Lessons In Deterrence From U.S. Foreign Policy In Iraq, 1982-2003

A Senior Essay

by

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Introduction

It has been more than half a century since Thomas Schelling developed the basic principles of deterrence theory in his canonical work, *Arms and Influence* (1966). It remains essential that the United States understand how to successfully deter its enemies, and the fundamental principles for doing so have not changed. However, the US is no longer trying to deter an equally powerful adversary in a game of Mutually Assured Destruction. In the unipolar world, the US finds itself in a much more complicated game in which it is not always clear how the US can deter an enemy, or even if the US can deter an enemy.

The US's recent efforts to cut a nuclear deal with Iran and its frantic scramble to keep North Korea from successfully testing an ICBM show that the US is not always willing to bet on deterrence as a way to keep its enemies in check. Sometimes, when dealing with an enemy, the US has to choose between betting on a policy of deterrence and betting on some other extremely risky course of action. The US has done this in the past, and will have to do it in the future, perhaps very soon. It is critical that the US bet right. In order to bet right, the US must have a working command of deterrence theory.

The US bet against deterrence when it invaded Iraq in 2003. The Bush Administration argued that the 2003 invasion was necessary because Saddam Hussein was undeterrable. We would like to think that this bet reflected a sound application of deterrence theory. However, if one were to judge the US foreign policy establishment's understanding of deterrence theory based on US foreign policy in Iraq between 1982 and 2003, one would conclude that the US foreign policy establishment did not understand the fundamentals of deterrence theory.

I do not mean to suggest that policy makers did not, theoretically, academically, or intellectually understand deterrence theory. After all, Schelling drew from US conduct in Cold War conflict zones such as Cuba, Korea, and Vietnam to order redefine what effective use of force would look like in the nuclear age. So, deterrence theory can be seen as a product of the United States foreign policy establishment's efforts to adapt traditional ideas about the use of force to the nuclear era.

Rather, I mean that the US failed *in practice* to *demonstrate* an understanding of deterrence theory.

In this essay, I will argue the following:

Between 1990 and 2003, the US repeatedly failed to deter and compel Saddam Hussein in the way it ostensibly was trying to. The US blamed these failures on Saddam, and ultimately cited them as evidence that Saddam was undeterrable, and therefore as justification for the 2003 invasion. In reality, the real blame for these failures lies with the US, for failing to see how its own actions towards Saddam between 1982 and 2003 undermined the deterrent and compellent threats and assurances needed to successfully deter and compel Saddam.

Here, let me be clear about what I am *not* arguing in this essay. I am *not* arguing that if the US had refrained from going to war in 2003, dealing with Saddam Hussein would have been smooth sailing, or that future efforts to deter Saddam would have been successful. I am *not* arguing that the US should not have gone to war in 2003. I do not take up the issue of whether or not going to war was "right". I do not take up these counterfactual and normative questions. For the purposes of this essay, I also reject all arguments that the US went to war for purely nefarious reasons.

In this essay, I will say many times that the US's claim that Saddam was undeterrable was unjustified. So, when I say this claim was unjustified, I do not mean that it was "wrong". When I say this claim was unjustified, I mean that the factual record does not support the US's narrative behind its claim that Saddam was undeterrable, and that the US came to believe this claim by unsound reasoning.

I will proceed with my argument as follows:

I will first enumerate the fundamental concepts in deterrence theory (Schelling 1966) that I claim the US failed to demonstrate it appreciated in its 1982-2003 relations with Iraq. I will then give a brief summary of the historical argument that supports these claims.

I will then provide a road map for the full version of my argument.

<u>Concepts of deterrence theory the US demonstrated it did not understand</u>

The US failed in practice to demonstrate an understanding of the following essential principles in deterrence theory:

Words aren't enough to convince someone that your threat is credible. Your own actions and patterns of behavior will influence how credible an adversary finds your threat.

To deter your enemy, you must give him what Schelling refers to as the "last clear chance" to avoid the conflict. To successfully compel your enemy, you must not make the psychological or social costs of complying greater than the costs of not complying.

A deterrent or compellent threat, no matter how credible, must be accompanied by assurances—assurances that by not taking the action from which a country wishes to deter you, or by taking the action into which a country wishes to compel you, you can avert the consequences that are being threatened. These assurances are just as important as the

threat. You must use the carrot and the stick in order to successfully deter or compel someone (Schelling 1966).

The Supporting Historical Narrative

From 1982 until 1990, the United States sought closer and more profitable relations with Iraq in the hopes that a powerful, stable Iraq could balance the new government in Iran. In pursuit of those ends, it provided material and strategic aid to Iraq and responded to Iraqi transgressions by turning a blind eye whenever it could, confronting Iraq only when it was forced to by international diplomatic and/or domestic political pressure. Furthermore, these confrontations came only ever in the form of censure never as concrete action.

