OIL, POWER & EMPIRE: IRAQ AND THE U.S. GLOBAL AGENDA
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CHAPTER ONE – "GO MASSIVE. SWEEP IT ALL UP."

[T]he process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor.
—"Rebuilding America's Defenses, Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century,"
Project for a New American Century, September 2000 1
The Pearl Harbor of the 21st century took place today.
—Diary entry of President George W. Bush, September 11, 2001 2

The 2003 Iraq war was not waged to eliminate "terrorism," destroy weapons of mass destruction, or liberate the Iraqi people. Instead, it was an unjust war of aggression, conquest and greater empire.

Labeled "Operation Iraqi Freedom" by the United States government, this war instead represented phase two, after the Afghanistan war of October 2001, in a sweeping, multi-dimensional campaign, waged under the rubric of a "war on terror," aimed at redrawing the world's geopolitical map in order to extend, strengthen and solidify U.S. imperial dominance.

Iraq is a prize and stepping stone in this audacious grand strategy. Invading and occupying this ancient land are intended to give further momentum to Washington's unbounded war, tighten America's grip on the oil-rich Persian Gulf, turn Iraq into a beachhead for controlling and reshaping the entire arc from North Africa to Central Asia, and strengthen the U.S. hand against rivals—current and future.

The full dimensions and implications of the 2003 war and the global agenda driving it have largely been hidden from the public, but they are both far-reaching and ominous:
• Conquering and occupying Iraq marks an historic escalation of direct American presence in the Middle East, and top Bush officials envision a generation-long campaign to radically restructure the entire region—a more aggressive and intrusive mission that could spark years of opposition and upheaval;
• The U.S. government has many groups, states, and regions in its sights, and radical changes are underway in Pentagon structures and strategies to enable U.S. forces to wage wars more quickly, more frequently, and in more theaters around the world; dramatic shifts are also taking place in U.S. nuclear posture that make nuclear combat more, not less, likely;
• Decades of international law and treaty are being revised wholesale; and
• Plans are afoot to further accelerate capitalist globalization—by force if need be—further widening the chasm between rich and poor, and entailing new, more direct forms of control over Third World countries. Iraq is a proving ground for these designs.

This vision of ongoing war for greater empire has been articulated at the highest levels. Shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, President Bush described the new war as "a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen."3 James Woolsey, a former CIA director and one of this agenda's prime supporters, calls it the "fourth world war."4 It is indeed a kind of world war, different in many respects than World Wars I and II and the Cold War, but a kind of world war nonetheless, fought to shape the destiny of countries, regions, and the entire international order for decades to come.

This book will explore the roots of the Iraq war of 2003 in nearly 100 years of foreign intervention to control the Persian Gulf and its vast oil wealth, and how the difficulties the U.S.

encountered in this quest have drawn it into a deepening spiral of military intervention and war. It will dissect the contradictory relationship between Washington and Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath government, including U.S. complicity in many of the regime's crimes, and why it oscillated between collaboration and conflict. It will dissect the Bush administration's kaleidoscope of fragmented, ever-shifting, and often transparently false renderings of Iraqi intentions and capabilities, and of the history of U.S.-Iraqi relations. And it will examine the interconnection between this history and the new U.S. global agenda, and its long-term implications for Iraq, the Middle East and the world.

Why was Iraq such a key link in this imperial design? Chapter 1 begins with the decision to wage war on Iraq, then analyzes the new global strategy that inspired it in order to answer that question.

A Response to Sept. 11?

The United States government has deliberately obscured the roots of the 2003 Iraq war by presenting it largely as a response to a single event—the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. As President George W. Bush put it in his May 1, 2003 victory speech aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln: "The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11th, 2001 and still goes on."5

In reality, "War is never an isolated act," as the 19th century German military theorist Karl von Clausewitz wrote, but "a mere continuation of policy by other means."6 In this case, the invasion of Iraq and the global strategy that shaped it did not originate on Sept. 11, 2001, but grew out of over six decades of U.S. involvement in the region, the global transformations of the 1990s, and more specifically out of planning that began a decade before the attacks that brought down New York's World Trade Center towers and damaged the Pentagon.

Tracing the evolution of the U.S. decision to wage war—both before and after Sept. 11, 2001—exposes official justifications on several levels. First, it demonstrates that the Bush II administration cynically used Sept. 11 as an opportunity to launch a sweeping agenda that had been in the making for years before this horrific day.

Second and relatedly, it shows that the U.S. government's real aims were radically different from its public rationalizations for war.

Finally, it shows that Washington's decision to launch the March 2003 war was made well over a year earlier, long before it attempted to secure United Nations support in the fall of 2002.

Agitating For Regime Change—in the '90s

Establishment agitation for war on Iraq and greater global empire began in the 1990s. The 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union was a geopolitical earthquake that suddenly left America the world's only imperial superpower. Officials in the George H.W. Bush administration began mapping out a "new world order" of unchallengeable U.S. global dominance which the 1991 "Desert Storm" war on Iraq, called by the Pentagon "a defining event in U.S. global leadership," was intended to initiate.7

This vision was articulated most directly in the Defense Department's 1992 "Defense Planning Guidance." Written by Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis Libby and Zalmay Khalilzad under the direction of then-Defense Secretary Dick Cheney—all later top officials in the Bush II administration—the document argued that the U.S. should insure "that no rival superpower is allowed to emerge in Western Europe, Asia or the territory of the former Soviet Union" and that the United States remain the world's predominant power for the indefinite future. The Defense Guidance envisioned accomplishing these far-reaching objectives by preemptively attacking rivals or states seeking weapons of mass destruction, strengthening U.S. control of Persian Gulf oil, and refusing to allow international coalitions or law to inhibit U.S. freedom of action.8

Yet over the next years it became clear that Desert Storm did not usher in the era of unchallenged U.S. supremacy that Washington hoped for—globally or in the Middle East. For various reasons, which we will explore in subsequent chapters, the 1992 Defense Guidance's vision was not fully implemented during the Bill Clinton years. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein remained in power, by the late 1990s Washington's strategy of strangulation pending regime change was unraveling, and the U.S. was facing the prospect of a serious setback in a region key to its global standing. These developments generated enormous frustration within the Clinton administration and outrage among former Reagan and Bush I officials and other powerful currents within the U.S. corporate-political elite, who believed that Clinton was squandering America's global predominance.

While out of office, the strategists of American predominance continued to elaborate and promote their global agenda—and call for more aggressive action against Iraq. Often working through right-wing think tanks, such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, or prominent publications like the Wall Street Journal and the media monopolist Rupert Murdoch-funded Weekly Standard, they churned out a stream of commentaries, strategy papers, articles, and books over the decade. In 1995, for example, Khalilzad wrote From Containment to Global Leadership, which amplified the theme of U.S. global hegemony.

