



THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT FOR THE NEW AMERICAN CENTURY IN SHAPING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD IRAQ: A FOCUS ON THE 2003 WAR

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Abstract:

This article critically examines the influence of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), a neoconservative think-tank, on the United States'(U.S.) foreign policy toward Iraq, focusing on the 2003 war. It explores the PNAC's role in shaping policy decisions, assessing how the US administration adopted its ideas and recommendations. Using a combination of document analysis and case studies, the study investigates the specific ways PNAC influenced policy pre- and post-war, including the involvement of critical actors in the decision-making process. The article aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the PNAC's impact on one of modern US foreign policy history's most significant and controversial events. By analyzing the extent of PNAC's influence and the factors that led to the war, it seeks to offer insights into the complexities of US foreign policy-making and the 2003 Iraq war's place in it.

Keywords: foreign policy- Iraq- PNAC- US.

Introduction:

Post-World War II, American foreign policy has mainly focused on containing the Soviet Union's influence and adapting to its status as the unrivaled superpower. The U.S. is now confronted with the strategic imperative of discerning its global responsibilities and managing its hegemonic power, pending the emergence of a competitor vying for the status of the world's most dominant nation. Since their ascendancy in the 1970s, Neo-Conservatives have exhibited a keen interest in steering American foreign policy. From the New Right to the Neo-Conservatives, American conservative factions have extensively employed think tanks for the articulation of policy. Generally, a think tank is funded by various organizations or foundations, primarily established to formulate policy directives on specific issues. Notably, the most influential Neoconservative think tanks include the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), established in 1943; the Heritage Foundation, initiated in 1973; and a more recent establishment, the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), founded in 1997. This article focuses on the impact of PNAC in shaping U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq.

In the weeks after the 9/11 attacks, amidst ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, the U.S. commenced formal planning for the Iraq War. As early as 1998, key figures in the George W.

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Bush administration, affiliated with the neoconservative PNAC, sought to rally support for an offensive against Iraq. Post-Soviet Union dissolution, PNAC's objectives encompassed missile defense enhancement, increased military spending, overthrowing Saddam Hussein, and perpetuating U.S. global supremacy. When over 30 PNAC affiliates including Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton, and Lewis Libby, assumed governmental roles, these objectives, particularly the ouster of Saddam Hussein, were adopted as priorities by the George W. Bush administration.

Nonetheless, the extent of PNAC's influence on shaping American foreign policy towards Iraq, specifically in orchestrating the 2003 War, remains a contentious issue. This paper seeks to address this debate through research to answer the central question: How has PNAC, since its establishment in 1997, affected the decision-making processes in American foreign policy that led to the 2003 Iraq War?

This research question delves into the specific strategies and mechanisms through which PNAC influenced U.S. foreign policy towards Iraq, particularly regarding the decision to invade and dismantle Saddam Hussein's regime. It examines the involvement of key PNAC-affiliated figures in the policy formulation process, including policymakers, experts, and media entities. Furthermore, it scrutinizes the policy proposals and advocacy approaches employed by PNAC that swayed the George W. Bush administration's decision to initiate the Iraq invasion.

This qualitative research employs a multifaceted methodology comprising document analysis and case study. Document analysis entails scrutinizing and interpreting primary and secondary sources pertinent to PNAC, such as its foundational texts, public declarations, policy briefs, congressional testimonies, and media representations. Such analyses can elucidate the organization's objectives, ethos, policy suggestions, and advocacy tactics, thereby serving as a metric for assessing its sway over U.S. foreign policy. Meanwhile, the case study method thoroughly examines specific instances illustrative of PNAC's influence on U.S. foreign policy towards Iraq, including the development of the preemptive doctrine and the endorsement of military intervention. Case studies offer comprehensive empirical data on PNAC's policy impact and assist in identifying the operative causal dynamics.

THE FIRST TOPIC: PNAC: ITS GOALS AND CHIEF MEMBERS

PNAC signifies a strategic American advocacy think tank, established in the spring of 1997 by an assemblage of neoconservative ideologues committed to advancing global leadership. The organization maintained a core staff of four full-time employees, supplemented by a contingent of interns. This team was instrumental in regularly producing and disseminating succinct policy papers and issue briefs, ranging from two to four pages in length, every six weeks to a diverse and influential audience of approximately 2,000 journalists, academics, congressional representatives, editorial writers, and think tanks. Gary Schmitt, the distinguished president of PNAC and a scholar with a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, elucidated the organization's strategy, asserting that this methodology afforded PNAC the capacity to articulate a well-reasoned and concise argument, thereby projecting an influence disproportionate to its size by offering a vision that was both clear and articulate ⁽¹⁾. The genesis of PNAC was marked by the involvement of a cadre of prominent figures, including Jeb Bush, Dan Quayle, Steve Forbes, Elliot Abrams, Richard Armitage, Douglas Feith, Lewis Libby, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, to name a few. These individuals have been deeply embedded in the fabric of American governance, maintaining significant roles since the Nixon and Ford administrations. The think tank's most eminent members have maintained a continuous and



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influential presence in nearly every subsequent presidential administration. Notably, many members of PNAC were fundamental to the Reagan and Bush administrations' inner workings, culminating in a comprehensive assumption of control over American foreign policy during the presidency of George W. Bush ⁽²⁾.