When Saddam invaded Kuwait on August 2nd 1990, the US corralled the international community into applying sanctions on Iraq in the hopes that this would compel Saddam to leave Kuwait. Between August of 1990 and January of 1991, President Bush threatened war if Saddam did not withdraw from Kuwait. The US went to war and won, but could not understand how Saddam could have thought the US would accept his annexation of Kuwait, and moreover, why Saddam would have refused to back down under threat of war.

The US failed to appreciate that it had done nothing but feed Saddam carrots for almost a decade (1982-1990), that it had never demonstrated it was willing to take action against Saddam for anything, and that these factors *undermined the credibility of their threat*. The US also failed to see that in the lead up to the war, President George H.W. Bush raised Saddam's costs of backing down from the conflict and in doing so, denied Saddam the "last clear chance" to avoid conflict. As a result, the US thought it had done everything

anyone would reasonably do to deter and compel Saddam. Therefore, at the end of the Gulf War the US concluded that Saddam could not be deterred or made to comply, and that the only way to deal with Saddam was to get rid of him.

Consequently, the US decided to leave in place the sanctions regime that was originally imposed to drive Saddam out of Kuwait. From the end of the Gulf War on, the US's primary goal of the sanctions was to effect regime change. It was clear to members of the sanctions coalition and to Saddam that the US would not lift sanctions or even partially lift the sanctions unless and until Saddam Hussein was no longer in power.

With this policy, the US gave Saddam no incentive to seriously comply with any part of the sanctions, because the sanctions were *not conditional* on Saddam's behavior. The *US provided Saddam no assurances* that if he complied, the sanctions would be lifted. The US did just the opposite, by making it clear that sanctions would stay in place no matter what Saddam did. Whereas the US policy towards Iraq during the 1980s had been *all carrot, no stick*, the US policy during the sanctions was *all stick, no carrot*.

In the first years of his presidency, President George W. Bush argued that the US needed to invade Iraq because Saddam could not be deterred. To make this argument, Bush claimed that Saddam's refusal to comply during the sanctions period showed that the US had tried deterrence on Saddam to no avail and so Saddam simply could not be deterred. Based on this deeply flawed reading of US-Iraqi history, the Bush administration argued that the US needed to go to war because there was simply no other way to deal with Saddam.

Plan For The Remainder Of This Essay

Whereas in the historical narrative I presented, I moved forward chronologically, starting in the early 1980s and ending in 2003, I will do the opposite in the full version of my argument.

I will move in this reverse order in order to critically examine the George W. Bush Administration's claim that Saddam was undeterrable and to more convincingly show how and why it was unjustified. I will divide my argument in the following sections:

Starting Clearly: First, I will provide working definitions for the terms deterrence and compellence and make a couple other notes about terminology.

Section I: In this section, I will dive into my argument. I will first establish that the Bush Administration's case for war rested on the claim that Saddam was undeterrable. Second, I will establish that the US supported this claim by further claiming that Saddam had been non-compliant for all of the post-Gulf War sanctions period and that this showed deterrence had been tried and failed.

Section II: I will discuss the post-war sanctions period. In this discussion, I will establish that while Saddam was noncompliant, this noncompliance did not and does not show that Saddam was undeterrable. I will establish that Saddam was noncompliant because the US's goal of regime made it impossible for him to both comply and survive. I will also discuss other reasons it is not justified for the US to use this time period as evidence that deterrence had been tried and had failed.

Section III: I will move back to the Gulf War Period, and examine why the US entered the post-war sanctions period with the goal of regime change. I will establish that the US did so because it believed that Saddam's intransigence in the prelude to the Gulf War

showed that Saddam could not be deterred or compelled. I will then establish that this conclusion was unjustified because, contrary to US claims it did not do everything it could have to successfully deter and compel Saddam in the prelude to the Gulf War.

Section IV: I will move back to the decade prior to the Gulf War. I will establish that the US's actions towards Iraq during this time period seriously undermined the credibility of the US's subsequent threat of war.

Conclusion: I will tie these different sections together and wrap up any loose ends. Finally, I will explain that if we want to successfully navigate present and future international crises, we must understand why our belief that Saddam was undeterrable was unjustified and how, in spite of this, we came to believe it.

Starting Clearly

Explaining and providing working definitions of deterrence and compellence

The logic of my argument in this essay is rooted in the concepts of deterrence and compellence developed by Thomas Schelling in his canonical work on deterrence theory, *Arms and Influence* (1966). Before diving in, I will spend a little time explaining the fundamentals of deterrence and compellence as Schelling describes them and specifying how I will use those words in this essay.

The word deterrence is often used to mean nuclear deterrence, wherein you deter an enemy from attacking you with nuclear weapons by threatening to attack him with nuclear weapons in response.

