

# The Origins of the Second Gulf War

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## Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to determine the most influential political advisors in the formulation of foreign and military policy leading up to the Second Gulf War. Using declassified and historical documents, this paper examines the influential role of those neo-conservatives and war lobbyists who strongly influenced George W. Bush in the planning, strategizing, and later launching of “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” The paper highlights the author’s perspective on the Second Persian Gulf War. It is based on the research conducted through analysis and discussion of existing political documents and various standpoint theories of some historians. The objective is to create a vivid picture of the US Government Plans towards Iraq and the involvement of war lobbyists and major decision-makers in this process during the Presidency of George W. Bush. The sole aim of the article is to describe and analyze US Foreign policy in connection with Iraq before the Second Gulf War, as the topic has not been explored in depth yet and is still open for discussion due to present day situation in Iraq.

**Keywords:** America, George W. Bush, Gulf War, national security, Neoconservatives, Iraq.

## Introduction

Key White House policy-makers will be identified based on the documents, media coverage, and existing literature. Why the United States decided to invade Iraq and what the motivation was behind this decision will be answered from the author’s perspective. Declassified sources and historical documents will support the author’s claim that the most influential policy advisors surrounding President Bush were Neoconservatives. Neoconservatives were individuals who strongly influenced George W. Bush in the planning, strategizing, and later launching of the Second Persian War. Their goal – defeating Saddam Hussein and his tyranny and bringing hegemony to the USA – was conducted under the umbrella of “exporting democracy”.

As one of the leading scholars states, “to understand what happened we need to deeply and critically enter into the hopes and fears of those who took the country into the war” (Jervis, 2011, p. 44). Hence, the close emanation of neo-conservative philosophy and individual personalities linked with neo-conservatism will be examined.

Twelve years after the US invasion of Iraq, huge numbers of declassified documents can be found in the National Security Archive of The George Washington University (NSAGW). CIA briefings and reports, everyday Memos of the officials, confidential correspondence, FBI interrogation and study group reports have finally been made public. These documents have not been examined thoroughly by field researchers and were kept declassified until just recently. Almost all of these documents were previously classified as Top Secret or Secret. Consequently, the sources examined in our work will shed light on the motivation and influence of Neo-conservative philosophy and Second Persian Gulf War.

## Methods

A complex study based on historical method was conducted. Data were obtained mainly from numerous internet sources of declassified documents and libraries, on-line articles, journals and hard copy books. All sources were analyzed according to the appropriate procedures established in historical methodology. Information was processed synthetically. This enabled the researchers to examine and understand the research topic correctly.

## Results

The purpose of the paper is to determine the most influential political advisors in the formulation of foreign and military policy leading up to the Second Gulf War. Research and historical documents strongly indicate leading Neoconservatives Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Richard Cheney in cooperation with Donald Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice were responsible for promoting American military power in the Middle East.

## Part One: War Lobbyists

Iraq always held a point of interest in George W. Bush’s politics. During his presidential campaign he stated that “*Building durable peace will require strong alliances ... It will require firmness with regimes like North Korea and Iraq – regimes that hate our values and resent our success. I will address all these priorities in the future*” (The Citadel,

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1999). Bush continues by claiming that if it is discovered that Saddam Hussein continues working on his weapons of mass destruction (WMD), he would “take him out” (Yildiz, 2004, p.90). During the campaign in 2000, Condoleezza Rice described Bush’s foreign policy towards Iraq as a clear case of deterrence stating, “if they [Iraqis] do acquire WMD, their weapons will be unusable because any attempt to use them will bring national obliteration” (Rice, 2000). As she was talking about the isolation of Iraq, she mentioned that there was no place for Saddam in modern politics and removing his regime was still a matter of discussion. “Nothing will change until Saddam is gone, so the United States must mobilize whatever resources it can, including support from his opposition, to remove him” (Rice, 2000).

