

Fantasies of World Order: Why Did the US Invade Iraq in 2003?

Siyu Huang¹, Xinyi Du², Jiayue Lyu³, Meng Xu^{4*}

¹*University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, 06269-3088, United States*

²*The Peddie School, Hightstown, 08520, United States*

³*Qibao Dwight High School, Shanghai, 201101, China*

⁴*Foreign Language MT, Qingdao No.2 Middle School, Qingdao, Shandong 266061, China*

*Corresponding author. Email: hayley18562765963@outlook.com

ABSTRACT

What caused the 2nd Iraq war? The conventional wisdom is that Neoconservatives, Bush's administrative failures, and domestic interests' groups have made the war inevitable. However, in contrast, this work argues that though these factors contributed to the US' long coordinated plans for the war, which emerged as early as 2001, they lack a forceful explanation for the incentives behind the decision. Through our analysis, this work found it was the hegemonic motives that caused the war fundamentally. To make our case, this work examines the causes of the Iraq War from three images, ranging from the level of leaders and domestic groups to a realistic world order, and discovers that the US's unipolarity fantasy's intolerance to potential threats triggered the 2003 Iraq War. The main implication of the work is that if the US remains in its hegemonic status and power dominance, it will be compelled to respond to any threats forward and make war possible.

Keywords: *Iraq War, Hegemony, Interest Group, Neoconservatives*

1. INTRODUCTION: WHY DID THE US WAGE THE 2ND IRAQ WAR?

In clarifying the causes for the 2nd Iraq War, or specifically, the incentives behind the war, many believe that the United States went to war due to interests' groups hijack, bureaucratic politics, or even because George Bush's personal will. Yet, these arguments which highlighted sub-national interest struggle showed significant shortcomings in their evidentiary support. Instead, the work argues that American hegemonic motives to maintain "strength beyond challenge" caused the second Iraq war. Indeed, other logics capture part of this puzzling war, but no further explanation covers so much so parsimoniously. Our study helps scholars to interpret, comparing with the first or second image record, the third image explanation which claimed the US was driven by national interest in the war, is the most accountable and legitimate illustration to the 2003 Iraq War outbreak. Besides, the war in Iraq cost enormous blood and treasure, our study of the 2nd Iraq War could be used to avoid comparable wars in the future.

The paper proceeds in the following manner. First, in the work, we look at the groundwork, setting down key

definitions for hegemony, personal preferences, hijack, and ideology. Next, we unpack the logic behind the most compelling arguments that explain the causation of the Iraq war. Third, we look at the evidence, adducing a puzzle that "Why did the United States devote enormous resources into the wars with Iraq, while during the years between these wars they had low hostilities towards each other?". We elaborate our methods of looking for empirical evidence and seeing which one theory is better and then use critical definitions and theories to case selection criteria and investigate the evidence for and against each argument in our case studies. Finally, the conclusion states our main findings, implications, and recommendations.

2. GROUNDWORK

2.1. Definitions for key-terms

In this section, this work defined and explained our key terms, for some are surrounded by definitional controversies. This work begins by discussing our outcome, or dependent variable, war. This work then moves to describing the causal forces, or independent

variables, that may have caused the crisis. These include hegemony, personal preferences, ideology, as well as hijack.

What is war? In common terminology, a war is defined as a state of declared armed hostility, with conflicts that have to result in, at the bare minimum, of "1,000 battle-related combatant fatalities within a twelve-month period." [1] They are to erupt either between states, within states, or among state(s) and non-state institution(s). Aside from the fundamental armed conflicts, the condition for defining a war also demands that either side is required to, to some extent, obtain effective resistances concerning the uses of force.

The Iraq War is a series of armed conflicts in 2003 primarily between Iraq and the US with its coalition forces. The invasion phase aim to "to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people"[2], resulting in the ultimate invasion and occupation of Iraq by the US military. Prior to the war, majority of international monitoring individuals and institutions, from the United Nations, United States, Britain, and other leading nations of the west hemisphere, continued to assert their beliefs of existing caches of Iraqi WMD, however, by the end of the conflict, they are only to find that the Iraqi WMD stock are nothing more than groundless allegations. Matter or fact, the consequences of this war are irreversible.

As a dominant player of this war, the United States of America is best defined as a hegemony in relation to other global powers. A hegemony is the dominance or leadership of a single power over the remaining powers, economically, culturally, politically, or militarily. This work concluded that "hegemony probably constitutes a ubiquitous feature of international relations," and continues to play a critical role of order keeper among the powers within the league [3]. By Personal preference, this work is referring to the subjective elements that contribute to a leader's actions on behalf of the Iraq War.

Ideology plays a key role in many of our analyses, so we felt necessary to define it. However, the long-stretched debate on defining ideology offered a myriad variety of concepts, in fact, it is shockingly frequent that these concepts contradict in perspective, traits, essential, and focus. In this case, we decided to endorse Hamilton's definition, which suggests that an ideology is "A system of collectively held normative and reputedly factual ideas and beliefs and attitudes advocating a particular pattern of social relationships and arrangements, and/or aimed at justifying a particular pattern of conduct, which its proponents seek to promote, realise, pursue or maintain." [4]

An ideology that is essential to our argument is liberalism. Liberalism is a political philosophy that aims to protect and maximize individual liberties, promoting

the rights of the governed equal or even above the authority of the governors. Liberals are devoted believers of solely democracy. They tend to feel insecure about any non-democratic governments and are absolutely opposed to any dictatorial and communist states, where the government lacks transparency as well as check and balance due to the centralization of power among very few individuals.

Hijack is the act of manipulation or unlawfully stealing control in order to fulfill a certain purpose that differs from the original destination of the matter. In the case of the Iraq War, it is to seize control of the government's decision making by superseding its chain of commands. Interest groups, which in some cases perform the act of hijacking, are corporations that influence politics for a shared special intention. In the case of the Iraq war which we are focusing on, interest groups are specifically classified down to two principal assemblies, bureaucratic groups aiming to divert public attention and evade responsibility for the failure of 911, and profit seekers who are attracted to the profound natural resources in Iraq, as well as the opportunity to profit off of ammunition dealing.

2.2. *Scope*

The temporal scope of our analysis ranges from the 1990s, which is the collapse of Soviet Union, to 2003, the official breakout of the Iraq war. Dissolution of the USSR signified the start of America's unipolarity, allowing the US to shift the centre of its foreign policy strategy, which was previously designed to counter the Soviet Union, on the preservation of such monopoly among global powers. Furthermore, it is only after the US had eliminated its foremost enemy, that it could begin to spare attention for other minor menaces such as Iraq. Our spatial scope focuses on the United States and Iraq. Regarding each nation listed above, we gave our reasonings: First, our arguments are found in analyzing the President's perspective, the elites, or interest group's motives, as well as the US government's pursuit as a whole. Second, we inevitably have to consider the circumstances in Iraq, specifically Saddam's regime, to understand the reasons that Iraq was considered as a threat worthy of blood and treasure to eliminate, for the United States and its coalition forces.

