:30; Varoufakis 2015:101-102). Surplus nations recycle their accumulated surplus dollars back into

the United States' financial system, financing US deficit spending. They effectively have no other choice, since they depend on US purchases of their consumer goods, and no other national currency is supported by an economy large enough to replace the dollar as reserve currency. Hence, the situation of the neoliberal period that followed the collapse of the Bretton Woods system is that trade surplus nations finance the American empire and military-industrial complex, a reversal of roles of the immediate post-World War II period when the United States used its surplus status to rebuild the global economy and create outlets for US surplus capital.

In spite of—indeed, because of—this transformation of the US and global economy, the United States has maintained a dominant position in the global economy throughout the post-World War II period. “As economic competitors grew rapidly in the prosperous years after World War II,” writes McCoy, “the US share of the world’s gross product slipped from an estimated 50 percent in 1950 to only 25 percent by 1999. Even so, at the close of the Cold War, American multilateral corporations were still the engines of global growth” (McCoy 2017:55). The strength of the American economy and the dollar’s role as the global reserve currency also enable the United States to impose economic sanctions on official enemy states as a form of economic coercion (Williamson 2013:82). The “legal” imposition of sanctions can be achieved through the United Nations Security Council, where the United States is one of the five permanent member states with veto power, another important institutional arrangement established after World War II. The United States also maintains extensive control over the World Bank as a result of its large shareholder status. This has enabled it to implement development policies in developing countries, such as the infamous structural adjustment programs of the 1980s, that have mired developing countries in debt and retarded their economic growth, but have benefited the American economy (Prashad 2007).

It is because the US military-industrial complex creates such a strong impetus for military interventions and a generally militarized foreign policy, and because state-managed trade relationships enable the deficit spending necessary to sustain it, that I refer to the post-World War II form of imperialism exercised by the United States as state capitalist imperialism. Moreover, even before the military-industrial complex was consolidated under the Kennedy administration, the global political-economic order established by the United States depended on multilateral institutions and alliances that were and still are essentially state institutions. However, at the same time, the maintenance of capitalist institutions, including the military-industrial complex, has not ceased to be a functional purpose of these arrangements.

Power Elite Control of Public Policy

A definite class structure characterizes American society. At the top of this class structure are the power elite, a decision-making class constituted by the intersection of social elites, the corporate rich, and high-ranking employees within political policy-planning groups (Domhoff 2014:xii). This class formation largely dominates the political decision-making process of the United States. Social class is differentiated from the economic class category of the corporate rich given that not all members of the latter group share the same social and political-economic goals—that is, a minority of members of the corporate rich can and do work in the interests of nonelites. But the power elite theory recognizes that there is a strong tendency for the corporate rich to prefer a well-defined set of policies from which they benefit at the expense of the rest of the society. As documented by G. William Domhoff, this includes opposition to the following policies: government jobs for the unemployed, making government social provisions such as

health care, unemployment, and social security more generous, and workplace rights and protections that “make it more difficult for the corporate rich to control the workplace” (Domhoff 2014:xiv). The corporate rich fund and serve on the governing boards of policy-planning groups—tax free foundations, think tanks, and policy-discussion groups—that promote these policies in Washington.

In my view, Domhoff’s theory was incomplete to the extent that it failed to consider the power elite’s foreign policy preferences, and related policy preferences such as military spending. To Domhoff’s anti-labor, pro-capital elite agenda, we can also add opposition to the following policies: decreasing the military budget, transitioning to a peacetime economy, decreasing the size of the military, decreasing the number of global military bases and nuclear weapons, and a less interventionist foreign policy. If these policy preferences are largely the result of pressure from the military-industrial complex, as explained above, what is the relationship between the military-industrial complex and the power elite?

Domhoff (1996) argued that there was not a “separate” military-industrial complex—that is, separate from the corporate community. He showed that the largest military-industrial firms were among the largest corporations in the United States, and that their boards of directors overlapped with those of the largest non-military, civilian corporations. Thus military-industrial firms are at the core of the American economy and power elite networks. Though Domhoff argues that this shows that a “separate” military-industrial complex does not exist (that is, separate from the corporate community), this finding is actually consistent with Seymour Melman’s permanent war economy thesis. For, according to Melman, what differentiates the state-managed military-industrial firm from the civilian corporation is not personnel or

ownership, but (a) the locus of managerial control, and (b) related cost-maximizing accounting practices that are specific to Department of Defense subcontractors (Melman 1974:34-35).¹

The fact that the military-industrial complex is so central to the US economy and elite networks explains why the corporate rich consistently support a set of national policies that contribute to its growth (large military budgets, an enormous weapons arsenal, a network of roughly 700 global military bases, and perpetual war). The elite have been resoundingly successful in achieving these policy objectives, as the post-World War II tendency has been for the federal defense budget to increase, weapons arsenals to expand, the number of global military bases to increase, new domains of military dominance to emerge, including space and cyber space, and the frequency and length of wars to increase. As with public policy in general, the corporate rich have been able to achieve these policies through their control of the executive branch of the federal government, where the most important foreign policy decisions are made, and through control of policy-planning organizations.

A long line of scholarship has shown that top-level foreign policy decision-making positions in the executive branch are staffed overwhelmingly by the corporate elite—corporation owners, founders, inside and outside directors, high-level managers, and corporate lawyers (Mills 1956; Kolko 1969; van Apeldoorn and de Graaf 2016). The most recent scholarship shows that this is no less true of the post-Cold War period than it was in the immediate post-World War

¹ With regard to managerial control, investment and production decisions are all ultimately made in the White House with the approval of Congress. And regarding cost-maximizing, as Melman documented, it is not market mechanisms that determine the profitability of military-industrial firms, but government subsidies. Beginning in 1961 under the management of Robert McNamara, the Department of Defense began requiring defense contractors to use an accounting practice known as “cost-plus” or “historical costing” to determine input costs. This leads to rapid *increases* in expenses for defense firms. So, rather than economizing production as private sector firms seek to do, defense firms are required by the Pentagon to increase production costs and to seek larger government subsidies. This has a twofold effect. One is that it increases the profits of military-industrial firms. The other, as mentioned above, is that it increases the power of the executive branch. Naturally, increasingly large military budgets are necessary to sustain this institutional arrangement.

II period. Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff conducted an analysis of “87 key cabinet-ranking and senior advisers involved in the making of U.S. grand strategy, 30 (with some overlaps between Clinton and Obama) from each of the three post-Cold War administrations . . . in the starting year of each administration (1993, 2001, and 2009)” (Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:64). These officials included “the president and the vice president; the secretaries and deputy secretaries of state, defense, and the treasury; the attorney general; the secretary of commerce; the U.S. trade representative; the chief of staff of the White House and his two deputies; the (three) senior advisers to the president; the national security adviser; the director of the CIA; the director of the National Economic Council; the ambassador to the UN; the director of the Office of Management and Budget; and the chair, as well as two members of the Council of Economic Advisors.” The sample also included “influential policymakers at crucial positions below cabinet-level rank within that particular administration,” such as Zalmay Khalilzad and Richard Perle of the Bush administration, and Richard Holbrooke under Obama (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:64-65).

What van Apeldoorn and de Graaff’s analysis shows is that the majority of these policymakers move from corporate leadership positions to their government positions, and that a smaller, but still large portion (about half) move back to corporate positions after their tenure in government. This means that the foreign policy bureaucracy of the government is effectively staffed by the corporate rich, seriously challenging theorists who maintain that the state and economy are separate and autonomous entities (e.g. Mann 1988, 2003, 2013). The 30 policymakers in the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations maintained 197, 157, and 126 corporate affiliations, respectively, including their positions before and after government tenure. (The numbers for the Obama administration are incomplete, since this analysis was conducted in

2016.) Most of these affiliations are with large, Fortune 500, transnational US corporations. The most numerous affiliations are with finance and law and consultancy firms, followed by a relatively even distribution of other industries: technology, defense, energy, media and marketing, transport, and consumer goods and services (Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:74).

According to Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff, these findings do not show sectoral capture of the state by a particular industry—all major sectors of American capital are connected to the executive branch—or suggest that this is the primary way in which specific industries influence the government. Rather, the implication is that policymakers tend to form their understanding of the world and their own perceived interests and values in the sociocultural milieu of the corporate world (Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:75). To the extent that the corporate community is integrated with the state-managed permanent war economy, this suggests, too, that corporate leaders internalize the values and associated ideologies that sustain the military-industrial complex, facilitating easy transition to executive branch foreign policy leadership positions. It also suggests that government officials whose early career socialization occurs within the foreign policy bureaucracy, as was true of many top Bush administration officials (see chapter 7), will also form similar values.²

As with domestic policy, among the most important institutional mechanisms for seeing through preferred policies are policy-planning organizations. Membership organizations, think tanks, interest groups, and lobbies, including “letterhead organizations,” are kinds of policy-

² This is an important point, theoretically and methodologically. Kramer and Michalowski (2006:24) write that “The organizational level of analysis links the internal structure of specific economic or political units with the external political-economic environment, on the one hand, and with the way in which the work-related thoughts and actions of the individuals who occupy positions in those units are conditioned by the requirements of the positions they hold and by the procedures of the organization, on the other. Differential association [theory], by focusing on the social relations that give meaning to individual experience, directs us to examine the symbolic reality derived from social interaction within bounded organizational niches.” The “symbolic reality” of the power elite is examined in section 3, below.

planning organizations that the corporate rich fund and manage for the purposes of influencing policy in Washington. Think tanks are especially important for this purpose. Their “[s]taff members conduct independent research, testify to Congress and other government agencies, and appear frequently as media commentators,” according to leading international relations scholar, Stephen Walt.

Most think tanks engage in extensive outreach efforts via their own websites, blogs, publications, seminars, legislative breakfasts, and other events, all intended to enhance their visibility inside Washington, facilitate fundraising, and increase their influence over policy. Think tanks can also play a critical role in many stages of a foreign policy professional’s career: they provide entry-level opportunities for young policy wonks seeking to make their way into government positions, and they provide sinecures for former government officials, including those seeking to return to public service at a later date. . . . [S]ome parts of it operate as a “shadow government” preparing people and policies for future administrations. (Walt 2018:99)

A relatively small subset of think tanks constitute a “core group” that have maintained connections with successive presidential administrations (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:78-88). The core group includes The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderberg Group, the RAND Corporation, the Aspen Institute and the Aspen Strategy Group, the Atlantic Council, the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Peterson Institute for International Economics, the Hoover Institution, the Carnegie Corporation and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Foreign Policy Association, the Committee for Economic Development, and the Bretton Woods Committee. Each of these planning bodies maintained at least 3 ties to one or more of 30 select executive branch positions in the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations, according to van Apeldoorn and de Graaff’s analysis. The CFR, Trilateral Commission, and Bilderberg groups maintained the most ties, with 35, 15, and 14 ties, respectively, to these same three administrations (Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:82).

While the think tanks and other policy-planning groups maintain extensive connections with decision makers in the White House, they are also extensively networked with the corporate rich through corporate funding and personnel on their boards of directors and trustees. The core group think tanks receive extensive funding from a diverse range of industries within the corporate sector. Most corporate funders are transnational corporations, and are evenly distributed among finance, energy, defense, media, entertainment, and technology industries (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:89). While corporate funding does not necessarily convey direct control of the intellectual content of the policy-planning organizations, it is unlikely that this funding does not have an influence on the kinds of policies promoted by these institutions (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:91). As for think tank-corporate director/trustee interlocks, among the nine most connected think tanks, more than half of their total directors/trustees also held board positions in a major corporation, accounting for connections to hundreds of different companies, according to van Apeldoorn and de Graaff. Approximately 70 percent of the directors/trustees of the CFR, Bilderberg Group, Aspen Institute, Brookings Institution, and Center for Strategic and International Studies, were also corporate directors (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:91-92).

Stephen Walt writes that “Although certain think tanks and research organizations are explicitly nonpartisan and aspire to high standards of scholarship, the line between research and policy advocacy is increasingly blurred” (Walt 2018:99). Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff go further, arguing that think tank nonpartisanship and “neutrality” serve as ideological cover for promoting a consensus in favor of imperialism (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:86). Their survey of core group think tanks suggests that each of them tend to work within the ideological parameters of Open Door imperialism—keeping open the global economy for US capital

penetration. So, while think tanks such as the CFR promote nonpartisan research and analysis, and maintain extensive links to both Democratic and Republican administrations, they tend to promote policies that are favorable to the military-industrial complex. Even Walt concedes that there is a “bias” in favor of US global hegemony “in the largest think tanks and research organizations such as the Brookings Institution, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Heritage Foundation.”

These organizations do not have a strict “party line” on many issues, and the people who work at them do not always agree on specific policy problems or foreign policy priorities. Nonetheless, several of these organizations were originally created to convince Americans to play a more active role in world affairs, and all of them lean strongly in the direction of greater U.S. engagement. (Walt 2018:115)

Control of the executive branch and the major policy-planning organizations are some of the most important ways in which the power elite control foreign policy, directing it in militarist and imperialist directions. But there are other ways as well. The American electoral system, with a few exceptions in certain states, incorporates first-past-the-post voting systems, which prevents third parties from being competitive. Because the two major political parties in the United States both promote an imperialist foreign policy, voters have few opportunities to elect either presidents or members of Congress who support antiwar or peace agendas. Moreover, such politicians have little chance for success in a political system that allows for virtually limitless corporate spending on political campaigns, and many politicians accept funding directly from the major military-industrial corporations. For incumbent members of Congress, opposition to war or the military-industrial complex is bound to rouse accusations from mainstream politicians, government officials, and the media of being “soft,” or “isolationist” (Walt 2018:143). Military bases are located every state (U.S. Department of Defense 2018), and military-industrial firms

contract work in every state (U.S. Department of Defense 2021), making opposing the MIC a risky activity for members of Congress.

Once government officials are elected, the general public has little direct influence on the character of foreign policy and foreign policy decision-making. Foreign policy is largely formulated in secret without public oversight and without regard for public opinion. The public may occasionally protest, even in large numbers, but there is no guarantee that this will prevent the outbreak of war, as the 2003 invasion of Iraq illustrated so clearly. The president may choose to obey federal law and submit decisions to go to war to a vote in Congress, but this is often not the case, reflecting the increasing power of the executive branch in the post-World War II period. Presidents may also wage covert wars, invoking national security as a justification for circumventing Congress. Congress may try to stop the executive branch from waging war, but it is not necessarily responsive to public opinion, and it is likely to support the president in decisions to go to war or prepare for it, whether these are submitted to a vote or not. As liberal scholars point out, politicians do monitor public opinion polls when making decisions to go to war in order to assess political risks to retaining office (Western 2005). But beyond these limited ways, the decision to go to war is decided by the power elite.

Moreover, the public is largely ideologically aligned with elite opinion on the use of military power in world politics. That is, the underlying assumptions about the benevolent role of American power that make military intervention and war seem morally justified are widely held among the public. However, there are several indications that the public favors different policies related to the military and war. For instance, Stephen Walt argues that the public is typically much more in favor of limiting military interventions than are elites (Walt 2018:260). Gallup polls also indicate that the public has consistently held that military spending is too high and

national defense is too strong, or are where they should be, even as the government simultaneously increases military spending (Newport 2019). These trends indicate that foreign policy is not a function of public preferences.

Imperial Ideology

As Marx and Engels famously wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*, “The ruling ideas of every age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.” In the United States, the ruling ideas pertaining to war and peace, the military and war, and the role of the United States in the world are the ideas of the power elite. The ways and means by which these ideas have become the ruling ideas—the dominant ideology accepted by elites and the public alike—will be discussed in subsequent sections. Here I describe the characteristics of America’s imperial ideology and explain how they promote militarism and war. These include American exceptionalism, pro-capitalism, pro-democracy, the externalization of evil, and military “credibility” (Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2014:35-36).

Americans tend to understand the United States as an exceptional nation in the world and in world history. American exceptionalism, as I will use the term, entails the idea that the United States is and has always been guided by a higher morality in its foreign affairs and in the ways its society is arranged. Its relationship to other countries is motivated by moral precepts rather than material interests, and if it is motivated by material interests at all, these interests are in the interests of other nations and people too. If the United States goes to war, it is always in self-defense against the aggression of others. The United States is not an aggressor nation and does not violate international law. Sometimes, the United States may veer from its righteous path and

get carried away in its effort to do good, and bloody interventions such as the Vietnam War may be remembered as “blunders” or “tragic mistakes” (Herman and Chomsky 2002:172-173).

The United States is also unique in its commitment to democracy, according to the dominant ideology. Americans often believe their democratic tradition is the best one and should be emulated by other nations with weaker democratic, or undemocratic, political traditions. Thus the United States seeks to promote democracy throughout the world. (The notion of a power elite is foreign to this ideology.) A corollary is that the United States also seeks to promote capitalism throughout the world. Capitalism, or “free enterprise,” is associated with “freedom” more broadly so that anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist governments, movements, or ideologies are understood as antithetical to freedom and democracy. Moreover, it is a moral imperative for the United States to actively promote these values and institutions.

States or movements that stand in the way of American global designs and ambitions become official enemies of the United States. Such resistance to American imperialism is understood not as emanating from the nature of American imperial policies, but from moral flaws of the people who resist imperialism. Since American interests are synonymous with the interests of everyone, and are inherently good, only people who are evil or otherwise morally inferior are thought to oppose the global proliferation of American institutions, policies, or ideology (Walt 2018:154). Worse, they may even be sub-human. (Racist dehumanization has always been an element of American imperialist ideology [Dower 2010:18-19].) In either case, such a characterization serves to legitimize killing or otherwise forcefully repressing them (cf. Walt 2018:154).

There is a tendency for ideologues of state-capitalist imperialism to inflate global threats. “Threat inflators,” writes Stephen Walt about imperialists in the foreign policy “community,”

“typically describe potential enemies as irrevocably hostile, irrational, and impossible to deter, which in turn implies that they must be removed” (Walt 2018:153). Moreover, there are always numerous enemies constituting dire threats, according to the dominant ideology, whether they are threats to Americans themselves or threats to other people whom Americans must protect.

A final element of American imperial ideology is that US “credibility” is always at stake, since failure to respond to threats will destroy US credibility either with allies who allegedly depend on us for leadership, or enemies who need to be deterred from nefarious conduct by displays of American force. This implies that “the United States must respond in places that don’t matter in order to convince adversaries it will act in places that do,” according to Stephen Walt (2018:149). Kolko (1988:5) argues that as American elites became increasingly pessimistic about their ability to control world events, especially after the Korean War, they were increasingly motivated by a concern to demonstrate military credibility, which led to military interventions in countries and regions that were only of secondary importance to the American economy, such as Vietnam.

The ideological function of ubiquitous, hostile, and unpredictable enemies, and appeals to credibility, is to create a cultural milieu in which it appears that war is almost always necessary, while American exceptionalism serves to make war seem good and righteous. If the world is understood through this broad set of ideological assumptions, then the military-industrial complex and military interventions motivated by narrow economic interests seem justified, especially since the ideology hides the real class interests that guide foreign policy behind a false “national interest.” It is important to note that the dominant ideology is inconsistent with historical or sociological reality. As mentioned above, imperialism has often allied the United States with antidemocratic regimes, and the United States has itself overthrown democratic

governments that failed to do Washington's bidding. And as explained above, military interventions serve the narrow economic interests of the Pentagon managers, and the power elite more broadly. And, while sometimes the United States does face real threats, many political scientists have shown that these threats are often inflated and exaggerated (see Walt 2018:147-148 for discussion and extensive references).

Of course, not all Americans believe or subscribe to the dominant ideology, and not all elites espouse it. Sometimes, elites may even challenge its assumptions. However, enough Americans subscribe to the dominant ideology to create a critical mass of public support for war efforts and the military-industrial complex. And most elites *do* subscribe to some version of the dominant ideology. Doing so is usually a requirement for career advancement in policy-planning organizations, the corporate media, the foreign policy bureaucracy of the federal government, and in many institutions managed by or closely linked to the power elite.

Among elites, there are also important ideological differences that fall within the parameters of the dominant ideology described above. These pertain to differences in strategy. The inability of the United States to control other countries with military force or win wars against nationalist movements engendered an ideological split between elites who argue for a more limited role of the US military, and those who argue for a more interventionist foreign policy. A corresponding ideological split also exists between those who advocate a universalist approach to foreign relations, and those who favor a more unilateralist position. Scholars of American foreign policy thus identify four corresponding groupings among foreign policy planners: realists, isolationists, hardline unilateralists, and liberal multilateralists (Western 2005:10-14).³ But, while they may disagree on strategy, American elites do not disagree on the

³ According to Western, *realists* believe US power should be used to defend US interests and primacy, but in a way that does not overextend US forces or damage the reputation of the United States. *Isolationists* are unlikely to

basic principle that the United States has the right to intervene in any part of the world where their perceived interests are at stake (Kolko 1988:294).

The Doctrinal System: The Media

How has this imperialist ideology become the dominant ideology in the United States? That is, how has it become the prevailing worldview among American citizens? What are the domestic, institutional sources of the ideology? And how are the power elite able to use them to promote it? There are two key institutions responsible for creating and disseminating political ideology in modern societies: the mass media and the education system. I argue that it is through control of these institutions that the power elite are able to heavily influence public thinking about militarism and war. I will discuss the education system in the following section. In this section, I describe the institutional characteristics of the American corporate media that cause them to carry out a propaganda function for the power elite.

In their classic work, *Manufacturing Consent*, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky describe the social function of the mass media this way:

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda. (Herman and Chomsky 2002:1)

advocate the use of military force, believing that it should be reserved principally for meeting imminent threats to US political independence or territorial integrity. *Hardline unilateralists* advocate increased military power to address various threats, discounting potential costs of military engagement. *Liberal multilateralists* emphasize the interconnectedness of the global order and defending American values, particularly democracy and free markets. They are often unwilling to support military interventions when they do not appear to lead to these ends, and oppose military interventions to support undemocratic allies. It is important to note that isolationists are a minority, and have little influence on foreign policy. As mentioned above, “isolationist” is often a negative epithet employed against opponents of military activism.

In a country like the United States, with an ostensibly “free” press, that the media serve this purpose is difficult to see, Herman and Chomsky go on to explain.

In countries where the levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy, the monopolistic control over the media, often supplemented by official censorship, makes it clear that the media serve the ends of a dominant elite. It is much more difficult to see a propaganda system at work where the media are private and formal censorship is absent. This is especially true where the media actively compete, periodically attack and expose corporate and government malfeasance, and aggressively portray themselves as spokesmen for free speech and the general community interest. What is not evident (and remains undiscussed in the media) is the limited nature of such critiques, as well as the huge inequality in command of resources, and its effect both on access to a private media system and on its behavior and performance. (Herman and Chomsky 2002:1-2)

Herman and Chomsky explain that such circumscribed media discourse is a consequence of the very class inequality in the “command of resources” that the media serve to perpetuate. The media, they show in several detailed case studies, tend to promote elite ideology, priorities, and perspectives, while marginalizing perspectives that fall outside the range of elite opinion.

Their “propaganda model” of the mass media is an elite theory of the media that explains why the media perform this way. A structural, political economy explanation, the model identifies five structural features of the mass media that they refer to as “filters” of media content: (1) the large size, concentrated ownership, and profit orientation of the media; (2) dependence on corporate advertising for revenue; (3) dependence on “official sources” of information in the government and corporate world; (4) disciplining flak from powerful elites; and (5) anti-communism, to which they added pro-market ideology after the end of the Cold War. Other writers conceptualize this last filter more broadly as “convergence in the dominant ideology” (Pedro 2011:1888).

The way these filters work, according to Herman and Chomsky, is approximately as follows (see Herman and Chomsky 2002:1-37). Filter (1): The large size and concentrated

ownership of major news media corporations ensures that only the corporate rich are able to afford the startup costs associated with owning and operating a large news corporation with significant public reach. This creates a bias within news corporations towards elite interests, as owners are able to ensure ideological conformity throughout their companies in virtue of their power to make hiring decisions, and smaller news companies are barred from competition in national media markets. Filter (2): Because consumers will not pay a price for news that covers production costs, the media depend on corporate advertising for revenue. This further biases the content of news in favor of the interests of large corporations and media conglomerates, which need to increase sales, and whose owners and managers do not want to see stories that cast them or their partners in a bad light. Therefore, as Herman and Chomsky quip: the media does not sell news to audiences, but audiences to advertisers. Filter (3): The profit orientation of the first filter requires that reporters have quick and easy access to readily available, and *prima facie* credible, sources of information. This means the government and corporations, which make information readily available for journalists and reporters through press releases, conferences, and other means. This puts the media into a relationship of dependency with the power elite. For if reporters are too critical of their powerful sources, they risk losing access to these sources of information, and their firms becoming less competitive. Filter (4): Flak refers to various forms of harassment and criticism of the media that emanate from different elements of the power elite when offended by particular stories or critical reporting that casts them in a bad light. There are also corporate-funded think tanks whose principal purpose is to criticize the media for alleged “liberal” bias, such as Media Research Center (see Goss 2013), the Commonwealth Foundation, the Center for Media and Public Affairs, and Accuracy in Media (AIM). About AIM, Herman and Chomsky write that its function “is to harass the media and put pressure on them to follow

the corporate agenda and a hard-line, right-wing foreign policy” (Herman and Chomsky 2002:27). Convergence in the dominant ideology (5): The dominant ideology described above is the framework of analysis that informs reporting and commentary in the corporate media. Self-censorship and the managerial selection of appropriately indoctrinated managing editors and reporters ensures ideological conformity throughout the major news corporations.

Herman and Chomsky, and later several other critical media scholars (e.g., Goss 2013; McCleod 2018; Zollman 2017), provided abundant evidence of systematic media propaganda in the domain of foreign affairs reporting. Generally, this research has demonstrated that there is a strong tendency for reporting and commentary to reflect elite understandings of the world and specific events. American exceptionalism and righteousness characterize reporting, and the corporate media is unanimously pro-capitalism. Government official enemies are routinely the subjects of “sustained propaganda campaigns” in which they receive extensive, negative media coverage. The crimes of enemy states receive extensive coverage and righteous condemnation, and may even be exaggerated. Such reporting is often supported by unreliable sources, such as domestic threat inflators in government or policy-planning organizations, or foreign dissidents with special interests in overthrowing a certain government. The United States and its allies, however, are rarely subject to such critical reporting when they commit crimes and atrocities. These are more likely to be characterized as unfortunate “mistakes.” US allies with undemocratic political systems tend to receive little media criticism, and may be described as taking appropriate steps towards democracy, while harsh condemnation is heaped on undemocratic official enemies for their political systems, which may be accompanied by calls for military intervention to overthrow their governments.

In short, news corporations in the United States—the largest network television channels, radio stations, and press—reproduce and disseminate the dominant, imperial ideology of the power elite. The general public has little opportunity for exposure to alternative definitions of reality in the media. While “independent” news sources do exist—news companies that do not depend on corporate funding and official sources—they have a relatively small public following, due precisely to the structural features of the corporate media that make them ubiquitous in the society. While this does not necessarily imply that the public or sections of it will always believe state-corporate propaganda, it does imply that the public is ideologically primed to support the military-industrial complex and military interventions. This helps explain why presidents are able to gain a critical mass of support from the public prior to major wars, even in the presence of large antiwar movements—the perspectives of which are blocked from media coverage.

The Doctrinal System: Academia

The mass media would likely not convey effective propaganda without the support of an education system that reinforces the same ideological content. The public education system and the university, like the media, serve to socialize young people into the institutions and class structure of the existing society. An important latent function of the education system is to instill ideological conformity (Schmidt 2000), as innovative thinking about social and political problems largely occurs within the ideological parameters of elite thinking. As a top-down process that affects the broader educational system, educational indoctrination begins in the university, where the expert scholars—who write history, civics, and economics textbooks for the public education system, and scholarly articles and books for academic and public

consumption—are trained. Professionally trained university scholars thus define the nature of American society and heavily influence the way Americans think about themselves and the world. They shape and constrain public thinking about politics and economics, and about the military and war. Public secondary schools, colleges, and universities are also sites of military recruitment and house Reserve Officer Training Corps programs.

These facts are largely explained by the institutional history of the American university system. The post-World War II university system developed with crucial assistance from federal government agencies and private philanthropic foundations. These provided the funding universities and academic departments often needed to survive (Simpson 1994:53; Parmar 2012:10). With the assistance of networks of willing professional academics, themselves often connected to the government and major philanthropic foundations, these elite institutions decisively shaped the research agendas of social science disciplines (Simpson 1994:57-62; Parmar 2012:7; Solovey 2013). Private philanthropic foundation leaders—their founders, directors, and trustees, all members of the power elite (see Parmar 2012:31-64)—sought to mobilize academia for the purpose of promoting and strengthening US imperialism. They funded area studies and international relations programs at elite universities such as Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, that were expressly designed to study the practical problems of managing a global empire and to provide training for government foreign service (Parmar 2012:7). Like the think tanks discussed previously, which they also lavishly funded, the foundation leaders funded university research programs that were intended to mobilize elite and public opinion against isolationism and pacifism (prior to World War II), and in favor of an active military role for the United States in the world (Parmar 2012:79). According to Parmar (2012), promoting an

imperial foreign policy agenda has remained the goal of the major private foundations: the Carnegie Corporation and its offshoots, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.

For its part, the federal government funded university social science departments and “gray area” (Rohde 2013) research institutes that blurred the distinction between state and private institutions. In the early Cold War period, most of this funding came from the military. It was given to university programs like MIT’s Center for International Studies, and research institutes like the Special Operations Research Office (SORO) and RAND Corporation (Rohde 2013:5). SORO researchers were tasked with studying the sources of communist insurgency in formerly colonized countries where US interests were at stake (Rohde 2013). The ill-fated Project Camelot, which employed political scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists, was launched by the Kennedy administration for similar purposes (Rohde 2013:63-88). The state-managed National Science Foundation (NSF) was established in 1950, and became another major source of government funding for the social sciences thereafter. According to Solovey (2013), in the early Cold War period, the military, NSF, and private foundations (Solovey refers specifically to the Ford Foundation) constituted a “system” that exerted a conservative influence on the social sciences. He argues that this system committed social science to quantitative, scientific approaches to the study of society that rejected humanistic and historical forms of inquiry dedicated to improving social life, such as Marxism. Instead, the patronage system steered social science towards technocratic social engineering, as determined by the needs of the corporate state (Solovey 2013:4-5).

The state and large private foundations thus played a direct role in the formation of the social sciences. The elite patronage system has not been modified in any significant way. As anyone working in the academic social sciences knows, aspiring graduate students and junior

faculty compete for large private and state grants to fund their research. In addition to enabling their research, grant awards also confer prestige on individual scholars, and many academic departments require grant-chasing for career advancement. Parmar offers the following explanation as to how this influences their work:

The intellectuals' own political-ideological development is determined by their primary, secondary, and tertiary socialization as well as by the posteducational structures of opportunities available to intellectuals to become occupationally and politically tied to a variety of social groups. U.S. philanthropic foundations have attempted to create strong networks precisely to recruit and mobilize the most promising academic intellectuals for a whole range of large-scale projects, including the development of the American state in domestic and foreign affairs. The intellectuals so mobilized are provided with strong career-building opportunities, well-funded programs, opportunities for policy influence, and are systematically well integrated, and they tend therefore to produce research of a utilitarian, technocratic character that is methodologically compatible with the positivistic orientations of foundation leaders. *This is not to suggest that foundations directly interfere with researchers or research results, let alone pressure researchers. It is only to suggest that given the conditions of perpetual financial crisis within academic institutions, the large-scale funding programs of foundations prove very attractive to researchers and influence the selection of research topics, research questions, and methodologies.* (Parmar 2012:10, original emphasis)

This system is not all powerful, however, and Parmar adds that researchers may still arrive at conclusions that challenge “hegemonic thinking.” But because scholars working in policy-relevant disciplines like international relations work in academic departments that may be staffed by former government officials, and may themselves seek positions in the government or elite policy-planning networks, they are unlikely to work outside the ideological parameters of elite thinking (Walt 2018:122-124). And as explained above, this opportunity structure itself is shaped by state, military, and economic institutions. This is not to imply that academia is a monolith on foreign policy questions or questions about war and peace, or that there is not ideological variation; it implies only that professional academic production is likely to occur within the parameters of elite thinking to the extent that it is institutionally dependent on elite

sources of funding, or that academics seek employment in the state bureaucracy or elite policy-planning organizations.