In 1996, William Kristol, former Vice President Dan Quayle's chief of staff and then-editor of the Weekly Standard, and Robert Kagan, another former Reagan official, published an influential article along the same lines in Foreign Affairs titled "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy." That same year, Richard Perle, another former high level Reagan official, along with Douglas Feith and David Wurmser, later officials in the Bush II Pentagon and State Department respectively, produced a strategy paper for Israeli Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu titled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," which called for radically reshaping the Middle East and removing the Hussein regime in Iraq. Wolfowitz, meanwhile, opined in the Wall Street Journal that the U.S. needed to go beyond "containing" the Hussein regime, and the 2000 Republican party platform called for "a comprehensive plan for the removal of Saddam Hussein."9

As discussed below, many of these officials, pundits and strategists would work with the "Project for a New American Century," organized by Kristol in 1997. Its stated mission was shaping "a new century favorable to American principles and interests." In September 2000, it issued a major

study titled "Rebuilding America's Defenses, Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century" whose contributors would read like a who's-who of the Bush II administration, including the authors of the 1992 Defense Guidance, Wolfowitz and Libby. "Rebuilding" expanded and updated the Guidance's themes and would become a template for the grand strategy embarked on by the Bush II administration.10

These strategists, some of whom are labeled neo-conservatives ("neocons") or neo-Reaganites, do not constitute an isolated fringe group, but represent the currently dominant thinking in the U.S. capitalist political establishment on how to deal with the potential opportunities as well as deep challenges confronting their system at home and abroad.11

The "Humble" Empire Searches for an Excuse

George W. Bush's seizure of the U.S. presidency in 2000 brought those clamoring for more aggressive action against Iraq and for greater empire back into power. Bush II had campaigned on the promise of a more modest foreign policy: "If we're an arrogant nation, they'll resent us," he said. "If we're a humble nation but strong, they'll welcome us."12 It would turn out that "humble" was unrelated to his real intentions.

Bush II packed his administration with the strategists of more assertive and expansive empire. Dick Cheney became Vice President, with Libby his top assistant. Donald Rumsfeld was named Secretary of Defense, and he made Wolfowitz, Feith, and Stephen Cambone his top deputies, and appointed Richard Perle as chairman of the Defense Policy Board, a group of some 30 high-level ex-officials and strategists that advises the Pentagon. Khalilzad was made Special Assistant to the President for Near East, South West Asian, and North African Affairs, and would become U.S. emissary to the Iraqi opposition shortly before the war of 2003. Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Bush, Sr., became Secretary of State.

As soon as his administration took the reins of power in January 2001, it began looking for ways to strike out more forcefully around the world—including against Iraq. The sequence of events shows that Sept. 11 would become the catalyst and opportunity to realize these strategic objectives, long in the works. More than eight months earlier, half of Bush, Jr.'s first national security meeting was spent on Iraq and the Persian Gulf.13 Shortly before, the Wall Street Journal had called reversing "the slide in the Western position against Iraq" Washington's most urgent foreign policy priority.14 At the Pentagon, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz immediately began studying military options for ousting Hussein.15 Containment, in their view, was no longer an option. First, it was breaking down, and second and more importantly, their broader global agenda demanded regime change and a radical transformation of the Middle East status quo. Former Reagan official and Bush II supporter Kenneth Adelman spoke to the global, tone-setting considerations of U.S. actions against the Hussein government: "Ideally, the first crisis would be something with Iraq. It would be a way to make the point that it's a new world."16

The new administration also stepped up efforts to link the Hussein regime to al Qaeda—months before Sept. 11, 2001. U.S. intelligence had been attempting to find such a link since the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, yet according to both The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, nothing had turned up.17 Now, in early 2001, the attempt began afresh. The Wall Street Journal reported: "when the Bush administration took office in 2001, officials at the Pentagon immediately began peppering intelligence agencies with requests for studies on Baghdad's links to terrorism. At a meeting of senior administration officials in April 2001 to discuss al Qaeda, a top Defense Department official asked Mr. Clarke [the National Security Council's counter-terrorism coordinator] about whether Iraq had connections to Mr. bin Laden's group. Mr. Clarke said no, according to two people in the room."18

In July 2001, the Wall Street Journal editorialized for "swift and serious measures to remove Saddam Hussein from power"19 and reported that, "Senior officials have held almost weekly meetings on the issue to discuss whether to push for the [Hussein] government's ouster."20 In August 2001, the U.S. launched its most savage air attack on Iraq in six months.21

The Washington Post reported that the week before Sept. 11, Cheney was "worried about the strength of our whole position in the Middle East—where we stood with the Saudis, the Turks and others in the region."22

"The Pearl Harbor of the 21st Century"

Then came Sept. 11, 2001. Some five hours after hijacked jets crashed into the World Trade Center and then the Pentagon, Rumsfeld told an aide to begin drawing up plans for war—on Iraq. That afternoon the CIA concluded that it was "virtually certain" that the bin Laden network was responsible, not Iraq or other states,23 but Rumsfeld wanted to know if U.S. intelligence was also "good enough hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] at same time. Not only UBL [OBL—Osama bin Laden]." His admonition: "Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not."24

Rumsfeld's orientation would encapsulate the U.S. government's response. Sept. 11 triggered a kind of "big bang" in U.S. global policy. In the hours, days and weeks afterward, the Bush team consolidated a decade of geopolitical planning and debate into a new grand strategy and launched an unbounded "war on terror" to implement it, a war whose varied objectives rapidly expanded far beyond its designated Sept. 11 origins. And Iraq was a key initial target.

The Washington Post's Bob Woodward reports that beginning hours after the Sept. 11 attacks and continuing over the ensuing week, top Bush officials held a series of secret discussions to hammer out their response. Woodward's descriptions and, more importantly, the 2003 war on Iraq that ensued 18 months later, make clear that neither punishing those responsible for Sept. 11 nor preventing future attacks were the Bush team's central and overriding goal.

Instead, Bush and his "war cabinet"—which included Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State Colin Powell, CIA Director Tenet, and often Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz—worked to translate the shock and grief of Sept. 11 into a mandate for a broad, ongoing war for greater empire.

On the morning of Sept. 11 Bush had stated simply that the U.S. would "hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly attacks." By the end of that day, however, the Bush II war cabinet had decided to seize the moment to strike out against a variety of governments and anti-U.S. political forces and to embark on their larger global agenda.25

On the evening of Sept. 11 Bush addressed the country. While drafting the speech, he and Rice decided to include a declaration targeting states, not just those responsible for that day's attacks. She argued, "First words matter more than almost anything else." Bush agreed: "We've got to get it out there now." So that night Bush declared: "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them." The Washington Post noted, "The declaration was a huge step for the administration...What he outlined that night from the Oval Office committed the United States to a broad, vigorous and potentially long war against terrorism, rather than a targeted retaliatory strike."26

The Bush leadership felt the need to respond to Sept. 11 with a vengeance in order to graphically demonstrate U.S. will and "credibility," because its standing around the world is based largely on its military might and demonstrated willingness to use it. These had been challenged on Sept. 11. There is a strong possibility that the attacks were aimed at America's presence and actions in the Middle East, as Christopher Layne put it in the Los Angeles Times: "Al Qaeda's actions were coolly calculated to achieve well-defined geopolitical objectives: the removal of the U.S. military

presence from the Persian Gulf (and in particular from Saudi Arabia) and an alteration of the U.S. stance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In other words, Al Qaeda's goal was to undermine U.S. hegemony."27 As Bush said later, he wanted to show "the world that there had been a fundamental change in U.S. policy."28

Responding with overwhelming violence (first on Afghanistan, later on Iraq) was inextricably linked with Washington's broader global agenda, which called for employing American military predominance to forcibly recast global economic, political and military relations. Rice, who would draft the official version of this new grand strategy, later spelled out the Bush regime's view of the post-Sept. 11 mix of necessity and opportunity, which was grounded in a decade of geopolitical strategizing:

> [A]n earthquake of the magnitude of 9/11 can shift the tectonic plates of international politics.... The international system has been in flux since the collapse of Soviet power. Now it is possible—indeed probable—that that transition is coming to an end. If that is right, then...this is a period not just of grave danger, but of enormous opportunity...to create a new balance of power that favored freedom.29