2.3. *Summary for groundwork*

In this section this work first specified the outcome, which was war, offering a conceptual explanation followed by a detailed description of our particular incident, the Iraq War. Second, the work moved on to the causes. It begins with defining and explaining the significance of *hegemony*, a terminology that the work labeled America with. After which, the work defined and specified the phrase *personal preference*, and related it

with our argument. Then this work defined the term *ideology*, and suggested its controversies; followed by a detailed expansion on Liberalism, the branch of ideology the work focused on. After which the work defined *Hijack*, and linked it to the *Interest group*, then offered its definition as well as explaining the two specific assemblies that it composed of. Finally, the work provided the temporal and spatial scope of our arguments and evidence.

3. LOGIC

In explaining the US's decision in invading Iraq, the conventional wisdom has three arguments in different images, ranging from individual to internal groups and then a national level of balancing of power. We will examine these three theories with the general models and then unpack them into the specific case which is the second Iraq War. The first-image story indicates that it was Bush's own preference that determined the foreign policies, which includes his own worldview and presidential history.[5] A second-image account claims the US's entrance into the war is due to internal interest groups hijacking.[6] The third-image explanation, which emphasized realism, asserted that the Second Iraq war was a preventive war for security and national interest, influenced by US hegemony.[7] The debate regarding whether the US entered the war was a rational choice to maximize national interest or a ruthless mistake would be answered by our analysis of these theories and the case studies.

3.1. *Presidential preference*

In the first-image account, individuals, usually leaders or powerful peoples, were the one who should be responsible for the decision of war. There are two sources that, generally, would determine leaders' preference, which are the leader's previous history and ideology atmosphere. Applying such logic to the Second Iraq War, a first-image explanation for the causes of the Iraq War entails Bush's personal influence and unique preference. Such an explanation focused on Bush's ideology worldview and Bush's historical legacy.

First, many contended that Bush had a neoconservative worldview that perceived all totalitarianism inherently hostile and incompatible to democratic states.[8] In democratic governments, its transparent decision-making system and political bureaucracy would inform other states about their intentions and relative power. Contrarily, totalitarian states' unchecked decision-making and information

ambiguity leads to uncertainties between states, making other states difficult to interpret their intentions and powers, and thus war is possible between democracies and undemocratic states.[9] President W. Bush hold the implication that undemocratic government types ought to be eliminated so as to create peace, this ideology subsequently contributed to the Bush Doctrine, emphasizing democracy promotion to be core US foreign policy[10]. Meanwhile, Saddam Hussein's dictatorship happened to be the target President Bush was determined to overthrow so as to demonstrate the US resolve to promote democracy and liberal worldview.

President Bush also possessed strong Christian preference, insisting that historically, Western Christians had imagined Arabs as decadent, alien, and inferior, and Western observers of Middle Eastern societies have emphasized their primitiveness and backwardness. W. Bush's inherited Christian worldview obviously regarded traditional Middle Eastern societies incompatible to Christian states.[11] This emotional color definitely acted as the role of catalyst in the decision of war. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that President W. Bush's Christian belief provided more confidence, and to some extent, added more resolution into launching the war against Iraq.

Furthermore, the leader's own history related to them would be the trigger for war. There were indications that Bush viewed the contest in personal terms including his belief that in 1993 Hussein had tried to assassinate Bush's father in a plot that, had it succeeded, might also have killed his wife, Laura.[12] In addition, there were beliefs that W. Bush was comparing himself with his father, so he launched the 2003 Iraq War to surpass his father's achievements. The second Iraq War partly was, partly, a solution to his family vendetta with Saddam Hussein or Iraq.

However, there were substantial contradictions. For the most problematic part, if President W. Bush had determined to invade Iraq, Bush, long before the war decision, should have already chosen a team sharing the similar neoconservative worldview and determination to support the war. On the contrary, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, and National Security Adviser Rice, whom he selected in his team all had counseled strongly against the war.[13] The decision of invasion, also, wasn't hastily made, which is contradicting to the usual style leader preference influence decision-making. Consequently, the presidential impact might act as a role of justifying the war, it could also be the accessory elements brought by the Iraq war.

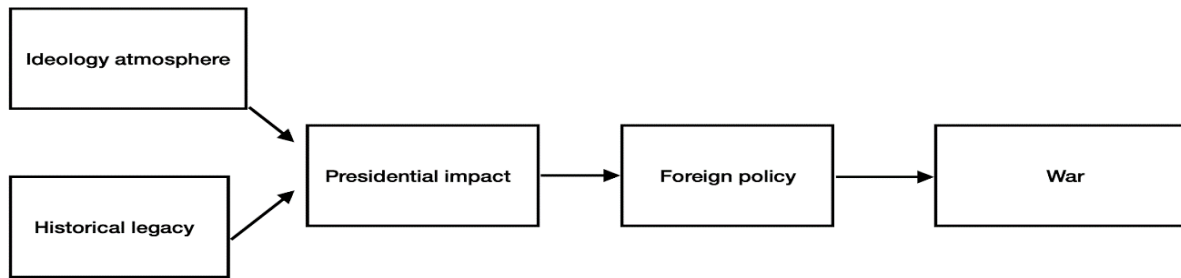


Figure 1 Presidential Preference

Figure 1 shows the argument in the session in a more direct way.

3.2. Domestic factions

A second-image explanation focused on the influence of sub-states' internal groups on the decision-making. In this explanation, the decision making was, largely, decided by the elite-groups who regard their own benefits above national interests. The domestic factions could be classified into two categories — the administration and cooperates. Firstly, according to the theory of diversionary war, the administration's attempt to divert the public's attention from internal disapproval so as to maintain popularity, caused war. The creation of external enemies would facilitate nationalism and patriotism, and also consolidate public support to the government.[14] Secondly, other interest groups, such as corporations or bureaucratic factions, might have their own aims and profits from the war, which could be achievable via hijacking the government's decision making.[15] The decision of war, therefore, was not made for meeting the national interest but for these elite-groups' own benefits.

Putting the above causal model in the case of the Second Iraq War, a second-image explanation emphasized the effect of sub-states groups, including Bush administration, bureaucratic factions and energy or defense corporations.