The foundational motivation for the inception of PNAC was predicated on the conviction held by numerous neo-conservative intellectuals, including the organization's progenitor, William Kristol, that there was a notable absence of a cohesive and strategic foreign policy framework among American conservatives, particularly pertinent in the context of the evolving global paradigm. Consequently, the goal of PNAC was to formulate and articulate such a strategy, a venture that culminated in the creation of seminal texts, most notably the *"Rebuilding America's Defenses"* report. The 1997 Statement of Principles by PNAC laments the perceived lack of direction in the US foreign and defense policies. It critiques the erratic policies promulgated during the Clinton Administration and addresses the conservative resistance to isolationist inclinations within their ranks. Despite these critiques, the statement observes, conservatives have not successfully promulgated a vigorous and strategic vision delineating America's role on the global stage. There has been a conspicuous absence of well-defined guiding principles for American foreign policy, a tendency to allow tactical divergences to eclipse the potential consensus on strategic objectives, and a failure to advocate for a defense budget that ensures American security and furthers its interests in the emerging century. Within this context, PNAC sets forth its mission: to rectify this lack of strategic vision and marshal support for a reinvigorated American global leadership ⁽³⁾.

PNAC advocated for a formidable military infrastructure as a cornerstone to sustain U.S. global hegemony, vigorously safeguard the *Pax Americana*, and disseminate American ideals internationally. Its comprehensive 2000 document, *"Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces, and Resources for a New Century"* ⁽⁴⁾, expounds on this expansive vision. Heilbrunn characterizes PNAC as ostensibly an advocacy group established to further the agenda of a "democratic crusade," positing that it served as a foundational framework for the foreign policy initiatives of the George W. Bush administration. PNAC's strategy incorporated preemptive measures ("shaping crises before they emerge") and a commitment to boldly and purposefully promoting American principles abroad. The organization conceded, albeit subtly, that the U.S. ought to maintain a "prudent" approach, acknowledging the possible complexities and challenges inherent in actualizing such an ambitious foreign policy agenda ⁽⁵⁾.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, PNAC members such as Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld carried out the foreign strategy of arming your enemy's enemy during the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Numerous members of the PNAC were implicated in the Iraq-gate scandal, the Iran Contra affair, the Arms for Hostages scandal, and the arming of the Afghan Mujahedeen. Dick Cheney, a PNAC member, oversaw the first Persian Gulf War. In essence, the same individuals who directed America's foreign policy during the arming of Iraq, Iran, and the Afghan Mujahedeen are now responsible for waging war against the very adversaries they created! Their War on Terror is fought against opponents that they chose to arm and train during the Cold War to combat the rise of communism. These individuals contributed directly to US foes in the War on Terror and are now all essential members of the George W. Bush government ⁽⁶⁾.

More than 32 PNAC members are employed by the Bush administration and have close links to defense contractors and other war-profiteering organizations, which is one of the critical reasons for their uncompromising push for endless world war. Their war-profiteering



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corporations have reaped billions upon billions of US government funds during both the War on Terror and the reconstruction of the war-ravaged nations the US currently occupies. The War on Terror has only just begun. Immediately following 9/11 events, when nearly all US stocks were declining, the value of defense contractors' and war-related industries' stocks increased. The following are the most notable members of both the PNAC and the George W. Bush administration:

William Kristol, serving as the chairman and a founding member of PNAC, is notably the progeny of Irving Kristol, often hailed as the “godfather” of neo-conservatism. The ideological orientation of William Kristol is presumably influenced by his lineage, being the offspring of a seminal figure within the neoconservative movement. Before his political endeavors, he imparted his political knowledge as a faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He is editor-in-chief at the neoconservative periodical, *The Weekly Standard*. Moreover, he has held significant roles, such as the chief of staff for Vice President Dan Quayle and Education Secretary William Bennett. His contributions to the AEI, alongside his father, further underscore his active engagement in neoconservative circles. Kristol's political allegiance transitioned to the Republican Party in the late 1970s after aligning with the Democrats. Post the 1992 electoral defeat of George Bush, senior to Bill Clinton, Kristol has dedicated his efforts to *The Weekly Standard* and has provided his expertise as an analyst on various television networks ⁽⁷⁾.

