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Just Wars or just wars?

“Good evening, everyone. This evening we will continue with our topic on foreign policy and the concept of *Just War*. We’re going to apply the *Just War* criteria that some of you developed last week to all three wars in which the United States is currently involved, starting with the war in Afghanistan.

“Before we begin, I would like for someone to tell me if it is useful to engage in this type of exercise? In other words, is this something purely theoretical or are there any practical considerations that we might derive from this exercise? Anyone? Mr. Dickerson.”

“War, sir, is neither theoretical nor abstract; that’s what our discussion was all about last week. So, insofar as the *Just War* criteria provides the politicians and the electorate with principles that help guide them when facing the possibility of war, I think it would be an invaluable tool.”

“Very well, anything else?”

“Yes,” replied Ms. Vanhurst. “Let’s not forget that the Just War theory may be useful to all peoples, since its values are universally recognized in their secularized form. The criteria applies to any political leader, whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or atheist, its primary purpose being to discourage and to prevent political leaders from engaging in unnecessary or unjust armed conflicts. It serves as an international moral law that, if observed, could reduce the possibilities of war. Then, if political leaders fail to abide by these principles, the *Just War Theory* is an important tool to hold their leaders accountable for their policies.”

“Thank you. Let’s begin,” I said. “The war in Afghanistan. Mr. Radusky.”

“I think that Afghanistan presents a rather clear-cut case of a morally justifiable defensive war, at least in terms of its cause,” he began by saying. “I’m not suggesting that al-Qaeda may not have a bone to pick with our policy in the Middle East or with our way of life; that’s beside the point. The question I asked myself was whether our government’s policies, or we as a

nation, were so evil that others could feel justified in conducting a 9/11 attack, and frankly, there's nothing, I believe, that could have possibly justified 9/11, nothing.

"On the other hand, there seems to be no doubt that the reasons for attacking the Taliban government in Afghanistan were also justified. The majority of all nations agreed with us and expressed their revulsion at the 9/11 attacks. Even the late Pope John Paul II, who enormously disliked violence, understood that governments had the moral right to protect its citizens from unjustified attacks.

"Further, I think our military response was in accord with the Just War Theory. The United States Government openly declared war after having been attacked by individuals being protected by the Taliban regime who by their own admission masterminded the 9/11 attacks. As to our government's motives or intentions, they have remained the same throughout the years: to remove from power those who were harboring terrorists; establish a democratic framework whereby the Afghan people would have a decent shot at electing their leaders; build the foundations of a society based on human rights and toleration; and assist the Afghans in developing their country."

"But did we rely on the principle of war as a last resort?" I asked.

"Well, once you're attacked, it's not as if you can afford to sit on your laurels and ponder what to do next. Given the magnitude of the attack and the fact that this was not the first act of violence against the United States by al-Qaeda, I think it would have been morally irresponsible to respond in a more passive manner. Besides, President Bush had requested the Taliban leadership to deliver the culprits of the attack. If this had been done, it is likely that there would not have been an Afghan war. The American attack came after the Taliban leader, Mohammed Omar, refused to hand over those responsible for 9/11."

"Why couldn't we have limited ourselves to denouncing the attack and turning the other cheek?" I asked.

"We could have done that," said Mr. Radusky." The question is whether it would have been the more responsible moral decision. This was a very different type of war in that it was not the Afghan government that attacked us directly. The guilty party was a group of terrorists that were using Afghanistan as a safe haven. The enemy was different this time around, the targets were civilians, and the means to carry out the attacks were barbarically different.

"The United States opted to pursue these terrorists in the same manner as the police would chase after a criminal who had robbed a bank and killed a clerk. The attempt by the police to go after the killer would be the war itself.

"If our government had limited itself to diplomatic protests, such behavior likely would have been an invitation to more acts of terrorism. Again, this was not the first terrorist act conducted by al-Qaeda against the United States. Besides, the president's military response was

measured. Imagine if he or someone else had embodied the passions for revenge that many felt at the time and we had decided to drop nuclear weapons on Afghanistan.”

“Good point, Mr. Radusky. Yes, Mr. Edson,” I called out.

“How do we know that President Bush wasn't motivated by hatred or desire for revenge instead of these supposed Christian-like values that the Just War theory suggests? We may remember that Bush even spoke in terms of a moral crusade, good versus evil, all of which suggest a self-righteous attitude. Also, how do we know that he wasn't motivated by his desire to get reelected?”

“Ms. Williamson, go ahead.”

“Could anyone have blamed the president for not feeling the same sense of outrage and a desire for revenge that many of us felt? These are very normal human reactions, given the circumstances. We don't know much, and perhaps never will, about the president's ultimate intentions. Further, the point about getting political mileage out of 9/11 seems less plausible to me; I don't see the president as being callous at all. Isn't usually the case that one's response to an incident reflects one's intentions? The president did speak in crusading terms, but his decisions were measured, as Mr. Radusky said. The president didn't say that we were going to blow Afghanistan off the face of the earth, at least publicly; he indicated that while the conflict was between the Taliban regime and the U.S. Government, it did not include the Afghan people. What's important is not how you initially feel but how you proceed in the end once the anger has subsided.”

“Good point!” I said. “Certainly, the president's outrage, although inevitably present in his decision, did not seem to be the prime motivation behind his action. Okay, Mr. Radusky, please go on.”

“The next criterion is whether the administration planned for the successful outcome of the war in Afghanistan. This is not easy to answer. One would think so, but there appears to have been some hastiness on the part of the president and his team. There's at least one credible account indicating that there were no war plans for Afghanistan in place. And yet, we went ahead with the attack because the president wanted a quick military response.¹

“Now, there is an even more important consideration that has surfaced, which likely will affect the duration of this war if not its outcome. I'm referring to President Bush's decision to initiate a new war in Iraq while the conflict in Afghanistan went on. As the war in Iraq dragged on longer than foreseen, it detracted from our effort in Afghanistan. Also, the administration's decision to cut taxes while expanding its military and intelligence activities in fighting three wars at once meant that valuable resources were being diverted from a possible successful outcome in Afghanistan.

“Further, I think that in its hastiness to respond, our government didn't

take into account the reality that regime stabilization in developing countries is far more difficult to accomplish than regime change, the more so when the initial problem—the Taliban militias and the al-Qaeda leadership—were far from being defeated. This means that the United States may have to cut back on its ambitious objectives, particularly if the government of Afghanistan fails to organize its ancillary institutions, namely the police and the military, and eliminate corruption.”

“So, you would not give President Bush high marks for the way he dealt with our response to 9/11?” I asked.

“While the president deserves recognition for wanting to respond adequately to the threat, and his motives were just and fair, the implementation of the strategy left a great deal to be desired, and likely placed at risk a successful outcome in Afghanistan. It is probable that the initial objectives in this war will not be accomplished before the United States’ withdrawal of its troops.”

“Could you address the issue of proportionality, Mr. Radusky?” I asked. “Was the principle adequately applied?”

“I wasn’t going to discuss it because I think there’s agreement that the response was adequate and justified. There’s one criterion, nevertheless, that does merit some attention: collateral damage. Unfortunately, innocent people always die inadvertently in wars. But the issue becomes politically damaging when innocent civilians are killed.”

“So what do you do?” asked Mr. Edson.

“It’s a tough situation,” replied Mr. Radusky. “Usually these incidents happen when there is poor intelligence, or, when seeking to protect one’s life, soldiers ignore what they were taught. At times one faces a situation in which the enemy uses innocent civilians as shields. Then, as they conduct search operations, unwilling to put their lives at risk more than necessary, they fire at both the enemy and civilians.

“No one will deny the difficulty involved in fighting an ethical war. This is how an ethicist responds to the dilemma: *Humanitarian law*,” he says, “*is generally intended to protect non-participants, not ensure a fair fight.*”² “It’s a tough sell, but the price we pay for failing to do so is enormous. When we engage in the killing of innocent civilians we end up obliterating the justness of our participation in a war. The political repercussions are just as bad. Today, one of the greatest problems the U.S. military faces in seeking to get the upper hand, both politically and militarily, is the issue of accidental killings of civilians.”

“So, what do you do when these things happen?” again asked Mr. Edson.

“I can tell you what not to do: blame the enemy, cover up the incident, and justify the misdeed. Instead, admitting the mistake, apologizing, and making reparations would be the right thing to do. I say this not only from an ethical standpoint; in the end, these actions will prove to be far more

advantageous politically and militarily.”

“Thank you, Mr. Radusky,” I said. “Let’s turn now to the global war on terror. Immediately after 9/11, and almost in parallel with the invasion of Afghanistan, the president announced that the United States would actively pursue terrorism throughout the world. He called on other nations to join our country and warned that any government harboring terrorists would be targeted. This has become the Bush policy on terrorism.

“Ms. Lewis, would you like to provide us with your evaluation of how the concept of *Just War* applies to our government’s actions on the war on terror?”

“Yes,” she replied. “First, we have to realize that the war on terror is not anything like a conventional war. The military has called terrorism a form of asymmetrical warfare, which means an unconventional or highly irregular way to fight a war that, initially, tends to provide certain advantages to the enemy.