Firstly, the diversionary war theory demonstrates that the Bush administration sought a war to coerce the domestic public and improve its popularity. By 2002, the Bush administration faced grave challenges unrelated to foreign affairs, including a sluggish economy, an exploding federal deficit, damaging corporate corruption scandals, and a stagnant stock market. The Bush administration had also failed to prevent the disastrous 9/11 attack or fixing the aftermath of Taliban and Ben Laden in a short time. These factors gradually lead to public's dissatisfaction, endangering the legitimacy and popularity of Bush's administration. The creation of an external enemy could distract the media, public and people from the domestic situation and portray that President W. Bush was a brave "war-time president" to

ensure the administration's continued public support and the benefit of the Bush's administration.[16] Iraq was an ideal target for the US, with fragile defense force and justified reasons such as preventing WMD and nuclear proliferation.

Secondly, various internal profit seekers possibly had hijacked the administration's decision-making, leading the government to make a decision that is not favorable to the nation but benefits a small proportion of interest-groups. A thorough dissection of the government ought to divide the government into different departments and bureaucracies, among whom all having different objectives and considerations, such as expansion, budget increase or other goals. After the Cold War, the unipolarity of the US and the elimination of a common threat to NATO resulted in the rapid cut down for the military expense and defense budget. Most administration leaders on Iraq policy - Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and several others, spent important parts of their careers in the Pentagon and had long advocated for increased military budgets and the military's expansion.[17] For them, they would produce mis-leading information and propaganda, creating a sense of necessity to confront this new enemy, so as to generate an excuse for budget increase.

This explanation also focused on the impact of various interest groups such as corporations having substantial interests in the war against Iraq. The US energy and defense corporations all have their preoccupations in the war against Iraq. For the Energy corporations, the oil-field in Iraq could be an enormous source of profit. The war would also act as a catalyst for defense corporations. The corporations that stood to profit most were those whose officers tended to support Bush and other Republicans.

Nevertheless, there were some paradoxical arguments to this second-image explanation denoting the influence of the domestic groups. For the diversionary war theory, even though the US was suffering from the 9/11 disaster and multiple administrative flaws, 9/11 also empowered the government with enormous nationalism, resulting in Bush's surprisingly high approval rate. W. Bush's approving rate change dramatically contraindicated to what the diversionary war theory

commonly suggested. More fundamentally, even if we suppose the Bush administration had the necessity to consolidate its power, a diversionary war is unfavorable. War, as the most risky, immoral and costly political means, would possibly elevate the internal disapproval and spoil the previous plans. Therefore, using war as a means to enhance the economic benefits for interest groups or expansion for bureaucratic groups is also unrealistic.[18] Because of Bush's previous experience in the oil business, he understood that oil-extraction facilities and oilfields were particularly vulnerable in a war. War, with unaffordable uncertainties, has an extremely low possibility of reaching their goals.[19] Other negotiations and readjustments might be a more feasible solution to increasing the economic profits. Even though the data, perceived from the sight in the context of 2001, that indeed numerous corporations obtained benefits from the war. However, we also couldn't deduce that because of this outcome, the interest-groups hijack theory is reasonable. Furthermore, as we consider the interest these elite-groups were seeking, they could simultaneously become national interests since oil reserve, defense budget, military forces and such could correspond to what the US hegemony demanded. Hence, it is ambiguous to say whether the decision of war, facilitated by the government officials who might have ties with other interest groups 'hijacked' the decision making. Considering the contradiction above, internal groups hijacking decision making in pursuit of profits, also, would not be the primary reason for the US to enter the Iraq War. The elite-groups hijack theory ought to be treated as an accessory effect brought by the War, but not the incentives for the US to invade Iraq.

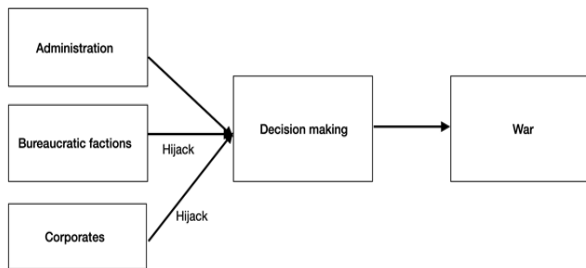


Figure 2 Domestic Factions

Figure 2 shows the argument in the session in a more direct way.

3.3. Hegemonic status and balancing of power

In the third-image logic, the cause of the war should be dissected from a national level, that is considering each state in an anarchic situation seeking for their own security and prosperity. All nations have to contemplate on each other's power, the benefits and costs before the final decision of war. In a unipolar world order, the hegemony's intolerance to any newly emerged threat would cause a preventive war not only to maintain the hegemony's status but also protect its core interests. The

war launched by the hegemony to protect its interests would be regarded as a preventive war.[20]

In 1991, the Soviet Union formally collapsed. This incident made a significant alteration to the world order, which denoted that the dominance of the world will shift from the bipolarity of the Soviet Union and the US to the unipolarity of the US alone. Considering the model above in explaining the war, the US used a preventive war, serving as a means to protect its national interest in the hegemonic context.

The most fundamental motive for the US invading Iraq was preventing possible threats to its national interests. The US, having its core interest among the globe, ranging from protecting Eurasia to East Asia stability and then the Middle East oil-field security. The US grand strategies, as powerful indicators and determinants for its foreign policy, consisted of these core interests.[21] Before the time of invasion, US diminishing domestic reserves and increased worldwide demand occurred, stimulating the US to guarantee oil supply to be secured, implying the Middle East stability to be more vital.[22] Additionally, protecting its allies from threats was regarded as the top priority for the US foreign policy. The invasion of Iraq would be a measure to secure Israel, the most vital US ally among the globe in the Middle East.[23] Even though Iraq didn't possess the economic, demographic or military capability of achieving a regional hegemony nor challenging the US's hegemonic status in a global context, WMD and nuclear weapons would easily enhance any states' relative power dramatically and lead to an internal power shift that broke the power balance in the Middle East. Consequently, Iraq had the capacity to threaten the oil-resources as well as the possibility to enhance anti-America terrorist groups' power after Iraqi power's ascendance. The intimidation posed by Iraq, therefore, drastically endangered the US about its interests in the Middle East. Since Iraq, in this way, made the US feel threatened and endangered.