Robert Kagan, another principal contributor to PNAC, shares an academic history with William Kristol at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. Kagan's prolific contributions to the think tank include numerous co-authored essays with Kristol, many of which have been published in *The Weekly Standard* or featured on the PNAC website. His regular contributions to *The Washington Post* on international affairs further highlight his analytical prowess ⁽⁸⁾. Kagan's experience extends to his role as a speechwriter for Secretary of State George P. Shultz under President Reagan. His tenure as a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, an institution traditionally more focused on research than the ideologically driven objectives of contemporary think tanks like PNAC, adds a layer of complexity to his profile. Though Kristol and Kagan have jointly endorsed the majority of PNAC reports and articles, this does not singularly attribute authorship to them; instead, it reflects the collective intellectual output of the members of PNAC ⁽⁹⁾.

Vice President Richard Cheney was an eminent affiliate of the PNAC. His spouse, Lynn Cheney, served on the board of directors for Lockheed Martin, the outstanding defense contractor and the foremost weaponry manufacturer globally. Subsequent to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Lockheed Martin distinguished itself as one of the select corporations to experience a surge in share value, coinciding with the onset of military engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq. Notably, at least four eminent PNAC figures maintained connections with Lockheed Martin. These consist of Thomas Donnelly, who assumed the role of Director of Strategic Communication and Initiatives in 2002; Bruce P. Jackson, who held various positions such as Vice President for Strategy and Planning (1999-2002), Director of Global Development (1997-1999), and Director of Defense Planning and Analysis (1995-1997); Vin Weber, a registered lobbyist; and Steven Hadley, a partner at Shea and Gardner, the legal entity representing Lockheed Martin. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in the Bush administration is considered as the PNAC's muscle. He led the neoconservatives' efforts to undermine the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and seize control of all intelligence operations within the federal government.



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Rumsfeld's efforts produced false intelligence leading to the Iraq War and his power stopped the CIA or anybody else from interfering ⁽¹¹⁾.

Vice-Secretary of Defense / World Bank President: Paul Wolfowitz served under Presidents Reagan, and Bush Sr. Paul Wolfowitz is the “visionary” behind US preemptive warfare and new international warfare strategies, which represent a significant element of the PNAC's foreign policy recommendations. Wolfowitz is the designer of policy for the PNAC and the Bush administration, and he is the driving force behind the Bush administration's embrace of PNAC policies. Wolfowitz conducted the intelligence assault against former Secretary of State Colin Powell before the invasion of Iraq (Powell was against an invasion of Iraq). Wolfowitz was once an advisor with Northrop Grumman (a global aerospace, defense and security company). At least seven senior Bush administration officials, including four PNAC members, have close ties to Northrop Grumman. Before joining the Bush administration, Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis Libby, Dov Zakheim, and Douglas Feith held War on Terror reconstruction contracts with Northrop Grumman valued at over \$48 million. Wolfowitz was a Northrop Grumman consultant, Libby and Zakheim were advisors, and Feith was a lawyer ⁽¹²⁾.

Lewis Libby, who previously held the job of Vice President Chief of Staff, worked during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. Libby has been widely recognized as the White House employee responsible for disclosing the name of CIA operative Valerie Plame. This action was used as a form of retaliation against Plame's husband, Ambassador Joe Wilson, for his refusal of the Bush administration's claim regarding “uranium from Africa.” Due to his indictment for perjury in the Valerie Plame scandal, he was compelled to resign. Libby is a former consultant with Northrop Grumman, as mentioned earlier ⁽¹³⁾.

Richard Armitage, who served as the Deputy Secretary of State under both Presidents Reagan and George W Bush, was intimately involved with the Iran Contra controversy. Halliburton, Boeing, Mantech, and Raytheon are four of the top 100 defense contractors in the US with which Armitage has extensive links. Armitage quit alongside his State Department superior, Colin Powell, due to disagreements with the rest of the government ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Undersecretary of State for Arms Control/Ambassador of the US to the United Nations (UN) John Bolton, like the majority of other George W Bush administration personnel, held various positions in numerous departments under both Presidents Reagan and Bush. Under the George W Bush administration, John Bolton worked as the Undersecretary of State for Arms Control. He was involved in controversy when Bush appointed him as the new U.S. Ambassador to the UN, an organization to which he was openly opposed ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Elliot Abrams, a prominent member of the National Security Council, provided his expertise and aid during Ronald Reagan's presidency. During his time in office, he experienced a tumultuous era in which he was alleged of perjury and faced potential legal action due to the Senate's investigation into the Iran-Contra Affair. It is alarming that someone with direct ties to the contras, a group involved in several deaths, was appointed to high-ranking posts such as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Democracy, Human Rights, and International Operations. Later, in 2002, Abrams was promoted to Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Near East and North African Affairs. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Richard Perle, a member of the Defense Policy Board, also worked during President Reagan's administration. His tenure extended into the presidency of George W. Bush, where he firstly led the Defense Policy Board before resigning in 2003 and later acting as a advisor to the Secretary of Defense. Perle's relations with different entities, including Hollinger International,