One week earlier before inauguration George W. Bush met with George Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, and James Pavitt, Deputy Director for Operations of CIA. The meeting was attended by Richard Cheney and Condoleezza Rice. Tenet declared that U.S. Government was facing three serious dangers. One of them was Al-Qaeda which posed immediate and huge threat. The other two were spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction and growing power of China (Daalder & Lindsay, 2003, p. 75). This was a good opportunity for Bush to clarify three main directions of National Security (Woodward, 2002). For him the second aspect of Tenet’s perspective was connected to Iraq and Saddam Hussein directly.

Later Bush had a meeting with the former president Bill Clinton, who made it clear that based on Bush’s campaign he concluded the following: the main headache for a new President was National Missile Defense and Iraq. Clinton also gave advice to concentrate more on Al-Qaeda, Middle East Diplomacy, North Korea, nuclear race in South Asia and only then Iraq. On February 6, 2001, Bush announced that USA will resume funding opposition in Iraq for the first time since the Iraqi army assailed opposition bases in 1996 (Gordon & Trainor, 2007, p. 15).

Soon Condoleezza Rice prepared proposal on “freeing the Iraqi people” where she reviewed dangers coming from Iraq and ways to overcome them. First of all, she suggested extending immediate military assistance to Iraqi opposition, based on authority that remained untapped in the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. The next step would be arming the oppositionists so they could eventually undertake operations and weaken his authority. The last option would be direct action taken by American forces against the Iraqi regime (Feith, 2008, p. 206).

Condoleezza Rice was not the only one with an action plan. U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz proposed a strategy against Iraq which did not advocate for the intervention of American Military Forces. He outlined a few strategic goals for consideration:

- “Win cooperation from other countries, building on the sixteen UN Security Council resolutions on Iraq since the Gulf War.
- Strengthen the Iraqi democratic opposition, improving their military capabilities through U.S. training.
- Help the opposition economically by, among other means, excluding from the UN’s sanctions those areas in

*Iraq (in the Kurdish north) not under Saddam’s control” (Feith, 2008, p. 204)*

As later Feith mentions it in The Wall Street Journal, Wolfowitz asked if the U.S. might create an autonomous area in southern Iraq similar to the autonomous Kurdish region in the north, with the goal of making Saddam little more than the “mayor of Baghdad.” U.S. officials also discussed whether a popular uprising in Iraq should be encouraged, and how they could best work with free Iraqi groups that opposed the Saddam’s regime (Feith, 2008).

On June 1, 2001 National Security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, chaired a meeting of Principals Committee. After much discussion four main directions were put on the table: continuing current containment strategy, actively supporting Saddam’s opponents, creating a better environment for insurgents in southern Iraq, and planning a U.S. invasion. But no final policy was set and administration officials continued to pursue their separate agendas (Gordon & Trainor, 2007, p.16).

Paul O’Neill, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, mentions that in January 2001, during the first meeting of National Security Council, the White House considered the Iraqi threat and the possibility of the removal of Saddam (Packer, 2005, p. 39). This indicates that Iraq was always considered a national threat. But even so, at this point it does not suggest that Bush administration was mentally ready for removing the Baath regime.

In February 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell launched his Middle East tour to address the Iraqi problem. His main goal was to develop new sanctions. As Douglas Feith will indicate in his article later “In the months before the 9/11 attack, Secretary of State Colin Powell advocated diluting the multinational economic sanctions, in the hope that a weaker set of sanctions could win stronger and more sustained international support” (Feith, 2008). At this stage main goals for the US government were containment policy towards Iraq, isolation of Saddam, and ensuring security for the neighboring countries. Also they had to control Saddam’s regime so United Nation sanctions would not be violated and the Iraqi government would not create a threat of WMD for the whole region. On the other hand, oil flow on international market had to remain unhindered.

It has to be mentioned that United States was already irritated, because they could not use UN resolutions in their favour. In a memo of 27 July to Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld states that they could publicly acknowledge that sanctions did not work over extended periods and stop pretending to have a policy that was keeping Saddam “in the box,” when he had actually “crawled a good distance out of the box” (Plett, 2001). Rumsfeld is recommending Principal Committee meeting on Iraq, to be followed by a National Security Council meeting. In the Same memo he concludes “Sanctions are being limited in a way that cannot weaken Saddam Hussein. He undid the UN inspections in the 1990s and is working now to further undo the sanctions and the no-fly zones. He appears to believe he is getting stronger. His general behavior and relationships with his neighbors suggest he is riding higher than a year ago” (Rumsfeld, 2001).