This tendency is visible in scholarly research across several disciplines. For example, the historian Alfred McCoy remarks that, relative to studies of European colonialism and imperialism, there has been very little serious study of American imperialism (McCoy 2017:44). Similarly, few scholars have dedicated themselves to studies of the military-industrial complex. To take another example, Parmer observes that political scientists have rarely studied the role of philanthropic foundations in foreign policy making, in part because the dominant framework of understanding is that foundations are nonpartisan and nonpolitical actors, and in part because international relations is a state-centric discipline; political scientists tend not to incorporate elite theories of the state (Parmer 2012:3-4). Elite studies have also fallen by the wayside in sociology (Parmer 2012:4; Domhoff 2018:38-39). And as discussed at length in the literature review, sociologists of war after C. Wright Mills have been dismissive of elite theories and military-industrial complex theses. In yet another example, in the communications discipline, the Herman and Chomsky propaganda model has been marginalized, even though it is well-supported by numerous studies, and no one has been able to demonstrate that it is not valid. Herring and Robinson (2003) find no explanation for this tendency other than ideological bias resulting from the operation of something like the propaganda model itself within universities.

While critical studies of American imperialism and war do exist, the professional university researchers who find employment in the state, influential policy-planning organizations, and NGOs, who are invited to comment in the mainstream media, or speak before Congressional committees, are usually those who subscribe to the dominant frameworks of understanding. They lend the prestige associated with their institutions and their credentials to

the latest military programs and war efforts, and scholars who may be equally qualified to speak on American foreign policy, but offer a critical perspective, are marginalized, their perspectives shut out from hearing in the larger society.

Conclusion

To summarize the argument made in this chapter, five interrelated features of American society cause the United States to go to war. The most fundamental is a form of imperialism exercised by the United States to control the global political economy and exert military control over states and movements that are perceived by American elites as challenges to it. The military-industrial complex creates an added incentive to use military force against such perceived challenges. The power elite of the United States have a vested interest in the military-industrial complex, given its centrality in the national economy, and because the corporate rich benefit from the US-led globalized economy, they also occasionally favor using military force to protect and further these interests. Because the power elite exert near total control over the American political system, they are able to implement policies that further these interests, unchallenged by anti-imperialist and anti-war elements of the society. The power elite are able to mobilize the general populace behind imperialism, militarism, and specific wars through their control of the mass media and education system, which systematically disseminate the ideology and specific justifications that make war seem necessary and righteous.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The main purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate that the elite model of war mobilization offers a superior explanation of the 2003 Iraq War compared to the state-centric and Marxist theories offered by sociologists. This requires presenting an explanation of the war in terms of the model, and comparing it to the alternative explanations. A case study of the war should be able to show that the antecedent conditions specified by the model existed in historical reality and led to the outcome of the war, and that the conditions specified by the state-centric and Marxist theories were not present or did not cause the war, or that if they did account for causally significant factors, the theory is inadequate due to a failure to account for all historically necessary conditions.

The research design and method used for achieving these objectives is a single historical case study employing process tracing. Process tracing is a form of within-case (as opposed to cross-case) analysis that shows how antecedent conditions are causally related to expected outcomes. It is a historical method especially suited for theory development and theory testing with single case study research designs. The following sections outline the structure of the research design and its logic, and describe the methods employed in this dissertation.

Adequate Causation and Process Tracing

The sociological study of war lends itself especially well to qualitative, historical case study research designs. The reason for this is that wars exhibit a degree of causal complexity that

it may not be possible to meaningfully capture in quantitative research designs. Large-scale or macro historical events like wars have five kinds of causes: necessary and facilitating conditions, diachronic and synchronic social processes, and the conjunctural interaction of all of these with specific historical contexts. In Max Weber's classic historical-comparative causal methodology, the identification of all of these in a case study is necessary to establish an "adequate," or what contemporary writers refer to as a "sufficient," cause of a macro-sociological, historical event (Kalberg 2012:129-143). A strong theoretical explanation for a such an event consists of an adequate causal explanation. An adequate causal explanation is not a "complete" explanation, given that it is always possible to consider new facilitating causes of a single event, but a theoretically grounded explanation.

A necessary cause is a condition that must be present for the occurrence of an event (Mahoney 2003:341). A facilitating cause is one that is less powerful than a necessary cause, but may help bring it about (Kalberg 2012:133-134). A necessary cause is a theoretically universal cause of all phenomena of a single kind, whereas a facilitating cause is not. Necessary and facilitating causes may be either synchronic—an interaction of different forms of patterned social action occurring at a specific point in time—or diachronic—a form of patterned social action that has a causal influence over time and across different contexts (Kalberg 2012:134-137). Conjunctural interactions are the interactions of necessary and facilitating causes with a particular cluster of patterned actions at specific points in time; in other words, the specific historical context in which the necessary and facilitating causes occur. The effects of synchronic and diachronic patterns are modulated by conjunctural interactions (Kalberg 2012:137).

In brief, establishing adequate causation requires identifying theoretical causes that unfold over time, and in the context of particular historical events that influence their historical

effects. Thus, historical narrative explanation must be combined with theoretically guided analysis of cases, and neither alone is sufficient for establishing adequate causation (Kalberg 2012:132). These methodological assumptions guide the analysis presented in this dissertation.

Contemporary scholars utilize process tracing as a way of identifying and analyzing the effects of antecedent conditions on an outcome (Goertz and Mahoney 2012:87-88). The method is a form of within-case analysis in which the effects of causes are “traced” through history to the particular outcome of interest. An explanatory model is supported to the extent that the causal processes specified by the model are shown to be evident in the case history. For this purpose, methodologists suggest the use of so-called “hoop tests” and “smoking gun tests” to establish necessary and sufficient conditions, respectively, in process tracing analyses (Goertz and Mahoney 2012:93-96). The requirement of a hoop test is that evidence of a necessary condition and its causal relationship to the outcome *must* be present in the case history. This is a necessary, but not sufficient requirement to establish the explanatory utility of a model for a particular case. The requirement of a smoking gun test for establishing a sufficient condition is the same, only evidence of a sufficient condition is sufficient, by definition, to show explanatory significance. Many necessary conditions may work in conjunction to form a sufficient condition.

I combine the logic of process tracing with Weber’s theory of adequate causality to assess the strength of the elite mobilization model and the other theories. In doing so, I substitute Goertz and Mahoney’s “sufficient” causation for Weber’s more robust conception of “adequate” causation. This substitution requires a more richly textured historical analysis, raising the bar for historical, sociological explanation.

Necessary and Facilitating Conditions Established by the Elite Model of War Mobilization

The elite model of war mobilization presents five interrelated factors that interact in open ended ways with their historical contexts to cause wars: (1) state-capitalist imperialism, (2) elite control of politics, (3) elite ideology, (4) elite control of the media, and (5) elite influence on education. For the purposes of analysis, the first four factors are classified as necessary conditions, while the last factor, education, is considered a facilitating condition. I do not maintain that these are, in fact, necessary or facilitating conditions for all cases. Empirically establishing such status requires cross-case analysis, the comparison and analysis of the range of relevant cases. I do not conduct such an analysis in this dissertation. The elite mobilization model, then, is only intended to offer a framework of analysis for this dissertation, and its ultimately validity is a question for future research.

Following Weber in this regard, the model is best thought of as providing a set of ideal types that pertain to a specific national context and period of time, and which may be modified in light of new evidence from other case studies. This is how I assigned the necessary and facilitating statuses to the five factors of the model. At the beginning of the study, I began with the assumption that all the factors were necessary conditions, but upon its completion, I concluded that I was not able to establish with the evidence I found that the fifth factor was a necessary cause of the Iraq War.

It should be fairly clear from the presentation of the model in chapter 3 that the social processes it identifies are synchronic, diachronic, and dynamic, rather than a static set of variables. The model identifies institutional configurations, namely the military-industrial complex and the structure of the media and university system; the cultural force of elite

ideology; and the social and political processes facilitating elite control of politics. These are diachronic agglomerations of social action, enduring institutional and cultural “legacies” that have not been modified in any significant way throughout post-World War II history, and which appear to continually exert causal influence in American society. The elements of the model are also synchronic in that they interact with each other at given points in time to produce the result of a war. And they are also dynamic or conjunctural in that though they are enduring characteristics of American society, they must be “activated” by historical events—some extraneous to the model itself—in order to lead to war; otherwise, the model would seem to imply that wars would simply occur all the time.

Research Design

In order to assess the relative strength of the model according to the logic of adequate causation and process tracing, I have broken down the analysis of the causes of the Iraq War into seven chapters: one to establish the historical context in which it occurred (chapter 5); five chapters corresponding to each component of the model (chapters 6-10); and one chapter (chapter 11) to address the viability of the alternative theories. Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the various conjunctural causes of the Iraq War as these unfolded in the history of US-Iraq relations prior to the 2003 Iraq War, beginning in the early 1950s. This history includes significant “catalyzing events” (Kramer and Michalowski 2006) or facilitating causes such as the first Gulf War, the rise of the neoconservatives in the Republican Party, the selection of George W. Bush as president, and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The presentation of this historical context enables a more detailed analysis of the case history according to the framework

provided by the elite model of war mobilization. In the five chapters dedicated to each component of the model, I show how each causal process manifested itself in the build-up to the war and led to its occurrence.

In writing this historical account, I relied on a variety of sources. These included secondary treatments of the Iraq War and other related historical developments; biographical accounts of Bush administration figures; and primary source material such as Bush administration planning documents, corporation annual reports, neoconservative think tank publications, and newspaper articles. (In some cases, as with the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance for instance, the original document is not available, in which case I have followed scholarly convention in citing press coverage of the document.) In most of the details, the history I present is familiar and uncontroversial, and similar, albeit less theoretically engaged, accounts can be found in standard treatments of the Iraq War (e.g. Anderson 2012; Record 2010)

After the analysis of the war's causes presented in chapters 6 through 10, in the concluding chapter, I critique specific sociological works on the Iraq War, in particular, those of Michael Mann (2003, 2013), Muhammad Idrees Ahmad (2014), John Bellamy Foster (2006) and William Robinson (2014). In commenting on the Open Door theory of American imperialism, I also comment on the work of Bastiaan van Apeldoorn and Naná de Graaff (2016), particularly their treatment of the Iraq War. In addressing works specifically on the Iraq War, I have sought to avoid criticizing straw person representations of the theories that are the focus of this dissertation. If these state-centric, Marxist, and Open Door accounts of the Iraq War can be rejected on empirical grounds, then these theories would not be tenable theories of American war more broadly. Weber's adequate causation notwithstanding, at a minimum, if the theories do not identify necessary conditions of the Iraq War, they cannot identify necessary conditions at the

level of theoretical generality. The basis of my critiques of alternative theories is that they do not identify necessary conditions of the Iraq War, due principally to empirical and conceptual errors.

Best Practices for Process Tracing

To ensure reliability in a process tracing analysis, Bennett and Checkel (2015) recommend ten “best practices” for process tracing. These are: (1) Identify many alternative explanations; (2) Be equally tough on alternative explanations; (3) Be alert to potential bias of sources (both of secondary analysts and actors or subjects of the study); (4) Take into account whether the case is a least or most likely case (cases least likely to support a theory may offer strong support for a theory if they do support it); (5) Justify where a case study begins, time-wise (how far back in time to go); (6) Gather diverse, relevant evidence, but justify when to stop; (7) Combine process tracing with case comparisons when useful and feasible; (8) Be open to inductive insights; (9) Use deduction to articulate empirical expectations about specific observations; and (10) “Remember that conclusive process tracing is good, but not all good process tracing is conclusive” (Bennett and Checkel 2015:30). Bennett and Checkel recommend, additionally, to create “elaborate,” fine-grained theories with many indicators to allow assessment of the relative performance of competing explanations. This prevents the use of vague terms, and specifies how exactly variables should cause an outcome. And, furthermore, they also recommend the use of counterfactual (or “control”) observations to help isolate causal processes and their effects.

In executing this study, I have tried to follow these practices. In the case of alternative theories, I chose the three alternatives that presented themselves in the literature, and I have tried to subject them all to rigorous scrutiny viz-a-viz available evidence.

With respect to the biases of sources, it is a commonplace in historical and political studies that historical actors often have reasons for being unclear or lying about the purposes of their action. In the case of the Bush administration and the Iraq War, they have never been forthright about why they invaded Iraq, perhaps for obvious reasons. To discern their real motives, then, I have relied less on their official rationales for the war and more on the interpretations of dissidents within the administration and government, on secondary analysts, and my own historically informed interpretations of available evidence.

With respect to how likely the case was to support my own theoretical propositions, other theorists (e.g. Ahmad 2013; Mann 2003, 2013) have ruled out, however unpersuasively, the utility of military-industrial complex explanations of the Iraq War. This being the case, it is possible that the Iraq War represents a hard test for my theory. As for the length of time covered by my case study, in chapter 5, I begin with the post-World War II situation in Iraq and the United States. To me this seemed like an appropriate time to begin, since in Iraq the proximate developments that led to Saddam Hussein's regime occurred during this period, while in the United States, the institutions described by the theory had taken shape during this time, and because the United States had just become increasingly active in the Middle East.

As for diverse evidence, I have relied on as many sources as I thought was minimally necessary to make the arguments and claims I needed to make.

Perhaps needless to say, I approached my study with an open mind towards modifying the theory I started with on the basis of evidence I might come across. For the most part, however, such modifications were not necessary.

The research design does not make explicit use of cross-case comparative analysis. Time simply did not permit such a study. However, I sometimes include in the analysis accounts of past wars to make points relevant to the 2003 Iraq War. But these are not exhaustive treatments of other cases.

Concerning the conclusiveness of my study, I believe that the balance of evidence presented in this study provides clear support for the theoretical propositions advanced in chapter 3. I believe these propositions are detailed and clear, and in the beginning of each chapter, I have outlined what I believe the expectations would be if my theory were correct, and proceeded with the analysis accordingly. And when appropriate—namely regarding the first four components of my theoretical model—I have tried to consider what might have happened if the history I present had been different, that is, if the causal processes identified had been absent.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Research Design

The advantages and disadvantages of using single case study designs in social research are well known. A major advantage of analyzing few cases is that detailed descriptions of historically concrete causal processes can be provided that are often obscured or invisible in cross-case statistical analyses of large samples in which the goal is to identify associations between variables. Another advantage is that the use of process tracing in even a single case can

contribute to theory formation since the case can be used to confirm or invalidate the expectations of a theory (Rueschemeyer 2003).

These same advantages may also entail disadvantages. If smaller samples enable in-depth description of causal mechanisms, they also limit the ability to make inferences about the cross-case generalizability of a theory. Because generalizations are made to theory rather than about all available cases, it is therefore difficult to know how well the theory can explain other cases. While the analysis of a few cases in a single study adds more support for a theory than a single case study design, the analysis of a representative body of cases is necessary to demonstrate that something is a necessary condition at the level of general theory. It is for this reason that the principal aim of this research design is to develop a theory—the elite model of war mobilization—and show that it does more explanatory work than alternatives for a particular case, rather than to test the external validity of theory.

CHAPTER 5

THE 2003 US INVASION OF IRAQ: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND PRECIPITATING EVENTS

This chapter outlines the historical background of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, also known as the Iraq War. It is divided into two sections. The first section outlines US-Iraq relations during the post-World War II period to the end of Clinton's presidency in 2001. The second section outlines the series of events that led to the invasion during the George W. Bush presidency. This longer history is necessary for understanding the context in which the Bush administration made its decision to invade. That is, it is necessary for understanding why the war happened. But it is the sequence of precipitating events presented in the second section that the elite model of war mobilization is marshalled to explain in later chapters.

Historical Background: US-Iraq Relations, 1954-2001

In the immediate post-World War II period, the imperatives of the Cold War—containing communism and building US hegemony—largely determined US policy in the Middle East, along with securing access to oil in the region. Among other regional military alliances, in 1954 the United States brokered the creation of the Central Treaty Organization (also known as the Baghdad Pact), a mutual defense agreement that included the United States, Britain, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan (Prashad 2007:38, 98). Under this agreement, member countries received military aid from the United States.

An extension of the Monroe and Truman Doctrines, the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957 informally established the Middle East as a new domain of US military control. Formally, this presidential resolution declared that the United States had the right intervene in any Middle Eastern country threatened by “armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism” (quoted in Blum 2004:89). William Blum observes that the doctrine advanced a “simplistic and polarized” Cold War view of the region that failed to consider various political currents of anti-Israeli sentiment, nationalism, pan-Arabism, non-alignment or neutralism, communism, and socialism. The conflicts in the region were thus often characterized by American state planners as emanating from the Soviet Union (Blum 2004:89-90, 93).

Iraq attained formal independence from Britain in 1930, but the ruling Hashemite monarchy remained close allies of the British, who were thus able to exert strong influence over Iraq’s national development. As in many formerly colonized countries, after World War II, currents of nationalism, anti-imperialism, and anti-colonialism became increasingly influential political forces in Iraq. Pan-Arabism was popular, especially after Nasser’s rise to power in Egypt in 1952. Yet the monarchy opposed pan-Arabism, and in 1958, the Iraqi premier Nuri al-Said ordered the Iraqi army to Jordan in an effort to quell pan-Arabism there. A group of pan-Arabists in the army—the Free Officers—refused, and subsequently overthrew the Anglo-American-backed monarchy in a military coup. The 1958 Free Officers coup brought to power General Abdul Karim Qassim.

Qassim implemented a series of social, political, and economic reforms intended to promote national development. His administration closed British military bases, renamed the country the Republic of Iraq, and withdrew from the Central Treaty Organization, declaring non-alignment in the Cold War. Under Qassim, Iraq also purchased weapons from the Soviet Union.

Qassim withdrew Iraq from the British sterling block, reduced the length of the working day, increased salaries for government workers, implemented a social security system for the elderly, and passed progressive laws for women (Anderson 2011:15). Qassim also planned for the gradual nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC), which had transferred 95 percent of Iraq's oil revenues to British, French, and American corporations under King Faisal II's regime (Anderson 2011:16). The Western owners of the oil companies affected by the nationalization were outraged, according to Anderson. "They contacted the Eisenhower and later the John F. Kennedy administrations, and the CIA began to encourage Iraqi military officers to stage a coup" (Anderson 2011:16).

After receiving international condemnation for invading Kuwait, Qassim broke off diplomatic relations with many Arab states (Anderson 2011:16). This was an unpopular move among Iraqis, and in an effort to gain political support, Qassim allied with the Iraqi Communist Party, the largest communist party in any Arab state, supported by approximately one fifth of Iraq's population (Prashad 2007:159). These developments alienated the Free Officers Movement, which attempted a coup. Later, in October 1959, a group of Baathist party members, including Saddam Hussein, attempted to assassinate Qassim. They were unsuccessful, and Qassim attempted to crush the Baathist party.

The Baathists were a political movement that originated in Jordan. They were socialist pan-Arabs, but bitterly anti-communist, earning them the support of the CIA in the United States. In February 1963, days before Qassim's nationalization of the IPC was to go into effect, the Baathists staged a coup, and overthrew Qassim. Backed by the Kennedy administration, they murdered Qassim, along with approximately ten thousand communists and other supporters. The Baathists took power, and Kennedy provided the new regime with weapons, while Bechtel,

Mobil, and other American corporations began doing business in Iraq (Anderson 2011:17). The Baathists held power for only nine months before a counter-coup led by Army General Abd al-Salam Arif, an ally of Qassim, overthrew the Baathists and brought Arif to power. After Arif died in a helicopter crash, his brother Abd al-Rahman Arif was elected to the presidency. Then, in July 1968, the Baathists staged yet another coup, taking power. Arif was exiled.

Iraq broke off diplomatic relations with the United States during the Six-Day War in 1967, turning towards the Soviet Union, which became Iraq's principal supplier of weapons under the Baathists. In 1972, the two countries signed the Iraq-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, and in June 1972, Iraq finally nationalized the IPC. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, relations with the United States deteriorated further when Iraq led the newly formed OPEC cartel in imposing an oil embargo against the United States (Juhasz 2006:152-153). The embargo led to dramatically increased oil prices and revenues for Iraq, which strengthened the new Baathist regime. There were large investments in public services, but 40 percent of oil revenues were spent on weapons and military purchases.

By the time of the 1968 coup, Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein had become the top leaders of the Baath party. Al-Bakr became president and prime minister, placing Hussein in charge of the security and intelligence services (Tripp 2007:188). Al-Bakr and Hussein ruthlessly liquidated political opposition within the ranks of the government, including the communists and elements of the Baath party that were not loyal to al-Bakr and Hussein. In 1977, Hussein took control of Iraqi oil policy, giving him control of the country's principal export commodity and means of development. At the same time, Hussein's brother-in-law and first cousin was appointed by al-Bakr to head the Ministry of Defense. As al-Bakr's health declined in the late 1970s, it was becoming clear that Hussein would assume the presidency. But before taking office

in 1979 Hussein carefully established client networks of political support that helped him consolidate absolute power over the state (Tripp 2007:209).

In 1979, the Carter administration added Iraq to an official list of state sponsors of terrorism because it supported the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and other organizations in the region. Economic sanctions followed (Juhasz 2006:157). But the Iranian Revolution fundamentally changed US-Iraq relations. The United States suddenly lost one of its major regional allies and oil suppliers when the Iranians ousted Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and brought Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to power. When the United States offered to bring the Shah to the United States for medical treatment on October 22, outraged student revolutionaries broke into the American embassy in Iran and took fifty Americans hostage. The hostage crisis and Carter's bungled military response weakened his 1980 presidential campaign, and Ronald Reagan defeated Carter to become president in 1981.

Meanwhile, sensing a moment of opportunity after the revolution, Hussein invaded Iran on September 22, 1980, beginning the bloody eight-year Iran-Iraq War. After the Iranians counterattacked and made their way into Iraq, the Reagan administration began supporting Iraq (Bacevich 2016:90). To facilitate this support, in March 1982, Reagan quietly removed Iraq from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. By November 1984 Reagan had restored full diplomatic relations with Iraq, "under extreme influence from US business interests, but against the advice of many within Reagan's administration," according to Antonia Juhasz (2006:158). Reagan favored Iraq in the war because Hussein was seen as a bulwark against the spread of further revolution in the Gulf region. The other reason for supporting Iraq was to create business opportunities there for American corporations, especially those linked to the Reagan administration that pushed for normalized relations.

As Antonia Juhasz puts it, “it was difficult to distinguish between business and political activity in Iraq,” (Juhasz 2006:165) during this period. In December 1983 Reagan’s envoy, Donald Rumsfeld—former US defense secretary under Ford, and future defense secretary under George W. Bush—met with Hussein to discuss a major oil pipeline deal with Bechtel. This project did not come to pass, though Bechtel would secure contracts with Hussein in 1988 to manage a petrochemical complex that was intended to produce precursor chemicals for the production of mustard gas. This happened only four months after Hussein attacked the Iraqi Kurdish city of Halabja with mustard gas, in March 1988, according to Juhasz (2006:168), an attack which killed an estimated 5,000 people (Tripp 2007:236). (In fact, Iraq had used chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers as early as 1983 (Harris and Aid 2013), with the full knowledge of the Reagan administration. But neither did these war crimes prevent Reagan from supporting Hussein.)

Other corporations also did business in Iraq. Halliburton, for instance, under both Reagan and H. W. Bush, was contracted to repair oil export terminals damaged during the war, build major oil pipelines, and provide equipment and training for the Iraqi State Oil Exploration Company (Juhasz 2006:167). Other corporations that did business in Iraq in the mid-1980s included AT&T, Hewlett Packard, General Motors, and Philip Morris (Juhasz 2006:168). Many of these corporations sold Iraq “dual-use goods” that could be used for either civilian or military purposes, prompting fears in the Pentagon that they would inevitably be used for the latter purpose. Between 1985 and 1990, the sale of such goods to Iraq amounted to \$782 million, and included various agricultural commodities, computers, helicopters, and transport planes. The United States also sold conventional and chemical weapons to Iraq through third party countries such as France and Italy (Bacevich 2016:91; Juhasz 2006:168).

Beyond providing weapons, technology, and agricultural goods, the United States provided direct military support to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. Beginning in July 1982, the CIA began providing intelligence to the Iraqi military on Iranian battlefield positions (Bacevich 2016:93). Such intelligence was provided throughout the war with the knowledge that Iraq would use it to expedite chemical weapons attacks.¹ Then, in 1987, after *Iraq* attacked the American USS Stark in the Persian Gulf—probably deliberately, as revenge for the Iran-Contra affair (Bacevich 2016:97)—the Reagan administration blamed Iran. Reagan also blamed Iran for obstructing the flow of oil in the Persian Gulf, even though Iraq had inaugurated the tactic of attacking international oil tankers in order to cut off Iranian oil exports. To prevent Kuwait from enlisting the help of the Soviet Union, Reagan set about to provide military protection for Kuwaiti oil tankers. When the first Kuwaiti oil tanker under US military protection—and disguised as an American vessel—was struck by what was assumed to be an Iranian land mine, this led to Operation Praying Mantis, an offensive US military operation targeting Iranian positions in the Persian Gulf. (During this engagement the United States also shot down the civilian Iranian Air flight 655, killing all 290 passengers, an event for which Bush refused to apologize.) Iran agreed to a ceasefire on July 20, and the war ended the next month, in August 1988.

The Iran-Iraq War left Iraq with enormous debts to neighboring countries, about half of which was owed to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. As Iraq's economy stagnated after the war, Hussein insisted that the debts be forgiven; in his view, Iraq had saved Arabs from a Persian

¹ Harris and Aid (2013) maintain that the United States was not yet providing battlefield intelligence to Iraq in 1983, the year they suspect Iraq first used chemical weapons. However, as mentioned, Bacevich notes that the CIA began providing intelligence on Iranian positions in July, 1982. Whatever the case may be, Harris and Aid, observing the documentary record, maintain that the Reagan administration supplied battlefield intelligence to Iraq in 1987 when it was expected that an Iranian offensive might defeat Iraq in the spring of 1988. Reagan did this knowing that Iran would use chemical weapons.

invasion (Anderson 2012:32). Saudi Arabia and Kuwait demanded to be repaid, so Hussein responded by massing troops on the border of Kuwait, and threatened to invade. Hussein was especially annoyed with Kuwait for increasing oil production after the war, lowering its price and reducing Iraq's revenue on its principal export. He therefore devised plans to take over disputed oil fields on the other side of the Iraq-Kuwait border, claiming they belonged to Iraq, and setting the stage for the Gulf War of 1990-1991. Hussein began massing troops on the border with Kuwait in mid July 1990, and after failed negotiations with Kuwait on August 1, Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990 (Anderson 2012:34).

Reagan's vice president, George H. W. Bush, became president in 1989. The strong US relationship with Iraq continued under Bush; Juhasz writes that "his administration led the most aggressive courtship of Saddam Hussein to date" (Juhasz 2006:169). This relationship was determined entirely by access to oil and investment opportunities for American corporations. Under Bush, Iraq became the United States' second-largest trading partner in the Middle East; the United States purchased one quarter of Iraq's oil exports, and became Iraq's largest supplier of nonmilitary goods (Juhasz 2006:171). Sales of dual-use technology continued, and the Bush administration was still providing military intelligence to Iraq in May 1990 (Juhasz 2006:171).

Just prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the Bush administration was in direct communication with Hussein about Kuwait at least three different times. US ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, met with Hussein on July 25, and reassured him that the United States sought close relations with Iraq and did not take sides in the border dispute. A personal message from Bush himself, days later, reinforced this message. While a message from a mid-level State Department official warned against an invasion (Anderson 2012:33), the meeting with Glaspie and the personal message from Bush probably suggested to Hussein that the United States would

not object if Iraq took over Kuwaiti oil fields. And, after all, the United States had supported Iraq's war against Iran, and had built extensive trade relationships with Iraq under Bush. Instead, when Iraq finally invaded Kuwait, the Bush administration denounced the military aggression, and imposed sanctions on Iraq through the United Nations. The United States became directly involved in the war on January 15, 1991, and easily expelled Iraq's forces from Kuwait. The fact that the Bush administration rejected Hussein's offers to negotiate a withdrawal prior to the intervention strongly suggests that the principal war aim of the Bush administration was to impose military control over Iraq or demonstrate US military power, rather than to expel Iraq from Kuwait or prevent Hussein from controlling more oil.²

In fact, the UN sanctions imposed on Iraq entailed a near total embargo on its economy, with the exception of medicine. The sanctions continued throughout the 1990s, and led to the deaths of approximately 1.5 million people, including 500,000 children between 1991 and 1998. The United States also imposed a no-fly zone over Iraq, nominally to prevent Hussein from attacking Kurds in northern Iraq and Shias in the south, which he had done near the end of the Gulf War, after the Bush administration encouraged them to rebel against Hussein. The Bush administration did not themselves attempt to overthrow Hussein because they believed that an occupation would destabilize Iraq, making withdrawal very difficult, and because they did not have international support to do so; the UN resolution authorizing US involvement in the Gulf War did not authorize overthrowing Hussein. Their efforts to remove him from power continued after the Gulf War, however. In 1992, the CIA helped establish the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an anti-Hussein political organization. According to Anderson,

Forty groups opposed to Saddam made up the INC, and they held a meeting during June [1992] in Vienna, where they declared they would create a new government that would respect "human rights and the rule of law within a

² On the administration's rejection of negotiations, see Chomsky (1991:190, 191, 206-208).

constitutional, democratic, and pluralistic Iraq.” The CIA funded INC, supplying over \$20 million in its first year . . . (Anderson 2012:41)

The Bush and Clinton administrations also used United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 as a cover to overthrow or destabilize Hussein’s regime. Resolution 687 established the United Nations’ Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM), an inspections regime that was intended to locate and eliminate Hussein’s nonconventional weapons—so-called “weapons of mass destruction” or WMDs—and facilities for their production. According to Resolution 687, if Iraq disarmed of its WMD capabilities under the auspices of UNSCOM, the aforementioned economic sanctions would be lifted. But according to Scott Ritter, a UNSCOM inspector deeply involved in the inspections process, the United States never intended to lift the sanctions. “The strict requirements placed on Iraq by Res. 687,” Ritter says, “which required a 100 percent level of accountability for all weapons, weapons programs, and associated material, made a finding of compliance virtually impossible.”

However, the intrusive nature of the work carried out by UNSCOM made a finding of “qualitative disarmament” quite possible. By 1998 it could be safely stated that Iraq had been disarmed to the point that it no longer represented a threat with regards to its WMD capabilities, and that given the high-quality of the ongoing monitoring and verification inspections that were in place, any attempt by Iraq to reconstitute its WMD programs would not go unnoticed. (Ritter 2001:31-32)

The sanctions were never completely lifted, however.

After Clinton took office in 1993, a policy-planning network composed of former Reagan and Bush administration officials began to coalesce around a vision for a stronger, overtly imperialist American foreign policy agenda. Collectively referred to as “neoconservatives,” they advanced what they called a “neo-Reaganite foreign policy” of “benevolent global hegemony” (Kristol and Kagan 1996). Central to their agenda was removing Hussein from power. In 1997, they established the letterhead organization, Project for the New American Century (PNAC).