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Trireme Partners, Global Crossings, and Morgan Crucible—each having significant roles during the 2003 Iraq war—garner particular attention ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Douglas Feith, another prominent figure, held the job of Undersecretary of Defense for Policy and was a member of the National Security Council for two years under President Reagan. Under President George W. Bush, Feith contributed to the Defense Policy Board and the Office of Special Plans (OSP), notably criticized for the flawed intelligence that precipitated the Iraq War. Notably, Feith's prior role as an attorney for Northrop Grumman is also of relevance ⁽¹⁸⁾.

With a history of serving under Presidents Reagan and Bush, **Zalmay Khalilzad** held various positions in the George W. Bush administration. As an Afghan American, Khalilzad actively assisted the Afghan Mujahedeen in the 1980s and later the Taliban in the 1990s. He particularly attempted to mitigate the perceived human rights violations of the U.S.-backed regime by frequently lauding the Taliban in the U.S. His tenure as a risk analyst for Unocal during its Taliban negotiations for an Afghan pipeline is noteworthy. Subsequent roles included Ambassador to Afghanistan from November 2003 until June 2005 and Special Presidential Envoy to Afghanistan. On April 5, 2005, President Bush nominated Khalilzad as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the US to Iraq, a position he assumed upon delivering his credentials to President Talabani on June 21, 2005, in Baghdad ⁽¹⁹⁾.

Other PNAC /George W. Bush administration members comprise at least ten members of the Defense Policy Board, the director of the OSP (formed to “cherry-pick” intelligence to support the invasion of Iraq, and dozens of individuals from the Departments of Defense and State who cooperated to the formulation of the ideologies and foreign policy initiatives embraced by the PNAC in 1998 ⁽²⁰⁾.

THE SECOND TOPIC: IRAQ AGENDA

In 1992, influential officials inside the George W.H. Bush administration, notably Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz, advocated for a more decisive American action in Iraq, including the removal of Saddam Hussein. This stance became a central tenet of PNAC, consistently emphasizing a strategic reorientation of U.S. policy towards Iraq. In January 1998, PNAC addressed an open letter to President Clinton, advocating for a committed U.S. stance on regime change in Iraq and urging Clinton to publicly support the ouster of Saddam Hussein ⁽²¹⁾. The letter pleaded the president to announce a new strategy in his address that would safeguard U.S. interests and those of its allies, mainly through the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime. PNAC reiterated its objective, urging Clinton to endorse this goal and to direct his administration towards executing a strategy encompassing diplomatic, political, and military efforts to facilitate the regime's removal ⁽²²⁾.

The letter prompted an invitation from the White House to discuss regime change. Nonetheless, the dialogue between President Clinton, his National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, and figures like Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Richard Perle did not align with PNAC's proposed agenda. The meeting exacerbated doubts regarding the administration's standpoint. Richard Perle later reflected on the meeting, noting Rumsfeld's observation of Berger's apparent concern with the political optics of U.S.-led regime change efforts rather than the substantive security implications and threats that the U.S. was confronting ⁽²³⁾.

The audacious policy that called for Saddam's removal was devised by Paul Wolfowitz, who became Rumsfeld's deputy in the Defense Department during the George W. Bush administration ⁽²⁴⁾. By the mid-1990s, Wolfowitz had reached the same conclusion as the



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majority of neoconservatives, namely that the U.S. had made a mistake by failing to remove Saddam when the opportunity presented itself in 1991. Wolfowitz stated during the 1996 Bob Dole presidential campaign that the Clinton administration had “virtually abandoned” its tries to defend the Iraqi people from a “blood-thirsty dictator” ⁽²⁵⁾, and by the end of 1997, he was writing in *The Weekly Standard* that the U.S. should use military power to “overthrow him” ⁽²⁶⁾. Wolfowitz wrote a multitude of articles during the remainder of the Clinton administration, arguing for the accusation of Saddam Hussein as a war criminal and the establishment of an Iraqi government in exile. Clinton's weak leadership and inconsistent application of U.S. commitment were blamed for the collapse of the coalition created by George H.W. Bush. Wolfowitz argued that the alliance would only regain its vitality if the U.S. exhibited a determined and hawkish stance towards Iraq, suggesting before Congress that the U.S. may have to act unilaterally to initiate collective action against Iraq and prevent France and Russia from following their “commercial noses”⁽²⁷⁾.