Meanwhile, U.N. took the resolution No. 1352 to continue Oil for Food program for 30 days. All this was directed to allow possible revision of the sanctions. By default this was a signal that the reform of decade-old sanctions on Iraq might be under consideration (BBC News, 2001). U.K. officials were making statements that *"it is very unlikely that London and Washington will give President Saddam Hussein control of his oil revenues again"* (Mason, 2001). But the new resolution policy was a failure because of the lack of support from Russia, China, and France. After 30 days Security Council extended the period twice, for 5 and then for 6 months (UN Office of the Iraq Program, 2010).

George W. Bush administration's entered the White House with the philosophy to remove Saddam Hussein's regime. But the pre-war accusations that Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction were not confirmed even after the end of the war. In 2008 George W. Bush spoke about the biggest regret during his presidency: "I don't know – the biggest regret of all the presidency has to have been the intelligence failure in Iraq. A lot of people put their reputations on the line and said the Weapons of Mass Destruction is a reason to remove Saddam Hussein. It wasn't just people in my administration. A lot of members in Congress, prior to my arrival in Washington DC, during the debate on Iraq, a lot of leaders of nations around the world were all looking at the same intelligence. And, you know, that's not a do-over, but I wish the intelligence had been different." (Spilius, 2008).

After a couple of weeks of long fighting and the successive capture of Baghdad, the luck of the American military campaign evaporated. Not enough American soldiers were mobilized – thanks to Rumsfeld – and soon marauders robbed the main governmental buildings, priceless exhibits were left without protection and eventually stolen from the Iraqi National Museum, and Iraq was thrust into chaos. (Rumsfeld, 2011).

Another mistake was to demobilize the Iraqi Army. As a result militaries mixed with the civilians and created an additional danger. Iraqis indeed witnessed the fall of Saddam's tyranny, but the USA could not establish any kind of Governmental system. For some time there was even outage of electricity and water. Americans became targets for experienced rebels.

In this chaos fundamental Islamist leaders entered the country. They were the founders and pioneers of the terrorist movements. A member of Al Qaeda's inner council and strategist Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, under the pen-name Al Suri asserts that: *"The American occupation of Iraq, he declares, inaugurated a "historical new period" that almost single-handedly rescued the jihadi movement just when many of its critics thought it was finished."* (Wright, 2006). Iraq was covered by the waves of bombing. In 2006, Richard Norton, Member of Iraqi Study Group says *"Surveying U.S. history, one is hard-pressed to find presidential decisions as monumentally ill-informed and counterproductive as the decision to invade and occupy Iraq"* (Silverstein, 2007).

## Part Two: Neoconservatives

To understand the foreign policy of the Bush administration

we have to analyze policymakers who were active during his presidency. Until 1990 the term Neo-conservative was never used to describe a certain group of people or philosophy of international politics. Known as "Reagan Democrats," their ideology suggested protecting national security by spreading and exporting freedom and democracy globally by assisting pro-democratic parties, consolidating international aid and in many cases by military intervention. As John Dumbrell explained Neoconservatism preaches the theory of democratic peace, which is possible only by internal democracy (Dumbrell, 2008, p. 31).

The conclusion that main decision makers of the war were Neocons has its followers among scholars, journalists or historians (Packer, 2005. Ricks, 2006; Ferguson, 2008; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). Since 1990, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Eliot Abrams were on the side of anti-Hussein policy. Finally during the presidency of George W. Bush several steps were taken by the White House administration, which were favourable for Neocons.