Deterrence can also refer not just to one specific effort to deter an enemy; deterrence may be a stand in for "a policy of deterrence" or "a strategy of deterrence". These describe an overall approach to dealing with an enemy. If a country adopts a strategy of deterrence against another, it means that the first country tries to influence the second country's actions exclusively through deterrence, rather than by more direct involvement.

Most generally speaking, deterrence is a way of influencing an enemy's actions to your own benefit. To deter an enemy is to get him to choose, of his own free will, to not take some specific action he would otherwise take, and which you do not want him to take.

When I use the word deterrence in this essay, I use it in the most general sense, which encompasses all possible meanings of the word as it is used in International Relations. In this essay, deterrence will refer to any effort to deter an enemy from taking a particular action. This does not exclude but neither does it automatically connote nuclear deterrence or deterrence as an overall strategy.

Compellence is closely connected to deterrence. Compellence, too, is a way of influencing an enemy's actions. Compellence, however, involves getting an enemy to take an action rather than to stop an action. Successfully compelling an enemy can also be described as getting him to comply of his own free will. Deterrence and compellence overlap when the goal is to get an enemy to stop doing something he is currently doing. This can be looked at either as compelling him to stop an action, or deterring him from continuing an action.

Deterrence and compellence require the same basic components:

A specified action to be not taken or taken

A credible, conditional threat

A threat is credible if the enemy believes that you will really carry out that threat.

A threat is conditional if the enemy believes that you will carry out the threat *if and only if* they fail to take (or not take) the specified action.

Deterrence and compellence must be used together to influence the full scope of an enemy's potential actions. Therefore, they are two sides of the same coin, and we cannot talk in general about one without implying the other.

For this reason, the US's claim that Saddam was undeterrable is really a claim that Saddam was both undeterrable and uncompellable.

In this essay, I frequently use versions of the word "deter". For concision, I will often use the words "deter" "deterrence" "deterrable" "undeterrable" to also mean "compel" "compellence" "compellable" and "uncompellable". Generally speaking, I will use iterations of the word "compel" only when I am speaking specifically of compellence and not also of

deterrence. For this reason, iterations of the word "deter" may seem to occur more frequently in the essay than do versions of "compel".

A Few Other Notes About Terminology

As the reader may already have objected, referring to "the US" as a unitary actor is problematic, because, well, the US is not a unitary actor. However, it is much easier to say "the US" did x, y and z than to say "the parties in the US that happened to win the internal battle over different foreign policy options and therefore got to set foreign policy on any given day" did x, y, and z. When I refer to the US as an actor—that is, when I say something to the effect of "the US claimed" or "the US did", I refer almost exclusively to whatever presidential administration was in power at that time. This is because the presidential administrations during this time period were mostly responsible for setting the US's policies and determining the US's actions in Iraq.

Finally, for expediency, I will sometimes refer to the US's claim that Saddam was undeterrable as "The Claim".

Section I:

The Bush Administration's Case for the 2003 Invasion

The Bush administration's case for war relied on The Claim (that Saddam was undeterrable)

The Bush Administration's Argument for War in 2003 was that invading Iraq and overthrowing Saddam Hussein was the least bad of exclusively bad options for dealing with the country. This required making a compelling case that all of the other bad options were worse than invading. As former CIA analyst and Middle East expert Kenneth Pollack explained in his 2002 book, *The Threatening Storm: The Case For Invading Iraq,* revamping the containment policy pursued during the Clinton years was not a viable option, because the so few members of the international community were willing to participate in sanctions against Iraq, after witnessing the devastation that 10 years of draconian sanctions had already wrought on the country. The only option besides containment and war was deterrence (211-242). If deterrence wouldn't work, war was the best option. This is why so much of the pro-war argument and rhetoric relied on the notion that Saddam was categorically undeterrable. And this is why the strongest arguments against the war, such as those made by two prominent IR Realist Scholars, Stephen M. Walt and John J Mearsheimer, relied on evidence that Saddam was "eminently deterrable" (2003).

There is ample evidence in the speeches made and documents released in the year and half or so preceding the war in which George W. Bush, members of his administration, and pro-war allies expressed this basic argument: that Saddam was undeterrable, so he had

to go. I think this is a fairly uncontroversial, claim, so I'll provide just a couple of examples of this:

In early 2002, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and President George W. Bush released a new National Security Strategy of the United States. In this document, the strategy of "pre-emption" was first articulated. In this document, Bush and Rice write: "…we know from history that deterrence can fail; and we know from history that some enemies cannot be deterred" (in Ehrenberg et al 2010, 84).

It is now widely known that the Bush Administration was already plotting its invasion of Iraq at this time. For this reason, the document itself can be seen as an effort to pre-empt criticism of the Iraq War by making the idea seem, when it was finally trotted out into the open, part of some coherent grand strategy. Therefore, it is fair to say that this quote references Iraq specifically (though not explicitly).