Bush and company discussed the need to act quickly "to capitalize on international outrage about the terrorist attack."30 They realized the attacks gave them a once-in-a-lifetime political opportunity to act forcefully to "shift the tectonic plates" of global power. One top Bush official who wished to remain anonymous told the New Yorker's Nicholas Lemann, Sept. 11 was a "transformative moment" not because it "revealed the existence of a threat of which officials had previously been unaware," but because it "drastically reduced the American public's usual resistance to American military involvement overseas, at least for a while... Now that the United States has been attacked, the options are much broader."31

On the morning of September 12, Bush again escalated his rhetoric: the attacks "were more than acts of terror. They were acts of war."32 On September 20, 2001, in an address before a joint session of Congress, Bush pushed the envelope further still by committing the U.S. to an ongoing "war on terror" against "every terrorist group of global reach," and "any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism." He then issued an ultimatum to the Taliban government of Afghanistan, where Al Qaeda had a base of operations. The U.S. initiated war on Afghanistan October 7, 2001.33

The Worldwide Attack Matrix Reloaded

By this time, Bush had already signed a top-secret "Worldwide Attack Matrix" mandating covert counter-insurgency operations in 80 different countries. The Washington Post commented that the plan "would give the CIA the broadest and most lethal authority in its history."34 Bush didn't define "terrorism" in his address to Congress, and his administration has rarely done so publicly in order to maximize its freedom to apply the term to whomever it sees fit, whether Palestinian fighters, Islamic fundamentalists, radical nationalists, Maoist guerrillas, states standing in the way of U.S. designs, or even Iraqis resisting the invasion and occupation of their own country.

In his address to Congress on September 20, 2001, Bush's only reference to Iraq was a brief mention of the 1991 Gulf War. It has since been revealed that his war cabinet had already been debating whether to immediately attack Iraq for over a week, and Bush had already directed the Pentagon to begin initial war planning.

These discussions began on September 12, 2001, the morning after the attacks. According to the Washington Post, they centered on whether to "take advantage of the opportunity offered by

the terrorist attacks to go after Hussein immediately."35 Bush's top advisors reportedly agreed in principle, but there were differences over timing.36

On September 17, 2001, after six days of debate, the Bush team decided not to strike Iraq—yet. The enormity of their emerging agenda demanded a step-by-step approach, and according to the Washington Post, they felt they would "need successes early in any war to maintain domestic and international support." As Bush told Woodward, "[I]f we could prove that we could be successful in this theater [Afghanistan], then the rest of the task would be easier. If we tried to do too many things—two things, for example, or three things—militarily, then...the lack of focus would have been a huge risk."37 That day Bush signed secret orders authorizing war on Afghanistan and instructing the Pentagon to begin planning for battle in Iraq.38

Bush also told the Washington Post that he wanted to make sure that the U.S. Iraq policy was not shaped by a desire to finish what his father hadn't, or, even more importantly, by the approach taken by his father's administration (explored in chapter 5): "one of the things I wasn't going to allow to happen is, that we weren't going to let their previous experience in this theater dictate a rational course for the new war." Here, we can probably take Bush at his word: in his view he had much bigger fish to fry—a global empire to extend—and doing so meant breaking with significant aspects of the Bush, Sr. strategic vision.39

Creating Pretexts at Hawk Central

As these discussions were going on within the administration, advocates of war on Iraq and greater global hegemony, in and out of government, began a concerted campaign–publicly and behind the scenes–to make sure that Iraq was indeed targeted in phase two of the war on terror. This campaign was not predicated on Iraqi involvement in Sept. 11, but on the geopolitics of global dominance.

The Pentagon became "hawk central" and kicked off the drive for war just eight days after the Twin Towers collapsed, with a September 19-20 meeting of the Defense Policy Board. The New York Times reported that the Board met behind closed doors "for 19 hours to discuss the ramifications of the attacks of Sept. 11. The members of the group agreed on the need to turn to Iraq as soon as the initial phase of the war against Afghanistan and Mr. bin Laden and his organization is over."40

Following the meeting, these war plotters dispatched former CIA chief James Woolsey to London on "a mission," the New York Times reported, to gather "evidence" linking Hussein to the September 11 attacks. Woolsey then began raising various charges against Iraq: that Iraqi agents met with Mohammed Atta, the alleged "ringleader" of the September 11 attacks; that Iraq provided fake passports for all 19 hijackers; that an Al Qaeda member traveled to Baghdad in 1998 to celebrate Saddam Hussein's birthday; that Iraq trained Al Qaeda members; and that Iraq was linked to anthrax mailed to U.S. Senators in October 2001. There was no real proof for any of these charges, as detailed in the appendix here—in fact it later turned out that the most likely source for the anthrax letters was someone associated with the U.S. military.41 Yet these charges were widely repeated in the mainstream U.S. media nonetheless.42

The day the meeting concluded, just nine days after Sept. 11, Defense Policy Board members and other prominent right-wingers, including columnists Kristol and Charles Krauthammer, drafted an open letter to Bush arguing, "Even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the [September 11] attack, any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. Failure to undertake such an effort will constitute an early and perhaps decisive surrender in the war on international terrorism." (emphasis added)43

Deciding on War: By November 2001

The "attack Iraq" drumbeat continued over the next months, and the quick U.S. victory in Afghanistan further emboldened hawks in the Bush administration. One official told the Wall Street Journal, "the idea of waging a similar small war in Iraq 'stopped looking unthinkable.'" David Frum, the former White House speech writer who coined the phrase "axis of evil" and authored The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush, described the arrogance surging through the corridors of power: "If a few hundred men and a few dozen planes could overthrow the Taliban, what might ten thousand men and a few hundred planes do in Iraq? Or a hundred thousand men and a thousand planes do to the whole Gulf? It suddenly seemed that American power could do anything."44

By late October or early November 2001, some seven weeks after Sept. 11, the Bush war cabinet secretly decided to move against the Hussein regime, according to reports in the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and the New Republic. By then, the Taliban had been defeated in Afghanistan and Vice President Cheney, who the Wall Street Journal reported had become Bush's "war counselor," had joined Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz in urging war on Iraq.45

In December 2001, the New Republic noted that after late October 2001 the debate within the Administration was no longer over "whether to extend the war to Iraq—that question has largely been settled."46 On September 12, 2002, USA Today reported,

> President Bush's determination to oust Iraq's Saddam Hussein by military force if necessary was set last fall.... He decided that Saddam must go more than 10 months ago; the debate within the administration since then has been about the means to accomplish that.... The course advocated by Rumsfeld and Cheney became policy, despite concerns by Powell and others... But whatever the response, aides say the president's determination to oust Saddam—the decision he made in the seven weeks following the attacks on Sept. 11—hasn't wavered.47

The Washington Post and Time magazine paint a similar picture, but report that the decision to wage war probably came in the spring of 2002. According to the Washington Post: "Then, in April, Bush approached Rice. It was time to figure out 'what we are doing about Iraq,' he told her, setting in motion a series of meetings by the principals and their deputies. 'I made up my mind that Saddam needs to go,' Bush hinted to a British reporter at the time."48

It may be impossible at this moment to precisely trace the evolution of the decision to go to war because, as USA Today reports, it was very closely held and made "without a formal decision-making meeting or the intelligence assessment that customarily precedes such a momentous decision"—and hence without the paper-trail and possibility of leaks that accompanies the process.49

However, given other administration actions, it seems most likely that by late October or early November 2001 the Bush administration had decided to move against Iraq in phase 2 of its "war on terror." Bush's January 2002 State of the Union speech targeted Iraq as part of an "axis of evil," and early in 2002 Bush directed the CIA to: step up its financial, military and organizational support for anti-Hussein forces; increase intelligence gathering in Iraq; and plan for the possible use of the CIA and U.S. Special Forces to track down, capture or kill Saddam Hussein.50

The meetings and decisions which reportedly took place in April 2002 may well have decided upon a massive assault, as opposed to other means of removing Hussein, or choosing between specific military options. In either case, the choice for war was made months before the U.S. attempted to legitimize its decision by going to the UN, enacting Resolution 1441, and dispatching weapons inspectors to Iraq.51

War First, Evidence Later

[They] lied comfortably, and whenever cornered there was no hesitation in lying, and repeating lies,

and not caring about [whether] what they repeated was true or false.52

Former Washington Post executive editor Ben Bradlee's description above of the Nixon White House applies doubly to the Bush II White House, Pentagon, State Department, and CIA. Their campaign for war on Iraq took official lying to new depths of cynicism, brazenness, double-speak, and hypocrisy.