Furthermore, the fact that Iraq only "possibly" possessed WMD as the US entered the war would not be a rejection to the realist belief nor the fact that Iraq posed a threat posed to the US. The US decision to enter the war to eliminate such a threat for its national interest, still, was a rational calculation that maximized its national interest. Firstly, Saddam Hussein's regime was totalitarian, which leads to information ambiguity and unchecked decision making. Therefore, US intelligence of possible Iraqi WMD possession would give enough justification to the US. Regardless of whether Saddam literally possessed WMD or information vagueness contributed to the intelligence of Iraqi WMD, an invasion will ultimately eliminate this threat.[24] Secondly, the UN inspection was regarded as unreliable and delayed, which acted as a counter-productive policy for the US to

continue the investigation and further legitimized the US invasion.[15]

Besides, the unipolarity implies the US global reputation as a hegemony had to be maintained, including its hegemonic reputation. After the threat of the USSR, the US kept the strongest military forces and enormous defense spending. Bush's West Point speech declared, "America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge." However, the 911 incident posted a gloomy prospect to the US, endangering the US global reputation.[34] Then a war is imminently needed to reinforce the US reputation and demonstrate the US resolve to maintain its dominance and protect its allies. The Second Iraq War, possibly could be a solution to the perception of the post 911 decline.

The question why the US chose Iraq as the target instead of assorted similar threats ready to possess WMD such as North Korea, Cuba and Iran, could be answered by several features of Iraq. Iraq's feeble power provided the US the impression of suffering and costing less. As compared with North Korea or Iran, Iraq is also inferior in demography, defense power, economy and crucially, Iraqi nationalism was feeble. Iraq, unlike North Korea having China's support and Iran having Russia on its back, Iraq didn't have any power allies in proximity. Geopolitics and resource benefits of invading Iraq fits

long-term American interest. The US would utilize Iraq as a base to project through the entire Middle East region to contend with other enemies such as Syria or Iran.

The third-image explanation for the US's decision of launching the Second Iraq War concentrated on its core interests' motives. It is deemed that the US launched the war for maximizing its long term overall national interest. Though the intelligence of proliferation of WMD and nuclear weapons was ambiguous, it was still worth taking the risk and using a preventive war to eliminate such potential threat to its allies and US's core national interests in the Middle East. Iraq's unique features, including favorable geography, weak defense capacity and isolation to allies, made itself a perfect target for the US. The unipolarity world order further permitted the US to launch the war with less consideration for the consequences. The US also would use this to symbolize its determination to protect allies and its resolve to maintain as the benevolent hegemony, which would validate its confidence and alleviate the sense of decline of 9/11. In a broader consideration, the US's occupation of Iraq further enabled the US to utilize Iraq as a military base to project all around the Middle East and further secure its core interest. These considerations were based on the US's long-term benefits, that was deliberately and cautiously contemplated.

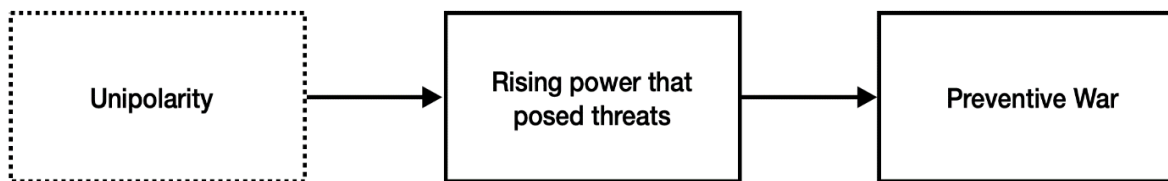


Figure 3 Hegemonic Status and Balancing of Power

Figure 2 shows the argument in the session in a more direct way.

3.4. Summary

In the logic section, the work analyzed the three main arguments for the US decision to invade Iraq, which are presidential preference, domestic factions and the US hegemonic motives. The former two arguments could account for some part of the war and act as the role of justifying the reason for war. But there is a crucial contradiction to their arguments, the evidence that there was a long and cautious deliberation before the decision of war, and war's essence of riskiness and unpredictability denied the presidential impact and domestic factions' struggle for interests to solely define the US motive for the war. The work deems that fundamentally, the US's hegemonic status and unipolarity world order would be the most essential driver for the US to enter the war. The US hegemony and

unipolarity contributed to the US's intolerance to any threats to its national interests and the permission for the US to launch wars without significant fiction. Iraq, with adequate capacity for threatening, relatively low cost of invading and appealing geopolitics reward, happened to be such a target for the US to invade. This argument also has the implication that the US will not bear any powers challenging its hegemonic status or causing enough threat to its core interest. In considering both of its rival and relative power, the US would forwardly initiate wars to prevent such threats and initiate wars under favorable conditions as Iraq did. In the following sections, the work will put forward more evidence to validate our analysis to these three arguments.

4. EVIDENCE

4.1. *The puzzle and a method to madness*

Empirical puzzle:

The US went to war with Iraq twice in two decades, but generally stayed out of armed conflict with them. What changed? Why did the United States devote huge resources into the wars with Iraq, while during the years between these wars they had low hostilities towards each other? What are the similar variables leading up to these wars? What changed over the years?

In the following part, this work discusses and compares two cases, the 1990-1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War. During the analysis, the work shows evidence for and against each of the three arguments, and discusses how the evidence nets out. At the end, the work suggests the most tenable argument through general discussion.

In the process, the work traces what happened around the president, the interest groups, the public and the media. The work traces relevant data that indicate the underlying logic behind each war. The reasons for doing a comparison of the two gulf wars are that they have some similarities but there are crucial differentiations such as the focused issues, the presidents themselves and the interest groups' interference, etc.

The work shows that the case study based on these two wars shows some logic about America's decision to launch a war.

4.2. *The First Gulf War: Prelude to Tragedy*

In this subsection, the work first tests personal preference, then interest group hijack, and finally America's hegemony hypotheses. At last, the work discusses and compares the three arguments and shows their reliability.

4.2.1. *Personal Preference*

In August 1990, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's forces invaded and occupied Kuwait. By early January 1991, George H. Bush, with the full backing of the United Nations, was preparing a war to drive Iraq out of Kuwait.

George H.W. Bush was an experienced president that was involved in the 1990-1991 gulf war. Bush is deeply concerned about the war and plays an important role in decision making. "Others around [Bush] understood that he was willing and able to play a predominant role. They must have factored that into their calculations." [26] Because the president had a rich knowledge about international affairs, some of the advisers who did not agree with him were not willing to show their objection.

"Although Bush was reported to be a good listener in the strategy sessions of the group, his personal experience and knowledge in foreign affairs, which exceeded that of most of the participants with the possible exception of Scowcroft, may have worked to intimidate those who might have fundamentally disagreed with the president." [27] So, it is clear that George H.W. Bush can greatly promote the decision of launching the first gulf war. The following question arises: did George H.W. Bush have a personal preference for launching the first gulf war?