Often, the US expressed The Claim by saying that Saddam himself was "the problem". This is conveyed in President Bush's October 2002 Speech Outlining the Iraqi Threat by the assertion that "the fundamental problem with Iraq remains the nature of the regime itself" (in Ehrenberg et al 2010, 89).

<u>But, to know whether or not The Claim was justified, we have to unpack it a bit.</u>

<u>To unpack The Claim, we have to unpack not only why we thought he was undeterrable, but also what it was we were afraid we could not deter him from doing.</u>

We must examine what it is the US feared Saddam might do because, again, deterrence is always attached to specific actions (Schelling 1966). You cannot know if you are able to deter someone without first knowing what it is you're trying to deter someone from.

What was it we were afraid Saddam would do if we didn't go in and overthrow him in 2003?

What were the actions he might take and worst case scenario consequences for us?

Many of fears behind our 2003 invasion were the same as those that led us to war in 1991.

In response to SH's invasion of Kuwait, President George H.W. Bush wrote National Security Directive 45, the first official document stating the US's policy position towards the situation. The document made clear that the US feared Saddam's control of Kuwaiti oil could disrupt the US's access to oil and that any additional Iraqi aggression towards other gulf state could further disrupt the oil supply.

These concerns are echoed in the subsequent NSD 54, which affirmed the interests and goals outlined in NSD 45 (Bush 1990), but which finally authorized the use of military force to drive Iraq out of Kuwait. In the NSD 54, the US said,

"Iraq, by virtue of its unprovoked invasion of Kuwait… and its subsequent brutal occupation, is clearly a power with interests inimical to our own" (Bush 1991, 1)

As is explained in Lawrence Freedman's and Efraim Karsh's authoritative book on the Gulf War, Saddam invaded Kuwait in part because Kuwait was exceeding its OPEC production quotas, driving the price of oil down, and making oil sales less profitable for Saddam, who was in enormous debt after the Iran-Iraq war (Freedman and Karsh 1993, 19-41). As was made clear in a meeting between US Ambassador Glaspie and Saddam Hussein about a week before Saddam invaded Kuwait, the US feared that if Saddam controlled Kuwait's oil, he would drive the price of oil up, threatening the US's access to cheap oil (Hussein and Glaspie in Sifry and Cerf 1991).

So, to the US's mind, any military aggression by Iraq against another Gulf Oil producing country threatened the US's oil supply, presumably either by giving Saddam control of a greater share of the region's oil resources, or by creating instability sufficient to impede normal trade routes and processes.

These concerns had not changed by 2003.

Dick Cheney outlined the same concerns in a 2002 speech delivered to the Veterans of Foreign Wars conference, although with an emphasis on how nuclear weapons would enhance Saddam's ability to do damage.

Cheney said:

> "Armed with an arsenal of these weapons of terror (WMD), and seated atop 10 percent of the world's oil reserves, Saddam Hussein could then be expected to seek domination of the entire Middle East, take control of a great portion of the world's energy supplies, directly threaten America's friends throughout the region, and subject the United States or any other nation to nuclear blackmail" (in Ehrenberg et al 78).

Kenneth Pollack, a former intelligence analyst for the Middle East at the CIA, painted a number of worst case Saddam scenarios that all revolved around the very same set of concerns in his 2002 book, *The Threatening Storm: The Case For Invading Iraq* (273-275).

Having established what the US was concerned Saddam might do, and therefore what the US wished to deter Saddam from, we can move on.

What evidence did the US have in support of The Claim?

Why did we think Saddam was undeterrable? What evidence did the US have that this was true?

Before we can answer that question, let's start by getting an understanding of what calling someone "undeterrable" implies. To assert that someone is categorically undeterrable is to assert that something inherent to that person makes him not deterrable, regardless of the situation.

However, for someone to be theoretically deterrable, the only thing about *him* that needs to be true is that he is rational. While no person is perfectly rational in the game theoretical sense of the word, people can be said in practice to be rational actors if they make calculated decisions in their own self interest, weighing costs and benefits of certain courses of action.

So, it is possible that when the US argued that Saddam was undeterrable, what it really meant was that he was fundamentally irrational.

However, despite any claims to the contrary, the United States government did not believe Saddam was fundamentally irrational. In late 1990, a renowned scholar of political psychology, Jerrold M. Post, wrote a psychological profile of Saddam for the US government to help it better understand Saddam's "motivations, perceptions, and decision-making". IN that profile, Post wrote that Saddam was "a judicious political calculator, who [was] by no means irrational" and that Saddam was "not impulsive" and "only acts after judicious consideration" (Post 1990).