The Bush case against Iraq rested on two lies, repeated early and often: first, that Saddam Hussein was linked to Al Qaeda and the attacks of Sept. 11, and second that his possession of dangerous chemical, biological, and possibly nuclear weapons posed a "grave and growing danger" to the Middle East and to the United States itself. The case was made directly by raising the specter that Iraq "could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred...the price of indifference would be catastrophic," as Bush did in his 2002 State of the Union address.53 It was also made indirectly by mentioning Sept. 11 in one breath and Iraq in the next in textbook bait-and-switch fashion.

In fact, U.S. intelligence agencies were well aware, long before Sept. 11, that it was very unlikely that there was any real connection between Iraq and Al Qaeda. In February 2002, the New York Times reported that the CIA has "no evidence that Iraq has engaged in terrorist operations against the United States in nearly a decade, and the agency is also convinced that President Saddam Hussein has not provided chemical or biological weapons to Al Qaeda or related terrorist groups."54

A Congressional commission set up in February 2002 to investigate the 9/11 attacks found no Iraqi connection, but did find a Saudi connection. According to commission member and former Senator Max Cleland (D-Ga.), the Bush administration delayed the release of their report until after Iraq was invaded and conquered for fear its findings would undermine the government's rationale for war.55

As a result of such deceptions, 69 percent of the U.S. public still believed Saddam Hussein was probably involved in Sept. 11 according to a Washington Post poll done in September 2003, two years after the attacks.56 Two weeks after these poll numbers were released, and some six months after the U.S. invaded Iraq, Bush and Rumsfeld were forced to admit—due to lack of evidence and the steady unraveling of their pretexts for war—that there was no evidence of Iraqi involvement in Sept. 11.57

Even before the war, it was clear that U.S. claims concerning Iraq's military strength and its possession of weapons of mass destruction were wildly "sexed up," if not outright fabrications.

In his January 2003 State of the Union speech, Bush warned that Saddam Hussein had or could have "biological weapons materials sufficient to produce over 25,000 liters of anthrax; enough doses to kill several million people...materials sufficient to produce more than 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin; enough to subject millions of people to death by respiratory failure...materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agent...upwards of 30,000 munitions capable of delivering chemical agents." He claimed that during the 1990s, the Hussein regime had "an advanced nuclear weapons development program," and then uttered what would become 16 infamous words: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."58

Months before, however, a September 2002 assessment by the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Pentagon's primary intelligence arm, concluded that there was "no definitive, reliable information" that Iraq either possessed or was manufacturing chemical or biological weapons.59

In 1998, five years before Bush made his nuclear claims, the International Atomic Energy Agency had certified that Iraq no longer had a nuclear weapons program. A year before Bush's speech, former Ambassador Joseph Wilson traveled to Niger at the behest of the CIA to investigate

the claim that Iraq had attempted to buy uranium; he found that it was "highly doubtful that any such transaction had ever taken place," and reported as much to the Bush administration.60 Meanwhile, the Iraqi government denounced charges that it had or would soon have nuclear weapons as a "huge clamour fabricated by the President of the United States" and "the biggest and most wicked slander against Iraq."61

After the 2003 war, a team of 1,400 U.S. and British experts scoured Iraq for banned weapons. After four months of searching, none were found.62 The failure to find any chemical, biological or nuclear weapons or prohibited missiles made a number of things crystal clear:

•	first, that no matter what the U.S. finds or doesn't find in Iraq (and most arms experts now feel the U.S. will never find any WMD because they were destroyed by the Hussein regime in the early 1990s), the U.S. had no valid intelligence showing that Iraq possessed chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons;

•	second, that the Bush team knew full well that Iraq was not a grave and growing danger;

•	third, most, if not all of the Bush administration's specific charges, detailed in the appendix, were deliberate exaggerations, distortions or outright fabrications; and

•	fourth, that the United States government had been lying about Iraq's purported WMDs for over a decade, as examined in chapter 7.

The Pentagon leadership was so determined to wage war on Iraq that in October 2001 it set up a new intelligence/operations arm—the Office of Special Plans—directly under the control of Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Feith. This Office reportedly played a key role in slanting, spinning and concocting "intelligence" that could be used to justify war, and propagating it to the White House and the media.63

During the year before the 2003 war, Vice President Cheney pursued a similar objective by paying a number of visits to the CIA to "investigate" the work of analysts assessing Iraq's weapons and possible ties to Al Qaeda. The analysts later reported feeling pressured to skew their findings to fit the White House agenda on Iraq.64

As we'll examine in the course of this book, this is but the latest chapter in Washington's long history of misusing, distorting, and concocting "intelligence" in order to achieve its objectives in the Persian Gulf.

In reality and all along, the administration saw a weakened Iraq—a country of 25 million the size of the State of California which had been battered by 20 plus years of war and 12 years of sanctions—as a target of opportunity, not a growing threat. The New York Times reported in September 2002 that the "Bush administration's decision to force a confrontation ...reflects its low regard for Iraq's conventional armed forces... American officials are confident that United States forces would quickly prevail" in war.65

Rumsfeld and other Pentagon officials "argued that U.S. military forces would overwhelm Iraq's rusting army," USA Today reported. In fact, Iraq's military was held in such low regard that Rumsfeld explored attacking as early as August 2002. "The mission would be relatively easy to execute... Rumsfeld envisioned a surgical strike using relatively few troops, many of them from special operations forces." After much internal debate, military planners decided to deploy a more robust force.66 The Bush II war cabinet calculated that a quick and overwhelming victory over Iraq would give further momentum and legitimacy to their "war on terror."

Like Alice in Wonderland's Queen of Hearts who screamed, "sentence first-verdict afterward...off with her head," Bush first decided to decapitate Iraq, then searched for "evidence" to justify it. His administration may even have been gambling that something would turn up after U.S. forces took Iraq that could then be used to validate the war ex post facto. This was even

acknowledged in some mainstream accounts: USA Today reported that the administration's internal debate over Iraq "left the impression with some that Bush was searching for a justification after deciding to target Saddam."67

Finding The Right Way To Do It

In December 2001, the New Republic noted that the Bush II orientation was to attack Iraq as soon as "we find the right way to do it."68 Over the next 17 months, the administration would try to find the right way to do so—developing a military strategy, mustering troops and equipment, preparing public opinion, and trying, unsuccessfully, to build a coalition for war.