PNAC wrote an open letter about Iraq to Clinton in 1998, claiming that diplomacy had failed, and that it should be the policy of the United States to remove Hussein from power. The letter was influential in the Republican majority Congress, and in 1998, Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act, which made removing Hussein the official policy of the United States (though it did not specify how this was to be done). Clinton signed the act into law.

The UNSCOM inspections effectively came to an end when the Clinton administration pulled out weapons inspectors in order to carry out a large-scale bombing campaign called Operation Desert Fox, in December 1998, which had been planned in early 1998 (Ritter 2005). In response to the bombings, Hussein closed UNSCOM operations in Iraq, preventing further inspections. Clinton bombed Iraq almost continuously in the final two years of his presidency.

This is the historical context in which George H. W. Bush's son, George W. Bush Jr., was selected to be the 43rd president of the United States in 2000. As discussed in the next section, Bush Jr.'s administration brought to power the neoconservatives, who were chosen to staff most of the administration's foreign policy positions. From the historical background discussed in this section, however, the long series of events that created the conditions for the 2003 Iraq War, prior to Bush Jr. assuming office, should be clear. Saddam Hussein himself rose to power with the support of the United States during the Kennedy years, and was supported again by Reagan and Bush. Reagan's support for Iraq (and Iran) during the Iran-Iraq War most likely prolonged that war, which in turn created the conditions for the Gulf War. Hussein's invasion of Kuwait set the stage for the 2003 US invasion, as did the rise of the neoconservatives and foreign policy hardliners in the Republican Party, and their taking office in 2001.

The Buildup to the Invasion: January 2001-March 19, 2003

The standard history of the buildup to the Iraq War is largely uncontroversial because the Bush administration's deceit in making the case for war was so obvious, and their methods so crude, that several state officials and politicians spoke out against the administration, and unlike the Gulf War, the invasion of Iraq failed to gather UN support.

George W. Bush became president on January 20, 2001. Dick Cheney was Bush's vice president. The two were closely allied with the neoconservatives, and appointed more than half of the founding members of PNAC to key foreign policy positions in the executive branch (Dorrien 2004). These included Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense; Paul Wolfowitz as Deputy Secretary of Defense; I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby as Wolfowitz's aid, and later Cheney's assistant; Douglas Feith as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy; John Bolton as Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security; Richard Perle, James Woolsey, and Kenneth Adelman were all assigned to the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee; David Frum was selected for White House speech-writer; and Stephen Hadley and Zalmay Khalilzad were selected for the National Security Council (Anderson 2012:62).

In bringing on the neoconservatives and hardliners like Rumsfeld and Powell, Bush and Cheney thus built an executive branch eager for war with Iraq. At the first National Security Council (NSC) meeting of the administration on January 30, 2001, Iraq was a top discussion item. CIA Director George Tenet presented photos to Bush that he said were chemical or biological weapons factories. Though Tenet admitted to having no "confirming intelligence" to prove they were weapons facilities, the NSC was assigned various tasks towards destabilizing the regime. Rumsfeld was told to "examine our military options" (Suskind 2004:72-75).

Iraq also figured prominently in the administration's early considerations regarding energy policy. Bush placed Cheney in charge of the National Energy Policy Development Group (NEPDG), a secret task force formed on January 29, 2001. "Cheney's Energy Task Force," as the group was called, recommended supporting "initiatives" to increase access to Middle East oil. Its members included cabinet secretaries, energy industry representatives, and possibly Iraqi opposition figures (Juhasz 2006:179-180). "It included executives from Exxon Mobil, Enron, British Petroleum, Duke Energy, and the American Petroleum Institute," and representatives from Bechtel, Chevron, and Halliburton (Juhasz 2006:179). According to Juhasz,

legal proceedings forced the Bush White House to reveal a series of lists and maps prepared by the Task Force that outlined Iraq's entire oil productive capacity and the foreign countries and companies lined up for contracts. Compiled in March 2001, the documents include detailed descriptions of Iraq's "super giant oilfields," oil pipelines, refineries, and tanker terminals. Two lists, entitled, "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts as of 5 March 2001," list more than sixty companies from some thirty countries with contracts in various stages of discussion for oil and gas projects across Iraq. (Juhasz 2006:180)

The UN Oil-for-Food program, initiated in 1996, allowed some access to Iraqi oil for certain corporations, but, according to Juhasz, "the companies within the Task Force were closed out of Iraq's oil market and were watching from the sidelines as the country's oil was divvied up to everyone but them" (Juhasz 2006:180).

These facts indicate that members of the administration were planning an invasion of Iraq upon taking office, long before they made the case for doing so to the public. The September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon provided the pretext the administration would need for making their case. Indeed, many of them perhaps hoped for such an event, a "new Pearl Harbor" as they referred to it in a policy document written by PNAC in 2000. Such an event

would garner public support for the massive increases in military spending the neoconservatives believed was necessary.³

On the very afternoon of September 11, 2001, Rumsfeld directed his staff to look for evidence linking the attacks to Hussein (Anderson 2012:70). It was, however, perfectly well known within the administration that the attacks were most likely perpetrated by al-Qaeda. Still, when the administration met in the small hours of September 12, to the astonishment of counterterrorism advisor Richard Clarke, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were seeking to connect the attacks to Iraq. The afternoon of September 12, Bush met with Clarke personally and insisted that he search for an al-Qaeda-Iraq connection. Clarke insisted that there was no connection, a finding that was confirmed across all departments and intelligence agencies (Clarke 2004:32). On September 21, Bush's daily intelligence briefing stated unequivocally that there was no evidence linking the September 11 attacks to Iraq and that there was little evidence of contact between al-Qaeda and Hussein. What evidence of contact there was indicated an effort to monitor the group, for Hussein saw al-Qaeda as a threat to his government (see Waas 2005). On September 14, the CIA also warned the administration against drawing a connection between Iraq and al-Qaeda, since such contacts were plainly implausible (Anderson 2011:112). But the principals in the administration ignored the intelligence.

At a war council meeting on September 15-16, Wolfowitz attempted to make the case for attacking Iraq, but was rebuffed by Secretary of State Colin Powell, who held that there was no connection between Iraq and al-Qaeda (Woodward 2004:25). The administration's immediate focus remained on the impending war in Afghanistan. But it is clear that the principals intended to turn to Iraq after Afghanistan. At the same war council meeting, while believing the

³ See chapter 8.

administration should focus first on Afghanistan, Cheney expressed interest in going after Hussein (Woodward 2004:25). And on September 20, Bush told British Prime Minister Tony Blair that a war against Iraq should follow the war in Afghanistan (Rose 2004). In October, the State Department established The Future of Iraq Project, which, “contacted and organized over 200 Iraqi engineers, businessmen, lawyers, doctors, and other ‘free Iraqis’ into working groups where they discussed topics concerning post-Saddam Iraq” (Anderson 2012:96-97). On November 21, Bush ordered the Pentagon to begin preparations for an invasion of Iraq (Woodward 2004:1-3, 30).

In December 2001, Bush and senior White House officials began publicly linking al-Qaeda and Iraq on the network news, suggesting that Iraq was in some way responsible for the September 11 attacks. Then, on January 29, 2002, Bush gave his famous “axis of evil” State of the Union address. In his speech, Bush told Americans that terrorists were everywhere in the world—not just Afghanistan—plotting to attack the United States. He identified North Korea, Iran, and Iraq as threats to global peace, the three countries constituting an “axis of evil.”

North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction. . . . Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror. . . . Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens—leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections—then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world. States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, aiming to threaten the peace of the world. (Bush speech in Ehrenberg et al 2010:60)

Now, in addition to the alleged al-Qaeda-Iraq connection, the administration began claiming that Iraq was developing WMDs, including nuclear weapons, which it might give to terrorists (Ehrenberg et al 2010:59). In February, Powell told the House International Relations Committee that Iraq was pursuing a nuclear weapons program, and between March and October,

according to Anderson, Cheney publicly claimed that Iraq was actively pursuing nuclear weapons at least four times (Anderson 2012:96-98). In an important speech at the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention in August, for instance, Cheney told the audience that “we now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons” and that “Saddam also devised an elaborate program to conceal his active efforts to build chemical and biological weapons” (Ehrenberg et al 2010:77). In one television interview in mid-April, aired in Britain but not in the United States, Bush told an interviewer that “Saddam needs to go.” “The worst thing,” he explained, “that could happen would be to allow a nation like Iraq, run by Saddam Hussein, to develop weapons of mass destruction, and then team up with terrorist organizations so they can blackmail the world. I’m not going to let that happen” (Anderson 2012:99-100).

On May 21, while arguing for a dramatically increased defense budget, Rumsfeld told the Senate Appropriations Committee that “we have to recognize that terrorist networks have relations with terrorist states that have weapons of mass destruction, and that they inevitably are going to get their hands on them, and they would not hesitate one minute in using them. That’s the world we live in.” He claimed terrorists were linked not only to Iraq, but to North Korea, Iran, Libya, Syria, and other nations, warning that “We are going to be living in a period of limited or no warning.” And al-Qaeda was inside the United States and “very well trained” (Suskind 2006:121).

Rumsfeld also authorized a secret bombing campaign against Iraq at this time. The purpose was to provoke a response that could be used as a pretext for war. In April, the United States bombed Iraq in the southern no-flight zones established after the Gulf War. Such bombings were authorized, but only in self-defense against Iraqi ground attacks, and only if necessary and proportionate. However, in May, bombing increased dramatically to 7.3 tons, and

to 10.4 tons in June. It remained steady at 9.5 tons in July before increasing again to 14.1 tons in August (Smith 2005).

On June 1, Bush gave a graduation speech at West Point, outlining what became known as the “Bush doctrine” of preemptive war. Bush explained that the Cold War strategies of deterrence and containment were no longer adequate because “unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.” Invoking the “war on terror,” initiated after the September 11 attacks, Bush explained that the “war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action.” He added that “our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives” (Ehrenberg et al 2010:65-67). This speech was understood by administration officials as an effort to prepare Americans for invading Iraq.

The administration made a definite decision to invade Iraq no later than July 2002, as revealed by the famous Downing Street memo, leaked to the press in 2005. The Downing Street memo, which recorded a July 23 meeting between senior officials in the Bush administration and the British government, revealed, according to British intelligence chief, Sir Richard Dearlove, that “Military action was . . . seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy. The NSC had no patience with the UN route, and no enthusiasm for publishing material on the Iraqi regime’s record” (Ehrenberg et al 2010:68-69). British and American officials also discussed the legal issues related to the invasion. British

officials concluded that self-defense and humanitarian intervention would not be plausible legal justifications. “The [British] attorney general was instructed to consider legal advice with the Foreign Office and Ministry of Defense,” according to Philippe Sands. “The chosen route was to build up the intelligence to support the claim that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, which could provide a potential legal justification. This meant persuading Bush to take the United Nations route, which Blair achieved by working with Colin Powell” (Sands 2005:184).

The administration began a more focused propaganda campaign to sell the war after Labor Day. For this they established the White House Iraq Group (WHIG), which included Rice, presidential advisor Karl Rove, vice presidential advisor Scooter Libby, and White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card Jr. (Woodward 2004:168-169). The purpose of WHIG was, according to deputy press secretary Scott McClellan (2008:142), “to coordinate the marketing of the war to the public.” “[C]onditions looked favorable for the Bush team as it launched its campaign to convince Americans that war with Iraq was inevitable and necessary,” McClellan says. “The script had been finalized with great care over the summer, and now, September 2001 [*sic*],⁴ was the time to begin carrying it out” (McClellan 2008:121). The secret bombing campaign also escalated in September, with bombing increasing sharply to 54.6 tons. In October it declined to 17.7 tons, before increasing to 33.6 tons in November, and then to 53.2 tons in December. Bombing during this time was directed at Iraq’s air defense system, in an apparent effort to weaken it prior to the impending invasion (Smith 2005).

The administration, and Cheney in particular, put tremendous pressure on the CIA to produce the correct narrative about WMDs in Iraq and the connection to al-Qaeda. According to Anderson: “Although vice presidential visits to CIA headquarters had been rare in previous

⁴ The correct year is 2002. This is apparently a typographical error in McClellan’s book. McClellan is referring to the marketing campaign of September 2002, just prior to the 2002 midterm elections.

administrations, Cheney visited the agency's headquarters almost a dozen times, grilling agents and demanding more work on possible leads that eventually would support the administration's claims" (Anderson 2012:104). Cheney and the neoconservatives did not trust the CIA to produce an intelligence analysis on Iraq that would support the administration's case for war.⁵ Thus, after the September 11 attacks, Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, established a covert intelligence unit to provide the right "intelligence" on Iraq. Feith was a loyal protégé of Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Libby, and the covert unit apparently produced the intelligence products that Cheney wanted about an Iraq-al-Qaeda connection, conveniently scrubbing them of contradictory information (Waas 2005).

The administration's propaganda campaign drew from the covert unit's "intelligence" to amplify the two major claims about Iraq they had advanced in the previous months: the Iraq-al-Qaeda connection, and that Iraq had or was developing WMDs, including nuclear weapons. Throughout September, Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, and Rice made several appearances on major network news programs claiming that Iraq posed an imminent threat to the United States, and that it would attack the United States. WHIG also established a connection with Judith Miller of the *New York Times*, who had been publishing stories since the 90s on Iraq's alleged WMD programs. Throughout the autumn of 2002, Miller's stories relied on discredited INC figures and false information fed to her from Cheney's office. The administration then cited her stories to provide ostensibly independent support for their own claims. The national media, with few exceptions, reported uncritically on the Bush administration's case for war, from the

⁵ Cheney alleged that he didn't trust the CIA because it failed to predict Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and the 9/11 attacks. However, that Cheney did not trust the CIA because it failed to predict 9/11 seems unlikely. In January 2001, the Bush administration received several warnings from George Clarke about an imminent al-Qaeda attack, but ignored the issue until April, having shifted their focus to Iraq. Preventing an al-Qaeda attack was simply not a priority of the administration (see Anderson 2012:62-63).

beginning of the sustained propaganda campaign in January to the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003. This and the media's role in persuading the American public to support the war are subject of chapter 9.

The administration's claims throughout 2002 about Iraq's connection to 9/11 and unconventional weapons were based on several subsidiary claims, all known to be false at the time they were made. Cheney had claimed that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons on the basis of a report he received from the CIA—which had received the information from Italian military intelligence—about an Iraqi purchase of “yellowcake” uranium from Niger. Neither the CIA or the State Department thought the report was credible, and a subsequent CIA investigation ordered by Cheney himself also found no evidence of such a purchase. Cheney's office received the CIA's report on the findings, but he continued to cite the yellowcake story as evidence that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons.

Cheney and other officials also claimed that 9/11 hijacker Mohammad Atta had met with an Iraqi intelligence agent in Prague five months before the 9/11 attacks. CIA investigators found no evidence for this meeting and briefed Cheney accordingly, but he continued to present the fabled meeting as evidence linking Iraq to 9/11. The story's source was Feith's covert intelligence unit.

Another source on the al-Qaeda-Iraq connection was a captured al-Qaeda commander named Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi, who told the CIA that Osama bin Laden had sent operatives to Iraq for training in the development of chemical and biological weapons. Al-Libi provided the story to the CIA after its interrogators tortured him. He later recanted his story, affirming what he had previously told the FBI—that there was no affiliation between al-Qaeda and Iraq. Yet, al-Libi's

torture-induced story was used by the Bush administration in speeches beginning in September, 2002, including major speeches at the United Nations (Anderson 2012:115).

Another story used by the administration beginning in September came from an Iraqi political refugee named Rafid Ahmed Alwan, known for years by his codename, Curveball. Alwan told German intelligence officers that he had worked at a mobile biological weapons facility in Iraq in 1998. In reality, the facility was a seed purification plant, satellite photos of the facility did not match Alwan's descriptions, and Alwan was not in Iraq in 1998 (DeFronzo 2010:141-142). The Germans therefore doubted Alwan's story and told the CIA that he was an unreliable source, that he was "crazy," and an alcoholic (Risen 2006:117-119).

Finally, Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the INC, fed false information on Iraq's alleged WMDs to the CIA, along with other INC members (DeFronzo 2010:139-140). Chalabi and the INC were strongly favored by the neoconservatives and Cheney to govern Iraq after Hussein was overthrown, but were not trusted by the CIA to provide reliable information about Iraq.

On September 7, in a speech delivered in Cincinnati, Ohio, Bush asserted, without evidence, that Iraq was six months away from developing nuclear weapons. Then, in a prime-time address to the nation on the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, he warned Americans that Iraq posed an imminent threat to the United States and the world. On September 12, the president addressed the United Nations, claiming that Iraq had attempted to purchase aluminum tubes that would be used to enrich uranium, and that Iraq would possess nuclear weapons within one year. He also claimed Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons. According to Bush, all of this meant that Iraq was in breach of United Nations Security Council resolutions implemented after the Gulf War barring Iraq from possessing WMDs. According to Bush, military force would therefore be necessary to enforce the resolutions if Hussein did not comply.

Five days after Bush's UN address, on September 16, Iraq agreed to unconditional inspections of Iraq.

On September 4, Bush invited 18 senior members of the House and Senate to the White House where he made his case for war against Iraq. He asked them to support a resolution that would authorize military force, and to vote on it before congressmembers left Washington to campaign for the 2002 midterm elections (Woodward 2004:169-170). In this, the administration's goal was to put pressure on Congress to support a resolution authorizing war by making the war a campaign issue. According to Bob Woodward, Cheney and Rice thought "The president should demand quick passage of a resolution so voters would know before the election where every congressman and senator stood on Saddam Hussein and his dangerous regime" (Woodward 2004:165).

Meanwhile, Tenet attempted to persuade the Senate intelligence committee that Iraq possessed WMDs and had restarted its nuclear program. Skeptical Democratic senators requested to see a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) outlining the evidence behind the administration's claims. Tenet admitted that one did not exist, but had the CIA prepare one after the Democratic senators on the Senate intelligence committee wrote the president a letter demanding to see one. The NIE on Iraq was given to the chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, Robert Graham, on October 1. Under intense pressure from the administration and the committee, Tenet had the document prepared in only three weeks, whereas NIE estimates normally take several months to produce. The NIE reproduced the administration's assertions about the al-Qaeda connection and WMDs, including the claim that Iraq could produce nuclear weapons within six months to year. Yet, the NIE also contained dissenting views from the intelligence community that seriously challenged the view that Iraq had WMD (Pillar 2011:73). The Democratic senators

who saw the NIE attempted to alert the public that it contradicted the administration's public claims. But to sway public opinion and Congress in favor of the resolution, Condoleezza Rice asked Tenet to call the *New York Times* and tell a reporter that the CIA supported the administration's claims. He did, telling the *Times* that "There is no inconsistency between our view of Saddam's growing threat and the view expressed by the President" (Cramer and Duggan 2012:206).

The propaganda campaign succeeded. On October 11, Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq. Most of Congress was not able to see the actual NIE given to the intelligence committee. Instead, they were given a white paper summary that omitted dissenting views found in the NIE and conveyed consensus and certainty on the threat of Iraq. Indeed, the white paper was not based on the NIE at all (Cramer and Duggan 2012:206). In the House of Representatives, the bill passed 296 to 133 in favor of the resolution, and in the Senate, 77 to 23 in favor. On DeFronzo's count, "About 97 percent of Republican representatives and 39 percent of Democratic representatives approved of the war resolution" and "98 percent of Republican senators and 57 percent of Democratic senators [voted] for the bill" (DeFronzo 2010:143). Senior Democrats in Congress, including those seeking to run for president in 2008, supported the resolution. Along with other Democratic politicians, they feared being seen as "soft" on terrorism or on Iraq, especially right before congressional elections. For, at that point, most Americans seemed to support a war against Iraq (DeFronzo 2010:143-144). The Bush administration and the media had succeeded in convincing most of them that Iraq was in some way responsible for 9/11, and that military force should be used to overthrow Hussein's regime.

After eight weeks of tense negotiations, on November 8, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1441. Drafted jointly by the United States and Britain, the resolution gave Iraq a “final opportunity” to dismantle its alleged WMD programs, and to comply with the 1991 Security Council Resolution 687, which was supposed to ensure that Iraq disarmed itself of WMDs after the Gulf War. Resolution 1441 threatened “serious consequences” if Iraq was found to be in breach of past obligations to disarm, but it did not authorize states “to use all necessary means” to enforce compliance (Sands 2005:185). As Sands (2005:185-193) cogently argues, Resolution 1441 also did not authorize the use of force on the basis of earlier Security Council resolutions, particularly Resolutions 678 (November 1990) and 687, which authorized force to expel Iraq from Kuwait, and to disarm Iraq, respectively. But academics in the United States and Britain would later argue that these earlier resolutions in conjunction with Resolution 1441 authorized force against Iraq.⁶

Hussein had already agreed to unconditional weapons inspections in September, and in December, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) arrived in Iraq for 60 days of inspections. More intrusive than the inspections regime of the 1990s, they were to be unconditional and could be carried out at any location without notice. Hans Blix, head of UNMOVIC, was to report on its findings on January 27.

The Bush administration apparently had no intention of waiting for the UN to arrive at a conclusion about Iraq’s WMDs, or working within the framework of the Security Council. According to Feith’s account of the December 18 NSC meeting, the administration did not believe that Hussein was cooperating with the UN inspectors. The administration maintained that Iraq had provided an inadequate declaration of its WMD capabilities to UNMOVIC (December

⁶ On American legal scholars who used this argument to support invading Iraq, see chapter 10.

8), allowing them to claim that Hussein was hiding something, in breach of Resolution 1441. War was thus seen as “inevitable,” as Bush put it (Feith 2008:338-343). On another occasion, Rumsfeld stated that it was actually impossible for Iraq not to have WMDs; if the UN didn’t find any, it was because Hussein had refused to cooperate in the weapons inspections.

On January 27, 2003, the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) and UNMOVIC reported the preliminary results of the ongoing inspections in Iraq to the UN. Mohamed ElBaradei, a respected Egyptian diplomat, was the director general of the IAEA, responsible for nuclear weapons inspections. Blix’s UNMOVIC searched for biological and chemical weapons. ElBaradei and Blix reported that there was no evidence that Iraq had WMDs (Blix 2003; ElBaradei 2003). Blix cautioned that the inspections did not rule out the possibility that there were WMDs and called for ongoing inspections. Less cautious than Blix, ElBaradei also called for further inspections, which he said would provide “credible assurance” that Iraq did not possess a nuclear weapons program. ElBaradei also debunked Bush’s claim made during his September UN speech that Iraq had purchased aluminum tubes to create centrifuges; in fact, the tubes were used to build small rockets. At this stage, then, there simply was no evidence that Iraq had WMDs (see Blix 2004:138-140). This was important since UNMOVIC had inspected sites recommended by US intelligence thought to be the most likely to turn up evidence (Cramer and Duggan 2012:207-208).

The day after Blix and ElBaradei reported to the United Nations, Bush gave his second State of the Union speech. He again made the case for war against Iraq, contradicting what Blix and ElBaradei reported the day before: he repeated the aluminum tubes myth, the false yellowcake story, and emphasized that Iraq was aiding al-Qaeda and might provide the organization with WMDs. Hussein was not disarming, according to Bush, but “deceiving.” If

Iraq did not disarm, Bush told Americans, then the United States would invade. Yet, on January 31, in another meeting with Tony Blair, Bush told him that there would be an invasion with or without UN approval, and whether or not inspectors found WMDs (Anderson 2012:121-122).

In a last-ditch effort to gain international support for the impending invasion, the administration sent Powell to the United Nations on February 5, where he delivered his famous speech on Iraq. Echoing Bush, he repeated the administration's lies. Iraq was in material breach of Resolution 1441, Powell asserted, because Hussein was deliberately hiding its WMD programs from the UN inspectors. Citing the same flawed "intelligence" sources—the NIE and al-Libi, though he didn't mention the yellowcake story—Powell advanced the familiar claims about mobile biological weapons factories, a nuclear weapons program, and Iraqi government support for al-Qaeda. It turns out that Powell "was never informed about al-Libi, and had no idea that many intelligence officers felt his statements on al-Qaeda-Saddam links were nonsense, forced by torture" writes Anderson (2012:123). Indeed, after rejecting a draft of the UN speech from Cheney's office that he called "bullshit," in the days before the speech, Powell accepted a new draft from Tenet, who assured him that he supported its assertions (Anderson 2012:122-123).

The following day, Bush had his turn at the UN where he gave a speech that might have included the "bullshit" from Cheney. The president repeated the familiar claims, but added that "Iraq has developed spray devices that could be used on unmanned aerial vehicles with ranges far beyond what is permitted by the U.N. Security Council. A UAV launched from a vessel off the American coast could reach hundreds of miles inland" to spray biological and chemical weapons on Americans (Bush quoted in Anderson 2012:123). And, "Senior members of Iraqi

intelligence and al-Qaeda have met at least eight times since the early 1990s” (Bush quoted in Anderson 2012:123).

Blix and ElBaradei contradicted such claims again in reports throughout the rest of February and March. On February 14, Blix reported that the ongoing inspections found no stockpiles of WMDs, and that Iraq had improved cooperation with the inspectors (Blix 2004:175-178). On March 3, ElBaradei reported that the documents supporting the yellowcake story were forgeries. And on March 7, Blix reported once again that no WMDs had been found, and that Iraq had largely cooperated with UNMOVIC in announced and unannounced inspections, and in destroying missiles outside of the permissible range set by the Security Council (Blix 2004:208-211).

The inspections and verification reports prevented the Bush administration from gathering support at the Security Council for a new resolution authorizing military force against Iraq. In early 2003, the United States, UK, and Spain sought a Security Council authorization that would declare Iraq in violation of disarmament obligations under Resolution 1441, and that this posed a threat to international security and peace (Kramer, Michalowski, Rothe 2005:61). But on March 5, 2003, the foreign ministers of France, Russia, and Germany met in Paris. They declared that the inspections process had showed increasingly promising results, and that it was possible to disarm Iraq through the inspections process. The foreign ministers also declared that their countries would “not let a proposed resolution pass that would authorize the use of force” (Blix 2004:206). It thus became clear to the administration that they would not be able to pass through a new resolution. The administration waited until the March 7 inspection report to make their decision to invade unilaterally.

After publicly discrediting Blix and UNMOVIC, and bent on war, the administration pressed forward with their plans. On March 17, Bush issued an ultimatum to Iraq. Because all diplomatic options had been exhausted, he alleged, and because Iraq had “uniformly defied Security Council resolutions demanding full disarmament,” Bush demanded that Hussein and his sons leave Iraq within 48 hours, or face an invasion. As Blix and ElBaradei had demonstrated, neither of these claims were true. And while Blix did not say that the Iraqis had cooperated to the letter with resolution 1441 (Blix’s major concern was that Iraq had not acted “immediately” and “proactively,” as required by 1441), his report did not support the notion that Iraq had “uniformly” defied the United Nations. In fact, Iraq, aware that the United States and Britain were positioning military forces for invasion in neighboring countries, had largely cooperated with UNMOVIC in a vain effort to prevent the invasion. Though he held Iraq to the highest standards regarding its disarmament obligations under Resolution 1441, Blix acknowledged Iraq’s cooperation in his February 14 and March 7 reports to the Security Council. Moreover, the Bush administration rejected an invitation by the Iraqis to allow thousands of US troops or FBI agents to search Iraq for WMDs (DeFronzo 2010:151).

It was not expected by anyone that Hussein would step down from power, and on March 19, 2003, Bush announced the invasion. The administration gave up working through the United Nations, as it was clear that a resolution supporting the invasion would not be supported by the Security Council. While 49 nations supported the United States in what the administration called a “coalition of the willing,” in many of these countries, most of the population did not support the invasion. World-wide antiwar protests emerged on February 15 after Blix delivered his report to the United Nations. “Over eight million people marched on five continents against a possible war against Iraq,” recounts Anderson. “In the United States, millions of citizens participated in

Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York City. Larger protests were held in Europe: a million in Madrid, more in Rome, and even more in London, the largest demonstration ever in Britain. Indeed, this was the largest global opposition to an American foreign policy in history” (Anderson 2012:127).

Yet, in the United States, most Americans had been convinced by the Bush administration that war was necessary. In February 2003, in the days after Powell’s speech, polls showed that 63 percent of Americans supported the invasion; in March, the number rose slightly to 64 percent.

Conclusion

As Cramer and Duggan argue, it is “highly likely that WMD was not a sincere motive [for the invasion of Iraq]. Instead, it appears WMD was merely an instrumental argument used to mobilize the public for a regime change policy motivated by other reasons . . . predominantly unrelated to WMD.” “We find,” they write, “there is little question the administration, in collusion with the British, fabricated the WMD threat entirely—it was ‘made from whole cloth’” (Cramer and Duggan 2012:202-203). The presentation above supports these conclusions. It is clear the administration did not have credible evidence that Iraq possessed WMDs or that an al-Qaeda-Iraq connection existed, and that it pressured the CIA to produce reports that would ostensibly provide this evidence. (In the case of the al-Qaeda connection, this entailed torturing prisoners to obtain the right information.) At different times administration officials received intelligence briefings and reports from the CIA or from UNMOVIC and the IAEA that contradicted their claims. It is clear that Bush and Cheney willfully ignored such information,

apparently having decided to invade Iraq no later than July 2002, and having discussed doing so as early as the first month the administration was in office. Cheney, Wolfowitz, and Feith likely knew there was no evidence that Iraq had WMDs, explaining their distrust of the CIA and the United Nations. That the CIA knew there was no evidence explains why a NIE was not produced until Democratic senators demanded one, and why the NIE white paper given to Congress was a false representation of the real NIE. That UN inspections failed to reveal WMDs also explains why the administration publicly discredited Blix and UNMOVIC, and didn't let inspectors come to definite conclusions about Iraq's WMD capabilities before declaring war.

The longer history of US-Iraq relations reveals that the key actors in the administration did not sincerely believe that Hussein's past aggression was fundamentally wrong—including chemical and biological weapons attacks against Iranians or Iraqi civilians or aggression against other countries—for many of them, including Rumsfeld, Powell, Khalilzad, Libby, Bolton, and Card, supported Hussein in the Reagan administration, and others, including Condoleezza Rice, supported him in the Bush Sr. administration. The very same people who were calling for a preemptive war to stop a possible Iraqi WMD attack (for which there was no evidence in any case), armed Iraq with WMDs and conventional weapons in the 1980s and supported Hussein's international aggression and terrorism.

If it is uncontroversial that the Bush administration did not wage a preemptive war to prevent an Iraqi WMD attack against the United States, there is more scholarly disagreement about how the many layers of reasons for the invasion are best understood. In the following chapters, I show that the war is explained well by the elite model of war mobilization.

CHAPTER 6

STATE-CAPITALIST IMPERIALISM AND THE IRAQ WAR

In this chapter and the ones that follow I show that a power elite model of war mobilization explains why the Iraq War happened. That is, the model explains why the Bush administration waged the war and why Congress and the general public supported it, even against the pressure of a historically unprecedented anti-war movement.

The explanation is offered in terms of the five components of the model described in chapter 3: state-capitalist imperialism, elite control of politics, imperialist ideology, media propaganda, and elite influence in academia. In five chapters corresponding to each factor, the manifestations of each factor are located in the precipitating events of the war and described in careful detail. Some of these events have already been discussed in chapter 5, but a deeper historical and sociological analysis is offered here and in subsequent chapters. This analysis also shows how the historical instantiations of each factor were causally related to the outcome of the war. In the present chapter on state-capitalist imperialism, events that occurred *after* the initial invasion during the US occupation of Iraq are also analyzed. The reason for this is to describe Bush administration motives for the invasion by considering their prewar occupation plans and how they were actually implemented after the invasion.