Nor did the US treat Saddam as if he was irrational. The US made accusations of Saddam that are inconsistent with a view that Saddam is irrational. For example, both the Clinton and Bush administrations claimed that Saddam exploited humanitarian aid

programs during the 1990s sanctions period for his own personal gain. Madeleine Albright expressed this view when defending the US's choice to maintain strict sanctions on Iraq despite the widespread suffering the sanctions caused, saying "I thought then and think now that the sufferings of the Iraqi people were Saddam's doing, not ours" (Reiff 2003) Regardless of how true this accusation is, exploitation for personal gain is a fundamentally rational activity.

Given that Saddam was rational, and that by and large the US government believed this, the US must have meant something other than "Saddam is irrational" when they made The Claim.

Indulge me in just a bit of theorizing as I try to get at why the US thought Saddam was undeterrable.

As I have said, deterrence is an interactive process. Say that party A wishes to deter party B from some course of action, C. Party A's success in doing so will depend on how well he can manipulate situational factors so that taking action C becomes more costly to party B than not taking action C. Therefore, success of deterrence depends much more on the actions of the person trying to do the deterring than it does on the object of deterrence. We've established that it is nonsensical to claim someone is categorically undeterrable unless you also believe he is irrational. So, what the US must really have meant by saying that Saddam was undeterrable, was that *they,* the US, could not deter Saddam.

But why would the US, the most powerful country on earth, think that it could not deter one little dictator in the Middle East?

The US appears mostly to have based this assertion on its own past experience with Saddam. US statements in the run-up to the 2003 invasion show that the US believed it had

tried and failed to deter Saddam. This is shown by the fact that in an effort to garner support for the war, the US government tried to show that deterrence had been tried and had failed. They tried to do this mainly by showing that Saddam had a long record of noncompliance and that they had tried all possible means of getting him to comply, but that none had worked.

In a the 2002 speech Dick Cheney gave at a Veterans of Foreign Wars conference, he spoke at length of all the efforts that had been made to deter and compel Saddam and of Saddam's chronic refusal to comply. Speaking of Saddam's agreements stop his WMD programs and submit to inspections, Cheney said "Saddam has systematically broken each of these agreements" and "Saddam has perfected a game of cheat and retreat; a return of inspectors would be no assurance whatsoever of his compliance with UN resolutions" and that there was "no basis in SH's conduct or history" to suggest that he would suddenly become compliant with further such efforts (in Ehrenberg et al 2010, 76-78).

President Bush gave a September 12, 2002 speech to the UN General Assembly, in which, like all the speeches senior administration officials made during this time, he made the case for war. The Bush administration distributed to the assembly members a "background paper" to supplement the speech. The 21-page document, titled "A Decade of Deception and Defiance", is basically a big list of the ways in which Saddam had been noncompliant with UNSC resolutions during the 1990s despite the international community's efforts to make him comply.

There is more evidence for the "deterrence has been tried and has failed" line in the Joint Congressional Resolution that authorized President Bush to use force against Iraq, which can be seen also as a formal documentation of the reasons the Bush administration

argued force was necessary. The actual authorization for the use of force comes only after several pages of justification, all of which cite Iraq's past conduct.

In the document, Congress said, Iraq "persists in violating resolutions of the UNSC" and therefore "remains in material and unacceptable breach of its international obligations" on a laundry list of issues including its ceasefire with Kuwait, its agreement to cooperate with weapons inspectors, WMD possession and development, its various an sundry human rights violations, it's obligation to release foreign detainees and return stolen Kuwait property. The resolution authorized force if Iraq did not "abandon(s) its strategy of delay, evasion and noncompliance, and strictly comply" with all relevant Security Council resolutions. Words like "persists" and "remains" show that Iraq's noncompliance was a pattern of behavior. Referring to noncompliance as a "strategy" has the same effect.

Finally, in his October 7 2002 Speech outlining the Iraqi threat, President Bush emphasized to the American public that the US and international community had exhausted all possible efforts short of war to get Saddam to comply. In almost literary fashion, and to great dramatic effect, Bush detailed these efforts by repeating the phrase "the world has tried…" followed by whatever thing the world had tried. For example:

"The world has tried…economic sanctions…the world has tried limited military strikes…the world has tried no-fly zones" (in Ehrenberg et al 2010, 88).

Bush hammered this narrative relentlessly, further saying,

"after eleven years during which we have tried containment, sanctions, inspections, even selected military action, the end result is that Saddam Hussein still has chemical and

biological weapons and is increasing his capabilities to make more" (in Ehrenberg et al 2010, 89)

So, along the road to war, US pointed to its past interactions with Saddam, and claimed it had done everything it could possibly do to deter or compel Saddam, and that it just didn't work. This was the US's reason for arguing that deterrence would not work.