"There was no diplomatic victory that could destroy Saddam's army. Looking squarely at his advisers, the president said plainly, 'We have to have a war.' His (Bush's) words hung in the air as heavily as any he had ever spoken." [28] In his book *Shadow*, Bob Woodward clearly shows that George H.W. Bush wanted the war to happen although he knew that a president who approved the outbreak of war would not be supported by the public. Woodward argues that Iraq's attitude of unwillingness to budge during the meeting that Baker met with Tariq Aziz on January 9, 1991, in Geneva offers Bush the justification to go to war with Iraq. And a letter which Bush had written to his five children two weeks earlier on New Year's Eve from Camp David may explain the determination of launching the war. "My mind goes back to history: How many lives might have been saved if appeasement had given way to force earlier on in the late 30s or earliest 40s? How many Jews might have been spared the gas chambers, or how many Polish patriots might be alive today? I look at today's crisis as 'good' vs. 'evil.' Yes, it is that clear." In this liberalist worldview, the president tends to have the war to consolidate the cause of "freedom" and "democracy" in the world.

But there is no evidence that shows Bush had personal preference for Saddam Hussein dead or alive, and the decision of giving up executing him after the war is won is to help its ally Saudi Arabia deal with the threat from Iran.

4.2.2. *Interest Groups Hijack*

During the first gulf war, the America armed forces have shown themselves adept at playing the "media game", they created a "pool" system to deal with the criticism of the US press.

They use it to offer tokens of openness as a means of better blunting public and media vigilance. "During the 1991 Gulf War the violence was not so much concealed as it was disguised, and even aestheticized and turned into television entertainment dressed up as television news." [29]. There is a collaboration hidden behind the TV news and the journals, the military get public support through the media while the media get profits from the deceitful and misleading reports. Who promoted the situation, the president, the interest group or the oil

companies? Maybe all. There is no strong evidence by now.

4.2.3. America's Hegemony

From the view of maintaining America's hegemony, Iraq's occupation of Kuwait has threatened the security of other Arab countries in the Middle East, as well as the interests of the United States in the region, which are mainly reflected in oil interests.

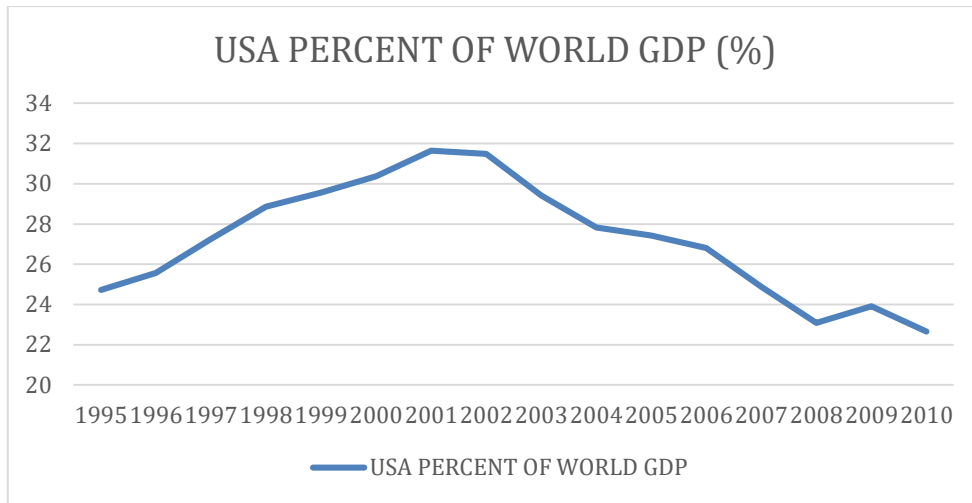


Figure 4 USA Percent of world GDP[30]

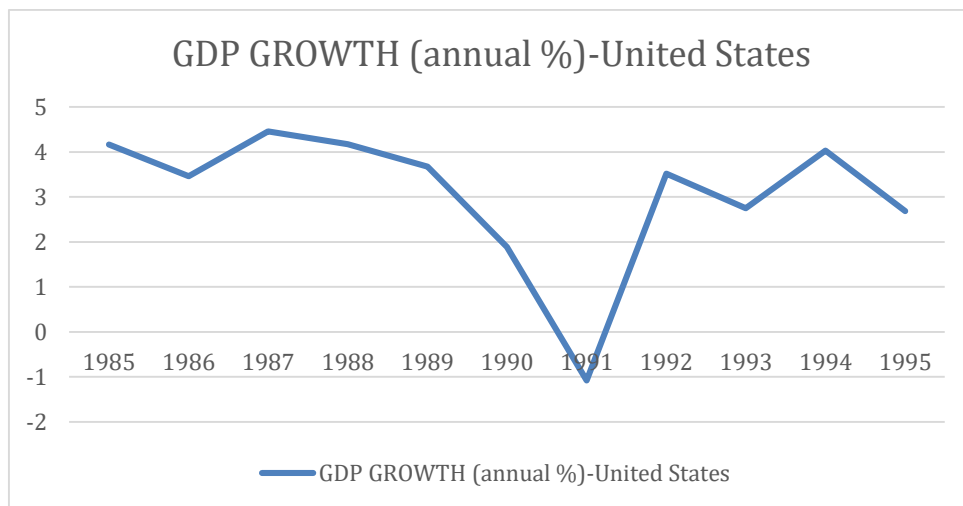


Figure 5 GDP Growth (annual %) -United States [31]

According to relevant data About the United States share of global GDP (shown in Figure 1) and GDP growth in history (shown in Figure 2), it shows that the American economy was in recession before the first gulf war, showing a negative growth trend and the share of global GDP is decreasing. The outbreak of the First Gulf War, on the one hand, led to the rising of oil prices. The data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows that in 1990, the petroleum and other liquids production of the United States ranked second in the world and the primary oil refining capacity ranked first in the world. At this time, the rising oil price was beneficial to prevent the economic recession of the United States. On the other hand, the United States is the world's major weapons producer, and the Gulf War can provide a vast market for dumped weapons and promote the economic development of the United States.

The data shows that the Iraq war did promote the economic growth of America for the annual GDP growth rate in the United States rose from -0.108(1991) to 3.522(1992), and lead to an increase in its share of global domestic product.

According to Mearsheimer's argument, "Great powers aim to maximize the amount of the world's wealth that they control... not only because it enhances the general welfare, but also because it is a reliable way to gain a military advantage over rivals." [32] economic growth can stabilize the United States' hegemony.

4.2.4. Summary of Evidence in the First Gulf War

From the analysis of the three different arguments, the logic of maintaining US hegemony is considered to

be the true cause of the war. First, from the president preferences perspective, although the evidence does show George H.W. Bush's personal capability to decide the war, but the evidence does not indicate his preference to do so. His determination of launching a war did not seem to be raised by himself but more about America's interest. Second, although the military and the media do cooperate to justify the first gulf war to the public, the factors behind it may not be limited to interest group's promotion.