State-Capitalist Imperialism and the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq

According to the power elite model of war mobilization, we would expect to see evidence of state-capitalist imperialism in the build-up to the war and in its execution, and evidence that

the imperatives of this institutional configuration were necessary causes, linked in sequential ways to its occurrence. More specifically, we would expect the war to be linked to the maintenance or expansion of the military-industrial complex, including the maintenance or expansion of concentrated decision-making power within the executive branch and increased spending on defense programs. We would expect to see the use of military force to demonstrate military credibility and primacy. We would therefore expect to see false pretexts advanced to hide from public view these institutional motivations and the individual and social class interests in sustaining these institutions within the president's administration. And finally, we would expect to see the international elements of the US imperial system at work: deficit spending to fund the war, and compliant foreign elites to assist the war effort.

The pretexts have already been analyzed in the previous chapter. It is clear that the Iraq War was not a preemptive or preventive war to rid Iraq of WMDs. What then were the real, imperial ambitions of the Bush administration? Scholars have identified two overlapping aspects of the administration's foreign policy that qualify it as imperial. The first is a drive towards global military primacy in which the administration sought to make the United States the world's sole, unrivaled superpower. Two important aspects of this drive for primacy were (a) a desire to increase the power and authority of the executive branch in foreign policy decision-making, and (b) to ensure that US military power was unrivaled (Cramer and Duggan 2012). The other feature of the administration's imperialism was that it sought to open Iraq's economy to American corporations, especially those closely linked to the Bush administration (Juhasz 2006). Doing so would facilitate control of Iraq's oil, which was also understood to be key to US global primacy. These two interrelated imperial motivations are discussed in turn.

A war to assert US primacy.

Cramer and Duggan argue persuasively that the main cause of the Iraq War was a drive to assert US imperial primacy. The key architects of the war, Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld, they argue, were ideological primacists.¹ Cheney and Rumsfeld—whom Cheney recruited to be Secretary of Defense—brought extensive foreign policy experience to the administration and were among the principal architects of the war in the administration. Bush did not have foreign policy experience, but deferred to Cheney in a division of labor whereby Cheney managed foreign policy, and Bush focused mostly on his domestic agenda (Warshaw 2009). Cramer and Duggan argue that “Throughout their careers they [Cheney and Rumsfeld] focused on what they perceived as two crucial ingredients for achieving US primacy: first that the US president needed to be unencumbered in the pursuit of US foreign policy goals (free from interference by Congress, the UN, the public and the press) and second the United States must have by far the most technologically advanced and superior military force in the world” (Cramer and Duggan 2012:230-231). The analyses offered here and in the following chapters on the social backgrounds of the key architects of the war support Cramer and Duggan’s argument.

As discussed in the previous chapter, regime change in Iraq was discussed at the first National Security Council (NSC) meetings of the Bush administration in January and February 2001. Ron Suskind’s account of these meetings—told from the perspective of the administration’s Treasury Secretary, Paul O’Neill, who was present at the meetings and assisted Suskind in writing the account—casts light on the administration’s purposes in invading Iraq.

¹ “Primacist” corresponds to Western’s “hardline unilateralist” category, mentioned in chapter 3, page 61. The primacist ideology—or unilateralism, as I will refer to it—of the Bush administration is discussed in detail in chapter 8.

After the first meeting, according to O'Neill, where NSC members were given various tasks towards destabilizing Hussein's regime, he received a budget planning memo from Rumsfeld titled, "Talking Points, FY01 and FY02-07 Budget Issues." In the memo Rumsfeld criticized the Clinton administration's cuts to the defense budget and called for increases in defense spending, "between \$255 billion and \$842 billion over the next five years." Such increases were necessary to carry out the changes in defense policy needed to meet the new security "threats" of the post-Cold War period, according to Rumsfeld. As Suskind summarizes the memo:

The premise . . . was that threats to U.S. security had taken root and grown quickly in the years since the globe's bipolar orderliness had dissolved. As new regional powers with intense hostility to the United States "are arming to deter us," Rumsfeld wrote, trade in advanced technologies has made it possible for even "the poorest nations on earth to rapidly acquire the most destructive military weapons ever devised." This dire prospect of a planet teeming with nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons—and, it was assumed, a desire to use them on the United States—is unavoidable, a *fait accompli*, the memo asserted. "We cannot prevent them from doing so." (Suskind 2004:81)

Suskind adds that "Rumsfeld listed Iraq, along with China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea, as moving down this path—and then noted an observation of former Defense Secretary William Cohen, in the Clinton administration, that a missile threat to the United States could emerge in one year" (Suskind 2004:81-82). All of this, according to Rumsfeld, would "limit our ability to apply military power" (Suskind 2004:81), and "deter us from bringing our conventional or nuclear power to bear in a regional crisis" (Suskind 2004:77).

Suskind observes that Rumsfeld's nascent defense strategy reflected neoconservative strategic thinking during the 1990s, and Andy Marshall's "Revolution in Military Affairs" (RMA) school of thought, which called for transforming the American military to utilize "smaller, swifter, technologically augmented force on land and sea, supported by precision long-range weapons and a sophisticated, intelligence-driven air attack" (Suskind 2004:79) capability.

Both the neoconservatives and RMA advocates stressed the need to dramatically increase defense spending in order to “modernize” the military. As discussed at length in chapter 8, the neoconservatives saw these objectives as necessary to maintain global US primacy; that is, to prevent challenges to American power and global hegemony. In Rumsfeld’s version, it was necessary to prevent the spread of WMD and long-range missile technology that could be used against the United States, and to “dissuade nations abroad from challenging our interests” (Suskind 2004:82).

Regime change in Iraq fit into this picture because it would serve as a demonstration of US power and military credibility; it would “dissuade” other nations from acquiring WMD or long-range missiles and challenging US “interests.” As Rumsfeld put it at the second NSC meeting on February 1, 2001, “Imagine what the region would look like without Saddam and with a regime that’s aligned with U.S. interests. . . . It would change everything in the region and beyond it. It would demonstrate what U.S. policy is all about” (Suskind 2004:85). Later, in July 2001, Rumsfeld made a similar argument: “If Saddam’s regime were ousted, we would have a much-improved position in the region and elsewhere A major success with Iraq would enhance U.S. credibility and influence throughout the region” (Butt 2019:274). The exact meaning of these statements is ambiguous, but in the context of neoconservative and hardline defense strategy, they strongly suggest that a principal reason for invading Iraq was to assert US power and thus preserve global military primacy. This is in fact how O’Neill interpreted Rumsfeld’s remarks and the administration’s focus on Iraq:

O’Neill thought about Rumsfeld’s memo. It described how everything fit together. The sudden focus on Saddam Hussein made sense only if the broader ideology—of a need to “dissuade” others from creating asymmetric threats—were to be embraced. That was the *why*.

A weak but increasingly obstreperous Saddam might be useful as a demonstration model of America’s new, unilateral resolve. If it could effectively

be shown that he possessed, or was trying to build weapons of mass destruction—creating an “asymmetric threat,” in the neoconservative parlance, to U.S. power in the region—his overthrow would help “dissuade” other countries from doing the same. (Suskind 2004:85-86)

Demonstrating US military power and credibility in a war against Iraq would also add to the power of the executive branch and the military-industrial complex, reinforcing the “imperial” presidency that was challenged during the Vietnam War and Watergate scandal (Savage 2007; Record 2012:132). Restoring presidential authority in defense policy was in fact a central objective of the Bush administration. Cheney and Rumsfeld shared with the neoconservatives a view of presidential authority in which the president should be unencumbered in decisions related to foreign and defense policy, whether by Congress, the Supreme Court, intelligence agencies, the media, or international treaties and organizations. According to Savage’s assessment of Cheney and the administration’s views on presidential power,

Cheney was determined to expand the power of the presidency. He wanted to reduce the authority of Congress and the courts and to expand the ability of the commander in chief and his top advisers to govern with maximum flexibility and minimum oversight. He hoped to enlarge the zone of secrecy around the executive branch, to reduce the power of Congress to restrict presidential action, to undermine the limits imposed by international treaties, to nominate judges who favored a stronger presidency, and to impose great White House control of the permanent workings of government. And Cheney’s vision of expanded executive power was not limited to his and Bush’s tenure in office. Rather, Cheney wanted to permanently alter the constitutional balance of American government, establishing powers that future presidents would be able to wield as well. (Savage 2007:8-9)

Cheney’s view on presidential authority and national security in particular was shaped by the fallout of the Nixon administration’s secret bombing of Cambodia in the late stages of the war against Vietnam. In particular, the 1973 War Powers Act was intended to restrain the president’s ability to use military force without notifying Congress. Cheney subsequently embraced a “unitary executive” theory of executive power, “which interprets article 2 of the U.S.

Constitution and vesting of executive power in the president as granting the president complete control of the executive branch and its declared functions, including of force as commander in chief,” according to Record. “The theory regards virtually any congressional attempt to limit the president’s control of the executive branch or to alter executive branch policies in the national security arena as unconstitutional interference” (Record 2007:134).

By expediting a massive mobilization for permanent war (the war on terror), and major military invasions and occupations of two countries, the Bush administration cemented into place “a perpetual emergency that both invited and mandated an expansion of presidential authority that even Nixon would have envied,” Record observes (2007:135). As the occupation of Iraq revealed, moreover, the Iraq War gave to the president of the United States neocolonial administrative control over an entire country. Combined with the massive increases in defense spending, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq represented vast expansions of the president’s administrative and decision-making power, both domestically and internationally.

US primacy and Iraq’s oil.

As many writers have demonstrated (e.g., Klare 2012; Bacevich 2016), it has been a long-standing American policy to secure access to or control of oil in the Middle East, given its central role in the global industrial economy. For the Bush administration, it is most likely that control of Iraqi oil was understood by the principal architects of the Iraq War as part of a broader plan for global imperial domination, and an opportunity to increase Iraq’s oil exports to the United States. This interpretation is the one best supported by the imperial grand strategy

articulated by administration officials, prewar planning documents, and policies actually implemented after the invasion.

The imperial grand strategy of the Bush administration is discussed in greater detail in chapter 8 under the heading of imperial ideology. For now, it is noted that one of the most important articulations of the administration's global strategy—the 1992 Defense Policy Guidance drafted by Paul Wolfowitz, “Scooter” Libby, and Zalmay Khalilzad for then Secretary of Defense Cheney—included the view that US strategy “requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power.” It also identified “access to vital raw materials, primarily Persian Gulf oil” (Ehrenberg et al 2010:10-11) as a key US national interest.

As also discussed in chapter 5, upon taking office Cheney headed an energy task force that in early 2001 had already begun preparing contracts for dozens of corporations to extract Iraq's oil and natural gas. Later, six months prior to the invasion, the administration consulted with US oil company executives on Iraq's oil, including Philip Carroll, former CEO of Shell's US oil division and Fluor Corporation, and Rob McKee, former executive of Conoco Phillips, then chairman of a Halliburton subsidiary. According to Juhasz, the administration was also advised by the State Department Future of Iraq Project's Oil and Energy Working Group. The Working Group included a US-educated Iraqi oil engineer, Ibrahim Bahr al-Uloum, who later served as Iraqi Minister of Oil during the occupation (Juhasz 2006:253). The Working Group did not advocate the full privatization of Iraq's oil, however. Instead, it recommended “production sharing agreements” (PSA) for new oil fields, and state ownership of existing oil fields under Iraq's National Oil Company (Juhasz 2006:254-256). Production sharing agreements largely privatize oil production, and lock in contracts for several decades. The CPA Orders discussed in

the next section provided the legal framework for PSAs to operate, and the US-backed Iraqi president Allawi implemented the PSAs for newly discovered oil fields, of which it was believed by the Bush administration there would be many.

Like the privatization of reconstruction, security, and other services, the privatization of Iraqi oil led to massive profits for American oil companies. “Three months after the invasion,” Juhasz recounts, “Chevron received one of the first contracts to market Iraqi oil. It has since signed subsequent longer-term deals with Iraq’s State Oil Marketing Organization, as have ExxonMobil and Marathon, among others” (Juhasz 2006:253). In one estimate, by August 2005, Iraq was exporting more than 50 percent of its oil the United States, “the majority of which was delivered by Chevron, ExxonMobil, and Marathon, with the rest delivered by Shell and BP” (Juhasz 2006:253). US oil imports from Iraq reached nearly record levels in the months and years after the invasion, in terms of total barrels-per-day exports, and daily averages. A degree of regularity of exports was also achieved that had not been attained in the past (Juhasz 2006:252).

The state-capitalist restructuring of Iraq’s economy.

There were also important economic motivations for the invasion of Iraq. As documented in rich detail by Antonia Juhasz (2006), the Bush administration sought to transform Iraq’s economy from a state-managed or centrally planned economy into what they called a “liberal,” “free market” economy. This would be achieved by removing protectionist barriers to trade and investment, privatizing most of Iraq’s state-owned industries and services, reducing taxes, and other measures. While the administration described this as an effort to introduce “free enterprise” into Iraq, it is clear that, in reality, the invasion and occupation actually served to open Iraq to the

Pentagon-managed state-capitalist economy. Thus the war served to replace one state-managed economy with another—one that approximated a neocolonial arrangement—rather than to introduce a liberal capitalism that depends principally on competitive market and price mechanisms for the distribution of goods and services.

On the organization of Iraq's economy, the intentions of the administration are evident from their prewar planning, and the actions taken after the invasion during the military occupation to implement their plans.

The invasion phase lasted from March 19 to May 1, 2003, and was followed by a period of formal occupation that lasted until June 28, 2004, at which point a transitional Iraqi government took control of Iraq. During the occupation phase, the United States established the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to govern Iraq. The CPA was managed exclusively by L. Paul Bremer III, a power elite figure who worked for the State Department for 23 years before becoming a managing director of Kissinger Associates, a secretive consultancy firm that specializes in foreign relations, founded by Henry Kissinger in 1982. He then became chairman and CEO of an insurance company specializing in risk assessment and insurance for multinational corporations operating in politically unstable countries. Bremer was a firm believer in national privatization and the corporate globalization it supports, and understood well the negative political responses to it in countries where it had been introduced (Juhasz 2006:191-192). It is for this ideological conviction that the Bush administration chose him to administer the CPA. He was chosen to replace Jay Garner, head of the CPA's predecessor organization, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, probably because Garner opposed the administration's plans for radical privatization of Iraq's economy.

This planning began as early as October 2001, when the administration established the State Department Future of Iraq Project. The project's Economic and Infrastructure Working Group produced a report entitled "An Economic Empowerment System," which advocated the privatization of Iraq's economy (Ehrenberg et al 2010:364-365). Concrete plans for privatization were developed as early as February 2003, when the US Agency for International Development (USAID) produced a report for Bearing Point, Inc. outlining a plan for restructuring the economy. The planning document, entitled "Moving the Iraqi Economy from Recovery to Sustainable Growth," suggested "a broad-based Mass Privatization Program." It explained that contractors would support "private sector involvement in strategic sectors, including privatization, asset sales, concessions, leases and management contracts, especially in the oil and supporting industries." After a year, the contractors would also help design "a comprehensive income tax system consistent with current international practice" (King 2001). Bremer's CPA implemented something approximating the USAID/Bearing Point plan, and USAID awarded Bearing Point a sole-source (non-competitive) contract in July 2003 to assist the restructuring process (Juhasz 2006:194-196). However, the CPA restructuring was much more rapid and heavy-handed than the original USAID plan suggested it would be. Nor was the restructuring in accord with "current international practice."

Bremer implemented 100 CPA "Orders" to replace Iraq's existing laws and begin the restructuring process. The Orders restructured Iraq's economy and political system specifically to advantage foreign corporations. Order 2, for instance, which disbanded the Iraqi military, transferred security work to US contractors and the US military. This plan, too, was designed by a private consulting company—Ronco Consulting Corporation of Washington DC—contracted by the Department of Defense (Juhasz 2006:202). Order 12 eliminated all protective barriers to

foreign competition, opening Iraq to a flood of US wheat exports. Order 37 eliminated Iraq's progressive tax rate, replacing it with a flat tax for corporations and individuals. The most important order regarding the economy was Order 39, which privatized all of Iraq's state-owned industries, with the exception of oil. Order 39, Provision 2 allowed 100 percent foreign ownership of Iraqi businesses. Provision 3 called for "national treatment," described by Juhasz as "a standard element in trade and investment agreements, which restricts governments from preferencing domestic business or workers over foreign businesses or workers" (Juhasz 2006:217). The result of this provision was that scores of US corporations were awarded billions of dollars in contracts for Iraq's postwar reconstruction. And Provision 4 allowed unrestricted repatriation of profits.

The CPA Orders also exposed as a lie the Bush administration's claim that it sought to bring democracy to Iraq, often cited as a reason for the invasion (e.g. Record 2010). Several of the Orders were explicitly undemocratic. Order 14 put Iraq's media under CPA control, implementing effective censorship. Two major newspapers, *al-Arabiya* and *al-Hawza*, were closed. The nominal purpose of the closures and media censorship was to close outlets alleged to incite violence against the CPA. Ironically, the closure of *al-Hawza*, the paper of Shi'a leader Muqtada al-Sadr, led directly to demonstrations and calls for terrorist acts against the CPA (Juhasz 2006:205-206). Order 62 barred opposition candidates from running for office against the occupation, the CPA, or its laws. Orders 57 and 77 placed American representatives in key decision-making positions in each government ministry for five-year terms. Order 97 created a commission that could disqualify political candidates and parties, and Order 100 transferred all government authority to an American-favored Iraqi, Iyad Allawi.

Allawi became interim prime minister on June 28, 2004. He was selected by the Bush administration because he was a reliable anti-Hussein opposition leader with CIA ties. (Like Chalabi, Allawi had worked with the CIA in an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1996.) Allawi did not independently govern Iraq, however. The CPA created an interim constitution based on the CPA Orders that prevented Allawi's interim government from modifying them until elections were held, which was supposed to be no later than January 2005 (Juhasz 2006:241-243). When elections were finally held, they were widely regarded as illegitimate. They took place under a declared state of martial law; were plagued by suicide bombings and eight candidates were assassinated; thousands of candidates delayed announcing their campaigns until the day of the elections to avoid assassination; elections were boycotted by Sunnis; and there were no election monitors. Moreover, the CIA interfered with the elections in an effort to get Allawi elected (Hersh 2005).

After the national elections, on January 30, 2005, Jalal Talabani became president, and Ibrahim al-Jaafari prime minister. Both were US-backed elites. After taking office, they worked with the Bush administration in the drafting of Iraq's new constitution, on which there was to be a public referendum. The constitution they wrote locked in the CPA Orders and was not completed until the day of the referendum. Thus, most Iraqis had never read it, and had no idea what they were voting for. Still, believing they were making a referendum on a democratic future for Iraq, many Iraqis voted for the new constitution. In reality, they were voting for the permanent imperial exploitation of their economy by American and multinational corporations.

Corporations with extensive links to the Bush administration's principals profited handsomely from federal government contracts in Iraq. These were awarded by USAID and the State and Defense departments, to several corporations, including those with strong links to the

Bush administration: Halliburton, Lockheed Martin, Bechtel, and Chevron.² Contracting corporations provided numerous services, including the consulting services already mentioned, logistical support for the military, security, transportation, base construction, housing and dining services, oil infrastructure repair, and the post-invasion infrastructure reconstruction projects. One of the first corporations to be awarded a contract in Iraq was Halliburton, which received a \$7 billion contract on March 7, 2003, before the invasion began (Rothe 2006:221). Halliburton's profits increased dramatically from contract work in Iraq (McNulty 2004). Its revenues rose from \$12.5 billion in 2002, to \$16.2 billion in 2003 (U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission 2004:22). Similarly, Lockheed Martin's revenues rose from \$26.5 billion in 2002, to \$36.8 billion in 2003 (Lockheed Martin 2004); Bechtel's revenues rose from \$11.6 billion in 2002 to \$16.3 billion in 2003 (Juhasz 2006:138); Chevron's 2002 revenues rose from \$1.13 billion in 2002 to \$7.23 billion in 2003 (ChevronTexaco 2004:4). Many of the contracts awarded to these companies were the cost-plus contracts described in chapter 3, which encourage cost overruns, and guarantee fixed profits.

The global imperial system.

Without the existing imperial apparatus bequeathed to the Bush administration by previous administrations, the invasion and occupation would not have been possible. Previous administrations, which of course included members of the Bush administration itself, left an already massive global military apparatus that was easily mobilized for the Iraq War: 1.45 million soldiers, and 725 global military bases in 130 countries to which they could be deployed;

² Such connections are the subject of chapter 7.

and numbers of aircraft carriers, destroyers, nuclear submarines, fighter jets, and bombers unrivaled by any other nation. Compliant foreign elites in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia allowed the United States to establish military bases in those countries during the Gulf War that were used to station troops for the invasion (Jervis 2012:37). And finally, the federal government was already running a deficit prior to the invasion, but was able to finance the war without raising taxes through foreign borrowing. Thus the war was financed through borrowing that by 2007 had added nearly \$1 trillion to a total national deficit of \$9 trillion (Stiglitz and Bilmes 2008:53).

Conclusion

As a manifestation of state-capitalist imperialism, the invasion of Iraq exhibits two significant characteristics: it was intended to shore up American military power through a demonstration of resolve that would hypothetically deter future challenges to US power; and it would concentrate decision power in the executive branch by creating, along with the invasion of Afghanistan, a “permanent emergency” that could justify sweeping executive authority and increasingly large military spending budgets. The invasion and occupation also gave the President neocolonial control over the entire economy and political system of Iraq. The occupation, in turn, engendered a windfall of state subsidized profits for American corporations contracted by the Pentagon, State Department, and USAID. The overarching objective of the invasion, then, to assert US primacy, encompassed political objectives that correspond to the two major structural imperatives of the military-industrial complex: increasing decision power for the

executive branch and Pentagon managers by increasing resources for the Pentagon, and channeling profits to the corporate sector.

Because these objectives would not have been widely accepted, either by the international community or by the American public, the administration marketed the war as an extension of the war on terror, and as a defensive maneuver against a future WMD attack. The administration's arguments and specific claims in justifying the war were thus intended to skirt traditional checks on the use of military force, both domestically, and internationally.

Domestically, the administration could rely on traditional propaganda techniques and a compliant media to market the war (this is the subject of chapter 9). Internationally, because they knew that the United Nations Security Council would not permit the United States to invade Iraq on the basis of demonstrably false pretexts, the administration was prepared to reject multilateralism in order to achieve predetermined goals in Iraq. That the public rationale for invading Iraq was a cover for different objectives was also evident when the administration refused to allow the UN weapons inspections process to conclude, and when it publicly criticized the inspectors after they consistently failed to corroborate and publicly rejected the administration's WMD claims.

The material objectives in invading Iraq reflected the priorities of the key architects of the Iraq War within the Bush administration. In the next chapter, their imperial ambitions are explained as outcomes of their social positions in the institutional and class structure of American society, which will also be shown to be necessary conditions for the 2003 Iraq War. State-capitalist imperialism cannot be understood separately from these societal arrangements.

CHAPTER 7

ELITE CONTROL OF POLITICS AND THE IRAQ WAR

In this chapter, I show that the imperial motivations for the Iraq War described in the last chapter stem from the specific socio-economic and political backgrounds of key administration officials involved in planning and starting the Iraq War.

As explained in chapter 3, because executive branch officials come overwhelmingly from the world of corporate management, and military-industrial firms are centrally located in the corporate economy (in terms of directorate interlocks and working relationships with major commercial banks), the president and other high-level officials are likely to have internalized an ideology that emphasizes the political and economic need to project American military power in international affairs. High-level officials may also have large incentives to start wars and sustain high levels of military spending in order to create profit-making opportunities for the corporations they come from before taking office, or to benefit the broader corporate sector on which they depend for political support. Otherwise, government officials use wars to extend geopolitical power and their own personal decision-making power.

The power projection, corporate war profiteering, and US oil imports facilitated by the Iraq War have already been described. In this chapter, then, I analyze the backgrounds of key Bush administration officials, focusing especially on (a) prior executive branch and defense positions, (b) policy-planning network connections between key Bush administration officials, and (c) the corporate backgrounds of these officials. According to a power elite model of war mobilization, we would expect to find these officials had prior organizational affiliations and occupations that shaped their thinking about American foreign policy and Iraq. In the case of six

officials reviewed in this chapter, it appears that prior government posts in the foreign policy bureaucracy, corporate connections to military-industrial and energy firms, and associations with neoconservative policy planning networks were the most important factors influencing their thinking about foreign policy and Iraq.

Social, Political, and Corporate Backgrounds of the Key Architects

Within the Bush administration, among the key architects of the Iraq War were George Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Condoleezza Rice, and Colin Powell. These were the figures most involved in war planning and organizing public support (Mann 2004). While others were also involved in these efforts, such as I. Lewis Libby, Douglas Feith, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Richard Perle, in this section I focus on these six officials, as they were the most powerful decision makers within the administration, and represent a wide range of different career paths into the administration. At this stage of the analysis, I am principally concerned with the social, political, and corporate management backgrounds of these officials, rather than their specific beliefs and ideologies, which are discussed more in the next chapter. The point here is to show how the imperial objectives of the Iraq War resulted from the prior institutional affiliations of these officials.

George Walker Bush.

Born into the power elite, Bush was the son of George H. W. Bush, the forty-first president of the United States. He attended the prestigious Phillips Andover Academy in

Massachusetts before earning his undergraduate degree in history at Yale, and then an MBA from Harvard Business School. Like his father, he began his career in the oil industry. In 1977 he founded a small oil exploration company, which was later acquired by Spectrum 7 Energy Corporation in 1984. In 1986, Spectrum 7 merged with Harken Energy. Bush was retained as chairman and CEO of Spectrum 7, and then as a board member and consultant for Harken (Juhasz 2006:40). In 1989, he bought the Texas Rangers baseball team, which he sold in 1998, earning \$14.5 million in profits. Bush began his political career working for his father's presidential campaign, where he helped promote his father among the Christian right. In 1994, Bush became the governor of Texas, winning the election for the office again in 1998. As governor, he implemented the familiar Republican policies of the neoliberal period: low taxes, cuts to state spending, and corporate deregulation. As a result, by 2000, Houston became the smoggiest city in the United States, and Texas became 49th and 50th in taxes collected and per capita state spending, respectively. Income inequality dramatically increased (Juhasz 2006:40).

In his 2000 presidential campaign, Bush worked closely with campaign fundraisers and businessmen Bradford Freeman and Craig Stapleton. Freeman's partner Ron Spogli was Bush's roommate at Harvard and Stapleton had raised money for Bush's father and invested with Bush in the Texas Rangers. Freeman was also a trustee at Stanford University, and was friends with former Secretary of State, George P. Shultz. Shultz was on the faculty of the Hoover Institution, a conservative think tank that promoted the politics of the Reagan-Bush political tradition. The Hoover Institution staffed Bush's campaign team and encouraged him to appeal to the conservative, Reagan-Bush political ideology that it represented. Bush was already connected to this political network through his father, and to solidify his conservative credentials among Reagan conservatives, he asked Cheney to be his vice president running mate (Warshaw

2009:21-24). After initially declining the offer, and managing Bush's vice president search, Cheney accepted Bush's invitation.

Richard (Dick) Bruce Cheney.

Bush also chose Cheney because he could bring to the campaign something Bush did not have: foreign policy knowledge and experience. After beginning studies at Yale and then dropping out, Cheney earned bachelor's and master's degrees in political science from the University of Wyoming. Cheney then began a long career in the federal government. One of his earliest positions was as Donald Rumsfeld's assistant in the Nixon and Ford administrations. When Rumsfeld became Defense Secretary under Ford, Cheney took his place as White House Chief of Staff. Then, after the Ford administration left the White House, Cheney was elected Wyoming's sole congressperson in the House of Representatives, a position he held from 1979 to 1989, consistently voting in favor conservative policies favored by the corporate rich. He is widely regarded as a "deficit hawk," though this label does not accurately describe Cheney's voting record on military spending. He is said to have joked that, as congressman, he never met a weapons program he didn't like.

Cheney moved up the ranks in Congress, becoming more interested in foreign policy. He served on the House Intelligence Committee, and on the committee that investigated the Iran-contra scandal, where he defended Reagan's illegal sales of weapons to Iran to support Nicaraguan terrorists on the grounds that the president should be unencumbered by Congress in managing national security. He was then appointed Defense Secretary by George H. W. Bush, and was instrumental in planning US involvement in the Gulf War. As Defense Secretary, he

began to forge stronger connections to the corporate world of defense contractors. “For example . . . his Defense Department paid the Halliburton Corporation \$9 million to study whether the military’s logistics services should be privatized. After Halliburton determined that the services should be privatized, it was awarded the first privatization contract” (Juhasz 2006:102). Then, from 1995 to 2000, Cheney was the CEO of Halliburton, during which time the corporation dramatically increased its government contracts (and thus its profits) under the Clinton administration.¹ It is also worth noting that Cheney’s wife, Lynne Cheney, served on Lockheed Martin’s board of directors from 1994 to 2000. Bruce Jackson, formerly the vice president of Lockheed Martin, was recruited to draft the Bush administration’s foreign policy platform during the 2000 election campaign, and was a cofounder of the lobbying group Committee for the Liberation of Iraq (Juhasz 2006:139), as well as a board member of Project for a New American Century (PNAC). Upon taking office, Dick Cheney owned stock in both Halliburton and Lockheed Martin.

The criminologist Dawn Rothe explains the conflict of interest created by Cheney’s shares in Halliburton after he became vice president:

Normally politicians put their stock assets into a blind trust after being elected to high office, so that someone else manages their stock portfolio. However, Cheney continued to hold 140,000 shares of unvested stock that is worth \$7.6 million at 2005 stock prices. This could not be managed or sold by anyone until 2002, because it was unvested; thus it could not be put into a blind trust. Therefore Cheney had a direct financial interest in the value of Halliburton’s stock and the financial profitability of Halliburton the first two years of his vice presidency. (Rothe 2006:220)

¹ Dawn Rothe writes that “Halliburton’s revenue from state defense contracts . . . nearly doubled (from \$1.1 to \$2.3 billion) under Cheney’s five-year tenure as CEO compared with the five prior years. For example, in 1995 Halliburton jumped from seventy-third to eighteenth on the Pentagon’s list of top contractors, benefiting from at least \$3.8 billion in federal contracts and taxpayer-insured loans . . .” (Rothe, 2006:220).

Cheney also owned large amounts of Halliburton stock in a blind trust that would be available to him after his time in government.

After working in the H.W. Bush administration, Cheney joined the American Enterprise Institute, and was a signer of PNAC's "Statement of Principles." Before entering the Bush Jr. White House, then, Cheney was an important congressional supporter of the military-industrial complex, one of its top state managers, and then a manager and shareholder of two of its largest corporate beneficiaries, with an indirect tie (through his wife) to another major defense contractor, itself linked to the movement for regime change in Iraq.

Donald Henry Rumsfeld.

Largely in control of foreign policy, Cheney recruited his former mentor Donald Rumsfeld for Secretary of Defense. Rumsfeld was educated at Princeton, earning a bachelor's degree in political science. He was a congressman for Illinois between 1963 and 1969 before taking positions in the Nixon administration, first as the head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, and then as US ambassador to NATO. During his time as NATO ambassador, Rumsfeld befriended the former Deputy Secretary of Defense and Cold War architect, Paul Nitze. As Secretary of Defense under Ford, like Nitze, he exaggerated the threat of the Soviet Union. He did this as part of an effort to obstruct the move towards détente begun under the Nixon administration and to persuade Congress to increase the defense budget.