“For example, the threatened country doesn’t deal with a geographically confined enemy, since the enemy can and does change locations. This makes terrorists more difficult to track down. Also, planning and decision-making among terrorist groups may or may not operate through a central authority, particularly when we’re talking about spontaneous groups that arise in different locations and operate on their own.

“Surprise attacks make terrorism quite lethal in many ways. In addition to the physical damage they inflict on humans and structures, these attacks seek to keep the political and military leaderships, and the citizens, out of balance. Terrorists create a state of anxiety that seek to demoralize and weaken the target nation. They want their actions to lead to a radicalization of government policies; as the state strives to protect itself and its citizens, terrorism certainly will affect the way of life of citizens.

“Other aspects of terrorism’s asymmetries are found in its arsenal of subjective elements at its disposal: its disregard of human life—theirs and others, including civilians—its disregard for universally accepted ethics; and the distinctive ways it uses other elements of society—religion, politics, terror, charitable organizations, financial and economic structures—to its advantage.

“From the standpoint of national security, the view is that terrorists will exploit their created asymmetries while placing the target nation-states at a disadvantage. In other words, terrorists do not fight fairly. However, I consider this view irrelevant since I would never expect my enemy to act in a chivalrous manner and place itself at a disadvantage so that we may defeat him more easily. In war, we have to expect the worst from our enemy, precisely because it’s our enemy. So, the crucial question is, should terrorists asymmetries justify us in becoming as immoral as the enemy we fight in order to level the fighting field?

“Asymmetries certainly can create military dissonance; they create confusion in the minds of war planners. I’m sure you all remember taking your kids to

amusement parks where they still have this game in which you're given a mallet to strike at gophers that come out of holes at different intervals, except you don't know when or out of which hole they're coming. Well, that's how difficult it is to deal with terrorism.

"And, among the greatest dangers that terrorism poses is that it creates mental and attitudinal imbalances within our political and military leadership that out of sheer frustration, fear, and uncertainty can lead to political and military excesses on our part."

"Does that mean that our war on terror is justified?" I asked.

"I think that it would be morally irresponsible not to confront terror," said Ms. Lewis. "That does not mean that we assume an 'end justifies the means' approach; that could be devastating. While conducting the war on terror, our government needs to be ethically aware and politically smart to prevent those excesses that easily arise out of frustration, fear, and uncertainty, as that is what the enemy wants to trigger in us. It's this unrestrained behavior on our part that can easily lead us to justify unethical action that the enemy will then seek to exploit politically."

"Overall, I think President Bush had the best intentions when he initiated his fight against terrorism, so from this standpoint I believe that the motives for defending ourselves against terrorism were *just*."

"What about all the excesses this administration condoned!" shouted Mr. Edson. "Torturing prisoners, illegal domestic surveillance, not providing legal safeguards for people we don't even know if they are guilty or not. Do you not consider these unethical?"

"Michael, didn't you hear me say that the mental imbalances that terrorism creates within our leadership can lead to excesses in which the ends can end up falsely justifying the means?"

"I presume you regard the examples I cited as excesses. Very well, I'm sorry," he replied.

"Going on," continued Ms. Lewis, "in terms of an internationally legal mandate, we should be aware that the United Nations endorsed the war on terror, namely because it had been deemed a defensive war. As to whether this is a war of last resort, I think the category does not apply. The policies we're now pursuing both domestically and internationally are no different than that of the police hunting down criminals and seeking to destroy their methods of operation in order to safeguard our well-being."

"Now, we must ask ourselves if the war on terror meets the next criterion, that of ensuring a successful outcome to this war. This principle suggests that the leadership should not have embarked on a war that it reasonably believed it could not win or one that from the beginning saw no clear ending."

"At the outset, I need to indicate that in a defensive war the victimized

nation has no choice but to continue to fight until the enemy is defeated or it decides to stop fighting. And, we must remember that terrorists seek to exploit their asymmetries to their advantage; in this case, location, mobility, and invisibility. They can be everywhere, at home and abroad; they can travel to different places with relative anonymity; and they tend to disguise themselves rather well; they receive support from numerous places worldwide; they can strike anywhere, at any time. Moreover, there are political, religious, cultural, and economic conditions that foster potentially endless terrorist activity. In other words, we have no idea when the global war on terror may end, and we have no way of reassuring our people that the end will be successful. All we can do, short of diplomatically engaging the governments of the countries where they operate in order to gain their support, is to maintain constant vigilance while we continue to confront the enemy.

“The next question we have to address is whether there can be a successful ending to the global war on terror. I think not; not unless we start doing things differently. This war, it has been said many times, will not be won militarily or through the use of sophisticated intelligence alone. The roots of the war on terror are tied to complex religious, political, cultural, and ethnic issues. These conditions have given way to violence on the part of terrorists, which as it had to be expected, provoked a justified military response on our part. If the root causes of this conflict are not properly addressed, our policies will not only be unsuccessful; they may be counterproductive.”

“You’re telling us that, not only is there no end in sight, but that we might not win this war. Can you tell us why you hold this view?” asked Mr. Brandon.

“The problem I see with the war on terror is that while we might not be able to win it, we might not lose it either. This means that we could easily be staring at decades of war with the possibility that, given the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, something catastrophic could very well happen before the war is over.”

“Are you suggesting that we could end up in some sort of a Vietnam quagmire?” asked Mr. Edson.

“We already are in a quagmire, but there’s a difference; in Vietnam we had the option to pull out, and we did. In the global war on terror we don’t have that option.”

“Forgive me, Ms. Lewis,” said Mr. Dickerson. “If you believe we’re in a quagmire and, according to you the government cannot ensure a successful outcome, does this mean that we’re involved in an unjust war, according to our criteria? Also, since you believe that we can’t win this war by staying the course do you have any new ideas on how we might *succeed*?”

“I realize that Dr. Planas had mentioned that a *Just War* must meet all of the theory’s principles,” replied Ms. Lewis. “That means that failing to meet this

principle may render the war unjust and morally unethical.

“But the war on terror puts us in a dilemma: we would need to find diplomatic ways to end terror. However, it is very difficult to engage extremists who do not value their lives through diplomacy. On the other hand, as I said, we can deal with governments to help us eradicate terrorist cells, as we’re doing in some parts of the world. Otherwise, we have no choice but to defend ourselves as much as we can and hope for the best.

“As to whether I have any ideas to win the war, I can say that I have no magic wand and that whatever ideas I have are probably already out there but haven’t become salient enough, and certainly are not amply projected on any of the two political parties’ radar screens. Both political parties, likely reflecting the citizenry, are now acting too defensively, so there is not much prospect of non-violent solutions.”

“Will you now evaluate the means we employ in the war on terror, Ms. Lewis?”

“I was just getting to it,” she said. “I need to make a caveat. I said at the beginning that there might be instances in which the ends we pursue in the war on terror may falsely justify the means we employ. Let me explain.

“The policies and actions involving privacy issues that the Bush administration approved relate to ethics, but they are of secondary significance; these are mostly legal issues and it will be up to the courts to decide if a specific activity is unconstitutional or not. It is also up to Congress to limit the actions of the Executive. Ultimately, it will be up to the electorate to determine how to hold the Executive accountable.”

“I don’t understand why you would consider questionable policies as being secondary,” remarked Mr. Edson.

“My rationale for saying this,” said Ms. Lewis, “is that the actions that the President of the United States approves at home are not aimed at innocent American citizens, although it certainly affects us. Ultimately, it’s up to the courts, the Congress, and the American public to decide what actions they will allow the United States Government to take to safeguard our security.

“The public may well decide, for example, that the tapping of their telephones is a lesser evil that might contribute to the success of the war on terror as opposed to citizens becoming vulnerable to terrorist attacks if they don’t. The same applies to investigating personal financial data, or even the mail and the internet. If the people were to agree, then the issue would be settled.”

“Does that mean that insofar as the courts, Congress or the public fail to decide, the Executive can operate at will?” asked Ms. Vanhurst.

“In a nutshell, Yes. Those are the safeguards that the constitution provides us with. And, don’t leave out the news media. For example, there were complaints against the Bush administration, suggesting that the president took

it upon himself to act outside a proper legal framework in some instances. Well, while we don't want to deny the Executive the means to successfully fight the war on terror, we want someone to keep a close tab on how those means are used to make sure there are no abuses. In these cases, the news media, at times, can be on our side.

"Now we come to those means employed in the war on terror against suspected individuals," Ms. Lewis continued, "some of whom may be American citizens, but most of whom, have been foreigners. This area appears to be very susceptible to excesses and violations of the principles of *Just War*, namely because both the public and the leadership tend to internalize the fear and the insecurity that terrorism creates—you know, all those underground gophers that no one knows how, where, or when they're going to surface.

"To be on the safe side, the Bush administration engaged in questionable rendition tactics and ended up detaining non-combatants for years without taking them to trial. It also created interrogation guidelines and adopted new definitions of '*what is not torture.*' And that is how Abu Ghraib happened.