Military planning began in November 2001 and was stepped up in April 2002. By late spring a variety of military options were being thrashed out. In late April 2002, the New York Times reported that Pentagon planners envisioned "a major air campaign and ground invasion, with initial estimates contemplating the use of 70,000 to 250,000 troops." The attack was to take place in early 2003 to allow "time to create the right military, economic and diplomatic conditions."69 In September 2002, two days before Bush presented the U.S. case to the United Nations, the Associated Press reported that the Pentagon had given Bush a "detailed set" of military options for overthrowing the Hussein regime.70

The decision to proceed through the UN represented an effort to build political and military support for a war the U.S. had already decided to wage, not an effort to disarm Iraq without war. The Washington Post reported that in August 2002, Secretary of State Powell convinced Bush to go through the UN, not to avoid war, but to make it possible. According to the Post, Powell warned that without UN cover, "the entire region could be destabilized–friendly regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan could be put in jeopardy or overthrown. Anger and frustration at America abounded. War could change everything in the Middle East."71

The U.S. intended the UN weapons inspections, carried out under Resolution 1441 passed on November 8, 2002, to be a "catch-22" situation from which the Hussein regime could not escape. If banned weapons were discovered, Iraq would be in violation of UN resolutions, thereby justifying war.

If Iraq did not admit to having banned weapons, the U.S. would argue that this too constituted a breach of Resolution 1441, which demanded a full and complete disclosure of all chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, as well as missiles with a range of over 150 kilometers. Since the U.S. supposedly had intelligence showing that Iraq did possess banned weapons, Baghdad would be in violation of Resolution 1441 by not declaring them, thus necessitating war in that case as well.

The Wall Street Journal, a vociferous advocate of war, spelled out this logic in an editorial on the eve of Iraq's mandated December 8, 2002 weapons declaration to the UN: "If Iraq asserts this weekend that it has no such weapons, then that will be on its face a material breach of UN Security Council resolutions demanding that he disarm. And a material breach means Iraq must be disarmed by force."72

But then, disarmament was never Washington's real goal; regime change was. Defense Policy Board Chair Richard Perle let this cat out of the bag in November 2002 when he told British MPs that even a "clean bill of health" from UN weapons inspectors would not stop the U.S. war machine. Perle was right. After more than 600 inspections, UN inspectors came up empty and the U.S. still went to war.73

In April 2003, after UN inspectors were pulled from Iraq, chief inspector Hans Blix told the Spanish daily El Pais, "There is evidence that this war was planned well in advance... I now believe that finding weapons of mass destruction has been relegated, I would say, to fourth place, which is

why the United States and Britain are now waging war on Iraq."74

International law and the United Nations Charter provide for only two legitimate reasons for war—individual or collective self defense in response to an armed attack, or an action authorized by the UN Security Council. The U.S. had neither, making its 2003 war on Iraq an illegal act of unprovoked aggression.

One World, One Empire

Neither mystical links with al Qaeda, invisible weapons of mass destruction, reflexive posturing, electoral politicking, nor diverting attention from corporate scandals and a weak economy explained why the U.S. government was hell-bent on attacking Iraq. But the sweep and enormity of its global agenda did.

"They have ambitions of essentially reshuffling the whole deck, reordering the whole situation—beginning with the strategic areas of Central and South Asia and the Middle East that are more immediately involved now—but, even beyond that, on a world scale," Bob Avakian of the Revolutionary Communist Party USA wrote shortly after Sept. 11. "They've set themselves a very far-reaching agenda with gigantic implications."75

This momentous shift in U.S. global strategy was crystalized in a new National Security Strategy (NSS) published on September 20, 2002. This new NSS echoed and codified previous strategy papers, including the 1992 Pentagon Defense Guidance and the Project for a New American Century's 2000 paper, "Rebuilding America's Defenses," discussed above. Then it went further.

Taking off from the hegemonic vision developed by Reagan and Bush I officials during the 1990s, the NSS argued that the 1991 Soviet collapse had left the U.S. the world's only superpower—with "unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence"—and that U.S. policy should be to "work to translate this moment of influence into decades of peace, prosperity, and liberty."76

What does this really mean? The document's mantra is creating "a balance of power that favors freedom." Like terrorism, "freedom" hasn't been defined by the Bush regime, but the substance of the NSS, as well as the voluminous writings of the imperial strategists who have shaped it, make clear that it means the freedom of America's dominant corporate-political elite to impose its values, interests, and economic system on all others. As the NSS baldly put it, "These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society."

The new National Security Strategy claims that the U.S. will not seek "unilateral advantage," yet it is a doctrine for just that—militarily, politically and economically. It amounts to an audacious declaration that the U.S. aims to remain the world's sole superpower for decades to come. The practical implementation of this new Bush doctrine will no doubt be shaped by internal debates and external events, including the growing unrest and resistance in now-occupied Iraq. Nonetheless, its implications are clearly enormous.

A core thesis, which has been a central theme in neo-conservative theorizing for over a decade, is preventing the rise of rival powers which could challenge the U.S. regionally or globally. The NSS envisions accomplishing this objective by first maintaining overwhelming military superiority over all other countries and combinations of countries, and second by no longer containing possible opponents, but eliminating them before they can emerge: "Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States." Defense Secretary Rumsfeld elaborates that the U.S. would deter "potential adversaries not only from using existing weapons but also from building dangerous new ones in the first place," and the U.S. would no longer judge states by their actions or intentions, but by their potential "capabilities."77

To achieve this staggering goal, the U.S. power structure envisions staggering methods, including disarming various countries, toppling defiant regimes, occupying strategic regions, and waging counter-insurgency wars against a variety of political forces standing in the way of U.S. control.

Marine General Peter Pace, the Joint Chiefs vice chairman, has stated that "the scope for potential anti-terrorist action included—at a minimum—Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, Libya, Georgia, Colombia, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and North Korea."78 Pace knew of what he spoke: The New York Times reported that by January 2003, the Pentagon had drafted a "National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism" which called for 20 to 30 years of war on a variety of states and anti-U.S. groups.79

Rule Out Nothing—Including Nukes

To carry out this global campaign of counter-insurgency and "regime change," as well as ensure that no other world power could stand in its way, the Bush II administration has embarked on an enormous military buildup.

For some, the term empire conjures up images of legions of Roman soldiers fanning out across Europe and the Middle East, and when applied to the United States today, seems overblown. Yet at $355.4 billion a year, America's military spending outstrips the combined spending of all other countries, and U.S. troops are stationed in over 120 of the world's 191 nations. The Romans couldn't even dream of such military power and reach.80

Radical changes are occurring in military doctrine, organization, and force structure designed to enable the U.S. to launch a number of wars across the globe, quickly and in succession if necessary. The bruising politics of this transformation, concentrated in the reported tensions between Rumsfeld and some of the uniformed military, were at play in the debates that raged within the administration in 2002 over the size of the force needed to seize Iraq.81

Ominous changes are also taking place in U.S. nuclear strategy. The latest U.S. "Nuclear Posture Review," leaked to the Los Angeles Times in February 2002, advocates scrapping arms control treaties, developing a new generation of nuclear weapons—including more "usable" tactical warheads—more fully integrating nuclear weapons into U.S. war fighting strategies, and planning for the possible preemptive use of nuclear weapons. For the first time, the U.S. stated it would contemplate nuclear strikes on non-nuclear powers. This latter move effectively undermines the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Los Angeles Times reported:

> The Bush administration has directed the military to prepare contingency plans to use nuclear weapons against at least seven countries and to build smaller nuclear weapons for use in certain battlefield situations, according to a classified Pentagon report obtained by the Los Angeles Times. The secret report, which was provided to Congress on Jan. 8, says the Pentagon needs to be prepared to use nuclear weapons against China, Russia, Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya and Syria. It says the weapons could be used in three types of situations: against targets able to withstand nonnuclear attack; in retaliation for attack with nuclear, biological or chemical weapons; or 'in the event of surprising military developments.'82

In September 2002, Bush signed Presidential Directive 17, a secret document which states, "The United States will continue to make clear that it reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force—including potentially nuclear weapons—to the use of [weapons of mass destruction] against the United States, our forces abroad, and friends and allies."83

Three months later, in December 2002, a new "National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction" was issued which threatened first strikes, possibly with nuclear weapons, against countries thought to be developing chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons.84

Top Bush officials radiate, as it were, a vicious eagerness to use military power, including

nuclear weapons. "Rule nothing out," Rumsfeld wrote in the May/June 2002 issue of Foreign Affairs. "The enemy must understand that we will use every means at our disposal to defeat them, and that we are prepared to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to achieve victory."85

It is not widely known that the Bush administration never took the nuclear option off the table in Iraq. Two months before the war, the Los Angeles Times reported that the Pentagon was "quietly preparing for the possible use of nuclear weapons in a war against Iraq...including the possible use of so-called bunker-buster nuclear weapons against deeply buried military targets."86

Channeling George Orwell: "Pre-Emptive Self-Defense"

The Bush II NSS also spells out that extending U.S. global dominance means striking down adversaries and recasting global political, military, and economic relations, which in turn necessitates trampling on international law, casting aside global treaties, eviscerating international organizations, and reordering traditional alliances.

One of its chilling new double-speak concepts is "pre-emptive self-defense." Throughout its history, the United States has often invaded or attacked other countries, whether they had attacked America or not. The Bush II NSS takes this tradition a huge step further and explicitly makes this doctrine of preemption—really prevention—the norm of U.S. conduct: "America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed... We will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively." In other words, the U.S. has given itself the "right" to launch attacks on other countries without warning, evidence of threat, provocation or international approval. No moral or legal reasoning is offered to explain why other countries should not be able to apply this same doctrine to the U.S.; it is taken as a given that they simply don't have the military power to do so.

A key precept is the NSS's rejection of the principle that other countries have national sovereignty and the right to determine their affairs within their own borders. It proclaimed, instead, the Orwellian concept that the U.S. will be "convincing or compelling states to accept their sovereign responsibilities." In other words, the U.S. will decide what other government's "responsibilities" are—with the threat that they will face bombs, perhaps even "regime change" and occupation, if they do not comply. Of course, for the U.S. it is different: national sovereignty is assumed to be absolute—unrestrained by treaty, alliance or law.

Well before Sept. 11, the Bush II administration made clear that the U.S. would no longer be impeded by treaties or past alliances. In its first months, Washington walked away from or downgraded its commitments to the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto agreement on global warming, the anti-ballistic missile treaty, and the biological weapons convention.87

It is widely understood that the U.S. government is radically breaking with existing international law and practice. Former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State in the Nixon administration Henry Kissinger is no stranger to U.S. intervention. A former member of Bush II's Defense Policy Board, Kissinger outlined the implications of the new strategic doctrine:

> Regime change as a goal for military intervention challenges the international system established by the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, which established the principle of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of other states. Also, the notion of justified pre-emption runs counter to modern international law, which sanctions the use of force in self-defense only against actual–not potential–threats.88

The Bush government is also revising its relationship with its former allies, NATO, and the UN. From now on, the U.S. "mission determines the coalition," as Rumsfeld has put it. Washington will set the terms and then others can sign up—or not.

Europe's insistence on "multilateralism"—that other global powers play a prominent role in shaping international affairs—is derided as the politics of the weak by influential hawks like

Robert Kagan. Writing in the June/July 2002 issue of the right-wing Policy Review, Kagan argues that, "Europe is turning away from power" and sees the world "through the eyes of weaker powers," while the U.S. "remains mired in history, exercising power in the anarchic Hobbesian world where international laws and rules are unreliable and where true security and the defense and promotion of a liberal order still depend on the possession and use of military might." He argues that Europe lost its "strategic centrality after the Cold War ended." Quoting one historian to make his own point, Kagan argues that Washington should deny it a voice in global affairs and seek "the retirement of Europe from world politics."89

The decision to wage war on Iraq without authorization under the UN or international law embodied this orientation. It was aimed in part at relegating other world powers to an even more subordinate status. The intense debate in the UN Security Council and the opposition of France, Germany, and Russia to the Iraq war had more to do with restraining U.S. global power and preserving international institutions in which they had a voice (along with their influence in the Middle East), than concern for the fate of Iraq and its people.90

French President Jacques Chirac warned that war on Iraq was an attempt "to legitimize the unilateral and pre-emptive use of force." Referring to the UN debates, the Washington Post reported, "the seven-week battle has masked a larger struggle over the projection and containment of U.S. power."91

Globalization at Gunpoint

The new National Security Strategy also advocates greater freedom for U.S. business and accelerated capitalist globalization. It states that the U.S. will "use this moment of opportunity" to extend "free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world" and to promote the "efficient allocation of resources, and regional integration." It calls for the promotion of "pro-growth legal and regulatory policies to encourage business investment, innovation and entrepreneurial activity."92

Taken together, and placed in the context of the post-Soviet decade of accelerated globalization and privatization, these prescriptions amounts to a demand that U.S. capital have open access to key global markets and raw materials; that trade, investment, ownership and political barriers standing in the way be broken down; that global trade and economic relations be restructured to reflect and perpetuate U.S. dominance; and that conditions be created for the unchallenged exploitation of hundreds of millions of laboring people worldwide. Combined with the NSS's insistence on U.S. military superiority and its right to use it to enforce "regime change," the document's economic principles can best be understood as capitalist globalization on U.S. terms, carried out at gunpoint. As we will explore in chapter 9, this is precisely the vision the U.S. is now carrying out in occupied Iraq.

In the aftermath of the October 2001 war on Afghanistan, acclaimed Indian writer Arundhati Roy described this intersection of globalization and the U.S. "war on terror":

> In the last ten years of unbridled Corporate Globalization, the world's total income has increased by an average of 2.5 percent a year. And yet the numbers of poor in the world has increased by 100 million. Of the top hundred biggest economies, 51 are corporations, not countries. The top 1 percent of the world has the same combined income as the bottom 57 percent and that disparity is growing. And now, under the spreading canopy of the War Against Terror, this process is being hustled along. The men in suits are in an unseemly hurry. While bombs rain down on us, and cruise missiles skid across the skies, while nuclear weapons are stockpiled to make the world a safer place, contracts are being signed, patents are being registered, oil pipe lines are being laid, natural resources are being plundered, water is being privatized...93

There are deep connections between the U.S. government's international and domestic agendas. Following Sept. 11 the Bush administration passed the Patriot Act, created a Department

of Homeland Security, and enacted a series of repressive measures designed to give the government broad new powers to suppress domestic opposition. Like the international counterpart that restricts sovereignty and broadens U.S. military might, domestic measures restrict privacy and civil rights, while expanding police powers. Such sweeping measures are the domestic version of the doctrine of preemption; the Bush team understands full well that its plan for an ongoing war to reshape the planet will generate waves of opposition—both within the U.S. and around the world—and it is putting in place machinery to attempt to suppress it.94

Returning to the international side of the agenda, the U.S. is striving to leverage an historic window of military (and to a lesser degree economic and political) supremacy into all-around political, economic and military dominance for the long term. Half-way measures, negotiated solutions, and diplomatic settlements are anathema to this vision of radical transformation. Michael Ledeen is a former Reagan administration official who was involved in the Iran-Contra affair and is currently a fellow at the right-wing American Enterprise Institute. He put it succinctly: "This is total war. We are fighting a variety of enemies. There are lots of them out there."95

The 2002 National Security Strategy was neither voted on by Congress, approved in an election, negotiated with allies, nor authorized by the United Nations. It wasn't even a topic of debate in the November 2002 elections, as right-wing commentator and war supporter Max Boot noted in the Washington Post: "Almost no one is criticizing President Bush's pledge to maintain American military hegemony.... The odd thing is that this dominance has occurred quietly and with little public debate."96

Instead, politicians and most of the mainstream media treated the NSS as if it were business as usual, and that the U.S. was a "benign" or "reluctant" imperial power that somehow has the right to determine the fate of humanity. Of course, neither U.S. nor world history have ever provided an example of benign imperialism—and the record of U.S. actions in Iraq is certainly no exception.