Let me pause here to anticipate an objection. So far, I have relied on the most public of the administration's arguments for war. Just because these very public forms of pro-war argument relied on The Claim doesn't mean that the Bush Administration truly believed that Saddam was undeterrable and needed to go. How are we to know that this argument reflected some kind of true belief in the government?

The Claim was not purely an invention of the Bush Administration. The US government had officially adopted a policy of regime change for Iraq in 1998. Furthermore, it was Congress that initiated this policy change by introducing and passing The Iraqi Liberation Act of 1998", which allocated funding for Iraqi Opposition Groups who were trying to overthrow Saddam Hussein (105th Congress 1998). The first point to note here is that while President Clinton signed this bill into law, it was not just his policy and so it did not leave office with him; a majority of congressmen and women supported regime change as of 1998, showing that they had already come to believe that dealing with Saddam in some other way was either too difficult or simply impossible. When the Bush Administration took office, Secretary of State Colin Powell made an inquiry to the State Department asking about the origins of the US regime change in Iraq (USDS 2001 January 23).

So, the idea that Saddam was impossibly obstinate and therefore needed to be removed pre-dated the Bush Administration. Additionally, it was a policy recognized by both the executive and legislative branches, meaning that it had much broader support. And, while, obviously, there is a difference between funding Iraqi Opposition Groups and launching pre-emptive war, the reasoning behind both of these policies was the same. We know that not all of the Bush Administration's public arguments for the war can be taken at face value; by now it is common knowledge that we were lied to about Iraq's possession of WMD. However, I think it is safe to say that the "Saddam is undeterrable and therefore needs to go" claim is not simply propaganda in service of a former Halliburton Executive's corporate greed, and so is at least honest enough to be worth analyzing.

First of all, it needs to be pointed out that it is illogical and inconsistent with deterrence theory to claim that just because past efforts at deterrence have failed, all future efforts will fail. This is because, again, conducting successful deterrence is so contextually and situatonally dependent. But, let's set that problem aside. Let's give the US government the benefit of the doubt and accept that totally illogical jump in reasoning.

Let's focus on the claim that in the past, the US had done everything it possibly could to deter/compel Saddam (and that it just mysteriously didn't work).

In order to evaluate that claim, we have to identify the historical incidents the US points to in support of it.

<u>What History did the US point to as evidence for The Claim?</u>

As is evident from the excerpts I have just discussed, most of the historical evidence the US used came from the post-Gulf war Sanctions period. Therefore, the next step I will take towards deciding if The Claim was justified will be to examine the post Gulf-War

sanctions period. Specifically, I will evaluate the emergent US claim that Saddam's conduct during the post-war sanctions period showed a pattern of non-compliance, and that this non-compliance showed that Saddam was undeterrable.

Section II:

The Post Gulf-War Sanctions Period

Did Saddam's conduct during the post-war sanctions period show a pattern of non-compliance?

Was Saddam Hussein largely non-compliant with the demands made in the UN sanctions? To answer this question, we first need to ask: what were the demands articulated in the text of the UN sanctions?

Demands of the Sanctions

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 661, which first established an international embargo on Iraq and froze Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets abroad, was passed a few days after Saddam invaded Kuwait (Graham-Brown 1999, 56-57). At the time, it was intended to compel Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait. During the course of the war, the UNSC passed ten other resolutions that affirmed demands made in UNSCR 661 and called repeatedly for Iraq to comply (Sifry and Cerf 1991, 137-156). After the war, the UNSC continued the international embargo that had been started under UNSCR 661, but did so in order to compel Saddam to comply with the terms of a new resolution: UNSCR 687.

A few of the demands made in UNSCR 687 were intended to formalize the end the war; Iraq had to formally recognize Kuwaiti sovereignty; Iraq and Kuwait had to agree to a UN-drawn border between the two countries; Iraq had to release prisoners of war, account for any missing persons, and return stolen property to Kuwait. The central and most significant demand in UNSCR 687, however, was that Iraq disarm. Iraq had to destroy all of its WMD--chemical, biological, and nuclear. Iraq was also to submit to long-term weapons inspections to make sure it had not failed to destroy any of its WMD and to make sure it did

not create new ones. Iraq also was not permitted to import any weapons or weapons technology, *or* any dual-use technology or goods—that is, anything that could be used for civilian purposes but could also be used for military purposes. Disarmament was the primary goal of UNSCR 687 and officially, of the entire post-war UN sanctions regime (Graham-Brown 1999, 58-59).

Now, having established the basic demands of the sanctions, we can discuss whether or not Saddam was non-compliant with the sanctions.

Was Saddam Non-compliant with the demands of the sanctions?

Saddam was non-compliant with many of the demands regarding Kuwait and the resolution of the Gulf War.