"One would have thought that, at the very least, we should have done one of two things. If we were going to resort to torture techniques because we believed that such methods were effective in the war on terror, fine! But then, we should have omitted our rhetoric on human rights in order to be spared of criticism of being hypocrites. This is one situation in which being the good guys doesn't justify employing questionable means. Torture affects the course and outcome of our wars by projecting a negative image of the United States among foreigners. Naturally, this image does not help us to earn credibility or to secure the hearts and minds of those we're trying so earnestly to win over."

"I believe, Ms. Lewis, that regarding these long periods of detention, the government was in a bind," argued Mr. Dickerson. "If we had hard evidence to prosecute these individuals, we should have done so. I'm almost certain that there are detainees who have participated or aided terrorism. But it's also likely that some may be innocent; only that, if released because they are found to be innocent, all that hatred they have accumulated while being wrongfully incarcerated will make true terrorists out of them."

"Yes, we know that to be true, unfortunately," she said. As she ended her presentation, she called on Mr. Hunt who would review the war in Iraq.

Mr. Hunt was well prepared. He spoke while he set up his PowerPoint presentation. "In my review of the war in Iraq, I chose to rely on Bob Woodward's book, *Plan of Attack*, as a guide. I decided upon it for two reasons: first, because it's the most intimate account to be published on events involving the major participants prior to the war; and second, because it is

full of anecdotes and personal quotations that reveal intentions and reasons that relate to the war that have not been publicly disavowed by the Bush administration. This is important. You may remember that while the Bush White House chose to dispel or contradict aspects of Woodward's subsequent book, *State of Denial*, as well as of George Tenet's memoirs, *At the Center of Power*, to my knowledge direct quotations attributed to administration insiders in *Plan of Attack* were not rebutted. By allowing Woodward's version of events to prevail, his narrative provides valuable insight into human causes and motives without which our explanations would have been more difficult to accept.

"I have read some reviews indicating that Woodward's account portrayed the president and his administration in a positive light and that he wasn't critical enough in *Plan of Attack*. These reviews might suggest that Woodward used kids' gloves to write his account of the Iraq War. On the other hand, I suppose it's the author's choice to either make subjective comments to the information he had gathered or to provide straight-forward reporting and allow the reader to come to his or her conclusions.

"Further, I find the absence of critical commentaries by Woodward advantageous in my presentation. Since I'm about to evaluate the Bush administration's actions, I alone shall be responsible for my conclusions without having to depend on anyone else's criticism. So, assuming that Woodward's report presents the Bush administration in a positive light, I shall profit from it, for then no one can say that I was influenced by some- one else's views.

"I'm not expecting Woodward's account to be complete, and I'm fully aware that any other information that has been omitted may certainly affect my evaluation. Nonetheless, I have followed the war in the media, and the information I have gathered parallels Woodward's account, although it lacks the intimate quotations he was able to obtain through his interviews.

"I would like to start by identifying those *Just War* principles that are either less relevant to the war in Iraq or those that the administration met. Then, I'd like to concentrate on other criteria that may require more discussion.

"For example, the Bush administration complied with the principle of providing the Iraqi regime with a war declaration as well as with ample warnings. This was no sneaky war. The media had reported that American troops were in the vicinity weeks before the initiation of hostilities, and days prior to the attack, I think everyone was expecting war; perhaps, with the exception of Saddam Hussein who might have thought that Bush was bluffing.

"I think that was the only clear-cut principle that the Bush Administration observed. The other principles need to be widely analyzed."

"You mean that no other principles were met?" asked Ms. Bynum.

“What I said was that the other principles require more consideration. By the end of our discussion, we will have reviewed all major principles, unless there might not be a need to do so.

“Let me begin. The first principle reads that the causes or reasons for committing the nation to war must be *just*. Ms. Lewis had indicated that this principle requires that the external circumstances guiding the leadership’s decision should be reviewed and considered in light of those Gospel-based values I discussed last week. This is where it all starts. If the leadership’s reading of events is somehow distorted, it will definitely affect the outcome of the decision, and possibly the justness of the cause. We may recall that Ms. Lewis identified a series of elements that may distort one’s perceptions and discernment of the external environment such as, ideology, expediency, fear, self-interest, and others.

“The record seems to indicate that the Bush administration intended to get rid of Saddam Hussein from its beginning, even prior to 9/11. All that the events of 9/11 did was to provide a national security cover to implement its anti-Hussein policies. It also seems to be the case that administration officials, beginning with the president and the vice president, whether subconsciously or willfully, exaggerated and distorted available intelligence reports to misinform the public regarding the threat that Hussein’s regime posed toward our country. Such behavior would have been necessary to justify the administration’s policies.”

“Wouldn’t that in itself distort the real causes for going to war with Iraq?” asked Mr. Wasserman.

“Yes, to a large extent,” replied Mr. Hunt. “However, the question we need to ask is whether the president may have proceeded with the intention in mind of protecting the American people, or whether the administration’s own insecurities or something else accounted for their purposeful distortions. In other words, it’s possible that in the administration’s frame of mind, *just ends*, conditioned by fear and by a sense of political responsibility, were serving to justify ethically dubious means; that is, misinforming the public.”

“Perhaps you’re referring to mitigating circumstances that might have helped the president in the eyes of God,” said Mr. Wasserman. “But such circumstances wouldn’t justify those actions in the eyes of the public, correct?”

“We’re not putting ourselves in God’s position to judge someone else,” argued Mr. Hunt. “And, while these circumstances may mitigate the president’s responsibility in the eyes of God, you’re right, I don’t think they would exculpate the president in the eyes of the American public.

“Let me go on to outline the president’s view on Saddam from the very beginning. Perhaps things may appear somewhat clearer.

“For example, there were no public reports in the media indicating that President Bush began his first term in office with an overt or a covert agenda

to topple Saddam from power.⁴ In fact, if we are to take the president at his word, he had campaigned for a *humble*, I should say neo-isolationist, foreign policy. Knocking off Saddam had not been a 'go-to' issue during the 2000 presidential campaign. Subsequent events once he assumed the presidency, however, seem to belie the official Bush agenda.

"To begin with, the president had been being briefed on Iraq since before taking office, although the information he was receiving was somewhat inconsistent. For example, in January 2001, Vice President-elect Cheney requested then Secretary of Defense Cohen to brief the president-elect, particularly on Iraq. Cheney considered Saddam a critical issue, one he viewed as *unfinished business* from previous administrations.⁵ Cheney's perspective apparently was not shared by CIA Director George Tenet who days later briefed President Bush on major threats to the nation. These major threats were: al-Qaeda, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and China. According to Woodward's account, *Iraq was barely mentioned*.⁶

"The president's inner circle, made up by Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, far from being detached from the Iraqi question appeared all too engaged in making something happen inside Iraq. Early in February 2001, they met with CIA's deputy director John McLaughlin to review Iraq policy. At that time, the group expressed interest in data collection on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) arsenal. The Bush team likely had concerns; in 1998, Saddam had asked United Nations weapons inspectors to leave the country.⁷

"President Bush begins to implement his policies against Saddam early after coming into power. In June 2001, a deputies committee made up of inner circle's second tier officials had been set up to discuss Iraq. This group recommended *low level initial covert* actions inside Iraq, involving mostly opponents to the regime inside the country.⁸ Then, by late summer, president sought to engage the CIA. The National Security Council asked the CIA how it viewed the possibilities for covert action in Iraq. Woodward reports that the agency, nonetheless, had concluded that Saddam would not fall through covert action alone, and that a military attack and invasion would be required.⁹

"Two interesting events take place prior to 9/11 that shed light on my evaluation. In August 2001, the deputies committee issued a classified paper entitled, *A Liberation Strategy*, proposing phased action to pressure Saddam by relying on Iraqi opposition.

"Moreover, the president, it seems, must have been under considerable pressure to take on Saddam for, as reluctant a warrior as Colin Powell was perceived among Bush's inner circle, the secretary of state felt that the president was being bullied into attacking Iraq.¹⁰ This was being done without publicly

alluding to terrorist links to the regime or without substantial evidence on the threat that Saddam's supposed possession of WMDs could pose for the United States. A comment by the president nearly three years later, however, revealed his true intentions prior to 9/11 with regard to Saddam Hussein. He said, *I wasn't having much impact on changing Saddam's behavior or toppling him.*¹¹ What these incidents indicate is that while Bush had not issued a presidential directive to remove Saddam from power prior to 9/11, the foundation of a mind-set had emerged out into the open, both within him and within most of his inner circle.

"Even giving the president the benefit of the doubt, could there have been other plausible explanations for his conduct? Why would the president want to take early action against the regime without a direct cause? Until then, Saddam had been effectively isolated and contained, as Defense Secretary Cohen had indicated. U.S. pilots practically owned Iraq's air space, patrolling the no-fly zone established at the end of the first Iraqi war. US aircraft entered Iraqi space 150,000 times in those ten years, and 10,000 times in 2000 alone.¹² In other words, Saddam posed little if any military threat to the United States or its allies in the Middle East. And yet, a mind-set was taking hold."