However, the oil problem does seem to be a strong proof for the war's outbreak. America needed to control the oil so as to accumulate wealth and enhance national power, so it can maintain world hegemony, which would keep America safe.

4.3. The Second Gulf War: First as Tragedy Then as Farce

In this subsection, we will follow the same order as the previous subsection. We will discuss personal preference, then interest group hijack, and finally America's hegemony hypotheses. At last, we will discuss and compare the three arguments and show their reliability.

4.3.1. Personal Preference

Although a president's personality and preference may not solely lead to some major decisions in a country, it is undeniable that they can affect the decision-making process. The ideological roots of neoconservatism lie in the crusading liberalism and anti-communism of the Cold War. Neoconservatives tend to believe that Israel and the United States are constantly threatened with destruction from non-democratic government types, which makes them inclined to advocate preventive attacks against potential enemies. As a neoconservative, President George W. Bush hold the ideology that "they (neoconservatives) see the War on Terror in the same light as U.S.-led wars against fascism and totalitarianism and envisioned the U.S. as a benevolent global hegemon that uses its power to promote democracy." [33] Lieberfeld claims that neoconservatives tend to see both Israel and the U.S. as continually threatened with destruction so they tend to advocate preventive attacks on potential enemies.

Beyond ideology, Bush considered that Saddam Hussein and him were having a deadly contest since "Indications that Bush viewed the contest in personal terms include his belief that in 1993 Hussein had tried to assassinate Bush's father in a plot that, had it succeeded, might also have killed his wife, Laura." [34] With the ideology and the responsibility of ensuring the family's safety, Bush personally promoted the outbreak of the 2003 Iraq war.

However, the evidence of personal contest seems untenable for there is no evidence that the president before September 11 sought or expected to go to war with Iraq. And the presidents' ideology does not seem to facilitate the war significantly. "Thousands of individuals accepted, supported, and facilitated the decision to launch a war that cannot accurately be characterized as the pet project of one or a handful of American policymakers." [35] Plus, the risk of launching the war is enormous, Bush must undertake extreme pressure. "...the political risk was significant: a broad political failure would have serious consequences for both the Bush presidency and America's position in the world." [36]

4.3.2. Interest Groups Hijack

For Americans, 9/11 is a disaster that they would never expect and the trauma is incurable. According to a co-sponsored survey that explores public attitudes about terrorism and natural disasters about a decade after the attacks of September 11, 2001 from The National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) found that 43% of Americans strongly agree that even though it's been 10 years since 9/11, the threat of a terrorist attack in America is "still on my mind." [37]

At the time, Bush administration must do something to appease public panic, so in October 2001, Bush launched a war in Afghanistan to topple the Taliban and root out al Qaeda, and then in March 2003 he launched a war in Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein. "The 9/11 attacks made the war on terror the central plank of American grand strategy." [38]

It is not surprising that interest groups can interfere with a country's policy-making, but no one knows how much they would interfere. Richard A Smith expresses the power of interest as "... in the last decade, the research on lobbying and voting in Congress has suggested that lobbyists may be more capable of influencing the decisions and actions of members of Congress than the conventional wisdom would suggest" [39] It shows that the interest group does impact the decision-making process. For example, David L. Altheide and Jennifer N. Grimes argued that the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), a neoconservative think tank, cooperates with some compliant media to develop, sell, enact, and justify a war with Iraq. "We have argued that the PNAC as a think tank and as a source of administration appointees was a significant news source in defining the situation for the American public. The American people were not aware of the story behind this push. The War story was told, but the PNAC story was not told." [40] They think PNAC controlled the information that the public could receive and ballyhooed Saddam Hussein's "wickedness" and destroyed some officials' efforts to change the Iraq War prospect.

All interest groups share a desire to affect government policy to benefit themselves or their causes.

As for energy and defense corporations, they would benefit from the products demanded by the war.

Table 1: Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company 2004 annual report [41]

Lockheed Martin Corporation 2004 Financial Highlights			
(In millions, except per share data)	2004	2004	2002
Net sales	\$35,526	\$31,824	\$26,578
Operating profit from business segments	2,976	2,468	2,020
Consolidated operating profit	2,089	2,019	1,158
Net earnings	1,266	1,053	500

For example, as shown in Table 1, one of America's largest defense industry contractors, Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company showed the data from their 2004 annual report that the sales of their products increased dramatically since 2003 and net earnings of 2003 and 2004 is twice as much as the net earnings of 2002. A small sign can indicate a great trend, the huge profits LMT gained represents enormous profits that the major defense corporations gained. But it seems hard to say that the companies would definitely promote the war to gain profits. After all, it is a risky strategy that companies can choose to avoid. And whether the companies promote war for their own benefits or for the nation's benefits is unclear since government officials are connected to some of these companies.

Also, it is difficult to distinguish between national interest and factions' interests when dealing with oil reserves, defense power and military budgets. The government officials having links with such interest could also be regarded as serving for the national interest that corresponded with the US hegemonic demand.

4.3.3. America's Hegemony

America has been the world's hegemony for long and it has been employing pressure on any potential countries that may change the situation. Why would America not accept the presence of other hegemony? According to Mearsheimer's theories, great powers are rational actors with global hegemony as their final goal. In the anarchic world, great powers compete against each other to preserve their sovereignty in an aggressive way.

Mearsheimer suggests in his work that the objective of a new foreign policy strategy that enabled the United States to expand its power in the Middle East forged by Bush and his advisors after the 9/11 attacks was not just ousting Saddam Hussein's regime from power, but also to use the war as a step towards global hegemony, so it

seems clear that 9/11 attacks offer a great opportunity for the United States to further seek world hegemony.

When asked why the United States went to war in Iraq during an academic visit to China, Mearsheimer replied that it was to reshape the order in the Middle East. For the United States, the solution of the Iraq issue can further intervene in the Middle East, thus exerting influence on the political map of the Middle East. If it succeeds, it could help to resolve the Iranian issue and perhaps even the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All of the efforts are devoted to ensure the safety of the oil supply of America. The Iraq War is a great chance for America to further control the crucial oil region, the Persian Gulf region. As a result, even though there is no clear evidence that shows the presence of WMD in Iraq, the United States launched a preventive war with the huge benefits of winning and the arrogance that they wouldn't lose and for the huge benefits of victory. According to Mearsheimer's definition of Power, "Power, as I define it, represents nothing more than specific assets or material resources that are available to a state." [42], if America gets more oil resources, it can be more powerful, and its hegemony would be more stable.