According to US government report which was compiled using data from the US Department of State as well as independent sources such as UNSCOM and Amnesty International, Saddam never accounted for over 600 prisoners of war or personnel that otherwise went MIA during the Gulf War. Saddam never returned "extensive Kuwaiti state archives and museum pieces" he had stolen. Nor did he return an allegedly massive—and massively valuable—quantity of stolen Kuwaiti military equipment including fighter jets, armored vehicles and missiles (US State Department 2002, 19-20).

As of 1999, Saddam had refused to formally recognize Kuwaiti sovereignty (Graham-Brown 1999, 66). Moreover, Saddam had demonstrated intent to violate Kuwaiti sovereignty during the post-war sanctions period. In 1994, Saddam massed about 70,000 troops on the Kuwaiti border, in an apparent threat to once again invade the country. Saddam backed down only when the US engaged in a kind of counter-build up (Gordon 1994).

Saddam violated the international embargo by engaging in smuggling and black market activities. Of course, this was not something Saddam—or anyone—could do alone. Neighboring countries such as Jordan and Turkey had great incentive to help Saddam violate the international embargo because they had depended heavily on trade with Iraq before the Gulf War, so the embargo on Iraq hurt them too. For example, Iraq had been Jordan's single biggest trade partner for the entire decade preceding the war and had relied on Iraq for most of its oil imports. The US had withdrawn aid to Jordan because Jordan would not join the Desert Storm coalition against Iraq. This put Jordan in a precarious economic position and made it even more dependent on maintaining some of its normal trade with Iraq (Graham-Brown 1999 66-67).

Saddam also subverted the UN sanctions by illegally selling oil outside of the UN's Oil-for-Food program—a 1996 deal between the UN and Saddam that allowed Saddam to sell some oil under UN monitoring in exchange for some humanitarian relief for his starving citizenry (Gordon 2010, 173-189), and which will be discussed in greater detail later.

Saddam was largely non-compliant with the disarmament provisions of the sanctions.

To verify Iraqi compliance (or non-compliance) with the disarmament provisions in UNSCR 687, in 1991 the UN established a special commission, UNSCOM, charged with performing weapons inspections in Iraq. Australian Diplomat Richard Butler described his experience as director of UNSCOM from 1997 to 1999 in his book, *The Greatest Threat*: *Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Crisis of Global Security*. Based on his own

experience and that of Rolf Ekeus, the UNSCOM director from 1991 to 1997, Butler wrote that

"…from the first days of UNSCOM Iraq sought to conceal its weapons programs and cheat on the disarmament process" (Butler 2000, 181)

and that during the post-Gulf War sanctions period,

"Every step in disarmament, every discovery and destruction of weapons and the means to make them, was achieved in the face of Iraqi concealment, deception, lying, and threats" (2000, xvi).

Throughout the 1990s, Saddam tried to thwart weapons inspectors by storing weapons and military equipment anywhere and everywhere that did not appear to be a military facility. According to a US Department of State report on Saddam's "disinformation and propaganda", Iraq hid weapons in "parks, mosques, hospitals, hotels, crowded shopping districts, ancient cultural and religious sites", soccer stadiums and many other civilian areas (USDS 2003, 10).

Under the weapons inspections program, Iraq was required to present "declarations" stating what kinds of weapons materials it had and where they were located, in order to allow UNSCOM to see that they were destroyed. The International Atomic Energy Association oversaw inspections for nuclear weapons. A 1997 report by the Director of the IAEA and directed to the Secretary General of the UN made clear that Iraq repeatedly provided declarations that were so obviously incomplete as to be laughable (United Nations 1997, 20).

By applying consistent pressure, the inspections teams got Saddam to declare somewhat more material over time, and UNSCOM oversaw the destruction of significant

amounts of WMD-related material and manufacturing equipment (United Nations 1997 20-23). In 1995, Saddam Hussein's son-in-law Hussein Kamel, who was also Saddam's Minister of Industry (and therefore responsible for overseeing Iraq's weapons programs), defected to Jordan. Shortly thereafter, he provided the UN with information about and documentation of Iraqi weapons programs that the UN had known nothing about (Pollack 2002, 76-77). These revelations made UNSCOM and the IAEA realize that their inspectors had been even more thoroughly deceived than they had thought (United Nations1997 20-22). After the Kamel revelations, Saddam continued to deny inspectors full access to his weapons programs.

Saddam also encouraged chronic harassment of IAEA and UNSCOM inspectors. After Richard Butler took over as director of UNSCOM in 1997, the Iraqis intensified their harassment of UNSCOM weapons inspectors. In some cases, this harassment was so aggressive that it endangered the lives of inspectors; for example, Pollack discusses an incident in which an Iraqi who was accompanying UNSCOM inspectors on a helicopter ride to a weapons sight "tried to seize control of the helicopter while in flight, nearly causing it to crash" (Pollack 2002, 88). The UNSC passed resolution 1134, which threatened repercussions if Iraq kept up its obstructionism.