"Mr. Hunt," I said, "I don't know where you're going with this, but something tells me that the way you intend to use this term, *mind-set*, is relevant to your analysis. Please, could you possibly define what you mean by it at this time and how is it pertinent to your explanation?"

"Of course," he answered. "I view a mind-set as a hardened inclination to act in a certain way while, subconsciously and simultaneously, warding off reasons and explanations that may prevent the decision maker from acting in the desired manner."

"I see. And what constitutes this mind-set?" I asked. "How does it get hold of the decision maker? Is this term similar to the one I introduced earlier, the so-called 'Scalia Syndrome?'"

"Similar, yes, but still different," replied Mr. Hunt. "If I understood you correctly, your term referred to a fixed view of reality based on self-arrived intellectual reasoning. It's a rather deep, yet narrowly-focused, intellectual approach to analysis.

"In a mind-set, however, there's no intellectual approach. I'd even say that a mind-set is deeply anti-intellectual. It's impulsive, and it's usually the product of several elements, although it's difficult to say which of the elements have the greatest influence. For example, a mind-set may be the product of acquired information, whether accurate or not; one's highly individualized perception of his current environment and how one relates to it; it includes past experiences and one's overriding set of values.

"A mind-set, however, will color information, even alter it in certain ways, and drive decisions accordingly. Moreover, while severe constraints or radical changes in the political environment could ultimately prevent execution

of a mind-set-led decision, these constraints would not prevent the mind-set from emerging and from struggling to see its preferred action carried out.”

“Very well, please proceed,” I said.

“I was indicating that President Bush’s desire to get rid of Saddam likely didn’t develop in a vacuum; it had multiple elements: perhaps including finishing his father’s unfinished war; Saddam’s attempt to murder the president’s father, the president’s religious interpretation of human events; and more than likely, the influence of those who were closest to him.

“What was known then was that all of his key associates were unabashed Saddam haters who would have preferred to see the Iraqi dictator out of power. It is interesting that in his book George Tenet suggested that the president was being pushed into going to war. Tenet identified Cheney, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, as the ones who, directly or indirectly, were pushing the country to war.¹³ Nonetheless, that Tenet’s ‘blame-through-instigation’ explanation seems irrelevant in such cases; after all, no one other than the President of the United States has the constitutional, political, and moral responsibility to take the nation to war.

“Another point. When it came to disliking Saddam, the U.S. domestic political environment sided with the president. I don’t know of any nationally elected official, Republican or Democrat, who didn’t think Saddam was even remotely acceptable as a human being. Viewed from this perspective, for the country to desire Saddam’s demise hardly could be regarded as engaging in impure thoughts.

“At this point, we may clearly establish that prior to 9/11 President Bush had developed a ‘would-like-to-do-it-if-I-could’ attitude regarding toppling Saddam Hussein from power.

“But then 9/11 happened. Reading Woodward’s account, and the president’s public acceptance of quotations attributed to him, one gets the impression that Bush had suffered an emotional knockdown. The blow had dazed him and it seemed as if a different personality had taken over:

*He talked in sweeping, even grandiose terms about remaking the world. “I will seize the opportunity to achieve big goals,” he said. And each move had to fit in the overall purpose of improving the world, making it peaceful, he maintained.*¹⁴

“Michael Gerson, the president’s speechwriter and quasi-alter ego, also had noticed how 9/11 had affected Bush. Now, the president wanted to reform terrorists and their societies, and he started thinking in terms of promoting democracy and women’s rights in the Muslim world.¹⁵ His once humble foreign policy was giving way to Wilsonian levels of idealism. Indeed, 9/11 had

not only reshaped the president's foreign policy; it reshaped him, too:

*September the 11th obviously changed my thinking a lot about my responsibility as president. [It] made the security of the American people a sacred duty for the president.*¹⁶

“While there were suspicions about the Iraqi leader's possession of WMDs, there had been no evidence of al-Qaeda links to Saddam. Moreover, Saddam's regime had become militarily weaker and, as I said, it had been effectively contained. Nonetheless, 9/11 had cemented the president's mind-set. While Woodward points out that 9/11 changed Bush's attitude toward Saddam, I would add that, more than just changing his attitude, Bush had extrapolated Hussein's past into the future. Two years after 9/11, while interviewing the president, Woodward noted:

*[9/11] changed his attitude toward “Saddam Hussein's capacity to create harm,” he said, adding, “all his terrible features became much more threatening.”*¹⁷

“In effect, Bush was candidly admitting having *discovered* the real Saddam and proceeded to disproportionately project the Iraqi leader's intentions to do harm to the United States on the basis of what he had done to others in the past. The president's mind-set had even narrowed down the options to deal with Saddam:

*“Keeping Saddam in a box looked less and less feasible to me.” Saddam was a “madman,” the president said. “He had used weapons of mass destruction in the past. He has created instability in the neighborhood” by invading Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990.*¹⁸

“Events after 9/11 suggested that the president was hunkering into a view that was becoming progressively narrower. A mind-set, I should tell you, shares traits with a scientific paradigm, and one inherent characteristic of paradigms is that they tend to protect themselves. Others will question it, but a paradigm will not question itself. Likewise, a mind-set acts like a filter; it allows only certain elements to pass through while keeping others out. “Eventually, 9/11 would become a self-reinforcing collective mind-set in the White House. Rumsfeld suggested that the opportunity had presented itself to attack Iraq; Cheney, too, but said that Afghanistan had to come first. The president agreed, saying *[we] won't do Iraq now. Eventually we'll have to return to that question.* Andrew Card, the White House Chief of Staff, Powell, and Tenet did advise against initially attacking Iraq in the midst of 9/11.¹⁹ Soon, however, the mind-set would take over everyone, including Powell. Even Scooter Libby,

Cheney's Chief of Staff, was convinced that Bush had made up his mind at the time about Saddam.²⁰

“From then on, the president and his inner circle began to incorporate unsubstantiated beliefs and overstated threats and to filter in information that would fit the mind-set. Let's look at this timeline:

-“In November 2001, the president asked Rumsfeld to review war plans for Iraq and to ask General Tommy Franks, who eventually would lead the invasion, *what it would take to protect America by removing Saddam if we have to.*²¹ Woodward makes a most acute observation regarding the president's action:

*What he perhaps had not realized was that war plans and the process of war become policy by their own momentum, especially by the intimate involvement of both the secretary of defense and the president.*²²

“By taking this step the president had started the mind-set's engine and shifted it into Drive. The presence of WMDs began to consume the president's view of Saddam. He told the media that if Saddam didn't allow United Nations inspectors back into the country there could be consequences.²³

-“On December 28, General Franks met with Bush and members of his team via video to unveil preliminary plans for an Iraq invasion. The president asked Franks, *is this good enough to win?* To which the general answered that it was.²⁴

-“Early in January 2002, Tenet notified the president that Saddam would not fall through covert action alone and that a military attack and invasion would be required. The president replied, *Darn!*²⁵

-“On January 29, the president delivered his State of the Union Address in which for the first time, and without substantiation, he publicly related terrorism and WMDs to Iraq. He said that Iraq was part of an *axis of evil* along with Iran and North Korea.²⁶ After listening to the speech, Michael Hayden, then head of the National Security Agency and subsequently CIA Director, realized that war was going to happen.²⁷

-“In February, one year before the invasion, Bush approved a CIA strategy authorizing the agency to support military operations inside Iraq in order to bring about regime change.²⁸ All this is taking place while the war in Afghanistan is going on.

-“In April 2002, eleven months before the invasion, Bush admitted to British reporter Trevor McDonald, *I made up my mind that Saddam needs to go,*” regardless of whether U.N. weapons inspectors were allowed into the country or not.²⁹

-“On August 14, Condoleezza Rice issued a draft of a Presidential Directive recommending complete *Regime Change* in Iraq. Without presenting evidence, Rice outlined the goal of regime change: *Free Iraq in order*

*to eliminate WMDs, their means of delivery and associated programs.*³⁰

-“On August 27, while still possessing no evidence, Cheney stated publicly before the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention:

*Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has WMDs [and] there is no doubt that he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies and against us.*³¹

-“In September, White House lawyers told President Bush they believed he had constitutional authority as commander in chief *to act alone.*³²

-“Also in September, Bush told congressional leaders at the White House, *[Saddam] is a serious threat to the U.S. and his neighbors and his own citizens.*³³

-“On September 11, on the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the president met with several House members and told them that, *the biggest threat ... is Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction. He can blow up Israel and that would trigger an international conflict.*³⁴ Again, the administration did not provide any evidence to corroborate its views.