Further open letters from PNAC to Congress underlined the organization's support for regime change in Iraq as the only way to rescue the region ⁽²⁸⁾, and control Iraq and Iraqi oil. The goal of Israeli security and sovereignty was also instrumental in the targeting of Iraq for regime change as seen in many of the neo-conservative group's letters and reports ⁽²⁹⁾. The group's letter to Clinton marked one of the group's first calls to remove Hussein from power. The second call for action against Iraq came in a May 1998 letter to Newt Gingrich and Trent Lott. The letter reiterated the organization's beliefs that military action against Iraq needed to be initiated and that U.S. interests in the region were in risk.

As outlined by Assoc ⁽³⁰⁾, PNAC articulated a comprehensive strategy in its communication to Gingrich and Lott, detailing four strategic initiatives aimed at facilitating the overthrowing of Saddam Hussein from power:

- Contest Saddam Hussein's legitimacy as the sovereign of Iraq, including advocating for his indictment on charges of war crimes;
- Support the establishment of an interim, representative, and autonomous government in Iraqi territories outside Saddam's dominion, utilizing a combination of economic, political, and military capitals;
- Employ the power of U.S. and allied forces to provide a protective umbrella for regions in northern and southern Iraq that have been liberated from Saddam's rule; and
- Sustain a robust U.S. military presence within the region, remaining poised to leverage this force to safeguard critical U.S. interests in the Gulf and, if required, to assist in the ousting of Saddam Hussein from power.

The U.S. employed the four measures above in its war against Iraq in early 2003. In his statement to the House National Security Committee in September of 1998, Paul Wolfowitz made the third significant appeal for action against Iraq. The majority of Wolfowitz's talk focused on the difficulties of current foreign policy toward Iraq and the means of achieving the PNAC's objective of removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. It demanded the same action as the letters to Clinton, Gingrich, and Lott, except that Wolfowitz spent substantial time applauding weapons inspector Scott Ritter for speaking out against the Clinton administration. Now, the George W. Bush administration despises Ritter for his opposition to the US-led invasion of Iraq ⁽³¹⁾.

Despite President Clinton's lobbying efforts yielding no substantial results, the advocacy campaign orchestrated by PNAC effectively influenced congressional Republicans. In October



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1998, President Clinton ratified HR 4655, commonly called the "Iraq Liberation Act of 1998." As stipulated in HR 4655, the policy of the U.S. would henceforth be to endeavor to depose the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and supplant it with a democratic governance structure. The legislation sanctioned aid to various Iraqi opposition factions, and in the years that followed, approximately \$8 million annually was allocated to the Iraqi National Congress (INC), a coalition led by Iraqi expatriate Ahmed Chalabi. The strategic objective behind this financial backing was to empower Iraqi dissenting groups to either destabilize or directly overthrow Saddam Hussein's government⁽³²⁾.

In its initial year, the PNAC actively promoted military intervention against Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi "dictator," with repeated demands for his ousting throughout 1998. The ascent of George W. Bush to the presidency enabled the PNAC to accelerate its strategy to depose Hussein. This shift saw numerous PNAC affiliates taking positions within the Pentagon, the office of the Vice President, and the State Department. However, the full realization of the PNAC's objectives was delayed until the events post-9/11 solidified their agenda⁽³³⁾.

THE THIRD TOPIC: PNAC AND THE BIRTH OF BUSH DOCTRINE

In September 2000, precisely one year before the 9/11 attacks, PNAC released a document entitled "*Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces, and Resources for a New Century*." This report⁽³⁴⁾ outlined a quartet of principal missions deemed essential for U.S. military forces to address emerging global challenges effectively. These missions are outlined as follows:

- Ensure the defense of the American homeland.
- Engage and achieve a decisive victory in multiple concurrent major theater wars.
- Undertake "constabulary" duties, which entail shaping the security landscape in key strategic regions.
- Undertake a comprehensive transformation of U.S. military capabilities to leverage the advancements of the "revolution in military affairs."

To control "space and cyberspace," to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, to institute an outrageously expensive missile defense system, and to promote the idea that the U.S. of America should stand as the world's sole decisive and preeminent power in a new "*Global Pax-Americana*" were some of the goals of the PNAC. Other goals included removing Saddam Hussein (an important "regime change"), increasing the military budget and spending, and nowadays, these objectives can be considered as the underpinnings of US foreign policy as well as the foundation for the Bush doctrine. Moreover, the War on Terror was the basis of these objectives⁽³⁵⁾.