Shortly before leaving the White House in 1977, Rumsfeld made arrangements with G. D. Searle to take over management of the company as president and CEO. In this role, he was instrumental in marketing aspartame, an artificial sweetener that had been linked to malignant

brain tumors. (G. D. Searle, already under heavy FDA scrutiny for lying about drug testing protocols, was prevented from marketing the sweetener until Reagan took office and created a more permissive environment for corporate malfeasance.) Rumsfeld also stayed involved in politics during this period. He was on Reagan's foreign and defense policy campaign advisory committee and was subsequently appointed Reagan's Middle East envoy, in spite of a general lack of knowledge about the region. He met with Saddam Hussein twice, in 1983 and then again in 1984. In 1984, his assignment was to assure Hussein of American support in the Iran-Iraq War, even though it was at that time clear that Hussein had used chemical weapons against the Iranians.

Rumsfeld also participated in the top-secret Continuity of Government program, beginning in 1989. This program simulated emergency federal government operations in the event of a nuclear weapons attack on the United States. In one iteration of the program, Rumsfeld was assigned to play the role of Secretary of Defense during a limited Soviet attack on Europe. In this scenario, according to Andrew Cockburn, Rumsfeld chose to ignore ways to deescalate the crisis in favor of initiating a thermonuclear war (Cockburn 2007:86-87).

In the 1990s, Rumsfeld held four more corporate management positions before his second term as Secretary of Defense. In one of these, he served on the board of directors for the Swiss construction firm, ABB, which sold two light water nuclear water reactors to North Korea. (He later denied knowing about these sales after the Bush administration denounced North Korea as a terrorist regime (Cockburn 2007:89-90)). It is ironic, then, that in 1997 Rumsfeld also headed the congressional Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States. This commission was sponsored by PNAC to challenge the view—supported by the CIA—that a ballistic missile defense system was no longer necessary for US national security after the

disappearance of the Soviet Union. The commission argued instead that North Korea, Iran, and Iraq (which later became Bush's "axis of evil") were "rogue" nations with ballistic missiles that constituted immediate threats to US national security. In making this claim, it presented no new evidence, and simply offered a more pessimistic interpretation of existing intelligence. In this, Rumsfeld's commission followed the strategies of Nitze's Committee on the Present Danger, which served a similar function in the 1970s.

Rumsfeld's long career in government and business before entering the Bush administration shows that he was "devoid of moral scruples," as Cramer and Duggan (2012:233) aptly put it.² He was a pragmatic liar, a recidivist national security threat inflator, and was apparently motivated by power lust and greed. He used the same tactics as Secretary of Defense under Ford, and as head of the 1997 ballistic missile commission, that would be used in the Bush administration to promote the Iraq War.

Paul Dundes Wolfowitz.

Cheney selected Paul Wolfowitz for Undersecretary of Defense. Wolfowitz earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Cornell University, and a PhD in political science from the University of Chicago. He completed his dissertation on nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East under Albert Wohlstetter, a Cold War hardliner and important influence on the neoconservative movement. In 1969, Wohlstetter helped Wolfowitz and Richard Perle join Nitze and Dean Acheson's Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy, which successfully lobbied Congress to continue support for antiballistic missile (AMB) systems. There, Wolfowitz

² For more details that support this interpretation, see Cockburn (2007).

and Perle wrote policy papers for Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson—another early neoconservative influence—who was a leading proponent of the ABM system. While finishing his dissertation, Wolfowitz taught at Yale, where I. Lewis Libby—a future Bush Jr. administration official—was one of his students.

After Nixon and Kissinger negotiated the Strategic Arms Limitation treaty with the Soviet Union in 1972, Jackson pressured Nixon into replacing the senior staff of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Hoping to gain support in the Senate for the treaty, Nixon selected Fred Iklé, another Cold War hardliner, to head the agency. On Wohlstetter’s recommendation, Iklé recruited Wolfowitz for the agency (Mann 2004:34). Then, in 1976 Wolfowitz served as a member of an outside, “independent” intelligence group assembled by Ford’s CIA Director George H. W. Bush to challenge the CIA’s intelligence estimates on the Soviet Union’s military capabilities. Team B, as the group was called, produced an alternative intelligence report to the National Intelligence Estimate, in which they falsely claimed that the CIA had consistently underestimated the Soviet threat and had failed to learn from its mistakes. The report made several ominous predictions about the growth of Soviet military capabilities, all of which turned out to be false or grossly exaggerated, and were intended to justify high military spending and defeat détente (Rovner 2011:113-136). After Team B, Wolfowitz served on the Committee on the Present Danger.

Wolfowitz served briefly in the Carter administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Regional Programs before taking on a position teaching at the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins in 1980. (He left Carter’s cabinet because Iklé warned him that it would ruin his chance of finding a position in the Reagan administration.) In 1977—before the Iranian Revolution—he argued that the United States needed to control access

to Persian Gulf oil, and that Iraq would threaten the security of the United States if it took over Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian oil fields (Juhasz 2006:29). Wolfowitz then joined the Reagan administration as State Department Director of Policy Planning. (Interestingly, Wolfowitz personally disagreed with the administration's official policy of supporting Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War, and favored overthrowing him.) He then served as Reagan's ambassador to Indonesia between 1986 and 1989, where he was an apologist for the Suharto regime, including its genocidal occupation of East Timor, which he supported until it ended in 1999 (Chomsky 2006:134-136). He held another Department of Defense position under Bush, this time as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, working under Defense Secretary Cheney. Under Cheney's direction, in 1992, Wolfowitz, Libby, and Khalilzad authored an important Defense Policy Guidance. This document, discussed at length in the next chapter, was an important articulation of the foreign policy that would be adopted by the second Bush administration in 2001.

After working in the H.W. Bush administration, Wolfowitz returned to academia as the dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. From this post he wrote apologetics for the Gulf War, and advocated for another war to overthrow Hussein. He argued that Iraq posed a major regional threat because Hussein was liable to attack Kuwait or Saudi Arabia and gain major control of the regional oil supply, and hence the global economy (Mann 2004:227-228). He was a signatory of the PNAC "Statement of Principles" and the 1998 letter to Clinton. He also served on Rumsfeld's 1997 ballistic missile commission and as a consultant to Northrop Grumman (Hartung 2002:111).

Rather than a career politician or corporate manager, Wolfowitz was principally a university intellectual. Because his beliefs aligned with, and he was personally connected to, the architects and intellectual managers of the Cold War—figures like Nitze, Acheson, and

Wohlstetter—he was able to attain his first government posts, and then move easily through the foreign policy bureaucracy in consecutive administrations, Republican and Democratic. He was an opponent of Hussein and advocated overthrowing him in the early 1980s, though Wolfowitz's affiliation with Suharto strongly suggests that he was a pragmatic careerist rather than the moralist he was often characterized as in the early 2000s (Chomsky 2006:134-136). The political strategy employed by the Bush administration to start the Iraq War—exaggerate threats and assail the intelligence community's estimates—reflected that used by Wolfowitz and his Cold War mentors to escalate the Cold War.

Condoleezza Rice.

According to Warshaw (2008:49), Bush allowed Cheney to build the administration's cabinet as long as key positions went to Bush's own political allies. One of the most important was Condoleezza Rice, a family friend who was Bush's campaign chief foreign policy advisor, and then National Security Advisor from 2001 to 2004. Though sometimes portrayed as a more passive member of the administration's foreign policy team, Rice actively worked to promote the Iraq War.

Rice studied international relations at the University of Denver and Notre Dame. Immediately after earning her PhD in international relations at Denver, she taught at Stanford University as a specialist in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. She held a Council of Foreign Relations fellowship at the Pentagon during the Reagan years before returning to Stanford in early 1991. There she befriended Brent Scowcroft (H. W. Bush's National Security Advisor) who invited her to participate in the Aspen Strategy Group, and hired her on to the National

Security Council where she worked as the director of Soviet and Eastern European affairs (Mann 2004:171). In this role, she helped draft corporate globalization policies for former Soviet countries.

At Stanford, Rice also met George Shultz, who was on the board of Chevron. After leaving the Bush administration, Rice told him she wanted to become involved in business. He helped her obtain a position on Chevron's board of directors, where she worked as an expert on Kazakhstan as the company moved into the Caspian region, a move that was facilitated by the policies she had designed previously while working on the NSC. She also served on Chevron's Committee on Public Policy during the UN Iraq oil-for-food program, in which Chevron was one of the few companies that was allowed to sell Iraq's oil. During the 1990s, Rice also served on the boards of several other corporations, including Carnegie Corporation, Charles Schwab, Hewlett Packard, JPMorgan Chase, RAND, and Transamerica. She was also a fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution.

The historical record suggests that Rice was a subservient careerist, willing to abandon principle and adjust her views as necessary for personal and material gain. This is indicated by her role on the board of Chevron in the 1990s when the corporation was implicated in various crimes, such as the 1998 and 1999 killing and torture of Nigerian civilians, and what is one of the worst localized oil-related environmental disasters in the world, pollution in the Amazon region of Ecuador (Juhasz 2006:11-118). In his authoritative work on Bush's war cabinet, *Rise of the Vulcans*, James Mann writes that

As always, Condoleezza Rice managed skillfully to stay out of the crossfire. During the first Bush administration Rice had usually been able to persuade both factions in the running disputes over Soviet policy that she was on their side. In the second Bush administration once again she avoided too close an identification with any particular faction or ideology.

Those who opposed the invasion of Iraq directed their ire primarily at others in the administration, towards Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and the president himself. They rarely paid as much attention to Rice, despite the fact that as national security adviser, she had quietly played at least as significant role as any of the others. She had been the prime mover behind the drafting of a new National Security Strategy that laid the framework for a preventive war. She had served as the White House coordinator and as the president's closest adviser, throughout the entire Iraq operation. (Mann 2004:367)

As an international relations theorist, Rice had been a realist, and in 2000, during Bush's presidential campaign, she suggested that Iraq could be handled with containment and nuclear deterrence (Mann 2004:257). Thus Rice conveniently shifted from a moderate realist position on Iraq characteristic of the Bush Sr. and Clinton administrations, to drafting the 2002 National Security Strategy that advanced the unilateralist grand strategy favored by Cheney, Rumsfeld, and the neoconservatives. Rice was also implicated in a dispute between the White House and the CIA over who failed to inform the president that the Nigerian uranium story was not credible prior to the 2003 State of the Union Address. Rice apparently prevented Alan Foley, director of the CIA's Weapons Intelligence, Nonproliferation, and Arms Control Center, from conveying to Bush that the intelligence was flawed (Risen 2006:110-111).

Colin Luther Powell.

Colin Powell was also closely connected to Bush Jr. prior to serving on his campaign team and agreeing to be Secretary of State. He had served in the Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations as National Security Advisor and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, respectively.

Powell attended City College of New York where he joined the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). The ROTC was the center of Powell's college experience, and he rose

to the level of cadet colonel. After graduating in 1958, Powell fought in the Vietnam War in two one-year tours. During his second tour in 1968-1969, he was selected to be the American Division's staff officer in charge of operations and planning. This was the division responsible for the My Lai massacre. While it is not clear that he was aware of the My Lai massacre itself, in this role Powell helped cover up reports of atrocities carried out against Vietnamese civilians and prisoners by American soldiers (Mann 2004:42-43). Powell believed in the American cause in the Vietnam War—"defending" South Vietnam from communist aggression—but did not approve of the civilian management of the war. He believed that the United States lost because it failed to provide adequate numbers of troops and exited the war prematurely. His experiences in Vietnam led him to formulate what later became known as the "Powell Doctrine," which held that wars should be fought with overwhelming force and only when all diplomatic efforts have failed. They should have clear objectives, and overwhelming public support, Powell believed, in order to avoid major defeats as in Vietnam.

After the Vietnam War, Powell served as an Army commander before becoming an aid to Deputy Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, and then to Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger. In the fallout of the Iran-contra scandal, Reagan replaced National Security Advisor John Poindexter with Carlucci. In turn Carlucci recruited Powell for Deputy Secretary of Defense. In these roles, Powell helped coordinate the 1983 intervention in Grenada and the 1986 bombing of Libya. When Weinberger stepped down as Secretary of Defense in 1987, Carlucci was moved into that position, and Powell became Reagan's National Security Advisor. Powell was then chosen by Cheney for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Bush administration, where he was instrumental in expediting the invasion of Panama in 1989. Interestingly, Powell did not initially support US involvement in the Gulf War; he asked whether liberating Kuwait was worth

the cost, and tried to convince Bush to use sanctions and containment. While Powell was not successful in that effort, he later convinced the H. W. Bush administration to end the US attack on Iraq sooner than others in the administration preferred, particularly Wolfowitz and his assistant Libby (Mann 2004:191-192). Powell also opposed prolonging military involvement when Hussein attacked the Kurds and Shiites.

As Chairman of the JCS, along with Cheney, Powell favored maintaining a large, post-Cold War military budget, a preference which ultimately revealed the contradiction of his military doctrine. Towards the end of his career as Chairman, under congressional pressure to rationalize large military budgets after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Powell approved and supported the US intervention in Somalia, even though it began as a small-scale operation, and its objectives became increasingly open-ended (Mann 2004:222-223).

After retiring from the JCS in 1993, Powell moved into the private sector, where he was active in youth organizations, including the Boys & Girls Club of America and the United Negro College Fund (Mann 2004:239). From 1996 to 2001, along with Rumsfeld, he was a director of Gulfstream Aerospace. He also served on the board of America Online. Though not particularly interested in participating in policy discussion groups—he was not involved with PNAC, or the early meetings of Bush’s team with the Hoover Institution—Powell was a member of the Bilderberg Group, the Atlantic Council, the American Academy of Diplomacy, and the Bretton Woods Committee.

Table 1. Prior Government, Corporate, and Policy-Planning Network Affiliations of Six Bush Administration Officials

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior Senior Positions in Federal Government</i>	<i>Prior Corporate Positions/Affiliations</i>	<i>Prior Policy-planning Network Affiliations</i>
George W. Bush (President)	-	Arbusto Energy Spectrum 7 Texas Rangers	Hoover Institution
Dick Cheney (Vice President)	Chief of Staff (Ford) Assistant to Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity (Nixon) Secretary of Defense (H.W. Bush)	Halliburton Proctor & Gamble Union Pacific Electr. Data Systems Morgan Stanley TRW IGI Laboratories, Inc. US West, Inc. Brandley, Woods & Co	Council on Foreign Relations Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs Project for the New American Century Center for Security Policy American Enterprise Institute
Donald Rumsfeld (Defense Secretary)	Director Office of Economic Opportunity (Nixon) Chief of Staff (Ford) Secretary of Defense (Ford) Middle East Envoy (Reagan)	Gilead Sciences General Instrument Corp. G.D. Searle & Company Gulfstream Aerospace ABB	RAND Project for the New American Century Freedom House Committee for the Free World National Academy of Public Administration Gerald R. Ford Foundation Eisenhower Exchange Fellowships National Security Advisory Group to the Congressional Leadership

Table 1 - continued

Paul Wolfowitz (Deputy Defense Secretary)	Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Regional Programs (Carter) Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Reagan) Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (H.W. Bush)	Northrop Grumman	Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy Project for the New American Century Council on Foreign Relations Bilderberg Group Trilateral Commission The Aspect Institute
Condoleezza Rice (National Security Advisor)	Director and Senior Director of Soviet and East European Affairs on the National Security Council (H.W. Bush)	Chevron Hewlett Packard Transamerica Corporation JP Morgan Charles Schwab	Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies Hoover Institution Carnegie Corporation Carnegie Endowment for International Peace RAND Council on Foreign Relations Atlantic Council Aspen Institute William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Colin Powell (Secretary of State)	National Security Advisor (Reagan) Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff (H.W. Bush, Clinton)	Gulfstream Aerospace America Online Inc.	Bilderberg Group Atlantic Council American Academy of Diplomacy Bretton Woods Committee

The Bush Administration's Think Tank-Corporate Interlocks

Table 1 lists the various think tank associations of the six administration officials discussed in the last section. Most of these think tanks are in the “core group” described in chapter 3. Among them, the most important in promoting regime change in Iraq were the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA). Though other core group think tanks later supported the war—including the influential and bipartisan Council on Foreign Affairs (CFR)—these three organizations pushed for invading Iraq beginning in the 1990s. They are the neoconservative think tanks that provided sinecures for the neocons of the Bush administration during the Clinton years and pushed for the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act.

Of these three, PNAC is the most important, as it led the charge for regime change and was the think tank organization with the greatest number of personal links to the Bush administration after the CFR (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2016:152). It was founded in 1997 by neoconservatives William Kristol (son of Irving Kristol) and Robert Kagan, an Ivy League-educated historian. Its founding members included Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, I. Lewis Libby, Richard Perle, and several other members of the second Bush administration. PNAC's membership largely overlapped with that of AEI and was stationed in an office at AEI's headquarters in Washington, DC. Its policies were therefore similar to AEI's, but its members created it to focus exclusively on foreign policy (AEI was more broadly focused) (Dorrien 2004:68). In 2000, one of PNAC's four directors was Bruce Jackson, CEO of Lockheed Martin. And in the late 1990s until 2000, PNAC and AEI were both funded by the Bradley Foundation, a right-wing “charitable foundation” that sought to create extreme right political networks. They also received funding from the Sarah Scaife and John M. Olin foundations, with funding from

these three foundations accounting for most of their budgets in the mid-90s and early 2000s (Downey 2015:246-247). While these think tanks also received funding from individuals and corporations, Downey (2015:247) suggests that the influence of foundations on their politics was considerable. In the late 1980s, AEI changed its leadership and moved to the right after the Olin and Richardson foundations withdraw funding. Their funding was subsequently renewed after these organizational and political changes.

JINSA is an Israel-focused think tank mostly concerned with advancing the hardline anti-Palestinian and pro-settlement policies of Israel's Likud right. A longstanding policy of this political movement had been a plan to remove hostile Arab powers through military force (Ahmad 2014). "JINSA has essentially recommended that 'regime change' in Iraq should be just the beginning of a cascade of toppling dominoes in the Middle East," writes William Hartung. "If JINSA has its way, the Bush administration will use military means, covert operations, and strong-arm diplomacy to foment 'regime change' not only in Iraq but also in Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt" (Hartung 2003:109). Dick Cheney and Douglas Feith were both JINSA members. Also linking JINSA to the military-industrial complex were board members Admiral Leon Edney, Admiral David Jeremiah, and Lieutenant General Charles May, each of whom also worked for Northrop Grumman as a board member or paid consultant (Hartung 2003:111).

Summary: Power Elite Control of the Executive Branch

This survey reveals that the six most important officials in planning the Iraq War were members of the power elite. However, prior corporate affiliations are not the most important factors explaining the administration's collective decision to invade Iraq, as some writers, such

as van Apeldoorn and DeGraaff (2016) and Juhasz (2006) suggest that it is. Of these six officials, all of them, with the exception of Bush, first held government, academic, or military positions before taking office in 2001. Therefore, with the exception of Bush—who in any case had no foreign policy experience prior to taking office—these officials had formulated their foreign policy views while working in the federal government, not in the corporate world. And of the six officials, only Cheney and Rice had close connections to the main corporate beneficiaries of the Iraq War discussed in the last chapter: Halliburton, Lockheed Martin, Chevron, and JP Morgan. None of the six officials had a direct working relationship with Bechtel prior to taking office. However, since Cheney was by far the most powerful foreign policy decision-maker in the administration—Bush largely deferred to him on foreign policy, and he staffed most of the foreign policy bureaucracy—his corporate affiliations do largely explain the character of the policies implemented in Iraq during the occupation, particularly the large number of contracts that went to Halliburton and Lockheed Martin, and the decision to invade itself. Rice’s affiliation with Chevron may also explain why it was one of the first corporate recipients of oil exploration contracts in Iraq and was one of the major exporters of Iraqi oil in the years immediately after the invasion. However, other major oil companies and contractors also benefited from the occupation and restructuring of Iraq’s economy, even without prior direct links to administration officials.

The role of previous government positions, careerism, and power lust are equally significant factors explaining individual motives to invade Iraq on the part of the key architects. Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Powell each held high-level Pentagon positions before coming to the Bush Jr. administration, and Rice held a National Security Council position in the H.W. Bush administration. Wolfowitz and Rice, though they started their careers in academia,

were at that stage already closely linked to the Pentagon. As powerful managers of a vast defense bureaucracy, all of them had personal interests in projecting US global military power and supporting large defense budgets, which they did throughout their careers. In this they were supported and enabled by W. Bush. While Cheney, Rumsfeld, and the neoconservatives favored overthrowing Hussein by the mid-1990s, by the time they had taken office in 2001, it became convenient for all Bush administration officials, including moderates on Iraq like Powell and Rice, to support the invasion to preserve their own decision-making power (Rice would be promoted to Secretary of State in 2006). Throughout their careers, all six officials—again, with the partial exception of Bush—displayed the kind of personality traits required to advance in the government foreign policy bureaucracy: a willingness to lie and deceive, inflate national security threats, and shift perspective as convenient and necessary to maintain one’s post and the power associated with it.

All members of the Bush administration were linked through conservative personal or policy-planning networks. Bush was personally linked to Cheney, Rice, and Powell through his father, and through the Hoover Institution. Cheney, in turn, was linked to Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, and Powell through prior working relationships in the H. W. Bush or Ford administrations. Cheney and Rumsfeld were also closely associated with Wolfowitz and other neoconservatives chosen for the administration. In turn, PNAC, AEI, and JINSA were each linked to the military-industrial complex through their boards of directors and their membership. Bradley Foundation funding for these think tanks also shows the influence of the corporate elite on the decision to invade Iraq.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how the decision to invade Iraq resulted from power elite control of the executive branch, and the ways in which this control was exercised. These factors should be considered in conjunction with the power the Bush administration was able to exert over Congress by pushing for a war resolution in October 2002 just prior to the midterm elections. In this way, too, the Bush administration power elite were able to consolidate their control over the decision to invade Iraq, bypassing Congress's constitutional mandate to declare war.

There is no simple way to imagine a counterfactual scenario in which the Bush administration was not a power elite constituency that would not violate the “minimum rewrite” rule of counterfactual causal analysis. The simplest counterfactual possibility is that Bush might have lost the 2000 election. The available evidence strongly suggests that if Al Gore had won the election, the Iraq War would not have happened. Harvey (2012) investigates this question in his explanatory account of the Iraq War. He concludes that the Bush administration's specific worldview and ideology are *not* the cause of the Iraq War, and that Gore would have invaded Iraq, too. However, Harvey's reasoning is built on factual errors. In particular, Harvey asserts that the Bush administration did not manipulate intelligence on the WMD threat, and that intelligence in other countries also showed that Iraq had WMDs. Both of these propositions are simply false. The scholarly consensus is that the intelligence provided to rationalize invading Iraq was either fabricated by the Bush administration or unreliable (see Pillar 2011). Military aggression against Iraq only seemed defensible because the Bush administration lied about Iraq's WMD capabilities, its intention to attack the United States, and its relationship to al-Qaeda.

There is no reason to believe that a Gore administration would have also fabricated such threats; the Democratic Party policy preference for countering Iraq had been sanctions and containment (Western 2005:182-183)

Invading Iraq only made sense in the context of the worldview and ideology of the Bush administration. This ideology is the subject to which I now turn.

CHAPTER 8

IMPERIALIST IDEOLOGY AND THE IRAQ WAR

According to the power elite model, ideology is a necessary condition to sustain American imperialism and to start wars. The dominant ideology about American defense policy that most heavily influences the way Americans think is formulated by the power elite. There are variants of elite ideology pertaining to defense ranging from conservative isolationism, conservative and liberal realism, liberal internationalism and multilateralism, to hardline unilateralism, but all of these tend to share the same set of assumptions. These include: American exceptionalism; the superiority of American-style democracy and capitalism and the right to impose them on others; ubiquitous threats to national security; and that these threats challenge the credibility of American military power. All forms of the dominant ideology assume the United States has the right to intervene in any country to promote or defend its “national interests.”

Most key foreign policy posts in the Bush administration were occupied by neoconservatives, though Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld are not usually considered part of the neoconservative network, and Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell were entirely outside of it. Yet, the key architects of the Iraq War were all hardline unilateralists who supported a similar vision of US military, political, and economic primacy, and understood Iraq as constituting a grave threat to US national security. In this chapter, I am principally concerned with describing this shared ideology and showing how it contributed to the decision to invade Iraq. To do this, I examine three main policy planning documents that ultimately informed Bush administration foreign policy and the decision to invade Iraq. These include the 1992 Defense Planning

Guidance drafted by Wolfowitz and his aids for Cheney's Defense Department; the 2000 Project for the New American Century's *Rebuilding America's Defenses*; and the 2002 National Security Strategy of the Bush administration. Because of the large number of neoconservatives in the Bush administration, and the influence their ideology exerted on Bush's defense policy, I also outline the history of neoconservatism.

According to a power elite model, we would expect to find each element of American imperialist ideology expressed in the three documents. We would also expect to find ideological justifications for the Iraq War that reflect the interests of its planners as well their need to sell the war to the public.

Bush's Hardline Unilateralism: History and Characteristics

Neoconservatism is a brand of American conservative ideology that is above all distinguished by "a radical expansive faith in American power," according to Gary Dorrien (2004:15) in his authoritative history of neoconservatism. By the 1990s, foreign policy had become the central focus of neoconservatism. It advocated (and still advocates) the maintenance and expansion of institutions that support unrivaled American global hegemony as the key to national security and global stability. It advocates unrestrained foreign policy decision-making power for the president; Congress, intelligence agencies, the media, the UN, and international law and treaties are understood to be likely impediments to maintaining national security when these slow or constrain the president's ability to use military force to counteract imminent threats, of which there are many. Aggressive military responses to alleged threats are thought to be more efficacious than diplomacy. Neoconservatism aligns well with other forms of American

conservatism in its rejection of strong welfare state measures and its nominal preference for supply side economics.

Neoconservatism began as an intellectual deviation from and response to democratic socialist and liberal social movements of the early 1970s. The name for the ideology was coined by Michael Harrington, the American socialist and editor of *Dissent* magazine, to designate a group of former allies who had broken with the Socialist Party over its stance on the Vietnam War. Like the social democrats associated with *Dissent*, the neoconservatives were anticommunist socialists. However, unlike the social democrats, most of them supported the Vietnam War as an extension of their anticommunism. Harrington called them “neoconservatives” to distinguish them from the socialists who opposed the war (Dorrien 2004:7).

“Most of the original neocons supported America’s war in Vietnam,” Dorrien explains, “but more important, all were repulsed by America’s antiwar movement.”

To them it was appalling that the party of Harry Truman and John Kennedy nominated George McGovern for president in 1972. They despaired over the ascension of antiwar activism, feminism, and moralistic idealism in the Democratic Party, which they called “McGovernism.” McGovernism stood for appeasement and the politics of liberal guilt, whereas the neocons stood for a self-confident and militantly interventionist Americanism. (Dorrien 2004:7)

The neoconservatives continued to support the Democratic Party until their presidential candidate Henry “Scoop” Jackson was soundly defeated in the 1976 primary elections (Dorrien 2004:9).

Though they initially rejected the label—they did not associate with the racism and isolationism of traditional American conservatism—the neoconservatives gradually adopted the name as they shifted their allegiance to the Republican Party, realizing they had more in common with conservative Republicans than Democrats. The first neoconservative to accept the label was

Irving Kristol in 1972. Kristol, the influential editor of the *New Republic*, was also the first to move to the Republican Party. The neoconservatives shifted decisively to the Republican Party after Carter's victory in 1976. Carter's foreign policy represented the triumph of McGovernism in the Democratic Party, the neoconservatives believed.

By the 1990s, after several of its affiliates held high-level positions in the Reagan and Bush administrations, neoconservatism was the dominant trend in foreign policy thinking on the Republican right. For the "neocons" of the 1990s, writes Dorrien,

neoconservatism was the form of mainstream American conservatism that stood for growth, intervention, unilateralism, optimism, and the universality of the American ideal. It usually espoused the ideology of democratic globalism, but even its realist versions wanted to base foreign policy on the goal of sustaining America's global domination. And it controlled most of the right's advocacy and policy institutions, notably the *Weekly Standard*, *Policy Review*, *Commentary*, *The Public Interest*, *First Things*, the *National Interest*, *National Review*, *American Spectator*, *Claremont Review of Books*, *American Enterprise*, *Journal of Democracy*, *Public Opinion*, *Orbis*, the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, the American Enterprise Institute, the Hoover Institution, the Manhattan Institute, the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, the Center for Security Policy, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Dorrien adds that "It was the neocons who got most of the conservative foundation money that paid for think tanks, journals, research assistants, TV studios, and agents who got them on TV" (Dorrien 2004:17).

For the Iraq War planners in the Bush administration who were ideologically inclined towards conservative realism, such as Powell, Armitage, and Rice, an elective affinity existed between their views and those of the neoconservatives. Powell shared the view held by most neocons that America had prematurely withdrawn from the Vietnam War, and like the neoconservatives, was concerned with regaining and then sustaining America's military strength after the American defeat in that conflict (Mann 2004:52). By 2000, as Bush's campaign foreign policy advisor, Rice (2000) also advocated unilateralism and US primacy. For their parts, even

though they are not usually considered neoconservatives, Cheney and Rumsfeld held nearly identical views to the neoconservatives, and they did so prior to September 11, 2001. That they did is not surprising given that Rumsfeld was a close friend of Paul Nitze and shared his hardline anticommunism, and Cheney was Rumsfeld's protégé. Cheney and Rumsfeld's hardline unilateralism is traceable to and a development of the hardline anticommunism of the Cold War period, as is neoconservatism.

The convergence of conservative realism and neoconservatism in the emergent unilateralism of the Bush administration is visible over time in key policy planning documents that influenced the Bush administration's foreign policy, including its views on and approach to Iraq. It is to these documents that I now turn.

The 1992 Defense Planning Guidance

The Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) is a Defense Department report, typically issued every two years, that is intended to instruct civilian Pentagon managers and military leaders on how to prepare forces, budgets, and strategies for the next decade. The 1992 DPG was especially important to policy makers because it was supposed to outline US grand strategy in the new post-Cold War world. At that time there were calls to reduce defense spending and yield a "peace dividend" that would direct federal funds to domestic civilian programs and services. But the Bush Sr. administration's Defense Department was managed by Cheney, and staffed with other Cold War hardliners—neoconservatives like Wolfowitz, Libby, and Khalilzad—who favored sustaining high levels of military spending after the Cold War. Cheney directed Wolfowitz to draft the DPG, who enlisted the help of Libby, Khalilzad, Perle, and Wohlstetter. A draft of the

document was widely circulated among the top-level Pentagon managers before it was leaked to the press by an official who thought it should be publicly debated.

The document's authors called for an unrivaled US global domination in which the United States insured the interests of other nations by pursuing its own national security and its own interests around the world. They outlined two broad strategic objectives.

Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to gain global power. (Ehrenberg et al 2010:10)

One aspect of this first objective was that “the U.S. must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests” (Ehrenberg et al 2010:10).

The second overarching objective “is to address sources of regional conflict and instability in such a way as to promote increasing respect for international law; limit international violence; and encourage the spread of democratic forms of government and open economic systems.” In working towards this objective, “the U.S. cannot become the world's ‘policeman,’ by assuming responsibility for righting every wrong,” but

will retain the preeminent responsibility for addressing selectively those wrongs which threaten not only our interests, but those of our allies or friends, or which could seriously unsettle international relations. Various types of U.S. interests may be involved in such instances: access to raw materials, primarily Persian Gulf oil; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles; threats to U.S. citizens from terrorism or regional or local conflict; and threats to U.S. society from narcotics trafficking . . . (Ehrenberg et al 2010:10-11)

Iraq is identified as a specific national security threat, and “In the Middle East and Southwest Asia, our overall objective is to remain the predominant outside power in the region and preserve U.S. and Western access to the region's oil.” (*New York Times* 1992)

The DPG also emphasized unilateral militarism, and nowhere mentioned the United Nations. While “coalitions hold considerable promise for promoting collective action,” the draft notes, “we should expect future coalitions to be ad hoc assemblies, often not lasting beyond the crisis being confronted, and in many cases carrying only general agreement over the objectives to be accomplished” (Tyler 1992). Moreover, “The United States should be postured to act independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated” and “may be faced with the question of whether to take military steps to prevent the development or use of weapons of mass destruction” (Tyler 1992).