-“On September 26, Bush met with other House members and told them—without presenting any evidence—that *Saddam Hussein ... is teaming up with al-Qaeda.... It is clear he has weapons of mass destruction ... anthrax, VX; he still needs plutonium and he has not been shy about trying to find it. Timeframe would be six months (to Iraq having a nuke if Iraq was able to obtain sufficient plutonium or enriched uranium....).* At another moment he said, *The Iraqi regime possesses biological and chemical weapons. The Iraqi regime is building the facilities necessary to make more. And according to the British Government, the Iraqi regime could launch a biological or chemical attack in as little as 45 minutes after the orders were given.*³⁵

-“On November 8, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution declaring that Saddam had to make a formal declaration of any possession of WMDs as well as to cooperate with the U.N. weapons inspectors. One month later, Iraq submitted a lengthy report indicating it did not have WMDs. On their part, the U.N. weapons inspectors indicated they had not been able to find any WMDs. Nonetheless, Cheney, proposed that the president declare that Saddam’s statement to the UN Security Council constituted a breach of the United Nations resolution because *he believed* the declaration to be false.³⁶

-“In December, the president met with Spanish President José María Aznar and told him:

*At some point, we will conclude enough is enough and take him out. He’s a liar and he has no intention of disarming. War is my last choice. Saddam Hussein is using his money to train and equip al-Qaeda with chemicals, he’s harboring terrorists.*³⁷ “Again, the president presented no evidence of Saddam’s links to terrorism.

-“On December 21, the president met with Tenet and his deputy John McLaughlin, who along with Cheney, Card, and Rice would decide how best to present the case for war to the American public. According to Woodward, it

was during this meeting that Tenet uttered his famous words, *It's a slam dunk*, supposedly referring to the strength of the evidence against Saddam.³⁸

-“On January 27, 2003, a mind-set type incident took place. During the State of the Union Address, the president included in his speech information indicating that Saddam had attempted to purchase uranium from Africa. Months later, it was revealed that the information was inaccurate. Tenet and CIA officials had asked the White House to remove the uranium incident from an October 2002 speech the president was going to deliver in Cincinnati because of its dubious credibility, but somehow the same information found its way into the draft of the State of the Union Address. This time, CIA officials reviewing the draft failed to notice it.”³⁹

-“On February 5, Powell presented the American case against Saddam Hussein to the U.N., relying on what the White House had accepted as incontrovertible evidence of Saddam’s links to terrorism and his possession of WMDs.

“What may we gather from this timeline?” continued Mr. Hunt. “There are common denominators that explain the influence of the president’s mind-set. He had incorporated specific beliefs into his mind-set: Saddam had WMDs in his possession; it was Saddam’s intention to use these weapons against the United States and/or its allies; Saddam would pass along these weapons to al-Qaeda terrorists; and Saddam had links to world terrorist organizations that threaten the United States.

“We can tell that the administration had hardened its mind-set progressively, refusing arguments that went against its intentions while coloring information to fit its own. For example, the inner circle rejected Powell’s several warnings against attacking Iraq as well as Brent Scowcroft’s views opposing the attack on Iraq. Scowcroft had been Bush’s father’s National Security Adviser and a close friend of the former president.

“Moreover, the president’s mind-set had now extended beyond Bush to include those less close to him. This meant that information that ran contrary to the war option was not going to be welcomed. For example, news stories indicated that, three months before the U.S. invasion,

Seventy national security experts and Middle East scholars met for two days at the National Defense University and then issued a report concluding that occupying Iraq ‘will be the most daunting and complex task the U.S. and the international community will have undertaken since the end of World War II.

“A copy of the report was given to the office of Douglas Feith, at the time the very influential undersecretary of defense for policy and the closest Pentagon person to the secretary of defense other than General Tommy Franks.”⁴⁰

“Even more to the point, a report issued by the Department of Defense Inspector General contended that Mr. Feith selectively ignored intelligence information regarding the absence of al-Qaeda ties to Saddam’s regime, something that, had it been accepted, would have weakened the administration’s case to go to war.⁴¹ This should not be surprising; according to Tenet, Feith already had made up his mind that the U.S. didn’t need to prove a connection between 9/11 and Saddam.⁴²

“The president’s mind-set took him into the point of no return in November 2002,” continued Mr. Hunt, “when Bush decided to seek a resolution against Saddam at the U.N. The president, as Cheney had done earlier, already had judged *a priori* that Saddam was not going to disarm and that Saddam would lie if he reported that he didn’t possess the weapons.

“Once the president’s mind-set took over and extended into others, it self-perpetuated and self-re-enforced its own intentions and desires. In September 2002, for example, the president met with some House members and told them that the last thing he wanted was to start a war, *Believe me, I don’t like hugging the widows*, he said.⁴³ And, in December, he told Spanish president Aznar that war would only come as a last resort.

“Now, remember that war as a last resort is a vital criterion of the *Just War* theory, established, precisely, to dissuade political leaders from taking military action too lightly. I think that if we were to apply the psychology of human sexuality to the president’s mind-set, it would have been like a high school lad engaging in foreplay in the rear seat of the car for the last hour and telling his date that sex is the last thing he has in mind. But, as events indicate, the president had long made up his mind that war was the answer; that he wasn’t going to wait for diplomacy; that whether or not the U.N. and other nations would follow wasn’t going to be a decisive factor.

“It may also be noticed from this timeline that, as time progressed, the administration became more unabashed and daring in building up unsubstantiated threats: there were vivid descriptions of WMDs in Saddam’s possession; statements that Saddam *will attack us*; he’s harboring terrorists, etc.

“While the administration was increasing its private and public rhetoric in favor of the war, military plans were being drawn, and troops were being mobilized. CIA Director Tenet argued in his memoirs that there was never any serious debate that he knew of within the administration about the threat Saddam posed or whether he should be contained instead of being attacked. Discussions were held on how to go to war against Iraq, he said, not whether we had to go or whether it was the right thing to do.⁴⁴ Tenet’s remarks—indirectly substantiated by Woodward’s account—suggest that the administration had made up its mind about attacking Iraq without much discussion of its merits and without much evidence other than strong beliefs.

“Given that substantial evidence was lacking, it would seem that the misinformation hype on the part of the Bush Administration could very well have been intentional,⁴⁵ whether driven by fear or insecurity, hatred toward Saddam’s regime, or a rightful concern for the well-being of the nation. The administration’s frame of mind at this time indicated that President Bush wanted to get rid of Saddam no matter how. This mind-set appeared to be the driving force behind the administration’s efforts to mislead the American public in order for this public to pressure the Congress into supporting the war.

“Congress, including Democrats, set aside its oversight powers and overwhelmingly approved the resolutions on Iraq without much questioning, suggesting that its members were feeling pressure from their constituencies.

“If we accept that a mind-set is a self-driven attitude that seeks and desires its own realization, the hype the administration built about the war becomes understandable, even natural, under those conditions. The war hype was signaling to the world that the president’s mind-set was not going to be denied; that Saddam had to go.

“Another important point. The media as well as supporters of the war have projected the assumption that if WMDs were ever found, it would have justified the attack against Iraq, since the administration made the presence of these weapons, along with the intentions to use them or distribute them, practically the sole reason for going to war. What can be said about this view?

“Possession of WMDs was the primary reason to go to war because, according to Condoleezza Rice, only this type of threat had the ‘legs’ to muster support for the war.⁴⁶

“In my view, it is a sad commentary about world and domestic public opinion that truthful reasons would not have motivated political leaders or nations enough to act. Had the administration informed the American public that the primary reasons for the war were to deliver a tragically abused people from the hands of a ruthless dictator; or to restore democracy and respect for human rights; or had the president provided concrete evidence that Saddam was about to strike the U.S.; or that Saddam had provided terrorists with WMDs, any of these reasons, if truthful, might have met the *just cause* criterion.

“Instead, I would have to conclude that this was not only a classic example of preventive war; it was the most dangerous type of the two categories of preventive wars that Captain Francis had discussed, and as such highly unethical.”

“How so!” asked an irate Ms. Bynum.

“That’s quite a stretch!” followed Mr. Brandon. “Just because Aquinas or Grotius said so? The president was very clear that they were embarking on a *preemptive war*, and everyone said the same thing. I’m afraid that’s a very subjective interpretation, Ted.”

“Bear with me for a moment, Ray,” replied Mr. Hunt. “I agree that almost everyone, the news media, the pundits, the American people, everyone had jumped on the preemptive bandwagon. Even Woodward relied on the usage of the term *preemptive*.

“But simply because the president of the United States wishes to call an automobile an airplane doesn’t mean we all have to follow suit, nor does his label transform an automobile into an airplane. My judgment about the war doesn’t rely on Aquinas, Grotius, the Bible, or any type of catechism. I’m going by those who should know, the military experts, the Department of Defense.”

“Whaaat?” exclaimed again Mr. Brandon.

“Ray, a preventive attack, which as we know constitutes an *unjust war*, is, according to the Pentagon, *a war initiated in the belief that military conflict, while not imminent, is inevitable, and that to delay would involve greater risk.*⁴⁷ As we all have come to realize, the Iraq invasion was based on a *belief* that war was inevitable, except that the inevitability of the war was one-sided; no one other than the White House seemed to have a realistic expectation that Saddam was going to attack the United States any time soon. The administration, however, did have a subjective impression that Saddam represented a threat to the United States and needed to be toppled from power.