The document articulated that the U.S. currently has no global competitor. The overarching strategy of the U.S. should endeavor to maintain and expand this favorable stance for as long as feasible. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that several potentially formidable states are discontent with the prevailing order and are inclined to alter it, should the opportunity arise, in ways that may threaten the comparatively tranquil, affluent, and liberal state of the global environment⁽³⁶⁾.

The statement continues the contentious 1992 Defense Planning Guidance Report, with both documents authored by the same individuals. "*Rebuilding America's Defenses*" explicitly states that the PNAC project was conceived as an extension of the defense strategy from Cheney's tenure in the first Bush Administration. It affirms the 1992 report's blueprint for sustaining U.S.



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dominance, preventing the emergence of any significant power competitors, and molding the global security structure to reflect American principles and interests. Furthermore, it endorses the earlier report's core principles as still valid and relevant⁽³⁷⁾.

The major "theatre wars" in Afghanistan and Iraq, the significance of the removal of Saddam Hussein and control of Iraq, and America's new preemptive strikes and unilateral military action strategy are all attributable to the recommendations and findings of the PNAC's *"Rebuilding America's Defenses"* report. The document itself can be regarded a template for the U.S.' anti-terror foreign policy and War on Terror. Even Rumsfeld's Missile Defense and the massive rise in military funding can be traced back to the PNAC and *"Rebuilding America's Defenses"*⁽³⁸⁾.

It is difficult to deny, after reading the report of *"Rebuilding America's Defenses"*, that the George W. Bush administration's objective from the beginning was the removal of Saddam Hussein and the takeover of Iraq's oil well before 9/11. This is not to imply that it was Bush's personal objective, but it was the desire of the vast majority of his most trusted advisors, who were mostly PNAC members, a goal with which Bush clearly agreed adequately to lead the U.S. to war in Iraq⁽³⁹⁾.

The PNAC and its neo-conservative affiliates perceived Iraq as a strategic target, not solely due to its perceived security threat to the U.S. but also as a potential epicenter for enacting *Friedmanite* economic reforms in the Middle East. Recognizing that it was impracticable to undertake comprehensive regional transformation instantaneously, the strategists posited that a single nation could catalyze broader change. The envisioned approach entailed subjecting Iraq, already debilitated by extensive sanctions, to intense military bombardment, followed by the allocation of American taxpayers' funds to private corporations tasked with its reconstruction. However, the objective was not to restore its pre-war state but to remodel it into an exemplar of free-market principles. The anticipated outcome was that Iraq's transformation into a vast free-trade zone would precipitate a cascade of democratic and neoliberal reforms across the Middle East⁽⁴⁰⁾. Over time, however, it has become evident that the neoconservative predictions were largely misguided. While a select cohort of corporations and key PNAC Republican affiliates reaped substantial financial gains from the Iraq War, the broader populace of the beleaguered nation has seen little benefit.

The *"Rebuilding America's Defenses"* report supports an increase in military budget and, not surprisingly, a missile defense system for the U.S. in order to achieve the aforementioned objectives. The report suggested using the budget excess to military expansion rather than domestic measures that would benefit the American people (as it was originally intended for)⁽⁴¹⁾.

THE FOURTH TOPIC: THE PNAC AND 9/11

Following the 9/11 events, PNAC recommended that President Bush aggressively dismantles the Al-Qaeda network by launching preemptive strikes against "rogue states." The organization's significant influence was primarily due to its members' close connections with the U.S. administration at that time. Established by Donald Rumsfeld (Bush's Secretary of Defense), Richard Cheney (Vice President during the Bush era), and Paul Wolfowitz (Assistant Secretary of Defense), PNAC's founders were deeply embedded in Bush's inner circle. This proximity ensured that the policy proposals of PNAC were directly presented to and strongly advocated for within the Bush administration⁽⁴²⁾.

On September 20, 2001, PNAC sent an open letter to President Bush, praising his initial commitment to the war on terrorism and suggesting that the campaign should not only target Osama bin Laden but also Saddam Hussein and other suspected perpetrators. This letter was an



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early push for considering a change of regime in Iraq as a crucial part of the global fight against terrorism. The PNAC letter speculated that the Iraqi government might have supported the recent attacks on the U.S. However, it argued that a thorough approach to eradicating terrorism and its sponsors should include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power, regardless of whether direct evidence of Iraq's involvement in the attacks exists. Failing to undertake this action would be seen as an early and potentially significant surrender in the worldwide battle against international terrorism⁽⁴³⁾.