The DPG embarrassed Bush, Baker, and Scowcroft for its brazen rejection of the post-World War II international order, which was understood to be built on cooperation among states, rather than hegemony by one superpower. Most senior members of the Bush administration distanced themselves from the document; fearing the end of his career, Wolfowitz claimed he never saw it before it was leaked. But Cheney, Powell, and the neoconservatives in the Defense Department actually supported it. Powell openly, unapologetically defended it, built as it was on his “base force” plan for post-Cold War national security. Powell, like Cheney, supported sustaining high levels of military spending after the Cold War to maintain military primacy, and preparing the military to meet a variety of regional threats, including Iraq, North Korea, and Iran. Cheney had Libby prepare a revised DPG for public relations purposes, but the final version Cheney left upon leaving the White House kept in place much of Wolfowitz’s language about unilateralism (Dorrien 2004:37-43).

The original DPG influenced the grand strategy articulated by the neoconservatives throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s after they came to power in the White House.

The Project for the New American Century: Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century

In the 2000 presidential elections, PNAC's members worried that Bush was not proposing an aggressive enough foreign policy, influenced as he was by the realists on his advisory committee (Shultz, Powell, and Rice). Chaired by Irving Kristol and directed by Robert Kagan, Devon Gaffney Cross, Bruce Jackson, and John Bolton, the group produced a detailed position paper called *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy Forces and Resources for a New Century*, which they hoped would influence Bush's foreign policy and his cabinet appointments if he won the election (Dorrien 2004:136-137). Written on behalf of PNAC, the document's principal author was Thomas Donnelly, with project co-chairs Donald Kagan and Gary Schmitt.

The major thrust of the argument advanced in *Rebuilding America's Defenses* is that unless the next president dramatically increases defense spending, the United States will not be able to sustain its military supremacy, and the post-Cold War global "*Pax Americana*" will be lost. The new president "must increase military spending to preserve American geopolitical leadership," the document reads, "or he must pull back from the security commitments that are the measure of America's position as the world's sole superpower and the final guarantee of security, democratic freedoms and individual rights" (Donnelly 2000:4). The assumption throughout the document is that American military supremacy has preserved a global peace in the 1990s, but that certain states, such as Iraq, Iran, North Korea, and China, wish to undermine both (Donnelly 2000:i, iii). These states are likely to be increasingly dangerous to the global

order in the twenty-first century, so the belief that military spending and supremacy can be relaxed in the post-Cold War period is not warranted.

The document was written in the spirit of the 1992 DPG, for “the basic tenets of the DPG, in our judgment, remain sound” (Donnelly 2000:ii). Like the DPG, *Rebuilding* emphasizes numerous threats to the global order and American national security. “[W]ith Europe now generally at peace, the new strategic center of concern appears to be shifting to East Asia.” Therefore, “The missions for America’s armed forces have not diminished so much as shifted. The threats may not be as great, but there are more of them” (Donnelly 2000:3). In fact, “there has been no shortage of powers around the world who have taken the collapse of the Soviet empire as an opportunity to expand their own influence and challenge the American-led security order” (Donnelly 2000:1) (In this regard, the end of the Cold War is blamed for Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait.) If the United States fails to keep these “powers” at bay, moreover, the “credibility” of American military power will be in question: “A retreat from any one of these requirements [to maintain regional “stability”] would call America’s status as the world’s leading power into question” (Donnelly 2000:5). Elsewhere in the document readers are told that “The true cost of not meeting our defense requirements will be a lessened capacity for American global leadership and, ultimately, the loss of a global security order that is uniquely friendly to American principles and prosperity.” (Donnelly 2000:v). So, not only will American power be weakened, but so too will American “principles” (i.e., commitments to democracy, freedom, and capitalism) and American national wealth—if the president does not commit to adding \$15 to \$20 billion per year to the defense budget, and making strategic preparations as outlined by PNAC. These include “defending the homeland,” especially from the threat of ballistic missiles and WMDs; achieving the ability to fight two large-scale wars simultaneously; military

technological “modernization”; and maintaining “constabulary” forces—preserving peace in regions like the Balkans and in the north and south of Iraq.

In an oft-quoted passage from *Rebuilding*, the authors remark that “the process of transformation . . . is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event-like a new Pearl Harbor” (Donnelly 2000:51).

The 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States

The neoconservatives got their new Pearl Harbor on September 11, 2001. A year later, as the administration was ramping up its propaganda campaign to sell the Iraq War, it released its National Security Strategy (NSS). It was nominally authored by Bush, but it was written by Condoleezza Rice. The NSS was apparently intended to begin priming the public for the unilateral approach the administration was prepared to take in attacking Iraq, and the notion of a preemptive war in self-defense against unconventional weapons and terrorists.

Bush began by noting that the Cold War ended in victory for “the forces of freedom” (e.g., the United States) and a “single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.” “These values of freedom,” the document continues, “are right and true for every person, in every society—and the duty of protecting these values against their enemies is the common calling of freedom-loving people across the globe and across the ages . . .” (Bush 2002:no page number). The United States must use military force to promote a “balance of power” that favors such freedom, and it must stand for “the rule of law; limits on the absolute power of the state; free speech” and so on.

There are two important enemies standing in the way of a global order that favors freedom: terrorists and “rogue states” that may also harbor terrorists. These threats, the NSS explains, are different from those of the past in that they are imminent threats that could harm Americans at any moment. Therefore, to defend itself, the United States may need to resort to unilateral, preemptive action: “While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country” (Bush 2002). Regarding Iraq, the NSS says “At the time of the Gulf War, we acquired irrefutable proof that Iraq’s designs were not limited to the chemical weapons it had used against Iran and its own people, but also extended to the acquisition of nuclear weapons and biological agents” (Bush 2002). Of course, the NSS doesn’t mention that the United States assisted Iraq in the use of chemical weapons, nor does it cite the evidence that Iraq had disarmed itself of WMDs by the end of the 1990s. “Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today’s threats, and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by our adversaries’ choice of weapons, do not permit that option. We cannot let our enemies strike first” (Bush 2002). Deterrence and containment must therefore be superseded by a more aggressive approach. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, this was likely to hold a superficial plausibility for many Americans.

According to international law preemptive war is legal, the NSS claims, because terrorists and rogue states constitute “imminent threats.” Whereas as an imminent threat usually constitutes “a visible mobilization of armies, navies, and air forces preparing to attack,” the concept must be adjusted “to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries.” “Rogue

states and terrorists do not seek to attack us using conventional means. They know such attacks would fail. Instead, they rely on acts of terror and, potentially, the use of weapons of mass destruction—weapons that can be easily concealed, delivered covertly, and used without warning” (Bush 2002).

Preemptive wars are in self-defense and in defense of allies, of course, and in the service of peace. Therefore, “We must build and maintain our defenses beyond challenge” (Bush 2002). And, “To contend with uncertainty and to meet the many security challenges we face, the United States will require bases and stations within and beyond Western Europe and Northeast Asia, as well as temporary access arrangements for the long-distance deployment of U.S. forces . . .” (Bush 2002). The United States must continue to sustain its global empire, in other words.

Conclusion

These documents illustrate that the architects of the Iraq War had developed a worldview long before coming to office in 2001 that could justify, however implausibly, a war against Iraq, both internally to policy planners and to the public. Their shared ideology emphasized the importance of American global hegemony—political, economic, and military. This “benevolent global hegemony,” as neoconservatives Irving Kristol and Robert Kagan referred to it, was understood to guarantee world peace and promote the interests of all other countries. Ensuring US and Western access to Persian Gulf oil was central to this worldview, though in the more public articulation of the 2002 NSS, this is left out. For the American public, the threat of terrorism and rogue states could serve to justify global military domination and preemptive war, even if it meant that policy planners had to lie about the threat of WMDs. Presumably, the Bush

administration understood that access to oil would not be a legitimate *casus belli* for the general public, but could count on public ignorance about international law and propaganda about weapons of mass destruction to gather their support for preemptive war. Of course, their own ideology emphasized that preemptive and unilateral wars are legal within the framework of international law.

The analysis of these documents reveals a nearly perfect symmetry with the ideal typical ideology outlined in chapter 3. What was innovative about and specific to the Bush administration's hardline unilateralism was its more or less open rejection of international norms of cooperation through the multilateral institutions and open rejection of international law in its formulation of preemptive war. In most other regards, the administration's ideology shares much in common with that of previous administrations and other strains of American imperial ideology. American exceptionalism is implied throughout these planning documents: the United States is the "final guarantor" of world peace; its values are universally valid for all people and nations; it only fights wars in self-defense; it defends and works within the parameters of international law; and so on. The United States must promote democracy, capitalism, and "freedom." There are ubiquitous enemies that may attack at any time. The threat these enemies posed was dramatically exaggerated, of course: Iraq did not possess WMDs; it was not six months away from developing nuclear weapons; it did not possess the capability to attack the United States with biological weapons; it was not linked to al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, or the 9/11 attacks; and it was cooperating with UN weapons inspectors. The doctrine of credibility was also in the background of Bush administration policy planning. Finally, US and Bush administration personnel complicity in Iraq's past WMD crimes against Iran and Iraqi Kurds is absent from the Bush administration's worldview.

The Iraq War would not have happened if the Bush administration had not crafted the ideology that it did and acted upon it. If the administration had believed in working within the framework of existing international law, for instance, it would not have started the Iraq War. For international law holds that war is only to be taken *in response to an armed attack* or if authorized by the United Nations Security Council (Friel and Falk 2004:2). The administration's longstanding commitment to global military domination—to the unconstrained pursuit of its own perceived “national interests”—outside of the framework of multilateral institutions and international law, justified to the key war planners the decision to invade Iraq without the legal mandate of the Security Council and without credible evidence of an imminent threat. Within the ideological universe of the administration's thinking, Iraq, as a major oil-producing country, was thought to be of central importance to a world political, economic, and military order controlled by the United States. Hussein was perceived as a challenge to this order, so it was reasonable to remove his regime from power and replace it with one that would be receptive to American interests in Iraq's oil.

Much of the American public, ideologically predisposed to support a militaristic foreign policy, could agree with the decision as long as it was premised on the claims that Iraq posed an imminent threat to the United States, that Iraq was somehow responsible for 9/11, and that the Bush administration's intentions for a post-Hussein Iraq were to bring democracy and capitalism to the country, which could be reasonably assumed to be good for its people and its national development. It is reasonable to surmise that if the administration had not inflated the threat of Iraq—indeed, fabricated it entirely—Congress and the public would not have supported the war. Nor would Congress and the public have supported the war if Cheney's actual intentions for the military occupation phase were made public.

Of course, ideology cannot influence the public by itself. It requires mediums. These are the subjects of the following two chapters.

CHAPTER 9

ELITE MEDIA BIAS, PUBLIC OPINION, AND THE IRAQ WAR

In the runup to the Iraq War, the American media did not all become outlets of neoconservative ideology *per se*. But it is infamous that the news media, including “liberal” outlets such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, tended to cover the war debate in a way that did not challenge the Bush administration’s claims and that privileged their arguments over those of dissenters, including officials and analysts who had worked on Iraq and were in a position to know that the administration was lying its way into war. In an already militaristic post-9/11 climate, this helped facilitate broad public support among Americans for the war effort.

An elite model of war mobilization postulates that the media behaved this way due to structural features of the corporate media identified by a propaganda model: (1) size and concentrated ownership of media corporations; (2) corporate advertising; (3) dependence on official sources in government; (4) disciplining flak; and (5) dominant ideology. We would expect to find that these institutional constraints led to self-censorship and conformity to the Bush administration’s line among journalists and reporters covering the politics of the Iraq War. And we would expect to find evidence that the media amplified the Bush administration’s sustained propaganda campaign demonizing Saddam Hussein, which began in January 2002, intensifying in September 2002 until the launch of the war in March 2003. And following an elite model of war mobilization, we would expect public opinion in favor of the war to increase with the intensity of the propaganda effort. Providing evidence to support these assertions is the goal of this chapter.

The chapter begins with an outline of the general characteristics of the media's coverage of the conflict with Iraq in 2002 and 2003 and a discussion of known explanations for the character of this coverage. I then present a more focused analysis of the media's coverage of key Bush administration claims and evidence available at the time that would have cast doubt on these claims. Throughout the analysis, I consider the movement of public opinion in favor or against the use of military force against Iraq as the debate in the federal government and media unfolded.

General Characteristics of Media Coverage of Iraq Prior to the Iraq War and Explanatory Factors

That the mass media tended to support the Bush administration's propaganda is uncontroversial; the story of the American media's supportive coverage in the buildup to the Iraq War has been told many times by different analysts (e.g., Exoo 2010; Friel and Falk 2004; Massing 2004; Moeller 2004; Western 2005:175-219). The balance of evidence indicates that the media tended to support the Bush administration's perspective on Iraq's alleged unconventional weapons, its threat to the United States and connection to al-Qaeda, and the legality of preemptive war. In newspapers, critical reporting was typically buried in the back pages, and facts that challenged administration perspectives were usually glossed over in the context of the administration's narrative. Thus, the picture conveyed by the media was that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including chemical and biological weapons; it had an active nuclear weapons program; Saddam Hussein intended to use WMD against the United States; and that because Iraq posed such an imminent threat, preemptive war was legal and legitimate, even if it didn't have the support of the United Nations.

The reasons the media performed this way are also well known. Most importantly, the Bush administration made a deliberate effort to market the war to the public and to coopt the mass media in this effort (Pillar 2011; Western 2005). This involved the careful control and manipulation of information made available to reporters. As Michael Massing notes in his oft-cited press critique in the *New York Review of Books*, the management of information “could take both positive forms—rewarding sympathetic reporters with leaks, background interviews, and seats on official flights—and negative ones—freezing out reporters who didn’t play along.” He added that “In a city where access is all, few wanted to risk losing it” (Massing 2004:46). Moreover, the Bush administration held few press conferences that would create opportunities for interrogation from critical reporters.

Another aspect of the propaganda campaign involved carefully timed public speeches to bolster public support and counter criticism. Examples include Bush’s 2002 “Axis of Evil” State of the Union speech, only four months after 9/11, and three months after the invasion of Afghanistan, when polls showed that Americans largely supported military action against Iraq (Western 2005:192-193); Bush’s speech at West Point on June 1, 2002, intended to prime the public for preemptive war against Iraq; Cheney’s August speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, intended to rebut arguments against the war advanced by former White House officials James Baker and Brent Scowcroft (Woodward 2004:163); and Bush’s speech at the United Nations on September 12, which occurred one year after the 9/11 attacks, and just after the administration began to vigorously push the case for war.

The propaganda campaign also involved a Pentagon-managed program to recruit retired generals to promote the war on the major television networks, particularly Fox News, NBC, and CNN, though the “analysts,” as they were called, appeared on all major network stations. Many

of the recruits held management positions in defense firms that sought to win contracts from the Iraq War or were lobbyists for the defense industry, though most of them did not disclose conflicts of interest to the networks or to the public. The recruits were given access to Pentagon meetings where Rumsfeld gave Power Point presentations on the talking points of the propaganda campaign. According to David Barstow, who broke the story about the program in the *New York Times* in 2008, the program managers “marveled at the way the analysts seamlessly incorporated material from talking points and briefings as if it was their own.” One insider quoted in Barstow’s investigation said the analysts were “taking verbatim what the secretary [of Defense] was saying or what the technical specialists were saying” and “saying it over and over and over” (Barstow 2008) on the major network television stations.

The Pentagon propaganda program reinforced the media’s normal tendency to rely on “official experts” for foreign policy analysis. In the elite press—outlets like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*—reporters tended to rely on high-level government officials and unreliable Iraqi defectors, particularly those associated with the Iraqi National Congress (Kurtz 2004; Western 2005:214).

A related factor that limited critical voices from reaching the media was that Democrats in Congress largely supported the administration’s Iraq policy out of fear that criticizing a popular president prior to midterm elections would hurt their chances for reelection. This was especially true of the most senior Democratic senators, potential presidential candidates like Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden, and John Kerry, who did run against Bush in 2004. Bush had very high approval ratings after 9/11 and the public largely believed that the Republican Party was stronger on national security than the Democrats. Congressional Democrats therefore could not afford to appear “soft” on Iraq in the period just after 9/11. The consequence of this for the

media was that there were fewer official sources they could interview with alternative perspectives on the administration's case for war (Massing 2004:46).

One more factor constraining media coverage to the administration perspective was flak from conservative media outlets like Fox News and the neoconservative *Weekly Standard*, from popular right-wing pundits like Rush Limbaugh, and from angry readers. The conservative media, which overwhelmingly supported the administration, branded journalists who strayed from the Bush administration's line as "traitors" or "liberals," while angry readers wrote hate mail and threats to outlets that were sometimes critical of the Bush administration, such as the *Washington Post* (Kurtz 2004). Rather than risking their careers and reputations, many journalists chose not to criticize the administration (Massing 2004: 46-47).

Specific Characteristics of Media Coverage and the Movement of Public Opinion

Having already begun planning for the invasion of Iraq upon taking office, when in November 2001 public opinion heavily favored military action against Iraq, the Bush administration sought to ensure sustained public support through the invasion of Afghanistan, after which preparation for Iraq would begin. Three fourths of Americans, according to Gallup polls, supported invading Iraq to remove Hussein (Newport 2001). After the confrontations with Iraq in the 1990s, when Hussein was seen as an aggressor, was alleged to have attempted an assassination of George H. W. Bush, and was portrayed as uncooperative with UN weapons inspectors, the American public in the early 2000s was already predisposed to see Hussein as an enemy (Western 2005:192-193).

The media and intellectual class were similarly predisposed. In December 2001, Judith Miller published a front-page story in the *New York Times* that featured interviews with Iraqi defectors and former weapons inspectors who alleged that Iraq was still pursuing WMDs, including nuclear weapons. The dramatic headline read: “A NATION CHALLENGED: SECRET SITES; Iraqi Tells of Renovations at Sites for Chemical and Nuclear Arms” (Miller 2001). Miller had been writing about Iraq since the early 90s and in 1998 met with Ahmed Chalabi, who connected her with Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haideri—her source for the December article—and other defectors. By 2000, she had established connections with several defectors who provided accounts of Iraq’s unconventional weapons programs and efforts to hide them. Her articles would draw on these sources to amplify the Bush administration’s propaganda campaign throughout 2002 and 2003.

After the “axis of evil” state of the union address, the media began to increase coverage of Iraq’s alleged WMD programs and defiance of UN resolutions. According to Western’s account, though there was some critical commentary on Bush’s speech, “Some of the most influential news organizations sided with the hardliners’ portrayal of Iraq as the most immediate threat to the United States. The *Washington Post*, for example, warned that ‘Iraq, busy rebuilding its weapons of mass destruction in the absence of U.N. inspectors, represents the most immediate threat, and the . . . tool of forcible regime change—of military actions—must also be considered’” (Western 2005:196).

In addition to amplifying the administration’s message, throughout this period the media also committed significant acts of omission that supported the administration’s push for war. According to media analysts Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, the media did not at any time cover the 2002 bombings of Iraq. “Remarkably,” they write, “although Iraq complained

about these *offensive breaches of the peace*, nobody [in the media] paid attention, despite the fact that Iraq filed documentation about them on a regular basis with the UN Security Council and the Secretary-General, as it had been doing for many years” (Herman and Peterson 2011:36).

Massing observes that in the summer of 2002 there was little coverage of the debate in the intelligence community about the administration’s use of data about Iraq (Massing 2004:25-26).

“Before the war, for instance, there was a loud debate among intelligence analysts over the information provided to the Pentagon by Iraq opposition leader Ahmed Chalabi and defectors linked to him. Yet little of this seeped into the press,” Massing (2004:26) writes. Another major omission that occurred in the *New York Times* involved the legality of preemptive war with Iraq. Friel and Falk (2004:15) observe that none of the *Times*’ seventy editorials on Iraq between September 11, 2001, and March 21, 2003, mention the words “UN Charter” or “international law.” Key legal facts, such as the fact that possession of unconventional weapons was not a legal *casus belli*, were not discussed in these editorials (Friel and Falk 2004:19-20).

When the administration ramped up its propaganda campaign in September, part of its strategy was to leak information to Judith Miller at the *New York Times*, and then cite her articles to support the case for war on public television and at the United Nations. On September 8, the *Times* published Miller’s front-page story, coauthored with Michael Gordon, entitled “US Says Hussein Intensifies Quest for A-Bomb Parts.” The article’s first paragraph announced that

More than a decade after Saddam Hussein agreed to give up weapons of mass destruction, Iraq has stepped up its quest for nuclear weapons and has embarked on a worldwide hunt for materials to make an atomic bomb, Bush administration officials said today. (Gordon and Miller 2002)

The officials in question worked in the White House Iraq Group. The materials, Gordon and Miller explained, included thousands of aluminum tubes intended for use in the manufacture of centrifuges to enrich uranium. While they qualified their reporting by noting that Iraq was “not

on the verge of deploying a nuclear weapon,” they emphasized the administration’s perspective and recycled the White House Iraq Group talking points:

Hard-liners are alarmed that American intelligence underestimated the pace and scale of Iraq's nuclear program before Baghdad's defeat in the gulf war. Conscious of this lapse in the past, they argue that Washington dare not wait until analysts have found hard evidence that Mr. Hussein has acquired a nuclear weapon. The first sign of a "smoking gun," they argue, may be a mushroom cloud. (Gordon and Miller 2002)

Here, the *Times* amplified the neoconservative view that intelligence about Iraq’s unconventional weapons had been historically unreliable and that preemptive action was necessary to prevent Hussein from acquiring nuclear weapons and altering the “strategic balance in the oil-rich Persian Gulf.” The morning that Gordon and Miller’s article was published, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, and Rice appeared on the Sunday morning talk shows where they referred to Gordon and Miller’s article. On CNN’s *Late Edition*, Rice repeated that “We don’t want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud,” a phrase the administration intoned in subsequent interviews and press conferences.

Bush delivered his speech to the United Nations General Assembly on September 12, warning that Iraq attempted to buy aluminum tubes to enrich uranium, possessed chemical and biological weapons, and was therefore in breach of UN resolutions to disarm. The speech was endorsed by the editorial boards of the leading papers (Western 2004:203-204). The editors of the *New York Times*, for instance, wrote that “President Bush gave some welcome coherence to Washington's policy yesterday in a strong and, for the most part, sensible speech to the United Nations.” They simply assumed Iraqi unconventional weapons capabilities were a matter of fact: “Iraq, with its storehouses of biological toxins, its advanced nuclear weapons program, its defiance of international sanctions and its ambitiously malignant dictator, is precisely the kind of threat the that the United Nations was established to deal with” (*New York Times* 2002).

Remarkably, what had only six days earlier been a stalled “quest for a-bomb parts” was now an “advanced nuclear weapons program”!

The *New York Times* and the press in general privileged the administration’s perspective, even as dissenters tried to reach the press with theirs. In the days after the *Times* published Gordon and Miller’s September 8 article, David Albright, a physicist and former weapons inspector who directed the Institute for Science and Security, spoke with Miller several times in an effort to correct what he thought was unbalanced reporting on the intelligence community’s assessment of the aluminum tubes. Albright knew Miller well; in 1998 he had linked her with an Iraqi defector who worked with him at the Institute. He was also intimately familiar with the aluminum tubes question, having been contacted by a government official to investigate the tubes after they were intercepted in 2001. According to Albright and experts in the US Department of Energy and the IAEA, the tubes were more likely for building rockets than centrifuges. According to Massing (2004:36), who interviewed him, “Reading the September 8 article, Albright felt it was important the *Times* take note of these dissenting views” (Massing 2004:36).

Miller and Gordon published a follow-up article on September 13, but again emphasized the administration’s views, and downplayed the split in the intelligence community. They did not quote Albright or any other official who disagreed with the CIA and the administration.

“Senior officials acknowledged yesterday that there have been debates among intelligence experts about Iraq’s intentions in trying to buy such tubes,” Miller and Gordon noted, “but added that the dominant view in the administration was that the tubes were intended for use in gas centrifuges to enrich uranium.” According to senior officials, they continued, “George J. Tenet, the director of central intelligence, has been adamant that tubes recently intercepted en route to

Iraq were intended for use in a nuclear program . . . They also said it was the intelligence agencies' unanimous view that the type of tubes that Iraq has been seeking are used to make such centrifuges” (Gordon and Miller 2002b). The debate about their intended use, however, was only a “footnote, not a split” in the intelligence community, according to the anonymous senior official quoted by Gordon and Miller.

Frustrated with Gordon and Miller’s reporting, Albright took his story to Joby Warrick at the *Washington Post*. Warrick did write an article about the debate in the intelligence community and apparent efforts on the part of senior officials to quiet dissent among intelligence analysts, but it was placed on page A-18, and “caused little stir,” according to Massing (Massing 2004:38-39). As Massing recounts, by mid-October, the press did begin to run some reports questioning the administration’s case for war. Feith’s secret intelligence unit was also revealed at this time and reported in a front-page article in the *New York Times*. But overall, according to Massing, “A survey of the coverage in November, December, and January reveals relatively few articles about the debate inside the intelligence community. Those articles that did run tended to appear on the inside pages. Most investigative energy was directed at stories that supported, rather than challenged, the administration’s case” (Massing 2004:45). This finding was supported by an analysis in the *Washington Post* of its own coverage (Kurtz 2008).

Another figure who spoke out against the administration was Scott Ritter, a retired Marine and former UNSCOM Iraq chief weapons inspector. Ritter campaigned vigorously throughout 2002 and 2003 to challenge the Bush administration’s claims about Iraq’s WMDs. According to Ritter, Iraq had “qualitatively” disarmed itself of WMDs, and could pose no threat to the United States. In a July 20, 2002 *Boston Glob* article, Ritter wrote that

While we were never able to provide 100 percent certainty regarding the disposition of Iraq's proscribed weaponry, we did ascertain a 90-95 percent level

of verified disarmament. This figure takes into account the destruction or dismantling of every major factory associated with prohibited weapons manufacture, all significant items of production equipment, and the majority of the weapons and agent produced by Iraq. (Ritter 2002)

Ritter was given space in the *Boston Globe* and independent news outlets like *In These Times* (Healy 2002), but his assessment was disparaged by Barry Bearak of the *New York Times*, who accused Ritter of having an “Iraq complex” and a “messianic side” for criticizing the administration, and holding that the United States should adhere to international law and the US Constitution (Bearak 2002).

Albright, Ritter, and many other experts were available and willing to provide an alternative perspective to news reporters on Bush’s case for war against Iraq. One of the few news companies in the United States that did give such dissenters significant attention was the small company then called Knight-Ridder, along with some of its associated newspapers around the country. Warren Strobel and Jonathan Landay interviewed several military officers, intelligence professionals, and diplomats who told them about their “deep misgivings” about the impending war with Iraq. Strobel wrote that

These officials charge that administration hawks have exaggerated evidence of the threat that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein poses—including distorting his links to the al-Qaida terrorist network—have overstated the amount of international support for attacking Iraq and have downplayed the potential repercussions of a new war in the Middle East.

They charge that the administration squelches dissenting views and that intelligence analysts are under intense pressure to produce reports supporting the White House’s argument that Saddam poses such an immediate threat to the United States that pre-emptive military action is necessary. (Strobel 2002)

The officials interviewed by Strobel and Landay challenged many of the specific factual claims made by administration officials. But besides the Knight-Ridder chain and alternative news outlets like *In These Times*, *The Nation*, or *Democracy Now!*, the debate in the intelligence

community and federal government about the intelligence the administration was using to justify an invasion was virtually invisible.

The effect of such media coverage in the fall of 2002 was almost certainly to increase public opinion in favor of military action against Iraq. Once debate about the potential costs of the war began, public opinion in favor of war fell to only 53 percent in August. But by the end of September, it increased to 58 per cent. About 80 percent of the public now believed Iraq had unconventional weapons and 62 percent believed Hussein was planning to use them against the United States (Western 2004:204-205). By early October, two-thirds of Americans believed that Hussein was involved in the 9/11 attacks, and 79 percent of them believed that Iraq was on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons (Western 2004:210). The propaganda campaign was apparently having the desired effect.

Another major media distortion involved coverage of the UN weapons inspection process in early 2003.

On January 27, Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei reported to the UN about the ongoing weapons inspections that began in December. Blix's report was critical of Iraq and carefully worded. He noted that "Iraq appears not to have come to genuine acceptance—not even today—of the disarmament which was demanded of it and which it needs to carry out to win the confidence of the world and live in peace" (Blix 2003). The reason for this was that Iraq had not cooperated in certain procedural aspects, namely guaranteeing safe passage for surveillance planes and helicopters, and preventing public protests. Blix also noted shortcomings in substantial cooperation pertaining to documentation of the elimination of weapons. However, he began by noting that

Iraq has on the whole cooperated rather well so far with UNMOVIC in this field. The most important point to make is that access has been provided to all

sites we have wanted to inspect and with one exception it has been prompt. We have further had great help in building up the infrastructure of our office in Baghdad and the field office in Mosul. Arrangements and services for our plane and our helicopters have been good. The environment has been workable. (Blix 2003)

ElBaradei's report on the search for nuclear weapons was less equivocal than Blix's report. ElBaradei maintained that the IAEA had confiscated and destroyed all elements of Iraq's nuclear weapons program by 1994, and that in December 1998, when it was forced to leave Iraq due to the US bombing, "we were confident that we had not missed any significant component of Iraq's nuclear programme" (ElBaradei 2003). His conclusion and central finding was that "we have to date found no evidence that Iraq has revived its nuclear weapons programme since the elimination of the programme in the 1990s" (ElBaradei 2003).

In news reports and editorials on these presentations, the *New York Times* misrepresented their substance in a way that made them appear to fit the Bush agenda (Friel and Falk 2004:25-31). In writing about Blix's speech, the *Times* implicitly assumed that Iraq had unconventional weapons, and emphasized its lack of cooperation. In her front-page story entitled "Inspector Says Iraq Falls Short," in the lead paragraph, Julia Preston wrote that Blix "gave a broadly negative report today on Iraq's cooperation with two months of inspections, providing support to the Bush administration's campaign to disarm Iraq by force if necessary" (Preston 2003). While the editorial board noted that Blix "had not yet uncovered hard evidence that conclusively proved that Iraq is developing prohibited weapons," a few sentences later, they asserted that "Without Baghdad's full cooperation, inspectors cannot disarm Iraq." "Secretary of State Colin Powell," they added, "warned Baghdad yesterday that not much time remains to begin disarming" (*New York Times* 2003d). Though Preston dedicated one paragraph to ElBaradei's key finding regarding nuclear weapons, the editors did not mention it, noting instead that ElBaradei "pointed

to important unanswered questions” about Iraq’s nuclear program. Friel and Falk (2004:25-26) correctly observe that ElBaradei’s only specific unanswered questions concerned the status of Iraq’s nuclear program *prior to 1991*, and did not bear on the key finding that Iraq had disarmed. The *Times* did not mention this detail.

In editorializing on ElBaradei’s February 14 UN report, the *New York Times* again did not mention his key finding that no nuclear weapons program existed in Iraq—which affirmed his January 27 report—and again implied that it possessed unconventional weapons, even though this was never an assertion made by Blix or ElBaradei. The editorial also contained outright falsehoods:

What should not be missed is that the positive aspects of the reports dealt largely with secondary matters like process and access. On the essential issue of active Iraqi cooperation in the disclosure and destruction of prohibited unconventional weapons, the inspectors could find little encouraging to say. (*New York Times* 2003b)

That the IAEA was confident that Iraq had no nuclear weapons program was not a “secondary matter,” but *the* key finding of its inspections with regard to UN Resolution 1441. And in his January 27 UN report, ElBaradei stated categorically that Iraq had fully cooperated in inspections. Moreover, in the February 14 report itself, he again stated categorically that “Iraq has continued to provide immediate access to all locations” (Friel and Falk 2004:28).