On September 12, 2002, President Bush went before the UN to condemn Iraq as one of the "outlaw groups and regimes that accept no law of morality and have no limit to their violent ambitions."97 Eight days later his government made official its new National Security Strategy, which announced that U.S. actions would no longer be bound by existing law or conventional morality, and that there were no limits to the "violent ambitions" of the U.S. corporate-capitalist ruling class. No other empire in history had ever issued such an arrogant, blatant, and chilling declaration of global hegemony. "Go massive. Sweep it all up," Rumsfeld had urged. "Things related and not."

A Laser Focus on Iraq

The NSS mentioned Iraq only once in passing. Yet for any who wonder why the Bush administration was so focused on regime change in Baghdad, it is essential reading, and explains far more than any Colin Powell presentation, British "White Paper," or UN resolution. After its release, Jay Bookman of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution remarked,

> The official story on Iraq has never made sense... Something else had to be going on; something was missing... In recent days, those missing pieces have finally begun to fall into place. As it turns out, this is not really about Iraq. It is not about weapons of mass destruction, or terrorism, or Saddam, or U.N. resolutions. This war, should it come, is intended to mark the official emergence of the United States as a full-fledged global empire, seizing sole responsibility and authority as planetary policeman. It would be the culmination of a plan 10 years or more in the making, carried out by those who believe the United States must seize the opportunity for global domination, even if it means becoming the 'American imperialists' that our enemies always claimed we were.98

Why was the Bush II administration focused on Iraq—before Sept. 11 and then like a laser after the attacks? War on Iraq was designed to "mark the official emergence" of a more dominant

U.S. imperium and much, much more, as we will explore in depth in chapters 9 and 10. In sum, Iraq represented the confluence of regional and global concerns; it can be thought of as a key piece on the chessboard of empire. Toppling the Hussein regime removed a troublesome piece, captured a central square, opened new lines of maneuver and attack—and announced the U.S. intention to checkmate the world.

Enforcing regime change was viewed as essential to solidifying the U.S. position in the Middle East, and thus a continuation of the politics of the 1991 Persian Gulf War. It was also seen as an essential step in implementing Washington's new grand strategy. The U.S. plans to turn Iraq into a client state and a launching pad for the restructuring of the entire Middle East, which includes moving against states like Syria, Iran, and Lebanon; attempting to forcibly resolve the Palestinian people's struggle on Israeli terms; bolstering unsteady allies in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt; and generally attempting to quash the anti-U.S. anger throughout the region. It was a war intended to "shock and awe" opponents of U.S. domination in the Middle East—and the world.

Of course, where the U.S. turns after Iraq is still an open question, which will be shaped by the outcome of the Iraq war, world events, and ongoing debate within the political establishment. Yet occupying Iraq potentially gives the U.S. direct control of the world's second largest oil reserves and places its armed forces in the center of the Persian Gulf/Central Asia region, home to some 80 percent of the world's petroleum and natural gas. Control of the global flow of oil and natural gas could give the U.S. enormous leverage over Russia, France, Germany, China, Japan, and others, possibly preventing any from challenging it—regionally or globally.

Prior to the war, Kissinger alluded to some of these multiple objectives:

> The overthrow of the Iraq regime and, at a minimum, the eradication of its weapons of mass destruction, would have potentially beneficent political consequences as well: The so-called Arab street may conclude that the negative consequences of jihad outweigh any potential benefits. It could encourage a new approach in Syria; strengthen moderate forces in Saudi Arabia; increase pressures for a democratic evolution in Iran; demonstrate to the Palestinian Authority that America is serious about overcoming corrupt tyrannies; and bring about a better balance in oil policy within OPEC.99

"In one place—in one regime," Bush said of Iraq in September 2002, "we find all these dangers, in their most lethal and aggressive forms."100 Iraq did represent a convergence, but not of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. It represented a convergence of imperialist needs and ambitions.

All Roads Lead Through Baghdad

It is for all these intersecting regional and global reasons that war on Iraq was deemed essential to the plan for a "New American Century." Different writers, activists and analysts have put forward varying objectives as the "real" reason for the U.S. war on Iraq, including grabbing Iraq's oil, preventing the Hussein regime from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, stabilizing the dollar, strengthening Israel, or retaliating for Sept. 11.

If understood as threads in the fabric of global empire, all these objectives and more are part of the U.S. agenda, although none by itself accounts for this war. Instead, it is the convergence of such necessities and ambitions of empire—in the Middle East and globally—that explains why, in the months following Sept. 11, the U.S. "war on terror" grew increasingly focused on Iraq and increasingly distant from the attack that damaged the Pentagon and destroyed the World Trade Center towers.

Prior to the war, leading Democrats, such as Senator Tom Daschle and Rep. Nancy Pelosi, argued that attacking Iraq would be a "diversion" from the "war on terror." This argument takes official statements that the real objective of this "war" is protecting Americans and eliminating global "terrorism" at face value. Yet, an analysis of the roots and objectives of the "war on terror"

and the overarching strategy that it is part of shows the opposite to be true: targeting Iraq reveals the essence of this war.

The representatives of American power who took office with the ascendancy of George W. Bush felt that the alternative to this audacious grab for dominance was strategic drift, mounting opposition, and the erosion of the U.S. grip on global power, and miss an historic opportunity to extend their reach. Without making an aggressive move against Iraq, their game-plan could unravel. "No course open to the United States is free of risk," Wolfowitz argued. "The question is how to weigh the risks of action against the risks of inaction and to be fully aware of both." So for those running the U.S. ship of state, all roads led through Baghdad.101

Imperialism By Any Other Name...

After decades of denial, it is now more frequently acknowledged in mainstream discourse that the United States is indeed an imperialist power: "America's entire war on terror is an exercise in imperialism," wrote Michael Ignatieff in the New York Times Magazine. "This may come as a shock to Americans, who don't like to think of their country as an empire. But what else can you call America's legions of soldiers, spooks and Special Forces straddling the globe?"102

What is still rarely admitted, however, and which we will detail in subsequent chapters in regard to U.S. actions in Iraq and the Persian Gulf, is that the U.S. has been an imperialist power for over a century and this imperialism flows from the exigencies of global capitalism. In 1948, George Kennan, Director of Policy Planning at the State Department under President Truman, bluntly articulated the vision guiding the powers-that-be:

> We have about 50 percent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity... The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts.103

Forty-nine years after Kennan recognized the need for "straight power concepts," former President Clinton painted a similar picture: "We have four percent of the world's population and we want to keep 22 percent of the world's wealth."104 Then, as now, a central feature of the global order remains the subordination of the bulk of the world's population, living in the oppressed or Third World countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, to a handful of advanced capitalist states—including the U.S., the European powers, Japan, and Russia. Those countries have some 15 percent of the world's population, yet consume over 80 percent of the world's output.