The incidents of 9/11 were perceived as a critical juncture that should not be overlooked, providing the U.S. with a pretext to pursue its objectives in Iraq. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon furnished the requisite foundation for the adoption and execution of strategies previously outlined in neoconservative frameworks. Before these events, PNAC, under the leadership of the prominent conservative William Kristol and with fervent proponents including Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Richard Perle, John Bolton, and Paul Wolfowitz, contended that the U.S. would require a "catastrophic and catalyzing event, akin to a new Pearl Harbor," to justify assertive global leadership. Fortuitously for these advocates, 9/11 emerged as the event analogous to the Pearl Harbor they had deemed necessary⁽⁴⁴⁾. Furthermore, the September 20, 2001, letter emphasized that a determined and victorious war on terrorism would necessitate a substantial augmentation in defense expenditures. It highlighted that combatting terrorism might involve confrontation with heavily armed adversaries and underscored the necessity of maintaining the capability to defend U.S. interests globally. The letter strongly recommended that the government not hesitate to request the requisite funds for defense to ensure victory in this war⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The financial relationships between PNAC, Enron, and Halliburton, as well as the support provided by these firms to the Bush administration, assisted in approving the Bush administration's foreign policy agenda, which integrated the preferences of these corporations. In addition, the bipartisan support it garnered facilitated the implementation/adoption of the PNAC's plan. Prominent Democrats, including John Kerry and Joseph Lieberman, endorsed PNAC's objectives on interventions and missions to change the regime in Afghanistan and Iraq. From the perspective of PNAC, if the U.S. intends to lay the groundwork for its role in the twenty-first century, it is essential that American foreign policy not only espouse moral principles but also substantiate them with tangible strength. The organization posits that integrating 'muscle behind our morality' is crucial to establishing the foundations for what it envisions as the next American century⁽⁴⁶⁾.

THE FIFTH TOPIC: PNAC: THE PUSH FOR IRAQ WAR AND THE PLAN FOR POST SADDAM IRAQ

After the attacks, increasing evidence supports the notion that the Bush administration lied and utilized the 9/11 attacks to justify a war on Iraq. In addition to the reality that nearly all of George W. Bush's closest advisors advocated for a war in Iraq in 1998 and that the Bush administration is implementing most of the PNAC's proposals. Moreover, multiple new intelligence agencies were created to "evaluate the Iraqi threat," but almost all of them were dismantled after the American invasion of Iraq. These agencies were responsible for nearly all of the 'intelligence' leading up to the Iraq War, most notably the false material Bush referenced in his State of the Union address in 2003⁽⁴⁷⁾.

Notably, members of the Project primarily undertook the inception and management of these emergent intelligence entities for the PNAC within the Bush administration. In the immediate



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aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group was formed with the mandate to reassess the raw intelligence data from the CIA, diligently searching for overlooked indications of Iraqi support for terrorism, which it alleged the Agency had previously failed to recognize due to bias. Concurrently, the Iraq desk at the Pentagon's Near East and South Asian Affairs office, which later evolved into the OSP, began to assertively promote the theory of an Iraq-Al Qaeda link, a hypothesis that remains unsubstantiated. The OSP assembled a series of intelligence reports to justify the proposed military intervention in Iraq. Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reports that the Pentagon's eight or nine PNAC affiliates, particularly within this office, colloquially dubbed themselves "*the Cabal*." Abram Shulsky, a contributor to the PNAC study, assumed the role of OSP director. Shulsky reported to Undersecretary of Defense William Luti, who had previously collaborated with Scooter Libby on Vice President Cheney's staff during the summer of 2001 and was a fervent proponent of Saddam Hussein's overthrow⁽⁴⁸⁾.

The OSP also collaborated with the Defense Policy Board (DPB), which was led by PNAC member Richard Perle and chaired by James Woolsey, a former director of the CIA, and Newt Gingrich, a former speaker of the House of Representatives. The DPB was significantly responsible for bringing the fraudulent testimony of Chalabi's Iraqi defectors to the US media. Ahmad Chalabi, the leader of the INC, supplied both the OSP and DPB with numerous defectors who attested to Hussein's possession of mobile weapons labs and weapons of mass destruction. Chalabi and the defectors both benefited greatly from their testimonies. They were always motivated by their own objectives. It is now evident that all of Chalabi's and his defectors' testimony was falsified and false. James Risen stated that the PNAC and neoconservatives had one plan for post-war Iraq, which was to instantly hand over full power to Ahmed Chalabi as Iraq's new president and then depart the country. Since President Bush rejected that approach, there was no alternative⁽⁴⁹⁾.

In an interview with the London Daily Telegraph, Chalabi stated that he was willing to accept full responsibility for the part that the INC played in giving the Bush government with inaccurate intelligence and testimony. He went on to say that the Bush administration was seeking for someone to blame, and that the INC was ready to take the fall for them. Up until that point, Chalabi was the Bush administration's principal supporter in its expectation of defending US interests in Iraq under the new Iraqi government. This hope was based on the assumption that Chalabi would play such a role⁽⁵⁰⁾.