On March 8, the day after Blix and ElBaradei reported again to the Security Council that no proscribed weapons had been found, and that Iraq had improved cooperation with inspectors and destroyed banned missiles, the *New York Times* editorial board finally acknowledged what had been the central findings of the inspections all along:

The main message from Hans Blix was that Iraqi cooperation has increased in recent days and weeks, and that Iraq has begun to move beyond access and procedural questions to the actual destruction of prohibited weapons, notably the bulldozing of missiles that exceed the range permitted by the United Nations. On

the crucial question of nuclear weapons, the other chief inspector, Mohamed ElBaradei, went further, saying that so far he had found no evidence that Iraq had restarted the nuclear weapons programs it had been forced to abandon more than a decade ago. He also reported that claims made by Washington and others that Iraq had recently made illegal purchases of uranium and prohibited nuclear components had been investigated and found to be unsubstantiated. (*New York Times* 2003a)

Yet, in the next sentence, the editors simply assumed, once again, and without evidence, that Iraq nevertheless had unconventional weapons and was refusing to disarm: “Baghdad is still a very long way from living up to the Security Council's demand for it to give up its unconventional weapons” (*New York Times* 2003a). Moreover, even though the *Times* editors did finally acknowledge the key findings of the inspections, at this stage it was too late to influence the debate, as it was now clear that the administration would soon start the war.

In striking contrast to its coverage of Blix and ElBaradei's reports was the media's coverage of Powell's UN speech on February 5. Echoing then Senator Joe Biden's assessment of the speech—which was shared by many congressional Democrats who favorably received Powell's speech—the *Washington Post* published an editorial titled “Irrefutable.” “After Secretary of State Colin L. Powell's presentation to the United Nations Security Council yesterday, it is hard to imagine how anyone could doubt that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction,” the editors began. “Mr. Powell left no room to argue seriously that Iraq has accepted the Security Council's offer of a ‘final opportunity’ to disarm. And he offered a powerful new case that Saddam Hussein's regime is cooperating with a branch of the al Qaeda organization that is trying to acquire chemical weapons and stage attacks in Europe” (*Washington Post* 2003b). The *New York Times* editorial board, though more tempered than the *Post's*, cautioned that the United States should “let diplomacy work,” but called the speech

“convincing” and wrote that “It may not have produced a ‘smoking gun,’ but it left little question that Mr. Hussein had tried hard to conceal one” (*New York Times* 2003c).

The propaganda campaign continued to move public opinion to support the administration’s war effort. On February 5, 2003, after Powell’s speech, a *Washington Post*-ABC News poll showed that 61 percent of Americans thought the administration presented enough evidence to support a military invasion and that 61 percent believed Iraq was trying to develop nuclear weapons (*Washington Post* 2003a). Other polls showed that 87 percent were convinced or thought it was likely that Iraq was supporting al-Qaeda (Western 2005:214). Gallup showed that support for war increased to 63 percent in February, immediately after Powell’s speech, and in March, 64 percent supported invading Iraq, with 33 percent opposed (Jones 2003).

Conclusion

This review of media coverage of diplomacy with Iraq prior to the 2003 invasion shows that the media performed according to the expectations of a propaganda model, and that the reasons for the nature of this coverage were those specified by the model. The news media depended overwhelmingly on high-level Bush administration officials, official experts provided by the administration, and unreliable Iraqi opposition figures in their sustained propaganda campaign to promote the war. News and editorial analyses of the claims made by the administration tended to uncritically promote their arguments, and even the liberal media simply adopted their perspectives, especially on Iraq’s alleged nonconventional weapons. More critical reporting tended to be placed on the inner pages of newspapers so that readers were less likely to see them, while front-page articles emphasized the administration’s dubious claims.

As for the causal efficacy of the propaganda model, if American news corporations were structured differently—in a way that made them less dependent on market dynamics that bear on profits, and thus less dependent on government sources—then they would have been more likely to report in the critical fashion articulated by liberal pluralist theories of the media. The fact that independent news organizations which do not depend on corporate funding did report more critically on the Bush administration's war campaign supports this point. There is also evidence that some news companies worried about the affect the war would have on advertising revenue (Hart 2004). Reporters worried that critical reporting could impede their access to the Bush administration. And because elite opinion heavily favored military intervention, and most members of Congress who opposed the war chose not to speak out against the administration, reporters had few sources of alternative perspectives to the those of the Bush administration. Flak from right-wing media outlets and threats from readers also helped condition media conformity. Finally, it is clear that elite ideology provided the general framework of understanding that informed media coverage. The Bush administration was portrayed as responding to a legitimate international threat, and media inquiry as to the material interests actually motivating the war were extremely rare. Coverage lacked historical context. Like the Bush administration, the media inflated the threat Iraq posed to the United States. This was reflected in *New York Times* front-page headlines about Iraq, which for months began with "THREATS AND RESPONSES" before the more specific subtitle. By contrast, smaller media outlets like Kight-Ridder and independent news services not subject to the same constraints on the corporate media provided much more critical coverage.

As expected by the broader elite mobilization model of war, the movement of public opinion increasingly in favor of intervention and increasingly in agreement with the Bush

administration's central propaganda claims, strongly suggests that the national media's deferential coverage helped the Bush administration garner public support for the war. Moreover, because the news media was the principal source of information for the public about foreign policy (Rampton and Stauber 2003:174), it is likely that if the media had been more critical of the Bush administration, the public would have been more skeptical of its claims. As for the cause of the Iraq War itself, if the public opposed the Bush administration's war effort in larger numbers, especially among Republican and swing voters, then it is at least likely that the administration and congressional Republicans would not have risked losing broad public support by starting the war.

In the buildup to the invasion of Iraq, then, the media performed a key ideological function in priming the general public and Congress to support the Iraq War. Academia, the other major source of ideology on foreign policy in the society, also contributed to the war. This is the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 10

ACADEMIA AND THE IRAQ WAR

In previous chapters, I examined the role of Bush administration elites and the ideology they elaborated in the 1990s as principal causes of the Iraq War. And in the last chapter, I showed how the American mass media supported the Bush administration's war campaign. In this chapter, I turn attention to the direct and indirect ideological support lent by elite universities and influential professors to the Bush administration's Iraq campaign. I focus especially on the "liberal hawks" from elite universities who supported the war effort, and the liberal ideology developed by international relations and international law scholars in the 1990s from which both liberals and neoconservatives drew in crafting pro-war arguments.

Though neoconservatism was a minority position in academia, liberal university intellectuals were drawn on extensively as official experts in publications like the *New York Times* in defense of the war, and their arguments bore remarkable similarity to those made by the Bush administration (Friel and Falk 2004). This is not surprising in light of the fact that in the 1990s, a liberal, neo-Wilsonian ideology was ascendant among policy-oriented intellectuals and university scholars that converged in important respects with neoconservatism (Smith 2007). In fact, Bush drew on theories articulated by these intellectuals in crafting the administration's national security strategy. That eminent liberal university professors would support the invasion of Iraq—some even worked in advisory capacities for the Bush administration—also recalled times when liberals and neoconservatives united in support of the same foreign policy objectives in the 1990s, such as "humanitarian intervention" in Kosovo.

The historical significance of these intellectual convergences and political collaborations are easily missed given the unique character of neoconservatism and the fact that the neoconservatives vehemently distinguished themselves from liberal foreign policy intellectuals. But these ideological similarities are what allow international relations scholars to conceptualize both liberal thought and neoconservatism as variants of a single “liberal hegemony,” the prevailing ideology in the foreign policy community (Walt 2018). While significant differences do exist between liberal foreign policy ideologies and neoconservatism, and dissent among liberal elites against the Iraq War often rested on these differences, the similarities allowed many others to support it, especially in the face of the political pressures to do so.

The liberal neo-Wilsonianism of the 1990s was a collective product of elite university scholars, private foundations, and policy research centers linked to the Democratic Party and the Clinton administration. Bush’s hardline unilateralism also had intellectual origins in the universities, where it was articulated in different ways by figures like Paul Wolfowitz at Yale and Johns Hopkins, and Condoleezza Rice at Stanford. The argument made in this chapter, therefore, is that the American university system made significant ideological contributions that were drawn on by Bush administration officials, other foreign policy elites and the media to justify the invasion of Iraq, even if the university system itself cannot be said to constitute a “necessary cause” of wars more generally. Moreover, on important defense policy questions, the views of the public, government officials, members of congress, and media personnel are undoubtedly influenced by prior education, which in turn reflects the ideological formulations of leading academics at elite universities.

That it was the university *system* that fostered this support is an important qualification. For an elite model of war mobilization predicts that universities will tend to reproduce elite

ideology due to their structural relationships to the state and corporate sector. This includes dependence on state and private foundation patronage for research and the presence of former government officials and other power elites in the leading academic departments. Especially in the policy-oriented disciplines, these relationships allow the power elite to control a large part of the relevant research, and through policy-planning networks, the ideology that informs policy making. As we will see, these factors operated in academia in the 1980s and 1990s to allow the ascendance of an imperial neo-Wilsonianism that informed liberal thinking in the Democratic Party, as well as the Bush administration's national security strategy.

Democracy Promotion and Human Rights in the Academy, c. 1980-2000

The intellectual historian Nicolas Guilhot (2005) traces the professional formalization of democracy and human rights promotion as a “discipline” to the early 1980s, when the Reagan administration established the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a quasi-non-governmental organization established to promote democracy abroad. In establishing the NED, the neoconservatives in the Reagan administration sought to appropriate the ideology of human rights promotion from the Carter administration, and use it as tool for their own foreign policy objectives. Broadly, this entailed using “democracy promotion” to defeat communism, much as it had in previous administrations. “Democracy,” as the neocons understood it, encompassed a conception of human rights not rooted in international law, as it was for Carter, but in the formal structures of constitutional democracy; human rights were held to be entitlements that would emerge from constitutional forms of government. The purpose of this particular conceptualization was to remove the enforcement of human rights from the purview of the

United Nations, which the neoconservatives held was an ineffective enforcement mechanism. Rather, human rights would emerge from within nation states as a consequence of adopting constitutional forms of democratic government, where they could be assisted by Reagan's new democracy promotion programs.

The NED was (and still is) a grant-awarding institution funded by Congress through the State Department to provide funds for programs in developing countries to assist in the formation of democratic institutions. It also funds research on democracy in developing countries. Grants in developing countries may assist activities such as “financing ‘democratic’ opposition forces . . . translating Western political literature, training pollsters, promoting human rights education, fostering an entrepreneurial culture, easing the internationalization of neoliberal economics through symposia and textbooks, sustaining independent news reporting, and briefing government officials on media strategy” (Guilhot 2005:85-86). Though such activities constituted the bulk of NED funds, the first grant it ever awarded was actually to fund research undertaken by sociologists Juan Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Larry Diamond on democracy in the Third World. Given their close relationship to the Reagan administration—Diamond was a researcher at the conservative Hoover Institution—Guilhot maintains that more than serious scholarship, this research was “meant to provide the semblance of a theoretical framework for NED activities” (Guilhot 2005:91).

The NED's research function grew in 1989-1990 with the launching of the quasi-academic *Journal of Democracy*, and then in 1994, with the creation of the International Forum for Democratic Studies, which hosts conferences on democratic development, and brings together scholars, Endowment personnel, and government officials from the United States and around the world. The activities of the Forum are managed by its Research Council, which

consists of approximately one hundred members, mostly political scientists, people who have been involved with NED, or elites who are approached to lend their name and authority to the institution (Guilhot 2005:92). These members create extensive links between the NED and core group think tanks and elite university research centers. Though not peer reviewed, the *Journal of Democracy* is highly regarded by many political scientists,¹ and was a major impetus to the growth of the study of democracy and human rights promotion in the 1990s.

A parallel and complementary development in academia in the 1980s and 1990s was the popularization among political scientists of new democratic transition theses that supplanted the older modernization theory of development. Modernization theorists held that in order for developing societies to democratize, a number of historical preconditions had to be met first, such as the adoption of Western values and sufficient industrial development. Inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, some political scientists began to believe that the transition to democracy could occur much more rapidly than assumed in modernization theory. Rather than cultural development or capital investment, they identified strong national leaders as the new agents of change in developing countries. According to the political scientist Tony Smith, “The ideas leaders brought to their reforming mission, the conflict management styles they adopted . . . their character as fathers of their people, founders of a new order—all these aspects of change seemed to acquire at this historical juncture an importance they had hitherto not possessed” (Smith 2007:130). “Hence the appearance of a wave of books on democratic transitions that centered on the character of strong leadership with the right ideas,” Smith says. “In some cases, [university] curriculum innovations included entire new programs on

¹ I owe this insight to Dr. Emily Hauptmann, an authority on the politics of political science research, whose graduate seminar on this topic I audited in the Spring semester of 2020. Google also ranks the journal in 6th place among political science journals on the basis of H index scores.

such matters as leadership, decision making, styles of negotiation, and conflict resolution” (Smith 2007:130-131). Thus many political scientists adopted a view of democratic transition and how it could be achieved that corresponded to the strategy of “democracy promotion” initiated by Reagan and propounded by the NED.

Another important theoretical innovation developed by political scientists during this period, and promoted by the NED, was democratic peace theory (DPT). In summary, Smith says,

democratic peace theory holds that just as leaders in a democracy come to power through negotiated compromises based on non-violence and enshrined in the rule of law, so in much the same way democratic states can resolve conflicts among themselves. The preference for nonviolent problem-solving approaches is enhanced by the transparency, predictability, and sense of accountability of constitutional democratic leaders at the domestic level that may spill over into their relations with leaders of other democracies.

Moreover, to the extent that democratic politics exists alongside open, capitalist economic institutions, the opportunity is present for integrating world markets and creating thereby interdependent economies, which in turn should contribute to peace among nations by giving each people a tangible stake in the well-being of others. As the rule of law basic to domestic democratic order and necessary for economic openness comes to be institutionalized in multilateral organizations, a collective security system might be consolidated capable of maintaining the peace. (Smith 2007:99)

More succinctly, the basic claim of DPT is that, as a matter of empirical fact, democracies do not go to war against each other. For DPT theorists, then, the foreign policy prescription that followed from this conclusion was that the United States should attempt to promote democracy in countries where it has not yet taken root. The more democratic the world becomes, it should follow, the more peaceful it will be. This, of course, is a more sophisticated reincarnation of the classic formulation of Woodrow Wilson (Smith 2007:63-67;97).

DPT was popularized by renowned Ivy League professor Michael Doyle, who in 1983 wrote two influential essays defending Immanuel Kant’s “democratic peace” thesis. Doyle’s argument inspired “a rapidly expanding and dynamic field of democratic peace theory” in the

academy, according to Smith (2007:97), so that in the 1990s much work went into elaborating and validating it. In this collective effort, Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs played a crucial institutional role (Parmar 2012:234). The Belfer Center has been funded by the Ford Foundation, and is housed in Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, which in turn is funded by the Kennedy family (Parmar 2012:235). It is the home of the leading international relations journal *International Security*, a policy-oriented scholarly journal that is consistently among the top-five most cited journals in the international relations field (Parmar 2012:234-235). In the early 1990s, several articles in *International Security* elaborated DPT, and in 1996, with funding from the Carnegie Corporation, its contributors published a DPT reader.

One final development that needs to be considered in the intellectual foundations of liberal foreign policy in the 1990s is the emergence of the doctrine of "humanitarian intervention." The origins of this concept and associated concepts like the "responsibility to protect" go back to 1987, when Bernard Kouchner, a founder of Doctors Without Borders, and the French jurist Mario Battati developed the idea of "the right to intervene" in states that perpetrated gross human rights violations against their own people or were unable to prevent them. After what were widely perceived to be failures of the United Nations to avert humanitarian catastrophes in Rwanda and Serbia, international law scholars, governments, and international organizations followed Kouchner and Battati in developing this concept (Sands 2004:179). They began to reconsider the classic Westphalian notion of national sovereignty, which bars intervention in sovereign states, and is foundational to the modern system of international relations. The opposing concept they developed was the notion of "sovereignty as responsibility," whereby a state's sovereignty comes with an obligation to protect its population,

so that states which abrogate this responsibility thus forfeit sovereignty and may be subject to outside military intervention.

These concepts were developed by an international network of scholars and activists, but had articulate proponents in the United States, such as Thomas Franck, a New York University law professor who “laid the groundwork for a juridical blessing of progressive liberal imperialism,” according to Smith (2007:169-172). One of the most prominent American scholars to advance the doctrine of humanitarian intervention was Samantha Power, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *A Problem From Hell: America in the Age of Genocide*, published in 2002 with support from George Soros’s Open Society foundation (Power 2002:569). Power was the Founding Executive Director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Kennedy School of Government before becoming a professor there. Canadian-American scholar Michael Ignatieff co-founded the center with Power, and was the Center’s director from 2000 to 2006. In 2000, Ignatieff participated in the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, organized by the Canadian government to make recommendations to global elites on a framework for implementing humanitarian intervention. The report produced by the International Commission in 2001, titled “The Responsibility to Protect,” outlined the legal innovations that were eventually adopted by UN General Assembly in the fall of 2005.

The Transformation of Liberal Theory to Imperial Policy

Influenced by the theories outlined above, the Clinton and Bush Jr. administrations incorporated democracy and human rights promotion into their foreign policy agendas, in turn heavily influencing how both the Democratic and Republican Party establishments thought about

the use of military force. For in the process of transformation from academic theories to official policies, DPT and democratic transition theories were militarized, often against the recommendations of their academic proponents in the case of DPT, though other academics supported this transition. Humanitarian intervention itself was a legitimizing framework for the use of military force, and the Clinton administration drew on it to justify bombings in Bosnia and Kosovo.

DPT and the new democratic transition thesis were introduced to the Clinton administration by Larry Diamond, the NED-sponsored sociologist mentioned earlier. Diamond became the editor of the *Journal of Democracy* in 1990, and was closely associated with the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI), the Democratic Party's public policy think tank. In 1991, he authored the PPI's Policy Report, entitled *An American Foreign Policy for Democracy*, in which he advanced the DPT thesis, and maintained that promoting democracy is vital to America's national security. Parmar (2012:233;332) observes that Bill Clinton appears to have lifted almost word-for-word Diamond's language about promoting democracy as a new strategy for ensuring US national security in a December 1991 speech. "Democracies don't go to war with each other," Clinton asserted. "Democracies don't sponsor terrorist acts against each other. They are more likely to be reliable trading partners, protect the global environment, and abide by international law" (Clinton 1991). The Clinton administration militarized DPT by dividing the world into a zone of democratic peace, and the zone of autocratic rogue states that threatened the zone of peace (Parmar 2012:233). As Parmar notes, such a worldview helped legitimize American military power, and "secured America's self-image as a good state—all while maintaining powerful armed forces and military budgets at near Cold War levels and heading off demands for a 'peace dividend' " (Parmar 2012:237).

Humanitarian intervention served a similar function for the Clinton administration. Challenging the liberal intellectual consensus on the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, a number of scholars have advanced accounts of American participation in these wars which demonstrate that Clinton's humanitarian concerns were thin covers for US imperial interests (Gibbs 2009; Herman and Peterson 2007; Johnstone 2002). By intervening in Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999, the Clinton administration actually sought to assert US hegemony over Europe at a time when Western Europe was trying to distance itself from US imperial institutions.

Especially concerning to US state planners were European plans for a new military alliance, Eurocorps, and planning for the Euro currency zone, which were seen as potential rivals to NATO and the dollar's privileged status as the global reserve currency, respectively (Gibbs 2009:24-33). As a mechanism for securing trade relationships, and an important component of the military-industrial complex, NATO served important political and economic functions in Europe for the United States. At a time when the *raison d'être* for NATO was in question, and credible threats to US power were lacking, the United States thus sought to check European assertiveness. Humanitarian intervention served as the pretext for doing so, providing a new lease on life for NATO and other Cold War institutions (Gibbs 2009:44).

Neither military intervention, however, received Security Council authorization. Thus the Kosovo intervention in particular has come to be widely regarded as an "illegal but legitimate" defense of human rights in liberal intellectual culture (Chomsky 2006:79-101). Yet, with regard to US participation in the Bosnian war, in a richly documented study, Gibbs observes that

During 1993-1994, US Officials continued their earlier policy of opposing EU peace plans—which sought a compromise agreement among Bosnia's ethnic groups—and effectively blocked their implementation. Partly due to US opposition, the EU mediation efforts failed. At the same time, the United States furnished military equipment to its Muslim and Croat allies in the Bosnia conflict through a large-scale covert operation. In late 1995, US officials brokered the

Dayton Accords, which finally did end the war. The implementation of these Accords took place under the aegis of a NATO-directed peacekeeping force, thus accomplishing the long-standing US objective of finding a new function for NATO. At a substantive level, however, the Dayton Accords were not much different from the earlier EU-sponsored peace plans the United States had opposed (Gibbs 2009:12).

During this period, moreover, the Croats and Bosnian Muslims carried out atrocities against civilians while receiving diplomatic and military support from the United States. For instance, it was only after a massive US-backed retaliatory strike on the Serbs for alleged atrocities in Srebrenica that the peace talks began. (It appears, moreover, that the Croats may have deliberately provoked the Serbian attack in Srebrenica.)

The US bombing of Kosovo in 1999 served as another check on European autonomy. The humanitarian pretexts for this intervention are seriously compromised by the fact that the United State rejected available diplomatic solutions and that the bombing was widely anticipated to *increase* ethnic cleansing, rather than prevent it, which is in fact what happened (Chomsky 2006:98-99).

Liberal Academics Who Supported the Invasion of Iraq

Not all academics involved in developing the theories discussed above would have supported the Iraq War, and in fact many of them did not. However, many of them did, and they received special attention in the media as official experts.

We will recall that the international law debate about the invasion of Iraq concerned (a) whether the United States had the right to use military force against Iraq without a Security Council resolution; that is, whether the November 8 2002 Resolution 1441 authorized the use of force if Iraq did not cooperate with the UN weapons inspectors; and (b) whether the United

States could legally use military force against Iraq if it was in “material breach” of previous Security Council resolutions; that is, whether Resolution 687 authorized the use of force against Iraq if it failed to comply with its disarmament obligations. These questions also turned on the reality of Iraq’s possession of unconventional weapons.

Distinguished American international law professors such as Thomas Franck, Ruth Wedgewood (Johns Hopkins), and Richard Gardner (Columbia University), offered their support for the Bush administration’s legal arguments. Gardner was quoted in the *New York Times* as the UN was wrapping up deliberations over Resolution 1441: “We have the right to use force because there has clearly been a material breach [of past Security Council resolutions].” In the same article, Franck says requiring a second vote “would irredeemably weaken the resolution” (Preston 2002).

In March 2003 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan announced that an invasion of Iraq without Security Council backing would constitute a violation of the UN Charter. To provide a counterargument, the *New York Times* drew on Ruth Wedgewood, who according to Friel and Falk (2004), was the most cited legal expert in the *Times* on Iraq just prior to the invasion. “I just disagree with the secretary general's legal view because there are fundamental Security Council resolutions that underlie this,” Wedgewood said. What she meant is that even without a new Security Council resolution, prior resolutions from the 1990s authorized the United States to disarm Iraq, “for the sake of the peace and security of the region,” according to the *Times*. Gardner was also quoted, only he made the incredible claim that the 1990 resolution that authorized Western states to expel Iraq from Kuwait now authorized the United States to invade Iraq and overthrow Hussein, “to restore peace and security in the area” (Tyler and Barringer 2003).

These arguments were characterized by ambiguity about the relevance of a new Security Council authorization, for the liberal hawks also invoked the Kosovo precedent. Michael Glennon, for instance, asked rhetorically, “Why would the Security Council spend two months deciding whether to authorize the use of force if its decision were not binding? How can the council's decision bind Iraq but not the United States?”

The administration's answer has never been articulated publicly. But its underlying theory probably was inherited from the Clinton administration's Balkan policy. Asked whether the United States was still seeking explicit Security Council approval to attack Iraq, Secretary Powell said, "The president has authority, as do other like-minded nations, just as we did in Kosovo." (Glennon 2002)

Apparently seeing no objectionable contradiction, he went on to explain that because other nations had violated the Charter, the United States can too:

The international legal system is voluntary and states are bound only by rules to which they consent. A treaty can lose its binding effect if a sufficient number of parties engage in conduct that is at odds with the constraints of the treaty. The consent of United Nations member states to the general prohibition against the use of force, as expressed in the Charter, has in this way been supplanted by a changed intent as expressed in deeds. (Glennon 2002)

Either the United States needed Security Council authorization, or it did not. If it did not, then the United States was free to violate international law and the US Constitution as thought necessary, while other countries were not free to violate international law if the United States disagreed with their actions.

In Anne-Marie Slaughter's version of the argument—Slaughter was Dean of Woodrow School of International Affairs at Princeton—“By giving up on the Security Council, the Bush administration has started on a course that could be called ‘illegal but legitimate,’ a course that could end up, paradoxically, winning United Nations approval for a military campaign in Iraq—though only after an invasion.”

The relevant history here is from Kosovo. In 1999, the United States, expecting a Russian veto of military intervention to stop Serbian attacks on ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, sidestepped the United Nations completely and sought authorization for the use of force within NATO itself.

Slaughter went on to explain that the war would turn out to be legal if the United States either found WMD, or was welcomed by Iraqis and helped rebuild the country. But the United Nations “cannot be a straightjacket, preventing nations from defending themselves or pursuing what they perceive to be their vital national security interests,” (Slaughter 2003) she concluded.

Wedgewood and Gardner also invoked the Kosovo precedent to justify invading Iraq (Tyler and Barringer 2003).

It is remarkable how closely these arguments reflected those advanced by the Bush administration, and how uncritically these scholars accepted the administration’s claims that Iraq was an imminent threat. But even more remarkable were the imperial apologetics offered by the likes of human rights expert Michael Ignatieff and Yale historian John Lewis Gaddis.

In an infamous front-page article in the *New York Times Magazine*, titled “The American Empire; The Burden,” Ignatieff defended American imperialism and the Bush administration’s plan to invade Iraq. “Being an imperial power” he explained,

means laying down the rules America [sic] wants (on everything from markets to weapons of mass destruction) while exempting itself from other rules (the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and the International Criminal Court) that go against its interest. It also means carrying out imperial functions in places America has inherited from the failed empires of the 20th century -- Ottoman, British and Soviet. In the 21st century, America rules alone, struggling to manage the insurgent zones—Palestine and the northwest frontier of Pakistan, to name but two—that have proved to be the nemeses of empires past.

It also means “Multilateral solutions to the world's problems are all very well, but they have no teeth unless America bares its fangs” (Ignatieff 2003).

Ignatieff placed the Bush administration's foreign policy in the context of traditional American imperialism. Though "The 21st century imperium is a new invention in the annals of political science, an empire lite, a global hegemony whose grace notes are free markets, human rights and democracy, enforced by the most awesome military power the world has ever known," the Bush administration's National Security Strategy is consistent with traditional Wilsonian idealism in its commitment to "the single sustainable model for national success."

Invading Iraq was an "imperial operation" according to Ignatieff, to be taken on by a "reluctant republic" that would "become the guarantor of peace, stability, democratization and oil supplies" in the Middle East. Moreover, "Iraq represents the first in a series of struggles to contain the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the first attempt to shut off the potential supply of lethal technologies to a global terrorist network." Again, the uncritical acceptance of the Bush administration's shaky pretexts was remarkable in light of available evidence that seriously undermined their claims. Ignatieff accepts the Bush administration narrative throughout the entire article, and even defends the administration's obvious hypocrisy. The Bush administration actually supported Hussein during his worst crimes in the 1980s, but "The fact that states are both late and hypocritical in their adoption of human rights does not deprive them of the right to use force to defend them." To his fellow defenders of human rights, Ignatieff explains that

The disagreeable reality for those who believe in human rights is that there are some occasions—and Iraq may be one of them—when war is the only real remedy for regimes that live by terror. This does not mean the choice is morally unproblematic. The choice is one between two evils, between containing and leaving a tyrant in place and the targeted use of force, *which will kill people but free a nation from the tyrant's grip*. (Ignatieff 2003, emphasis added)

If the "people" he refers to are Iraqis, Ignatieff seems to think killing them may be justified if it frees them from Hussein's rule. Ignatieff's is a strange conception of human rights.

The distinguished Yale historian of the Cold War, John Lewis Gaddis, offered similar imperial apologetics in a series of lectures he gave at the New York Public Library in 2002, and then published in book form in 2004. Like Ignatieff, Gaddis (2004) places the Bush administration's defense policy in the longer tradition of benevolent American imperialism, going back to Thomas Jefferson's "empire of liberty," and comparing Bush's defense policy to that of John Quincy Adams and Woodrow Wilson. In fact, Gaddis regards Bush as "quite Wilsonian" (Bai 2004). The chapter on the Bush administration offers a defense of the 2002 National Security Strategy and the invasion of Iraq.

Gaddis believes that Bush's NSS is a significant improvement over Clinton's less assertive foreign policy. Unlike Clinton, who approached foreign policy issues in a piecemeal fashion, the Bush administration articulated a grand strategy, Gaddis explains. A key part of this grand strategy is democracy promotion, which may prevent the conditions for terrorism from emerging in authoritarian regimes. Gaddis approves of this objective, and approves of the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq as an extension of the war on terrorism, and says that terrorism justifies violating Iraq's and other countries' sovereignty. If terrorists don't play by the rules, then Americans can't either if they are going to defeat them (Gaddis 2004:86).

Though he is entirely uncritical of the administration's basic premises about WMD, terrorism, and international law, Gaddis does correctly perceive that the invasion of Iraq was intended to have a demonstration effect that would deter other nations in the region from opposing US primacy. Afghanistan represented one such "Agincourt"—the British victory over the French in 1415—and the administration needed to keep up the "momentum" by invading Iraq. Then, "if we could repeat the Afghan Agincourt along the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, then we could accomplish a great deal."

We could complete the task the Gulf War left unfinished. We could destroy whatever weapons of mass destruction Saddam might have accumulated since. We could end whatever support he was providing for terrorists beyond Iraq's borders, notably those who acted against Israel. We could liberate the Iraqi people. We could ensure an ample supply of inexpensive oil. We could set in motion a process that could undermine and ultimately remove reactionary regimes elsewhere in the Middle East, thereby eliminating the principal breeding ground for terrorism. And, as President Bush did say publicly in a powerful speech to the United Nations on September 12, 2002, we could save that organization from the irrelevance into which would otherwise descend if its resolutions continued to be contemptuously disregarded. (Gaddis 2004:93-94)

Like the other liberal hawks, Gaddis here accepts most of the Bush administration's central claims and assumptions about Iraq and national security as true. It is also not clear why overthrowing Hussein is unfinished business from the Gulf War, since there was never a Security Council authorization to do so.

Gaddis's critique of the Bush administration is based on strategic concerns rather than empirical claims about WMD and terrorism, or concerns about morality or international law. Bush's problem, Gaddis avers, is that he just didn't know when to stop the "shock and awe," by which he means "the determination of the Bush strategists to shake up a status quo in the Middle East that had become dangerous to the security of the United States" (Gaddis 2004:99). By invading Iraq without international support, Bush risked failing to provide "reassurance" to the world that US power would be used for constructive rather destructive purposes, especially since the occupation was run so "raggedly". Moreover, Bush might be wrong that democracy necessarily will stop the spread of terrorism (Gaddis 2004:101-103). It could turn out, Gaddis explains, that democracy may not work in Afghanistan and Iraq if leaders are not elected who will be US allies and won't support terrorism. In this case, the United States will have to turn to "empire" and impose less free, but more stable "authoritarian" governments in these countries. "How else have great powers imposed their authority in the past when confronted with anarchy,

resistance, ethnic rivalries, cultural differences, and disparities in economic development?”