Today, the U.S. has $5 trillion invested overseas, does $2 trillion in foreign trade a year, and operates networks of manufacturing, finance and commerce that ring the planet. This global system is driven by the interconnected compulsions of economic competition between rival firms and strategic competition between rival nations, whose state institutions represent their nation's dominant corporate and financial interests. In an era of faster and faster global capitalism, this competition has grown more heated as winners rise and losers fall with increasing rapidity—whether products, technologies, corporations, whole industries, countries, even empires. During the past century alone, the British, French, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and two Russia empires—one czarist, one Soviet—have fallen or collapsed. This phenomenon is very much on the minds of those running the U.S. as they attempt to capitalize on what some strategists have called America's "unipolar moment."

Securing ready access to markets, investment opportunities, and natural resources demands influence, even control, which the U.S. has generally secured, through a combination of economic inducements, political alliances, and most of all, military force. As that tireless and tiresome champion of global capitalism, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, put it, "The hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist. McDonalds cannot flourish without

McDonnell Douglas...and the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps."105 This is why some 500,000 U.S. troops are stationed at 700 military bases in 120 of the UN's 189 member states, and why the U.S. spends over $350 billion a year on its military—far more than any other nation in history.

Oil: Greasing the Wheels of Empire

Global capitalism is fueled and lubricated by oil. Of the world's raw materials, none is more vital to economies and armies, none confers greater profit and strategic power. As we will show, it is the lifeblood of modern empire, a crucial prop of U.S. global power and wealth on many levels. Petroleum is an essential economic input whose price impacts production costs, profits, and competitive advantage. It is an instrument of rivalry: controlling oil means exercising leverage over those who depend on it and over the world economy as a whole. And it is impossible to project military power globally without abundant supplies of oil. This is not simply, or even mainly, a question of the U.S.'s growing dependence on imported oil. Even if everyone rode public transportation and the U.S. didn't import a drop of oil, it would still seek to control the global flow of petroleum, if only to prevent others from doing so.

The heart of the world petroleum industry lies in the Persian Gulf, which contains 65 percent of the world's known oil reserves, 34 percent of the world's natural gas reserves, and now accounts for nearly 30 percent of the world output of each.106 As the world's thirst for petroleum has grown, so has the Gulf's strategic importance. Since the end of World War II, dominating the Middle East and controlling these vast oil supplies have been crucial to U.S. foreign policy under 11 different presidents. In pursuit of these objectives, the U.S. acted covertly and overtly, employing the carrot of aid and the stick of military assault—installing and overthrowing governments, exerting economic, political and military pressure, waging wars, even threatening the use of nuclear weapons. The pillars of U.S. control have included the Shah's regime in Iran, the state of Israel, and the subservience of repressive Arab rulers.

Yet maintaining control of this volatile region of deep poverty, rapid social change, broad popular resistance, and growing anti-U.S. anger has been fraught with difficulties. During the tumultuous decades following World War II, U.S. dominance was repeatedly challenged and often thwarted by the rise of Arab nationalism, the explosion of Palestinian resistance to Israeli colonialism, the 1979 overthrow of the hated Shah of Iran and the subsequent rise of Islamist movements, and by its competition with other global powers—especially its Cold War rivalry with the nuclear-armed Soviet empire.

Iran and Iraq, now labeled part of an "axis of evil," have posed particular challenges to U.S. control. These two Persian Gulf states have adequate water supplies, enormous oil reserves, and relatively large populations. Both have experienced revolutions that put in power forces who sought to tap into nationalist sentiments in the area and turn their country's assets into greater regional power and influence. This course threatened to impede U.S. hegemony and turned Iraq and Iran into frequent targets of American intrigues and interventions.

President Bush and his cohorts have attempted to obscure this history with their talk of a "war on terror" that pits "good versus evil" and champions of "freedom" against those who "hate our freedoms." The history we will explore in the next 7 chapters makes clear why U.S. officials studiously avoid the actual record of American actions in Iraq and the Middle East—in fact they command us to avoid it as well: "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists," Bush declares. No wonder. This record reveals a starkly different reality than the government fantasies offered to justify intervention and war. Four broad, interconnected themes emerge:

•   For over 60 years, U.S. actions in Iraq and the Persian Gulf have been guided by calculations of global empire, regional domination, and overall control of Persian Gulf oil. As a result, they have never brought liberation, but have instead inflicted enormous suffering and perpetuated oppression. There are deep national, social and class divisions running through the societies of the Middle East, but foreign domination—by the U.S. in particular—remains the main obstacle to a more just social order.

•   Second, U.S. actions have brought neither peace nor stability, but spawned a deepening spiral of resistance, instability, intervention and war. There are connections here, and a trajectory to events which we will explore, from the 1953 coup that installed the Shah in Iran to the 1979 revolution that overthrew him, to the subsequent Iran-Iraq war, to the first U.S. Gulf War in 1991, and then the second in 2003. The new U.S. National Security Strategy and its offspring—the "war on terror"—are efforts to forcibly resolve these growing impediments.

•   Third, this war represents a further, horrific escalation of that deadly spiral of U.S. intervention and it is only the beginning. Washington has dispatched its military to conquer and occupy a country in the heart of the Arab world, perhaps for years to come, and use it as a springboard for further maneuvers and aggressions in the region.

•   Finally, the history of foreign intervention in the Persian Gulf demonstrates that grand ambitions of conquest and control are one thing, but realizing them can be quite another. Oppression breeds resistance, actions provoke reactions, and events often career beyond the control of their initiators in unexpected ways.

It is to that history that we now turn.

END NOTES:

CHAPTER ONE
"Go Massive. Sweep It All Up."
1   www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf, 51
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41   See Appendix, p. 310.

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Theme: Oil and Energy, US NATO War Agenda. Plato wrote that the greatest political calamity imaginable was the divided state where you have one half of the population triumphing, and the other half plunged into grief. Today Plato's warning applies most manifestly to the globe itself, with the relationship between the first and third world – between the haves and have nots – duplicating the tragic and precarious conditions described by the west's most influential political philosopher more than 2,000 years ago. Larry Everest, author of timely and well-argued book, "Oil, Power, & Empire: Ira... 5. Combined and Conicting Goals: The United States Rivals Britain Morgan nances the British war New York bankers challenge the City of London Britain moves for oil supremacy Churchill and the Arab Bureau A battle for control of Mexico The secret of British oil control. ix. 1 1 2 5 8. 11 11 14 15. 19 19 20 22 28 29 30. 35 35 37 40 43 44 46. 50 50 55 58 59 60 61. Instead, OilEmpire.US focuses on understanding how the United States public was tricked into supporting the war (9/11 was the key part of this campaign) and why the war was so wanted by the Empire (to control the Middle East oil supplies as the world passes the point of Peak Oil). "Had we gone the invasion route, the US could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land." - - George H. W. Bush, "A World Transformed," 1998 memoir (explaining why the US did not occupy Iraq in the 1991 "Desert Storm" war). Insurgency assumes that we had gone to Iraq and won the war and a group of disgruntled people began to operate against us and we then had to do counter-action against them. That would be an insurgency.