From the beginning they fully supported George W. Bush. Two well-known members of the Neoconservative group, Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz were his political advisors during the presidential campaign (National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 326). The Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld also appeared among the followers of anti-Iraqi ideology. At some point there was a belief that Colin Powell, who had a very good military background and knew the region very well, could balance anti-Iraqi wave. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the political environment in which he found himself he decided to change his side and support the regime change in Iraq. This would appear to be supported by the fact that three main political positions in new administration went to Neocons – Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas J. Feith, who served as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. Nevertheless, they had strong support from both Vice President Richard Cheney and Condoleezza Rice, strengthening the argument that Neocons were leading the decision-making process concerning Iraqi policy.

The anti-Iraqi group was so powerful that they tried to tie Iraq with any kind of danger to the USA. One of the prime arguments and example for this point might be the meeting of agencies (FBI, CIA etc.) on terrorism, where Richard Clarke put on the table the threat coming from Al-Qaeda. Wolfowitz directs the subject to Iraq. Bob Woodward gives tenable analysis when he writes that for the August of 2001 aim of Neocons towards Iraq can be explained as "Enclave Strategy." As Wolfowitz suggested enclave would support Iraqi opposition and finally would collapse Hussein's tyranny. Colin Powell assumed that 25 million Iraqis would immediately join American-supported opposition. For Wolfowitz this was the most absurd, strategically unbelievable suggestion. His tentative proposal for President was not to rush or allow anyone manipulate him until he had a solid reason (Woodward, 2004).

It is important to mention that after 9/11 Neoconservatives were giving interviews where they were underlining changes that the terrorist attack brought. For the sake of an argument, we have to note how proudly they stated that they

had influence to share their own ideas with the leaders. The consensus among scientists about the opened possibilities for selling Neocon ideas to Georg W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld and Richard Cheney after 9/11 can be seen as logical continuation of above mentioned interviews.

After terrorist attack on World Trade Center, Richard Perle had a conversation with David Frum, speechwriter of Bush. He said that: *"we are not going to deal effectively with global terrorism if states can support and sponsor and harbor terrorists without penalty"* (Perle, Interview, 2003). In September 19, 2001 Perle was leading Defense Policy Counsel, which mainly discussed Iraqi issue (Gordon & Trainor, p. 15). Ian Shapiro claims that after 9/11 to discuss terrorism as subject matter of Criminal Law was widely used by Neocons for their long term plans (Shapiro, 2007, p. 120).

Iraq was always discussed in the White House, but all these plans and strategic proposals ripened into an action plan just after 9/11 terrorist attack. For Neocons this was a chance to actively advocate and realize their ideas. Robert Kagan and William Kristol are making a strong statement in *The Weekly Standard* while stating: *"It is past time for the United States to step up and accept the real responsibilities and requirements of global leadership. We've already tried the alternative. ... It is a tough and dangerous decision to send American soldiers to fight and possibly die in Iraq. But it is more horrible to watch men and women leap to their deaths from flaming skyscrapers. If we fail to address the grave threats we know exist, what will we tell the families of future victims? That we were "prudent"?"* (Kagan & Kristol, 2002).

To explain reasons of the war two researchers John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt are studying the influence of Neo-conservatism followers. In their book *"The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy"* they are openly stating that Neocons were supporting Israel and were trying to convince leaders, that the September 11 terrorist attack demanded immediate action. Destroying Saddam's tyranny should become a part of the bigger plan to remove all threats coming from Iraq. Spreading democracy in the region was a priority. In their opinion this plan was put on the table after events of September 2001. But Mearsheimer and Walt are do not take account of the fact that the plan to remove Hussein and start fighting for regional dominancy was created long before Al-Qaeda attacks (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007).

To strengthen the argument we will try to bring examples from Clinton's administration. Operation Dessert Strike in 1996 is clear indication of anti-Iraqi attitude. (Koppel, 1996). This was favourable for both hawkish Democrats and Republicans as in both camps there were politicians who desired US supremacy in the Middle East through conflict. Especially Neoconservatives benefitted from it. Their main goal became the regime change in Iraq by all means. Their priority was the "export of democracy" (Davis, 2006, p. 30). Supporting local opposition was the part of their strategy. They also have found a desirable candidate – Ahmed Chalabi, an expatriate from Iraq. He was very close to Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle. (Dizard, 2004).