Gaddis asks. “Empires have a bad reputation in this post-colonial age because of the oppression they inflicted. It’s worth remembering, though, that they also at times brought order, prosperity, and justice” (Gaddis 2004:106).

If the United States turned to empire, it “would appear at first glance to be the biggest gap of all between promises made and performance delivered” by the Bush administration’s defense policy. But that’s only if we don’t “place the Bush grand strategy within the larger context of American history, where the idea of an ‘empire of liberty’ has deep roots” and recognize that empire and liberty are compatible (Gaddis 2004:107). In short, American imperialism has always been justified because Americans have always meant well.

At the end of his book, Gaddis explains that it is okay to be patriotic and that we have a responsibility to fight for our country’s freedom, messages he conveyed to his graduate students at Yale (Gaddis 2004:116;118). For his service to the Bush administration’s agenda, he was invited to the White House to discuss his book (Bai 2004).

To take one more example, another liberal academic who supported the Iraq War, though in a different way, was sociologist Larry Diamond (2004; Smith and Diamond 2004). Like most liberal academics, Diamond did not support the initial invasion itself because he preferred a multilateral approach with UN support. However, he did not regard the invasion as “imperial” in character because it was based on what he believes were legitimate security concerns, and he welcomed the opportunity the invasion and occupation brought to bring democracy to Iraq. He therefore offered his expertise in democracy promotion to the Bush administration as an advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority. But rather than the neocolonial regime forced on the country, or the very act of invading itself and the destabilization this created, Diamond’s

explanation of “What Went Wrong in Iraq” focuses mostly on insufficient US forces to control the “security” of Iraq, and militias that undermined US efforts to build democratic institutions. He praised the interim constitution’s respect for “liberal values,” especially “individual rights.” Diamond’s critique of the Bush administration’s democracy building thus focuses on tactical mistakes such as not sufficiently including the UN in the administration of the country, or problems associated with not having international legitimacy by invading without UN support. But Diamond does not fundamentally disapprove of US objectives in Iraq.

Conclusion

Neoconservatism, hardline unilateralism, and liberal internationalism, once incarnated as public policy, take on forms that yield similar imperial policies, whether Democrats or Republicans are in power. Democracy and human rights promotion, though usually associated with liberalism, in the 1980s was appropriated and developed as official policy by the Reagan neoconservatives. In the National Endowment for Democracy the neocons created an enduring and bipartisan policy instrument that linked the state with academics who helped formulate US foreign policy. Along with policy research centers like the Belfer Center and the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, and other professors at elite universities, NED-linked researchers helped articulate a neo-Wilsonian ideology based on academic theories, including democratic peace theory, democratic transition theories, and humanitarian intervention. These academic innovations heavily influenced liberal foreign and defense policy in the 1990s, and in traveling from the university to the offices of power in Washington, they became instruments of American military imperialism. In this transformation, liberal thinking began to converge with what would

become the Bush administration's National Security Strategy, and in the case of some influential professors, the convergence entailed a conscious and deliberate defense of American imperialism and the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

These developments may not have been necessary for the Iraq War to happen, but they made it easier for at least some Democrats and liberals to support it, and ensured that there was no shortage of liberal experts available to the media to substantiate the Bush administration's war propaganda and vindicate violations of international law. The ideological pillars of neo-Wilsonianism bolstered the neoconservative and unilateralist imperialism of the Bush administration, providing moral, national security, and legal rationalizations for the American military primacy that was at the core of the Bush administration's grand strategy. If global democracy is consistent with world peace and national security, as Bush explained in the 2002 NSS and in speeches promoting the war in early 2003 (Record 2010:110), then the United States would be justified in going to war against Iraq and transforming it into a market democracy, to be followed by the rest of the Middle East. As proponents of the new liberal development thesis suggested and as the Bush administration claimed, all of this could be easily achieved. And if the United States failed to attain Security Council authorization, war might be illegal, but it would be a legitimate defense of human rights and American "national interests." According to Smith (2007:69), liberal intellectuals in the 1990s provided much more sophisticated articulations of these ideas than had the neoconservatives. By the time Bush came to power in 2001, these were available for incorporation into his national security strategy and administration rhetoric more generally.

Indeed, even if in a perverted form, all three components of the liberal ideology are captured by Bush press secretary Scott McClellan, who explains why Bush went to war against Iraq thusly:

Although I didn't realize it at the time we launched our campaign to sell the war, what drove Bush toward military confrontation [with Iraq] more than anything else was an ambitious and idealistic post-9/11 vision of transforming the Middle East through the spread of freedom. This view was grounded in a philosophy of coercive democracy, a belief that Iraq was ripe for conversion from a dictatorship into a beacon of liberty through the use of force, and a conviction that this could be achieved at nominal cost. The Iraqis were understood to be modern, forward-looking people who yearned for liberty but couldn't achieve it under the brutal, tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussein. (McClellan 2008:128-129)

In the March 17 speech in which he gave Hussein his final ultimatum, Bush said: "Unlike Saddam Hussein we believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty. And when the dictator has departed, they can set an example to all the Middle East of a vital and peaceful and self-governing nation" (Record 2010:110). Language mirroring DPT appeared increasingly in the administration's thinking after the invasion (see Record 2010:110-111).

As suggested by the power elite model of war mobilization, the liberal ideology was a product of elite universities and was crafted with support from private and state funding sources; in the case of Larry Diamond's work, the NED; in the case of the Belfer Center researchers, the Carnegie Corporation and Kennedy family; and in the case of Carr Center researchers, the Kennedy family and George Soros. Such funding was not necessary for some professors to advance these ideas, but it did help them gain wide acceptance in academia.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSIONS: THE POWER ELITE MODEL OF WAR MOBILIZATION AND THE IRAQ WAR

In chapters 5 through 10, I provided an explanation of the invasion of Iraq according to an elite model of war mobilization. The balance of evidence in these chapters offers broad support for the model in that this evidence illustrates the structural characteristics of the model and the relationships of these characteristics to the expected outcome of war. In this concluding chapter, I will review my argument and compare it to those advanced by state-centric, Marxist, and Open Door theorists. I contend that the balance of evidence provided in this dissertation supports my model better than theirs; that is, that this model is a better explanation of the Iraq War. On this basis, I conclude with a set of policy prescriptions that would change the character of American foreign and defense policy so as to ensure that the United States complied with international law, and used war and covert military force only when these were actually necessary for national defense, rather than as tools of imperial domination.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq, it is clear, was not a preventive war to eliminate Iraq's nonconventional weapons capabilities. It is unlikely that eliminating weapons of mass destruction was even a sincere motive of Bush administration officials, though the evidence does not permit absolute certainty about this (Butt 2019). However, it is clear that the administration made claims to justify the invasion that they did not have good reasons to believe, and in this sense, they effectively lied to the American public and to the world. To achieve their predetermined goal of invasion, administration officials had to politicize the intelligence gathering process so that the CIA would appear to support their claims. This involved putting pressure on CIA analysts to arrive at conclusions that would justify an invasion, or at least

appear to, and creating alternative institutional sources of “intelligence” that would also support the favored policy.

The longer history of the Bush administration officials and their dealings with Iraq also suggests that their motives were insincere. Most significantly, in the 1980s, Bush administration officials working in the Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations openly supported Hussein while he was committing the very crimes they would later fault him for to justify two wars against Iraq.

The main reason for the 2003 invasion, it appears, is that Bush and the other principal architects of the war sought to assert US military primacy with an awesome demonstration of American power that would a) consolidate executive branch power over expanded military institutions, and b) direct state subsidies to industrial defense corporations. As explained in chapter 8, these officials were all adherents to a primacist grand strategy, the cornerstone of which was unrivaled American military power and global hegemony predicated on military, political, and economic predominance. Control of Gulf region oil was understood as key to sustaining this primacy. Moreover, Bush, Cheney, and Rice came to the administration as representatives of the fossil fuel industry. Iraq’s large oil supplies, then, and its weak military status help explain why it was a specific target for such a display of force.

However, in understanding this motive, more significant than prior corporate affiliations, with the exception of Bush himself, the key Bush administration officials discussed in chapter 7 were all formerly managers of the defense bureaucracy, of the military-industrial complex (MIC), and all of them including Bush had internalized the requisite values for holding such offices. For Bush, the son of George H. W. Bush, participation in the bureaucracy itself wasn’t necessary for such socialization, and he fully trusted his father’s former partners. Not surprisingly then, the shared unilateralism of the administration, neoconservative or otherwise,

reflected in the most advanced form the institutional imperatives of the military-industrial complex described in chapter 3. Cheney, Rumsfeld, and the neoconservatives sought almost total freedom and unimpeded power for the president in managing national security, and military primacy and unilateralism were idealized by all administration officials.

Whatever other idiosyncratic reasons individuals within the administration may have had for wanting to invade Iraq, fundamentally, the invasion and occupation represented an exercise and consolidation of power for the state managers of the defense bureaucracy, and a massive transfer of wealth to the corporations that contracted with the Pentagon, State Department, and Agency for International Development, either once the post-9/11 military buildup began, or after the invasion of Iraq during the occupation.

The ideological impulses that motivated the invasion were mostly derived from intellectual sources inside the neoconservative movement, sustained by elite-funded policy-planning organizations like the American Enterprise Institute and the Project for the New American Century. However, the administration's hardline unilateralism also converged in important ways with liberal internationalism as it had developed in the 1990s in the university system and policy-planning networks linked with the Democratic Party. This allowed many liberal intellectuals and Democratic Party leaders to support the invasion of Iraq, and to help Americans understand Bush's National Security Strategy as a normal, if innovative, reformulation of American defense policy, and one that was needed to protect Americans from another terrorist attack like that which occurred on 9/11. In fact, the Bush administration's foreign policy ideology, or "grand strategy," was remarkably similar to what came before it, whether liberal or conservative, a new frankness about unilateral action and primacy notwithstanding.

The war probably would not have happened if the American media system functioned differently from the way it does. The media did not serve as a check on state power in the run up to the war, and did not provide a “marketplace of ideas” so that Americans could evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of invading Iraq and make an informed decision that considered the factuality of administration claims and relevant historical context. Rather, the Bush administration deftly manipulated media coverage, ensuring that the media collectively performed more like an authoritarian state propaganda agency rather than a set of autonomous, independent institutions hypothesized by pluralist accounts of American society. The media promoted the war effort by uncritically channeling the Bush administration’s claims and assumptions about Iraq. The effect of such media manipulation and deference appears to be that public opinion in favor of military action against Iraq was sustained and further mobilized in the eighteen months after the 9/11 attacks as the administration gradually shifted focus from Afghanistan to Iraq.

Alternative Explanations: Pluralist States, Capitalist States, or Opening Iraq’s Door?

Wars present a store of clues and evidence that can make several different explanations seem plausible, especially if different weight is given to different factors that may be widely recognized as relevant. For their parts, sociologists and scholars critical of American imperialism have offered state-centric, Marxist, and Open Door theories of the invasion of Iraq. But how well do they stand up to the explanation offered by an elite model?

Michael Mann, it will be recalled, has defended a state-centric theory of American militarism in general, and of the invasion of Iraq in particular. He has been dismissive of MIC

theories, and believes that American economic and military imperialism are unconnected, save for the dollar's status as global reserve currency and the way this sustains US military power (Mann 2013:229).

About the invasion of Iraq, Mann argues that it represented a “new imperialism” unlike anything that came before the Bush administration. Its roots are in the neoconservative movement. Mann explains that

the Democrats would not have reached [the new imperialism] unaided, and nor would Republican Party elders brought up on more pragmatic policies. Neither envisaged unilateral, uninvited and essentially unprovoked invasion of foreign countries—except tiny countries viewed as being in the American “backyard,” like Grenada and Panama. Major interventions during the 1990s had differed. In the 1991 Gulf War Saddam had violated international law by invading Kuwait and the US had assembled a UN-backed coalition which included his Arab neighbors. In Bosnia and Kosovo ethnic civil wars were raging and intervention was begged for by the groups suffering most and aided by the UN and NATO. . . . But in these cases American militarism was more or less normal for the post-1945 period. Behind them lay a mainly pragmatic and defensive notion of military power. If we were threatened, we could respond, with overwhelming force if necessary. But there was no sense of using militarism offensively to remake the world into a better place. (Mann 2003:7-8)

Mann's gloss on twentieth century American history is obviously flawed. For example, the United States did not have any UN support in bombing Kosovo, and did not have Security Council authorization in bombing Bosnia, and the invasion of Vietnam was not a “pragmatic and defensive” response to a national security threat, but outright aggression. And messianic visions for making the world a better place were not new with neoconservatism. This understanding of history prevents Mann from seeing the continuities that exist between Bush's “new imperialism” and the thrust of post-World War II American foreign policy. It also implies that military imperialism does not have systemic or structural causes. Indeed, as a residue of his anti-Marxism, Mann explicitly rejects the ideas that societies are “systems” and that structural explanations of wars are possible (e.g. Mann 2013:243).

About the MIC and the Iraq War, Mann says that “The larger U.S. military-industrial complex is . . . active in lobbying for the maintenance and renewal of America’s massive military . . . , but it rarely lobbies for war, and there is no evidence it did so here,” in the case of Iraq (Mann 213:241). This makes sense if the MIC is understood as *only* industrial defense firms that push for war by lobbying, but not if it includes state management, defense firms’ linkages to the broader corporate sector, and the networks of defense-focused individuals and organizations funded by the corporate rich. As explained in chapter 6, invading Iraq fit within an ideological framework that was functional for sustaining the MIC and was financed by corporate elites interested in sustaining it.

How then does Mann explain the Iraq War? In his 2003 book he writes that

In reality the invasion was fueled by a mixture of motives to which the new imperialists would not openly admit. Some of them might be considered suspect motives—oil, revenge and a believe that it could dominate the Middle East by military force. The desire to dominate also had mixed motives—oil again, defense of Israel, but it also contained a genuine desire to bring freedom and democracy to the region. Saddam was seen as an evil tyrant, whom the US could usefully remove, while the UN could not. So underlying all these reasons was a supreme confidence that American military power could bring them all to pass. (Mann 2003:218)

By “revenge” Mann refers to vengeance for Hussein’s assault on Shiite and Kurdish allies after the war, his regime’s obstinate survival, and alleged attempt to assassinate H. W. Bush in 1993. While he cites the right documents (e.g. the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance), he does not closely investigate their content, leaving this explanation facile and unconvincing.

In his 2013 work on American imperialism, however, while still maintaining the fundamental separateness of American economic and military imperialism (Mann 2013:242), Mann nonetheless concedes that the pre-invasion State Department plans for Iraq demonstrated “the main direct connection between economic and military imperialism” (Mann 2013:239) in

the Bush administration's foreign policy. Still, he goes on to explain that Bush's "military intensification was ideologically germinated" and that "there has . . . been little connection" between military and economic imperialism in the Bush administration's defense policy (Mann 2013:241, 242).

Another sociologist to advance a state-centric explanation of the Iraq War is Muhammad Idrees Ahmad (2014). Initially, it is difficult to categorize Ahmad's explanation, for he incorporates a kind of elite network analysis called a "flex net" approach, which shows the political network connections among Bush administration officials and neoconservative intellectuals. But Ahmad's analysis is not a political economy analysis of elites in the tradition of Mills (1956) or Domhoff (2014). He ultimately concludes that wars in general, and the Iraq War in particular, do not have "monocausal" explanations, agreeing with Mann that "explanations of war that focus exclusively on larger structures have only limited utility. The world is too complex to be explained by all-encompassing models" (Ahmad 2014:171-172). The agency of historical actors must be considered along with institutions and structures, he explains. Ahmad thus focuses extensively on the neoconservative network and its individual member connections to Israel and Judaism to explain how the Bush administration came to invade Iraq. His is ultimately a variation on the Israel lobby argument advanced by Mearsheimer and Walt (2007).

Like Mann, Ahmad is dismissive of the MIC as a cause because, like Mann, he understands it solely as the defense industry and as a kind of institutionally distinct lobby. Without saying who his interlocuters are, Ahmad says "Those who argue that the war was waged on behalf of the MIC infer its role from the inevitable profits that accrued to military contractors like SAIC and Lockheed Martin." However, Ahmad explains that "the MIC has been able to

generate profits without actually needing a war” (Ahmad 2014:30). “The case also fails on empirical grounds,” Ahmad continues, for “it leaves unstated the question of agency.”

To the extent that evidence of lobbying is offered, it points to neoconservative think tanks such as PNAC, Centre for Security Policy (CSP) and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA). To be sure, a bevy of retired generals with links to arms manufactures did parade on prime-time US television to promote the war. But they were merely cheerleading a venture others had conceived.” (Ahmad 2014:30-31)

This is all Ahmad says about the MIC. About “hegemony and dominance” as motives—motives I argue are associated with the MIC—Ahmad (2014:28-30) points out that various establishment figures outside the administration were opposed to the invasion. However, that reveals absolutely nothing about the motives of the top decision makers who were actually in power.

In spite of the otherwise impressive rigor in detail of Ahmad’s book, his explanation is simply wrong viz-a-viz the basic historical facts. Ahmad’s explanation places most of the influence for the invasion of Iraq on the neoconservatives, who, he says, after 9/11 were able to “persuade” Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld to invade Iraq (Ahmad 2014:167). Yet, as Cramer and Duggan (2012) point out with regard to the Israel lobby thesis, and as I have also shown, neither Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, or Rice needed to be persuaded to invade Iraq, which was already on the agenda of the first National Security Council meeting of the administration in January 2001, and for which there had already been planning for several months prior to September 2001. And it was Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Rice—the administration’s primacist hardliners—who put Iraq on the early agenda of the administration, not the neoconservatives. Rather, it appears that the neoconservatives were brought into the administration by the hardliners to support the invasion, but were sidelined when they disagreed with Bush and Cheney. For example, the neoconservatives favored total privatization of Iraq’s oil while the State Department’s Future of Iraq Project ultimately settled on the production sharing agreements (i.e. partial privatization)

discussed in chapter 6. The neoconservatives also opposed Saudi Arabia, and after 9/11, favored turning against it, correctly pointing out that Saudi Arabia financially supported al-Qaeda, and that 15 of the 19 9/11 hijackers were Saudis. But the administration continued to support the Saudi monarchy, even apologizing to the monarchs after Richard Perle brought Laurent Murawiec of the RAND Corporation to criticize Saudi Arabia at a meeting of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Review Board (Cramer and Duggan 2012:224). Cramer and Duggan (2012:225) show that the primacist policy preferences were chosen over those of neoconservatives in several important policies related to the Iraq War and the Middle East. They also point out that when prominent neoconservatives like David Frum (Bush's speechwriter) broke with the administration in 2006 they did so because they felt marginalized. It appears, then, that the invasion was not a war on behalf of Israel at the behest of the neoconservatives, even if the war aligned with the foreign policy objectives of Israel's Likud right, and even if there were administration connections to prominent Israel lobby organizations.

Turning to Marxist theories, while Mann's explanation of the Iraq War is unsatisfactory, he does make some important points regarding Marxist explanations of the Iraq War. Contrary to Marxist theorists like Robinson, who argues that the invasion of Iraq "violently opened up the country to transnational capital and integrated it into new global circuits," and "at a time when the global economy was showing serious signs of stagnation" (Robinson 2014:123), Mann points out that there was no economic decline explaining Washington's increased presence in the Middle East. "[T]here was no relative decline in American economic power between 1970 and 2000—no market or gross national product share decline needing new military solutions" Mann (2013:230) observes. However, more relevant to Robinson's transnational class thesis—which maintains that nationally specific markets are less relevant than transnational class interests—is

Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes' observation that the Iraq War probably hurt the American economy and spurred the world-wide great recession of 2008:

The U.S. economist Robert Wescott estimated in the years immediately following the beginning of the Iraq war that the value of the stock market was some \$4 trillion less than would have been predicted on the basis of past performance. Uncertainties caused by the war, the resulting turmoil in the Middle East, and soaring oil prices dampened prices from what they "normally" would have been. This decrease in corporate wealth implies that consumption was lower than it otherwise would have been, again weakening the economy. (Stiglitz and Bilmes 2008:125)

The Federal Reserve, they go on to explain, sought to offset the adverse effects of the war by keeping interest rates lower than they might have been, encouraging national spending that was unsustainable. "The low initial interest rates allowed households to borrow more against their houses, enabling America to consume well beyond its means," ultimately leading the 2007-2008 recession once interest rates rose (Stiglitz and Bilmes 2008:126).

All of this is perhaps not surprising, for as Mann also points out with regard to Marxist theories, the national defense strategy of the Bush administration was not in any way economic in character. "While militarism pervades the writings of the intellectuals among them, they [the neoconservatives] are silent on international economic issues, which seem to interest them not at all" (Mann 2013:233). I agree with this analysis; macroeconomic issues are entirely absent from the documents reviewed in chapter 8, aside from empty claims in the 2000 PNAC report that insufficient military spending will hurt the American economy.

Another obvious problem for the Marxist, transnational capitalist class explanation is the fact that the American power elite were divided on the invasion, including a notable break between the old H. W. Bush Republicans and the Bush-Cheney White House. James Baker (2002) and Brent Scowcroft (2002) even opposed the war in part on economic grounds. There was also opposition to the war from the leadership of most Western capitalist nations that was

not obviously only premised on tactical disagreements (Pond 2004), as Robinson claims it was. Robinson's Marxist theory does not explain these differences among elites.

In sum, for state-centric and Marxist explanations of the Iraq War, either the basic conceptual frameworks do not align with empirical reality, as with Mann and Ahmad's conceptualization of the MIC, which leads to a failure to consider relevant factors such as decision power and personal ambition, or there is not enough evidence indicative of the relevant causal factors, as with Foster and Robinson's theories. And in the case Ahmad's Israel lobby explanation, it simply does not align with the historical facts on record.

What about Open Door theories? Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff's analysis (2016) of American grand strategy in the post-Cold War period is rich with useful data on the corporate and government backgrounds of officials from the Clinton, Obama, and Bush administrations. They link these backgrounds—particularly the corporate backgrounds, extensive in each administration—to what they refer to as an Open Door grand strategy that has characterized American foreign policy since the late nineteenth century through the Obama administration. Militarism, according to this theory, serves to open foreign markets for American investment. Unlike Williams's classic Open Door thesis, and more consistent with Marxist theories, van Apeldoorn and de Graaff (2016:35) see corporate elites in the offices of state power formulating such policies as a response to objective accumulation crises in the American economy.

With regard to the Iraq War, van Apeldoorn and de Graaff (2016:73) observe that 27 of 30 top Bush officials had corporate backgrounds, and consistent with the analyses presented in chapters 7 and 8, they point out the think tanks affiliations of these officials, and outline the characteristics of the administration's ideology. And like I have argued in chapter 6, van Apeldoorn and de Graaff argue that the invasion and occupation of Iraq were intended to open

Iraq's economy for American corporate investment, as evident in the Coalition Provisional Authority Orders. Hence the Open Door objective of the invasion.

The major problem with van Apeldoorn and de Graaff's explanation of the Iraq War is that it is plagued by a functionalism that is similar to that which weakens Marxist theories. Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff try to accommodate agency in their explanation, but I do not believe they are successful. The implication of their method and theory is that corporate representation in the government can be assumed to directly influence specific policies in virtue of the large number of corporate representatives throughout the administration. However, the distribution of power within an administration varies—in the Bush administration it had shifted decisively to the Pentagon managers—and in the case of the invasion of Iraq, it seems to be the brainchild of Cheney and the other principal architects. Rather than achieving national economic strength through political and economic expansion, gaining and exercising broad decision power appears to have been their main purpose of the war. Moreover, the invasion does not appear to have been precipitated by an accumulation crisis, and subjective fear of one does not appear to have factored into the administration's decision to invade. In the last analysis, the principal architects waged the war more as power-seeking state managers rather than as growth-oriented representatives of the capitalist class. Specific corporate connections that may explain why certain corporations received contracts in Iraq does not change this.

Policy Implications

Debates about the causes of American militarism in general, and about the causes of the Iraq War in particular, are not merely academic, but have important policy implications. If the

goals are to make American society less militaristic, and to ensure that military action is resorted to as a foreign policy tool of last resort, then understanding the true causes of militarism is necessary for implementing effective reforms. If a power elite model of war mobilization accurately describes the structural causes of militarism in the United States, what policies could be implemented that would move American foreign policy away from an imperial model and towards one based on international cooperation and diplomacy?

At the most fundamental level, if the military-industrial complex creates incentives for ambitious, power-seeking individuals and groups to use war and preparation for it as means for exercising and expanding their own power, then the military-industrial complex should be drastically curtailed to levels consistent with what is necessary to secure national defense and provide assistance for legitimate peacekeeping and humanitarian purposes. This implies a transition from a permanent war economy to a peace economy that produces commodities that can be consumed in the civilian market economy, rather than military commodities that are manufactured solely to be destroyed and to cause death, the production of which benefits virtually no one except for the corporate rich. Rather than subsidizing war production, the federal government could contract major industrial defense corporations for green industrial production and national infrastructure repair. Once the permanent war economy is eliminated, the opportunity for powerful individuals to exploit it for their own purposes will no longer exist.

But how could such a transformation happen if the very people who benefit from the permanent war economy are the ones who control public policy? How then can control of policy be wrested from the power elite? Achieving more democratic control of American society would require several changes. First, the widespread use of first-past-the-post, winner-take-all elections should be replaced with electoral forms that allow voters to choose third party candidates, such

as ranked choice voting or fusion voting. This would allow citizens to vote for candidates who might adopt anti-war and anti-imperialism positions without the risk of effectively throwing away their votes, and allowing a less preferable candidate to win, as is the case with the current system. Other electoral reforms would also be necessary. To prevent corporate-backed candidates from having more public visibility than third party candidates, legal limits should be placed on corporate spending on election campaigns and purchasing air time, and incentives should be put in place for candidates to use public funds, as with the Maine Clean Election Act, which provides state funding for candidates who promise not to use private funds in their campaigns.

To further democratize American politics, and allow the public to understand how policies are formed and whose interests they serve, think tanks should be legally required to publicly disclose their sources of funding and indicate how this funding could or does influence their policy recommendations. Think tanks are not objective, independent sources of information about public policy, so they should be required to make this evident to the public. Americans might think differently about major foreign policy membership organizations and think tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations if they understand that such organizations are heavily funded by defense corporations that benefit from the policies these organizations tend to advance.

To ensure that the power elite can no longer dominate mass media discourse, and strongly influence the way Americans think about war thereby, the corporate mass media system of the United States should be democratized. The mostly privatized mass media system does not ensure independent, critical reporting that holds powerful people accountable for their actions, and does not offer a range perspectives to American citizens that enables them to fully understand the implications of a given policy decision. As Robert McChesney (2008) has argued,

public funding should therefore be made available for independent and community media and national public media. In the United States, public media are very poorly funded, with public media outlets like NPR receiving only a small percentage of revenues from state subsidies. Publicly funding the media would make news companies less dependent on corporate advertising and profitability, allowing them to work more independently from state-corporate power. Implementing media antitrust laws would also give media conglomerates less control over national media markets, and enable smaller media companies to compete for national audiences. Even with the advent of social media and Internet news, such reforms are necessary to create a more open media system, as the Internet has not served to democratize the mass media in any significant sense. Most reporting about foreign affairs that is available to the public still comes from major news corporations, even if it is circulated across peoples' computers instead of television sets, radios, or printed newspapers. As much as social media may be utilized to circulate independent news analyses, it has also proven to be a significant source of state-corporate misinformation for the public, as was revealed so vividly during the Trump years. Moreover, social media users are prone to using it to follow sources of information that reinforce their preexisting views.

Other kinds of reforms are also necessary to loosen elite control over the policy-making process. As CIA veteran Paul Pillar argues, "The Iraq War experience alone is reason enough for a serious national examination of [intelligence] politicization and of reform that might reduce it" (Pillar 2011:313). As it is currently structured, and as so clearly revealed by the Bush administration's Iraq war campaign, the intelligence "community" is not able to produce intelligence reports and analyses independently of the political objectives of the executive branch. Pillar (2011:311-330) recommends several reforms that could allow the intelligence

agencies to work more independently from the president, and thus to produce more objective analyses. These include giving the director of national intelligence a long, fixed term, instead of the current arrangement in which this office is a political appointment made by the president. A board of governors analogous to the Federal Reserve Board of Governors could also be established to emphasize the independence of intelligence agencies. Congress could be more closely involved in intelligence debates through the creation of a non-partisan congressional intelligence office akin to the Government Accountability Office and Congressional Budget Office. Another option is that policy makers could be required to take special courses on “correct methods for assessing overseas situations” (Pillar 2011:320). And because so many policy makers are political appointees—“in-and-outers” with political objectives shaped by their professional affiliations with the corporate world (Pillar 2011:323)—reducing the number of political appointees in government and replacing them with career intelligence analysts would also increase the independence of the intelligence community from state-corporate power.

Ultimately, while such policies are needed, because of the disproportionate power elites exert over the political process in the first place, to implement such sweeping reforms will require powerful, nationally organized social movements to mobilize widespread public support for politicians who will support these policies. This may necessitate that antiwar organizations and social movement organizations for electoral, media, and other kinds of reform work more closely together, which would have the added benefit of strengthening their influence as individual social movements; historically, by itself the antiwar movement has been a small, marginal presence in American society and politics. Such collaboration would require that progressive social movement leaders think systematically about policy changes in terms of structural changes to the state and political economy, rather than understanding social problems

and related policies in isolation from the class structure of the society and the elite policy-planning process, or as a question of partisan politics; both of the major political parties in the United States are invested in the permanent war economy, and both parties at the highest levels of state management are power elite-dominated institutions.

Suggestions for Future Research

Academic researchers have their part to play in the social movement for a more peaceful United States. They can use their research abilities and knowledge to educate the public and inform the work of social movements for peace. However, to be more effective in these endeavors, it is probably necessary for more American academic social scientists to dedicate themselves to the study of the political economy of American militarism than is the case at the present time. If the relative lack of interest in the topic reflects career incentives that are created by the elite patronage system that sustains much of academic research in the United States, then efforts should be made to increase state funding for colleges and universities. This would allow emerging scholars to more easily pursue research that isn't oriented toward the needs of state and corporate elites. Academic departments could also facilitate such research by promoting non-technocratic forms of research, interdisciplinary, interdepartmental collaboration, and research methods besides the standard multiple regression statistical analysis and qualitative interviewing that are the staples of most social science graduate programs.

Such considerations aside, sociologists and other historical social scientists might expand and improve on the ideas that have been presented in this dissertation. Substantial empirical work on the military-industrial complex, based on hard economic data and interview research

with industrial engineers and other insiders, has not been conducted since Seymour Melman's seminal writings, to my knowledge. And there is little consensus, at least among sociologists, about the causes of American imperialism and militarism. This is in large part because sociologists simply haven't dedicated themselves to rigorous historical studies American military interventions. In this dissertation, I have tried to provide a robust framework of analysis for carrying out such research and an example of how it could be done. Pursuing further case studies will allow researchers to refine or substantially modify the elite model of war mobilization as needed. Because more recent history has a greater influence on policy decisions and agendas in the present moment, researchers might dedicate themselves to the study of the major US war efforts of the post-Cold War period, particularly US involvement in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya. Unlike the Iraq War, these wars are widely believed to be "good wars" that were waged for humanitarian purposes, or legitimate self-defense in the case of Afghanistan. In each case, existing research seriously challenges this mythology, and future case studies may reveal that these wars are explained well in terms of a power elite model of war mobilization. Future researchers might also closely examine the numerous clandestine wars the United States has fought, as these are less known to the general public, and the social causes of what appears to be a "new Cold War" with Russia and China.

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