In May of 2004, the US troops and Iraqi police stormed the residence of Ahmad Chalabi, the Iraqi with the closest relations to the U.S. who was previously considered a leading candidate to lead Iraq's interim government⁽⁵¹⁾. The once-favored Iraqi exile has fallen out of favor with the U.S., and his strong relations with other Bush administration officials (and the PNAC members) have surely also ended. Chalabi, a member of the Iraqi Governing Council, severed connections with the US-led coalition after the attack, and numerous other council members also condemned the raid. In addition, the Defense Intelligence Agency halted monthly payments of \$335,000 to the INC after numerous years of support⁽⁵²⁾. Between 1992 until the beginning of the conflict in 2003, the US State Department granted the INC more than \$100 million⁽⁵³⁾.

The Office of Strategic Information, or OSI, was another intriguing group established by PNAC after 9/11. OSI's aim was to "present a good impression of US military activities abroad and influence public opinion". The OSI, which was more of a public relations organization than an extension of the Defense Department, disseminated false material to affect American and Arab perceptions of the Iraq war. The OSI had hired the Rendon Group, a private company, to assist it with the arduous work of disseminating false material. The Rendon Group has



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collaborated with the U.S. government in Argentina, Panama, Iraq, Haiti, Kosovo, and countless other nations where the dissemination of false information was crucial to advancing American goals. The most frightening aspect of the Rendon Group is that they purportedly helped create the INC in Iraq to resist Saddam Hussein's rule ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Yes, the INC, which is accountable for the false evidence, expresses gratitude to its leader Ahmad Chalabi. According to its founder, Donald Rumsfeld, the OSI was disbanded by the Bush administration after its mission became "so damaged that it's very evident to me that it cannot function." Even though the OSI was inoperable, the Rendon Group contract was still in effect. It should now be evident to everyone that the Bush administration cherry-picked the evidence to support an invasion of Iraq because the evidence simply did not exist! Even before Bush was elected president, the Bush administration's objective was to depose Hussein and seize control of Iraq. The Bush administration, which was filled with PNAC members, had a lot to gain from a war in Iraq ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

To fulfill their war objectives in Iraq, the very same PNAC members established the multiple groups listed above. They had the Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group to provide evidence of a link between Iraq and al Qaeda, the OSP to present evidence that provided a sense of necessity for a preemptive strike, and the Office of Strategic Information to hammer the message into the heads of all of the average citizens around the world. This was all intended to garner support for a preemptive assault against Iraq. Each impediment to the success of military action in Iraq was countered by an 'intelligence' unit of the Defense Department.

Conclusion:

PNAC, a neo-conservative think tank, played a significant role in advocating for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. It influenced US foreign policy decision-making by promoting a regime change in Iraq and linking it to the broader strategy of reshaping the Middle East to advance American interests. Since its establishment PNAC advocating a number of policy recommendations to influence US government's decision to invade Iraq which were detailed in its plan published in 2000 title "*Rebuilding America's Defenses*" (later on adopted by George W. Bush as blueprint for his foreign policy). First, PNAC developed a new foreign that focused on strengthening America's military power and maintaining a dominant presence in the world. Second, it developed for a policy of regime change in Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein arguing that he was a threat to the American interests and security through a preemptive action. Third, building public support for the invasion of Iraq by highlighting the dangers of weapons of mass destruction and linking the Iraqi government to terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda .

PNAC used several mechanisms to influence American foreign policy towards Iraq. It used public advocacy where its prominent members called for the removal of Saddam Hussein through opinion articles and speeches, policy papers, open letters such as 1998 open letter to Clinton, and reports produced on the need to invade Iraq as the "*Rebuilding America's Defenses*" which called for increased military spending and preemptive strikes against Saddam Hussein. Government outreach is another mechanism used by PNAC to influence American foreign policy towards Iraq. Many of the PNAC members had access to high- level government officials and later became key players in George W. Bush administration including Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. They used their positions to push for the invasion of Iraq, and to ensure that the ideas and recommendations of the PNAC were adopted by the US government. Furthermore, Lobbying and having powerful ties to other pressure groups such as AEI which also advocated for the invasion of Iraq through its connections to government officials and advocacy campaigns. Also, the financial relationships



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between PNAC and war-profiteering corporations and defense contractors, as well as the support provided by these corporations to the Bush administration, contributed to the acceptance of the Bush administration's foreign policy agenda, which integrated the preferences of these corporations. Finally, collaborating with different media outlets to promote pro-war messaging and downplay opposition to the invasion in an attempt to influence public opinion .

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