Long before Neocons found Chalabi, the CIA was interested in him. In the early 1990s, the CIA was already funding

the opposition in Iraq and The Iraqi National Congress (INC) was created in 1992. Ahmed Chalabi became the head of the Congress. Of course people in Agency knew how to avoid direct connections with friends of America so money for INC went from Rendon Group. There is some evidence to suggest that this company was conducting international political works for Defense Department as well (Dizard, 2004).

INC was receiving military aid from Kurds. It is maybe possible that this INC should be a platform for establishing democracy in Iraq. In 1993 Chalabi started the realization of the action plan to change Iraqi government. Based on his scenario INC had a leading role in organizing an uprising in the South part of Iraq through Shias, whereas Kurds would start rebellion in the north. One of the most obvious goals that Chalabi was trying to achieve was bringing INC to power. The plan was coordinated with the U.S.A. In his team Chalabi had figures like – General Wayne Downing and former officer of CIA Duane "Dewey" Clarridge. They became military instructors of INC volunteers. As for General Downing, he by himself was working on the action plan.

On the basis of evidence currently available, it seems fair to suggest that Ahmed Chalabi's END GAME failed in 1995. The plan was based on tentative proposal that Iraq was ready for uprising and no military unit would fight on Saddam Hussein's side. A serious counterargument to the consideration is that the same military forces were fighting with Hussein during previous revolt of Shias and Kurds. This raises a question as to why the creator of the plan considered that Iraqi Soldiers would stay inactive. One of the prime failing of "revolutionary movements" that started in 1995 was the above-mentioned opinion. Iraqi forces started fighting with Saddam and they indeed killed around 100 followers of INC. The Central Intelligence Agency stopped funding INC, which served as umbrella for Iraqi opposition groups. INC was dissolved. Chalabi and couple of his followers escaped to London (Lang, 2004).

The culmination might be considered the year of 1998 and Bill Clinton's "Iraqi Liberation Act." To put it differently, with this document Neoconservatives justified their ideology. During his statement of October 31, 1998 *"The United States looks forward to a democratically supported regime that would permit us to enter into a dialogue leading to the reintegration of Iraq into normal international life... United States continues to look to the Security Council's efforts to keep the current regime's behavior in check; we look forward to new leadership in Iraq that has the support of the Iraqi people. The United States is providing support to opposition groups from all sectors of the Iraqi community that could lead to a popularly supported government"* (NSA Electronic Briefing Book 326 – Statement by President).

This point is particularly relevant while discussing Neo-conservative philosophy. Every word that Clinton mentioned in the statement can be related to their ideology. For the sake of an argument we have to mention the obvious fact – somehow Clinton administration managed to draw the same policy as Neoconservatives. On May 1, 1998 President Clinton signed Public Law 105 – 174, which made \$5,000,000 available for assistance of the Iraqi democratic opposition for such activities as organization, training, communication, and dissemination of information; developing and imple-

menting agreements among opposition groups; compiling information to support the indictment of Iraqi officials for the war crimes, and for related purposes. The president should provide Iraqi democratic opposition with the following assistances: 1. Broadcasting Assistance – the U.S. Information Agency had a budget of \$2,000,000 for fiscal year 1999 to carry out these goals; 2. Military Assistance – The aggregate value of assistance provided may not exceed \$97,000,000; 3. Humanitarian Assistance. But there was a restriction – no organization with a connection to Saddam Hussein or his regime would get any aid from the U.S.A. (NSA Electronic Briefing Book 326).

The Iraqi Liberation Act of 1998 appeared to be a victory for the Neocons but next steps of Clinton Administration were quite disappointing for them. The government failed to take any further effective moves to achieve the goals.