“Now, what constitutes a *preemptive* attack according, not to the Bible or the *Just War* theory, but to the Pentagon itself? The Pentagon defines a preemptive attack as one *initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent.*⁴⁸ Frankly, it would take a lot of juggling to fit the Iraq threat and the invasion into this definition. And yet, the White House accomplished to project such a perception upon the Congress, the public, and the media rather easily, and without much evidence.”

“Captain! Is this true?” asked Mr. Brandon.

“Yes it is,” replied the captain. “I’m afraid that Mr. Hunt is correct. I only paraphrased the Department of Defense’s usage of the term, but if we go by the Pentagon’s definition, then this was not a preemptive war. The term itself means that I’m going to beat you to the punch into doing something that I know you’re about to do to me. Evidence, of course, is crucial, because without it, the leadership is placed in the precarious position of making a colossal mistake. That’s why Mr. Hunt stated that the presence of WMDs alone would not have justified a preemptive attack, even by military standards. It would only serve to rationalize a preventive attack. But then, almost anything can rationalize a preventive attack.”

“You mean to tell me that the White House couldn’t have checked with its own Department of Defense or that the military leaders could not have corrected the White House, if only to tell the public what they were doing?” asked Ms. Williamson.

“Well, we don’t know,” replied Mr. Hunt, “if military officials attempted to

correct the administration's perception or at least the usage of the term; maybe someone did. But I must say that the administration told us numerous times that this was going to be a preventive war, not a preemptive war, just that it assigned the wrong label to an otherwise accurate description of what was going to take place."

"Mr. Hunt, could you possibly give us some examples of those instances?" I asked, "and could you also explain to us what you think led us into a preventive war?"

"Yes, of course. I'm going to list these instances by dates so that we may clearly see a pattern that, short of subsiding, just kept feeding on its own set of beliefs. But first, let me make a caveat. According to Woodward, it was Rumsfeld who first came up with the term *preemptive*. This is how Rumsfeld characterized the security of the United States, then:

*The key thought about this is that you cannot defend against terrorism. You can't defend at every place at every time against every technique. You just can't do it because they keep changing techniques, time, and you have to go after them. And that means you have to preempt them.*⁴⁹

"In reality, what Rumsfeld meant to say was that we have to prevent terrorism from happening by pursuing the terrorists, because, according to Rumsfeld, the United States found itself in a situation of great uncertainty and insecurity, or what Ms. Lewis described as the gophers game. And further, Rumsfeld indicated that terrorism provides the enemy with asymmetrical advantages that are not always easy to deter militarily.

"However, in his remark, Rumsfeld was referring to world terrorists, not to Iraq. So, what he meant to say was that the United States needed to pursue these terrorists anywhere they were, as if they were bank robbers, in order to prevent them from robbing banks again. This, in my view, is a reasonable and justified strategy concerning terrorists, for they have struck before several times, and they were going to do it again; everyone in the world knows that.

"Preemption, however, is the result of *incontrovertible evidence*, while prevention arises mainly out of a state of uncertainty and a desire to beat the odds. Again, Ms. Lewis gave us the example of panicky soldiers who begin to shoot wildly because they think they are going to be ambushed.

"Similarly, when a nation is not able to manage its uncertainty while its security is at stake, more than likely prevention will be the response. Why? Because it's more expedient; it's a way of solving one's problems by cutting corners. Powell, for example, whether because of a moral sense or practical considerations, seemed to have had a better understanding of the terms. According to Woodward, *any discussion of employing the military under some theory, and not an immediate threat to U.S. National security, made Powell*

*exceedingly nervous.*⁵⁰ Tenet, too, appeared to have such an understanding. He claimed that while there may have been political or military discussions about the invasion, there was no debate about the *imminence* of the Iraqi threat.⁵¹

“Prevention means attributing possibilities of a threat without waiting to see if an attack is imminent. And from this timeline we will see that, for over one year, the White House expressed itself in preventive terms:

-“In his State of the Union Address on Jan 29, 2002, Bush stated,
*By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes (Iraq, Iran, and North Korea) pose a grave and growing danger ... I will not wait on events while dangers gather.*⁵²

-“In March, Cheney spoke to armed forces personnel aboard the USS John C. Stennis stationed in the Arabian Sea, *the U.S. will not permit the forces of terror to gain the tools of genocide.*⁵³

-“In April, Bush told British reporter Trevor McDonald,
*the worst thing that could happen would be to allow a nation like Iraq, run by Saddam Hussein, to develop weapons of mass destruction, and then team up with terrorist organizations so they can blackmail the world. I'm not going to let that happen.*⁵⁴

-“In August, Cheney told the Veterans of Foreign Wars that,
*there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has WMDs [and] there is no doubt that he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies and against us ... The risks of inaction are far greater than the risk of action.*⁵⁵

-“In September, on the first anniversary of 9/11, the president delivered a speech before the U.N. General Assembly, and said,
*Saddam Hussein's regime is a grave and gathering danger. To suggest otherwise is to hope against the evidence. To assume this regime's good faith is to bet the lives of millions and the peace of the world in a reckless gamble. And this is a risk we must not take.... The first time we may be completely certain he has nuclear weapons is when, God forbid, he uses one. We owe it to all our citizens to do everything in our power to prevent that day from coming.*⁵⁶

-“Echoing Condolezza Rice's words weeks before, on October 7, 2002, the president said in a speech in Cincinnati,
*Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof, the smoking gun, that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.*⁵⁷

-“And in February 2003, one month before the start of the war, Powell, who

by now had yielded to the White House mind-set, gave his own rendition of a preventive war at the U.N. before millions of people in the U.S. and around the world:

We know that Saddam Hussein is determined to keep his weapons of mass destruction; he's determined to make more ... Should we take the risk that he will not someday use these weapons at a time and a place and in a manner of his choosing, at a time when the world is in a much weaker position to respond? The United States will not and cannot run that risk to the American people.⁵⁸

“Let me ask you a quick question Mr. Hunt,” said Mr. Radusky, “can, should, the United States run the risk of being attacked again if we fail to act preventively in order to abide by the *Just War* criteria?”

“Mr. Radusky, President Bush told the U.N. that it would have been a reckless gamble to assume that Saddam Hussein would never strike the United States with WMD's or provide terrorists with these weapons. So, he embarked on a war, just in case, to prevent that day from coming. Tell me, wasn't that a gamble as well?”

“You're asking me if we can afford another gamble on the supposition of a perceived threat. Well, the whole purpose of *Just War* criteria is precisely to prevent accidental wars from happening; to avoid nations from becoming involved in trivial wars or in pursuing wars as ends in themselves or as means to glory and fame; to avoid what Gary Trudeau satirically referred to in his *Dooniesbury* cartoon as a *blooper of a war*.

“Is the purpose of the *Just War* ethics to sanitize the international environment in an absolute manner and prevent war from happening, ever? No. But then, not even preventive wars will accomplish that. On the contrary, if everyone starts thinking *preventively*, we would really go back to the times when a feudal lord would leave his castle and attack others just to prevent them from eventually attacking him.”

“What do we stand to lose by foregoing the *Just War* criteria?” asked Mr. Edson.

“Quite a lot, Michael! Deaths, lots of it, on both sides, and maybe for nothing. We also stand to lose our credibility and our leadership role in the world. Do you know what that signifies? That others won't trust you, that others will perceive you as the reckless one. We stand to waste lives, resources, and the support from others that one day we may truly need to support us or to defend other people's lives .

“We would squander lots of good will that we need for real conflicts such as another 9/11 or the global war on terror. Do you realize that a spring 2006 opinion poll taken in fifteen nations showed that our global image had significantly deteriorated, even among our allies and friends, largely because of the Iraq war? On account of our presence in Iraq, many people thought at the

time that the United States was a threat to world peace!⁵⁹ What kind of example are we providing to the world? In fact, by invading Iraq we altered the rules of the game in international politics. Remember what Captain Francis said: *if we do it, others will feel justified in doing it, too.*

“Having publicly referred to them as evil, and witnessing what happened to one of the members of this axis, shouldn’t North Korea or Iran feel justified in moving forth with their nuclear ambitions while alleging that they feel threatened by us? Once we decided to change the rules of international relations, we must realize that everyone can incorporate the new rules, and that means that we can’t complain when others apply these rules to us.”

“May I ask another question?” said Mr. Edson. “Had the WMDs been found and had the war lasted only 3 months with few casualties, could we have said that the war was justified?”

“Again, Michael, this is not about WMDs,” replied Mr. Hunt. “The Soviets had them for decades; the Chinese still have them. And suppose Saddam had these weapons in his possession since after the Gulf War. If you’re a madman who had suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of an internationally-led American coalition a few years back, wouldn’t you have desired to make those weapons available to terrorists anytime during the last decade so they would have used them against us? Besides, these weapons that Hussein supposedly had didn’t seem to alarm the Bush administration that much; that is, until after 9/11. Today, several governments possess WMDs. What makes our leaders feel so sure that any of these governments would not surreptitiously transfer these weapons to terrorists?”