As Charles A. Duelfer and Stephen Benedict Dyson showed in their paper *Chronic Misperception and International Conflict the U.S.-Iraq Experience*, the United States and Iraq have long held misperceptions to each other and according to misperception theories, that lead to the outbreak of 2003 Iraq War. In their words, "they formed a no falsifiable enemy image of Iraq that became the sole explanatory construct for everything Iraq said and did".[43] For a long time, the U.S. connect the terrorism with Iraq, resident George W. Bush said in an interview that "The security of the civilized world depends on victory in the war on terror and that depends on victory in Iraq. So, the United States of America will not leave until victory is achieved." [44] It is not surprising that the United States launch the war after 9/11

attacks since the terrorism in Iraq is a big threat to the United States.

At the same time, although there is no clear evidence that shows the presence of WMD in Iraq, the possibility of nuclear proliferation would be terrifying enough. “Once a terrorist group acquires nuclear weapons, preventing their detonation on U.S. soil would be extremely difficult.” [45]

4.3.4. The Summary of Evidence in Second Gulf War

For the second Iraq war, the analysis outcome changed a little but the hegemony logic is still predominant. First, Bush personally will clarify his position — the second gulf war should be launched. His neoconservative viewpoint and competition with Saddam Hussein led him to strongly approve of the war.

Yet, he was not prone to have the war with Iraq after 911 and it is too unreasonable that a democratic country has a dictator who decides such a vital war. Second, although multiple evidence shows the profits that the companies get and the interest groups use methods to confuse the public as well as divert their pain from 911, the American political system’s complexity and the presidential discretion on foreign policy questions obstruct the capability that interest groups can change about foreign policy.

For maintaining hegemony, the problems are not limited to oil problems, the enormous potential threat from terrorists as well as nuclear weapons create serious potential danger to the United States. To diminish the threats and further stabilize hegemony (the purpose of which is to make America safe), the 2003 Iraq War was eventually launched.

Variable table

Table 2: summary of variables in the 1st and 2nd Gulf War

Cases	Presidential Preference	Interests Group Hijack	US’s Hegemony	Outbreak of War
pre 1st Gulf War	weak	weak	strong	No
1st Gulf War	weak	moderate	strong	Yes
pre 2nd Gulf War	weak	weak	strong	No
2nd Gulf War	strong	strong	strong	Yes

The table 2 summarized the variables in the first and second Gulf Wars.

4.4. General Discussion

By comparing the circumstances in the first and second Iraq war, it shows that the fundamental determination of the two wars is the maintenance of US’s hegemony. Before the outbreak of the first gulf war, George H.W. Bush did not show strong personal preference about the war, and there is no evidence that shows interest groups swayed the public opinion to launch the war. In the second gulf war, George W. Bush had strong personal preference and was determined to promote the war and the interest groups do propagandize the necessity of launching the war to the public to get profits in the war.

But no matter if the president's preference is strong or weak, the interest group’s interference is effective or not, both if the two wars took place because they have one thing in common — to maintain America’s hegemony which in an offensive realism view is to ensure the safety of the country. Why did this happen? Our explanation is that the most decisive factor behind these wars is to

maintain the hegemon. And the United States followed the offensive realism ideology when they decided whether or not to launch a war.

5. CONCLUSION

The second Iraq war was a major political decision after 9/11 when the US suffered a disastrous homeland attack and was perceived to be challenged. The 2nd Iraq War was certainly a platform for the United States to demonstrate its hegemonic status to the world. Although much literature for leader preference and interest groups hijack made a detailed explanation, the Iraq War is not an irrational decision that leader preference and interest groups hijack, for which plentiful evidence suggested, including its careful deliberation and consultation before war. Therefore, the most substantial incentive behind the Iraq war should be attributed to the third-image story, which was a desire to assert hegemony and demonstrate its resolve to protect allies and interest in front of a worldwide audience. A war would be a perfect resolution to demonstrate such resolve. It is found that there was no evidence that the President before September 11 sought to go to war with Iraq. There is also no strong evidence

and release of archived documents to support the interest group's hijack argument because the President retains discretion on foreign policy. Besides, interest groups such as the administration using the war as a diversionary means, bureaucratic or corporate groups gaining profits from the war would be an unreasonable account. This is due to the essence of the war to involve riskiness, unmoralness and unpredictability, making a war impossible to actually meet the demand of these interest groups. More substantially, even though some government officials or senators linked with oil and defense corporations facilitated the decision of war, the consideration of increasing the defense budget or oil reserve could simultaneously be considered as maximizing national interest. This also made us difficult to distinguish between the difference between 'rational decision' and 'hijack', an arbitrary explanation claiming the decision of war to be 'hijacked' would be lame. Additionally, the US is the rational great power agent whose ultimate goal is global hegemony, and war is a practical step to such global domination and maintenance of unipolarity. Any actions threatening the Persian Gulf will be seen as a direct assault on the United States of America's critical interests. According to our analysis of realism in hegemonic war theory, power maximizing and security maximizing are based on realist views that believe anarchy is what states make of it. Realism highlights the competitive nature of states in a condition of anarchy [46], which means the U.S. believes in a zero-sum game of world order-the foundation of American foreign policy ideology. Based on the theory of defensive realism, when states cannot correctly estimate the power of other states, they are bound to expand in search of security. When the U.S. intended to maintain the post-Cold War world order of unipolarity, whether Iraq truly possessed WMD [47] would not be a huge consideration. The policy implications of this study should be deeply troubling to the I.R. intelligentsia. Our findings indicate that the leader's preference and interest groups hijack were not the collective failures to explain the 2nd Iraq war because both of them do not have the authoritarian authority to exert discretionary decisions to go to war. So when scholars study the causes of the war, they should not consider first and second image stories solely, but focus more on the most important principle of American foreign policy - world domination and unipolarity. Although there is no released archived document to prove which arguments were fought for, it is certain that the United States will always behave toughly to maintain hegemony and initiate wars under favorable conditions. The importance of this study is to prove that U.S. foreign policy is, to some extent, based on offensive realism, and that the purpose of the Iraq War was compelled by the absolute hegemony in the world. Although many documents argue that the Iraq War was a determined war because of oil interests and leadership preferences, the essential reason behind these explanations is also to

achieve the ultimate hegemonic goal of power domination and reputational power.

Acknowledgement

This article was improved thanks to helpful suggestions from Joseph M. Parent-University of Notre Dame's political science professor. We also thank our helpful TA, Gilbert Lai. All errors are our own.