This changed during the George W. Bush Administration when Neocons convinced Richard Cheney about the threats and dangers Iraq could create. Cheney subsequently convinced Bush that Hussain had to go (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 247). Initially it may seem that Bush needed convincing but on the contrary, all he wanted was good reason and motive. It is widely accepted that he had personal interest towards Iraq. He even had his own vision and while we were researching the causes of the war within his administration we must not forget Bush family interests in Iraq. Hussein practically became personal enemy for Bush family and removing his regime was unfinished business.

There still is a lot to learn about the “complete story” of Richard Cheney. Nevertheless, based on journalistic facts about meetings of Cheney and one of the leading Neocon – Bernard Lewis, one can assume that Cheney was “converted”. After those exact meetings he stood on the side of war for the sake of “exporting democracy.” Even more, he was protecting the idea of spreading democracy and during his speeches he leaned on words such as – peace and freedom in the Middle East. This would appear to be supported by his statement of August 2002: *“When the gravest of threats are eliminated the freedom loving peoples of the region will have a chance to promote the values that can bring lasting peace”* (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p.255).

While it may well be valid that Cheney was “converted”, it contradicts the fact that Richard Cheney had the background and history of working during Nixon, Ford, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush Administrations and it’s highly doubtful that he became a target for converting. He knew all the people involved in the process. It is also arguable that he adopted the plan of “exporting democracy.” It is a clear fact that he was more lobbying for oil rather than democracy (Cheney, 1999). Cheney had his own history with oil. From 1995 until 2000 he was CEO of Halliburton. (Ricks, 2006, p.18). This is a company which provides wide range of services including products and services to the oil and gas industry. In 1998 Cheney said during the Panhandle Producers and Royalty Owners Association annual meeting: “You’ve got to go where the oil is. I don’t think about it [political volatility] very much.” (Bruno & Valette, 2001). Therefore “conversion” of Cheney is highly doubtful. His and Neo-conservatives interests’ had a lot of similarities.

Nevertheless, mentioning Cheney and oil brings us to the reason, which is believed to be the most substantial for why the USA started the conflict. While stating about motives we have to mention one curious case - the name of the entire operation. In the beginning indicated name was Operation Iraqi Liberation (Press Briefing by Ari Fleischer, March 24, 2004). Soon after the start of the war the name was modified and it became Operation Iraqi Freedom. Obviously the abbreviation of the Operation Iraqi Liberation (OIL) showed the most, if not the only, important motives for the war. The pursuit of oil combined with the US regional interests, George W. Bush’s personal motives, and Neoconservative ideology must be taken into consideration when reaching a conclusion. The most comprehensive mistake that was made by Americans was leaving Iraq a without local leader who could control the whole country.

## Conclusion

The purpose of the paper is to determine the most influential political advisors in the formulation of foreign and military policy in the Bush administration leading up to the Second Gulf War. Key White House policy-makers are identified based on documents, media coverage, and existing literature. Declassified sources and historical documents support the argument that the most influential policy advisors surrounding George W. Bush were leading Neoconservatives. Additionally, as stated above, the pursuit of oil combined with the US regional interests, George W. Bush’s personal motives, and Neoconservative ideology must be taken into consideration when understanding American post 9/11 foreign policy. However, the authors would like to stress that if not for the 2001 terrorist attacks and the tremendous intellectual intervention of Neoconservatives, it is highly unlikely that the Bush administration would have started the war in the Middle East.

Although some researchers like Max Boot and Jane J. Kirkpatrick suggest that *“the administration has adopted these policies not because of the impact of the neocons but because of the impact of the four airplanes hijacked on September 11, 2001. Following the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history, Bush realized the United States no longer could afford a “humble” foreign policy. The ambitious National Security Strategy that the administration issued in September 2002-with its call for U.S. primacy, the promotion of democracy, and vigorous action, preemptive if necessary, to stop terrorism and weapons proliferation-was a quintessentially neoconservative document.”* We believe that the influence and power of the Neocons prevented Bush from entertaining a more multilateral and diplomatic post 9/11 foreign policy (Boot & Kirkpatrick, 2004). As such, the United States instead played a role of the hegemon. As Robert Kagan strongly concludes America wanted to restore international order and secure her place as the world leader.

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