“Addressing national security issues is not easy, but to what extent do we want to inoculate ourselves against all the dangers the world brings on to us? There are numerous threats in the world today. Some of them may end up being only threats; others could be adequately dealt with through diplomatic means; some may reach the status of an imminent attack and would require preemptive action; others we might not be able to deter on time and will result in a defensive attack.

“Somehow, we have to realize that there’s only so much we can do to bring about security to the nation. Right now, for example, neither our ports, our borders, nor our chemical storage plants and transportation system are secured, and yet we are seeking to sterilize the outside world so that we could feel safe.

“If we choose to go down the path of eliminating potential threats—as preventive wars call for—simply because we perceive them as such, we might create enormous instability in world affairs; we may have to add incredible numbers to our enemy list, Muslims, Arabs, North Koreans, Latin Americans, Chinese. Where do we stop? Are we going to neutralize a sizable portion of the Earth’s inhabitants in order to ensure security for the American people? Such is the irrationality and immorality of a preventive war.”

At that moment, I decided to intervene. "Suppose we compare war to a gun. Do we use a gun for preventive or for defensive purposes? Do we use a gun when someone is about to hurt us, or do we go and shoot someone we believe will eventually hurt us? I think that what Mr. Hunt is alluding to is that a Preventive war is a narrow and shortsighted solution to one's security; it's a mirage of a solution caused by fear and uncertainty, conditions that lead to a sense of expediency and a need to cut corners in order to make ourselves feel secure."

"Actually, that was what President Bush was contemplating," said Mr. Hunt. "This is what he said, *We need to fight this war abroad so we won't have to fight it at home*. He made this statement seemingly oblivious to the highly callous nature of his remarks. Who wouldn't prefer that other people's homes be destroyed rather than their own? Who wouldn't opt for other lands to be bombed instead of their own? Who wouldn't prefer transferring acts of terror abroad instead of having to occur at home? Now, tell me, who wouldn't like such a great deal?"

"Well, the administration did a good job selling this war to us, and we bought it. We bought it because we became afraid and the administration, too, sensed that we had become afraid. Wouldn't it have been better if the president had reassured us by reminding us that among our worst enemies was fear itself?"

"Why do you say this was a callous attitude on the part of the president?" asked Ms. Williamson.

"Ms. Williamson, tell me," Mr. Hunt replied, "who's responsible for preventing terrorists to come into the country, whether legally or illegally? Who's responsible for protecting our land borders, our coastland, and our air space?"

"Protecting ourselves against terrorism is our responsibility, not others! And we certainly have the resources to do so. Yet, our government decided that it was more expedient to export the war to Iraq, not based on compelling evidence, or even imminent threats, but on the possibility that there could be threats in the future. This, indeed, was a case in which the feudal lord left his castle to attack his enemy in order to prevent his enemy from *possibly* attacking him in the future.

"It's possible that the administration was well-intentioned in seeking to protect our people; callously well-intentioned, and naïve. But Bush and those around him panicked, generating a sense of fear in all of us that may have created far more uncertainty in the long run than the uncertainty we meant to eradicate by going to war.

"In the final analysis, and without the certainty of an imminent attack, there might be more of these preventive wars if future presidents do not have the self-confidence they will require to face the brink.

"Ken Adelman, a former Reagan administration official and a close friend of

Cheney, may have inadvertently contributed to the theory on the causes of war when he wrote a piece in the Wall Street Journal urging the president not to waste more time in going to war:

*Every day Mr. Bush holds off liberating Iraq, he said, is another day endangering America. Posing as a 'patient man,' he risks a catastrophic attack. Should that attack occur and be traced back to an Iraqi WMD facility, this president would be relegated to the ash heap of history.*⁶⁰

“So, let us now add ‘historical legacy’ to fear and insecurity as among determining elements that can prompt a president to go to war.

“Going forward, the American people will have to be the real decision makers. Do we accept a preventive strategy in our foreign policy? Do we go on to disregard our religious and moral values in an attempt to enhance the security of the American people on the basis of circumstantial, inferential, probabilistic, and suspicious intelligence about a potential threat emerging sometime in the future?”

“I have a question,” said Ms. Bynum. “All of a sudden, everybody started blaming the president because no WMD’s had been found. Is it truly his fault that he was given lousy intelligence?”

“Ms. Bynum, the Bush administration sought to convey the image that the president acted responsibly and on the basis of reassurances he received from his intelligence man,” said Mr. Hunt. “I think, however, that we need to examine this aspect. On December 21, 2002, three months before the invasion, and months after war preparations and mobilizations had been carried out, Tenet and Deputy Director John McLaughlin met with Bush, Rice, Cheney and Card to make the agency’s case on WMDs. Relying on Woodward’s account, my timeline indicates that, by that time, the administration already had arrived at its decision to attack Iraq. Tenet, too, indicates that such was the case.⁶¹ The only issue left was how the administration would showcase its decision to the American public and to the world.

“According to Woodward’s account, the evidence that these two intelligence officers presented was so inadequate that even the president, as inexperienced as he was in military and foreign policy, and someone who is not known for his analytical skills, showed immediate disappointment. *Nice try, I don’t think this is quite—it’s not something that Joe Public would understand or would gain a lot of confidence from,* the president told them. Finding the presentation disappointing, Bush asked Tenet, *how confident are you?* to which Tenet replied, *Don’t worry, it’s a slam dunk case.*⁶²

“According to Tenet’s memoirs, the by-now infamous phrase that the administration relied on to publicly justify the invasion of Iraq was not meant to provide the president with any degree of certainty regarding the presence of WMDs in Iraq. Tenet has indicated that his phrase referred to how easily it

could be for the administration to make its case on the basis of whatever information was available that could be made public. If everyone in the Oval Office that day understood the context of Tenet's words, it was clear that by leaking Tenet's remark while refusing to clarify the circumstances for nearly three years, the administration was not only blaming the CIA director for providing lousy intelligence; it was absolving itself of any wrongdoing. Tenet called this action by the White House, *The most despicable thing I have ever seen in my life*.⁶³

"Is it possible that it was all a misunderstanding? We can give the administration the benefit of the doubt and argue that a well-established mind-set could have misunderstood remarks that were in line with its prevailing intentions. And yet, what's incredible is that Bush was not convinced. He told the group what he thought of the prepared selling points, *Needs a lot more work. Let's get some people who've actually put together a case for a jury*. And, playing his own devil's advocate, Bush told Tenet, *Make sure no one stretches to make our case*.⁶⁴ That was Bush.

"Meanwhile, Cheney, who was known for being an extremely politically cunning, even suspicious individual, does the opposite of the president! He accepted what the president had just questioned. He went along with Tenet's presentation. 'Why not,' he would say; 'why question the man who knows it all!'⁶⁵

"And Rice, who according to numerous public estimations was the most skilled analyst in the administration, whether buying into Tenet's presentation or not, encouraged the president to move onward with the invasion to get rid of Saddam once and for all before he can present another threat to the world community in the future.⁶⁶

"In the end, the one who showed the most doubt was the president himself, and yet, as an example that a mind-set is not much of an asset in politics, he managed to set aside those doubts. Woodward reported that Bush had said later that McLaughlin's presentation *would not have stood the test of time*, but that Tenet's reassurances were important.⁶⁷ Whether this remark by the president is true or not, one thing is certain; the president never contradicted Woodward's quotation.

"But, were there really any reassurances? Tenet indicated that during the meeting, Bob Walpole, his intelligence officer, had informed the group that the intelligence community's available evidence *was nowhere near that categorical*.⁶⁸ In the end, they all believed what they wanted to believe. The president and his team uncritically accepted evidence that he himself suspected would not have persuaded "Joe Public." Here lies the irresponsibility; that a morally insufficient mind-set would be so willing to march into war relying on inadequate information.

"We should take into account, too, that under stress, a mind-set becomes even more treacherous, particularly when this attitude is held by those who

oversee issues of justice, war, peace, or law and order. An open mind searches for alternatives; it questions beliefs and assumptions, it seeks to combine morality, common sense, and policy into forceful action; it rejects generalizations, unrealistic idealism, and shallow judgments.

“Under stress, however, a mind-set’s tendency is not to question itself, for that would cause even more stress. The tendency is to give in, to seek closure by adapting to that which is already established. The president, understandably, had been under quite a bit of stress prior to taking the nation into war. As Bush told Woodward,

*Yeah, I felt stressed.... My jaw muscles got so tight. And it was not just because I was smiling and shaking so many hands. There was a lot of tension during the last holiday.*⁶⁹

“Frankly, Ms. Bynum, what the record tells me is that towards the end, the decision-making process had been very shallow; what the mind-set wanted was not last minute questioning, but soothing reassurances; whether they were well grounded or not was beside the point.”

“Mr. Hunt, tell us then,” I asked, “is it your conclusion that the war on Iraq was an unjust war?”

“There were both right and wrong actions involved in the decision, sir. The duty the president said he felt to invade Iraq in order to protect the American people may have been noble, as were part of the administration’s war planning concerns about minimizing or avoiding collateral damage.