REFERENCES

- [1] Meredith Reid Sarkees (2010), *Inter-state Wars, Version 4.0, Definitions and Variables*, <https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/COW-war/inter-state-wars-codebook>
- [2] George W. Bush (March 22, 2003, Office of the Press Secretary), *President Discusses Beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom*, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030322.html>
- [3] G. John Ikenberry & Daniel H. Nexon, *The Dynamics of Hegemonic Orders*, *Hegemony Studies* 3.0, DOI: 10.1080/09636412.2019.1604981
- [4] Hamilton 1987: 39
- [5] Lieberfeld, Daniel (2005), "Theories of Conflict and the Iraq War." *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no. 2 : 1-21. Powers, Thomas. 2004. "How Bush Got It Wrong." *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 51, No. 14, September 23, pp. 87-93.
- [6] Miller, E., & Yetiv, S. (2001)., *The New World Order in Theory and Practice: The Bush Administration's Worldview in Transition*. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 31(1), 56-68.
- [7] G. John Ikenberry & Daniel H. Nexon (2019), "Hegemony Studies 3.0: The Dynamics of Hegemonic Orders", *Security Studies*, Volume 28, 2019 - Issue 3, DOI: 10.1080/09636412.2019.1604981
- [8] Lieberfeld, Daniel (2005), "Theories of Conflict and the Iraq War." *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no. 2 : 1-21.
- [9] Walt, Stephen M. (1998), "International Relations: One World, Many Theories". *Foreign Policy*, no. 110: 29. doi:10.2307/1149275
- [10] George W. Bush (2001), *Bush doctrine*, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2002/10/07/bush-doctrine-pub-1088>
- [11] Said, Edward (1979), *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York

- Schweizer, Peter & Rochelle Schweizer (2004), *The Bushes: Portrait of a Dynasty*, Doubleday, New York
- [12] Bumiller, Elisabeth (2004), "The President and the Gun: To the Avenger Go the Spoils." *New York Times*, June 21, p. A 16.
- [13] James Mann (2004), *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, Penguin, New York, A popular account of key figures in the administration is James Mann
- [14] Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce (2002), "Domestic Politics and International Relations." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 1: pp. 1-9.
- [15] Michael Ratner, Jennie Green, & Barbara Olshansky (2003), *Against War in Iraq: An Anti-War Primer*, Seven Stories Press, New York
- [16] James Moore & Wayne Slater (2003), *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential*, Wiley, Hoboken
- [17] Clarke, Richard (2004), *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*, Simon & Schuster, New York
- [18] MacDonald, Paul K. & Joseph M. Parent (2018), "Conclusion: Retrenchment as Reloading." In *Twilight of the Titans: Great Power Decline and Retrenchment*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca
- [19] Bob Woodward (2004), *Plan of Attack*, Simon and Schuster, New York
- [20] Kennedy, Paul (1989), "Map & Total War and the Balance of Forces, 1914-1918." In *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. Vintage, New York
- Lieberfeld, Daniel (2005), "Theories of Conflict and the Iraq War." *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no. 2 : 1-21.
- [21] Christensen, Thomas J. (1996), *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958*. Princeton University Press, Princeton
- R.D. Hooker, Jr. (2014), *The Grand Strategy of the United States*, National Defense University Press, Washington, D.C.
- [22] Klare, Michael (2004), *Blood and Oil: The Dangerous Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum*. Metropolitan Books, New York
- [23] United States Department of Defense (2003)
- [24] David Mitchell & Tansa George Massoud (2009), *Anatomy of Failure: Bush's Decision-Making Process and the Iraq War*, *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5, 265–286
- [25] Lieberfeld, Daniel (2005), "Theories of Conflict and the Iraq War." *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no. 2 : 1-21.
- [26] Yetiv, Steve A. (2011), *Explaining Foreign Policy: US Decision-Making in the Gulf Wars*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore
- [27] Wayne, Stephen J. (1993). *President Bush Goes to War: A Psychological Interpretation from a Distance*. In *The Political Psychology of the Gulf War: Leaders, Publics, and the Process of Conflict*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh
- [28] Woodward, B. (2000), *Shadow: five presidents and the legacy of Watergate*, Touchstone, New York
- [29] PURVIS, STEWART(1991), *The Media and the Gulf War*, *RSA Journal* 139, no. 5423 : 735-44.
- [30] YCHARTS.com, *US GDP as % of World GDP* (measure: percent), https://ycharts.com/indicators/us_gdp_as_a_percentage_of_world_gdp
- [31] The World Bank, *GDP growth (annual %) - United States*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2020&locations=US&start=1961&view=chart>
- [32] Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001), *Strategies for Survival*, In: Jack L. S. (Eds.), *The tragedy of Great Power politics*, W.W.Norton & Company, New York, pp.137
- [33] Lieberfeld, D, "Theories of Conflict and the Iraq War." *International Journal of Peace Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2005, pp. 1–21.
- [34] Lieberfeld, D, "Theories of Conflict and the Iraq War." *International Journal of Peace Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2005, pp. 1–21.
- [35] Flibbert, A. (2006), "The Road to Baghdad: Ideas and Intellectuals in Explanations of the Iraq War", *Security Studies*, 15(2):310-352
- [36] Flibbert, A. (2006), "The Road to Baghdad: Ideas and Intellectuals in Explanations of the Iraq War", *Security Studies*, 15(2):310-352
- [37] Cote & D'Ambrosio and Wallace & Washburn (2011), "The 911 Opinion Survey", <https://cupdf.com/document/is-copyrighted-by-survey-authors-ote-dambrosio-and-the-911-opinion-survey.html>

- [38]Boyle, M. J. (2008), "The War on Terror in American Grand Strategy." *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-) 84, no. 2: 191-209.
- [39]Smith, R. A (1995), "Interest Group Influence in the U. S. Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 1 : 89-139.
- [40]Altheide, D. L., and Jennifer N. G. (2005), "War Programming: The Propaganda Project and the Iraq War." *The Sociological Quarterly* 46, no. 4: 617-43.
- [41]Lockheed Martin (2004), Lockheed Martin Annual Report 2004, <https://www.lockheedmartin.com/content/dam/lockheed-martin/eo/documents/annual-reports/2004-annual-report.pdf>
- [42]Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001), Anarchy and the Struggle for Power, In: Jack L. S. (Eds.), *The tragedy of Great Power politics*, W.W.Norton & Company, New York, pp.64
- [43]Duelfer, C. A. & Dyson, S. B.(2011), "Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience." *International Security*; 36 (1): 73–100.
- [44]NPR News (2006), "The U.S. War on Terrorism, and in Iraq", <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5744828>
- [45]Panofsky, Wolfgang K. H. (2003), "Nuclear Proliferation Risks, New and Old." *Issues in Science and Technology* 19, no. 4
- [46]Walt, S. M. (1998), "International Relations: One World, Many Theories". *Foreign Policy*, no. 110: 29. doi:10.2307/1149275
- [47]Betts, R. K. (2003), "Suicide From Fear Of Death?". *Foreign Affairs* 82 (1): 34. doi:10.2307/20033426