“Also, the president had become a born-again politician after 9/11 and now wanted to improve the moral quality of the world and reform terrorist nations; he became concerned about the plight of the Iraqi people under a sadistic regime; he wanted to expand freedom and women’s right throughout the region; he was even concerned that early oil revenues should go to the Iraqi people, *repayment of debt ought to be the last in line*, he argued.⁷⁰ None of these intentions are ethically wrong.

“On the other hand, initiating a war to prevent possible or potential real threats that may or may not materialize is a very dangerous affair in international politics. This is what makes this war unethical. The intentions and reasons to go to war also were not entirely noble, given that fear and insecurity within the leadership were major determinants.

“Moreover, as you may recall, one of the *Just War* criteria is that the leaders have to plan for a successful outcome to the war. Well, we now know that plans for the reconstruction of the country following regime change were simplistic and naïve, as were assumptions about easy victories, being welcomed as liberators, and giving light consideration to the possibility of hostility unleashing ethnic/sectarian strife or a civil war. Believing that a successful

outcome was evident, the administration disregarded and downgraded sound military and political advice to commit the necessary number of troops and planning to ensure the rebuilding process. This is the overall picture that the special inspector general for the Iraq reconstruction made public in March 2007 that:

*In the days after the invasion, the Defense Department had no strategy for restoring either government institutions or infrastructure, adding that even Congress provided vast amounts of money with little idea of how it was being spent.*⁷¹

“To confirm this view, we do well to remember that Gen. Peter Schoemaker, the Army’s former Chief of Staff, testified before a House Committee that the United States invaded Iraq while having \$56 billion less in equipment and 500,000 fewer soldiers than at the time of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, a war we fought with numerous other allies.⁷² That can hardly be called responsible strategic planning.

“Furthermore, we have to ask ourselves, to what extent the war in Iraq has not resulted in the growth and expansion of radical Muslim fundamentalism, thus making the overall effort of our global war on terror much more difficult. At least one National Intelligence Estimate arrived to this conclusion.⁷³ On account of the information provided, and in the absence of any other information, I would have to say that the decision to invade Iraq was morally reprehensible and politically devastating, since it likely contributed to the lengthening of the war and to additional casualties and destruction.

“The decision to go to war, in my view, was a sadly misguided effort conditioned by emotions (animus, fear, and insecurity), implemented through unethical means (misinformation), and yet, possibly motivated by good intentions (protect the nation).

“The means themselves were politically and morally reprehensible because they subverted and disregarded the religious, moral, and political values this nation stands for. Further, the attack violated the principles of *just war* in almost all respects, even if it was not undertaken with a desire to do evil.

“In my view, the causes of this war are to be found on a moral confusion of ends and means and on the absence of coherent and consistent moral principles due to inexperience, the burden of the job, an almost black and white moral view of human nature and world politics, and a self-imposed mind-set that would not allow opposite views to compete.”

“So, all the blood that has been shed has been in vain?” asked Ms. Williamson.

“Despite what some may say, Ms. Williamson, wars are never *awesome*,” replied Mr. Hunt. “Good people die on both sides of the battlefield. One would think that good soldiers and innocent people should not die in wars, much less

in wars that can be avoided, but they do. We don't know yet if our soldiers have fought in vain, or died in vain. It's quite possible that we will redeem ourselves in the end in order to honor those who have died and those who have been permanently injured. But to attain that, we may have to move beyond Secretary Powell's *Pottery Barn rule*—*you break it, you own it*—that he had conveyed to the president before the attack.⁷⁴

"It's not only a matter of accepting responsibility for the damage we have done. In our own country, a *hit and run* accident is illegal and morally wrong. Both the law and our moral values require us to stop and find out about the condition of the victim. If the victim is hurt, we're supposed to call for emergency assistance, and inform the police. And, if we're truly sensitive, we see the person to the hospital and care for his or her recovery. In other words, you just don't abandon the victim in the middle of the road. Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan.

"We created a mess in Iraq, and by 'we' I mean not only the administration and the Congress, but the American people, too. The easiest thing to do would be to leave the scene of the accident. But, have we stopped to think about the consequences? Going back to the practical considerations of ethics, what happens if we leave a weakened Iraq in the midst of ethnic/sectarian strife? Are we certain that others with less than honorable intentions wouldn't take advantage of the situation? Would a weakened Iraq present a political temptation to outsiders? What if the crisis creates a serious political disease in the area and soon begins to infect others in the region?

"Or, once Iraq recovers, would we be able to count on the Iraqi people as allies knowing that we had left their house in shambles? If you ask me, Ms. Williamson, all the blood that has been shed may not be in vain if we act responsibly and morally; that is, if we see the victim through its recovery."

"Would that mean staying there, perhaps forever?" asked Mr. Edson.

"Recovery means doing everything we creatively and responsibly can to stabilize the country. It could mean leaving soon if we conclude—dispassionately, and without fear or domestic political considerations—that our departure would contribute to stabilization within both the country and the region; or it could mean delaying such departure if we think that both goals could not be attained through early withdrawal, assuming the Iraqis want us to stay."

"What about President Obama's determination to effectively withdraw all troops by 2011? Since he believes that this was an unjust war, is this the way to amend the mistake?" asked Ms. Vanhurst

"As I said, you don't right a wrong in this case by doing the opposite of what President Bush did," answered Mr. Hunt. You don't leave the scene of the accident. Instead, you plan for a responsible withdrawal. I would hope that the president considers that his decisions entail more than just seeking to save face as we did in Vietnam. The stakes are much greater here. I'll be very surprised if he withdraws from Iraq before stability is attained, even if it

costs him dearly politically.”

“In that case, do you share Ms. Lewis prognosis that the war cannot be won in its present course?” asked Mr. Dickerson. “You seem to be proposing the possibility that we continue to fight a war that can’t be won.”

“That would be highly unethical and quite stupid as I’m sure everyone here will agree,” Mr. Hunt answered. “Now, in reply to your question, Ms. Lewis was referring to the global war on terror, not to Iraq. Second, the problem is that by invading Iraq, we have made it part of the war on terror. And, yes, I do share Ms. Lewis’ view that staying the course or slightly altering our strategy may not be of any help to us and may complicate things for us in the long run.”

“I just hate to think of all these kids dying,” lamented Ms. Williamson.

Ms. Williamson,” I called out. “I don’t know what it means to go to war. I never did; I didn’t feel that patriotic at the time to quit my studies and go to Vietnam. Others went in my place, which is why I feel a sense of reverence for those who died then and those who die now, and for those who have become disabled in war.

“From a very personal standpoint, I feel bad for not having responded to the call, regardless of how I felt about the war then, particularly because others died in my place. Those who responded then, and those who have responded today, carry within themselves a sense of pride and honor to which I’m not entitled. Their commitment to duty and the sense of responsibility they showed by serving has been very humbling.

“Today, our soldiers are truly involved in victim stabilization; they’re assisting an entire nation to get back on its feet. That’s quite a daunting task we’re asking them to do. Our soldiers have done what they have been asked to do without questions; they simply have obeyed; and they are doing their best. We can only hope that they’re not doing it for nothing.”

“Are you suggesting that the politicians are responsible for the death of these kids?” asked Ms. Williamson. “If that’s so, how do we hold them accountable?”

“How do we hold ourselves accountable, Ms. Williamson?” I asked. “Not the politicians, but us? A democracy only has mechanisms to hold public officials accountable; it doesn’t tell us what to do when we mess up, other than to learn from our mistakes, I suppose, and hope that we may show greater consideration to these soldiers and their families than what we showed to those who went to Vietnam.

“Okay, what else?” I asked. “Mr. Hunt, are you through with your presentation?”

“I don’t believe that I can say much more than what I have said, so I’ll just answer any questions anyone may have.”

“I do have a comment and a question,” said Mr. Edson. “Ted, you have indicated that the American people bear responsibility for the war in Iraq. Are you

making some sort of rhetorical statement?"

"Michael, the Senate voted overwhelmingly, 77 to 23, the House did, too, 296 to 133, in favor of granting the president the authorization to use military force as he determines to be necessary and appropriate against the continued threat posed by Iraq.⁷⁵ And while this was a Republican-led preventive war (only one Republican senator and six Republican House members voted against the resolution), the majority of Democrats in the Senate and a sizable number in the House voted in favor of the war.

"This means that the majority of the American public, as shown by the vote in Congress and public opinion polls, supported the war in Iraq. It means that those who supported the war were in fact supporting a preventive war, not a preemptive war."

"Very well," replied Mr. Edson, "and what about the churches, the religious institutions; didn't they have a responsibility to educate their followers?"

"Yes they do," replied Mr. Hunt. I'm aware that the more conservative mainstream churches and religiously-oriented lobbying groups supported the war, unconditionally and enthusiastically, if I may add, while moderate and somewhat more liberal mainstream denominations did not. Also, we didn't hear much from the various churches' leaderships."

"Thank you, Mr. Hunt, for your analysis. That will be all for tonight. Have a good evening, and I will see you next week."

Endnotes

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