Far from encouraging Iraqi compliance with the inspections, as it had been allegedly intended to do, the resolution ended up making Saddam furious. It was shortly after this that Iraq expelled American members of the UNSCOM inspections team. Even though the American inspectors were gone, Saddam still obstructed and evaded inspections. Ultimately, in late 1998, UNSCOM withdrew all its inspectors (Graham-Brown 1999, 354). In response, Iraq eventually threw out all American UNSCOM inspectors and ultimately in

1998 did the same to the rest of the UNSCOM team, ending the weapons inspections program (Graham-Brown 1999, 353-354).

We see that in many ways, Saddam *was* noncompliant with the demands of the sanctions. More than technically non-compliant, Saddam was resistant to the very spirit of the sanctions.

Did Saddam's noncompliance show that he was undeterrable?

It seems fair for the US to say Saddam was non-compliant during the post-war sanctions period.

I wrote earlier in this essay that compellence can be thought of as inducing compliance. So, this means that a failure to induce compliance constitutes a failure of compellence. So, wouldn't it at this juncture be fair to say that, Because Saddam did not comply no matter what the US did, he was not successfully compelled, even though the US did everything it could, and that therefore, compellence (and therefore deterrence) just doesn't work on Saddam? Wouldn't it be fair to say that Saddam's conduct during the sanctions period show that he is undeterrable?

The answer is: no. While it is largely true that Saddam was non-compliant, it is not true that the US did everything it possibly could to compel Saddam during this time period. So, it is not fair to say that Saddam was undeterrable (uncompellable), because the observed compellence failure was the US's fault.

While the US shared with the rest of the international sanctions coalition the goal of disarmament, regime change was its main goal.

The US's goal of regime change meant that the overall structure of the sanctions gave Saddam no incentive to comply with their dictates. I will go about explaining this by establishing the following things:

1) Regime change was the US's main goal from start of the post-war sanctions period and remained the US's main goal throughout the post-war sanctions period

2) Regime change goal meant the US had no interest in changing Saddam's behavior, and therefore the US would give no reward for partial compliance

3) Different goals meant different definitions of compliance

4) Saddam knew all this

Therefore, Saddam had no incentive to comply, and in fact had incentive NOT to comply. I will now explain this in more detail.

<u>1) Regime change was the US's main goal from start of the post-war sanctions period and remained the US's main goal throughout the post-war sanctions period.</u>

Evidence for the first component—that the US entered the post-war sanctions period with the goal of regime change—is that in early May of 1991, about two months after Operation Desert Storm had ended, Deputy National Security Adviser Robert Gates stated:

"Saddam is discredited and cannot be redeemed. His leadership will never be accepted by the world community… All possible sanctions will be maintained until he is gone…Any easing of sanctions will be considered only when there is a new government" (Gordon 2010, 17).

Several documents from the US intelligence apparatus show that Gates' words weren't just bluster, but truly reflected US aims.

The first such document is a CIA report written in March of 1991, immediately after the Gulf War, and titled "Iraq: Implications of Insurrection and Prospects for Saddam's Survival". The report discussed at length the scenarios in which Saddam might be overthrown, and analyzed how likely each of these scenarios was to actually happen. The analysis concluded that regrettably, "Saddam's in power for now" (CIA 1991, 2), but that the state of the economy would be a "key factor" in deciding how for how much longer. The report implied that it was important to keep the sanctions embargo in place because "If UN sanctions continue and Saddam is unable to sell oil, his position internally will be at increasingly greater risk" (CIA 1991, 9).

By the next year, the US seemed to think that Saddam's prospects had improved. A National Intelligence Estimate from 1992 entitled "Saddam Husayn: likely to hang on" said that if there was enormous popular dissatisfaction, Saddam might be overthrown. However, the estimate projected that Saddam would stay in power for at least a year more because Saddam had been able to keep his support base happy by protecting them from the worst effects of the sanctions (DCI 1992).

The discussion in both these documents of sanctions as a critical ingredient in Saddam's hypothetical downfall show that the primary outcome variable of the sanctions the US cared about was whether or not Saddam would stay in power.

The US intelligence apparatus continued into the Clinton years to speculate on how likely it was Saddam would stay in power. A much more extensive National Intelligence Estimate from 1993 provides more evidence that the US thought of sanctions primarily in terms of how they would affect SH's ability to stay in power, rather than how they might change his behavior. Consider the following excerpts:

""If the sanctions were eased…the pressure on Saddam would lighten, and his chances of surviving in office would be substantially enhanced."

"If enforcement of the sanctions continues unabated, there is a better-than-even chance that Saddam will be ousted during the next three years."

"Although sanctions by themselves will not directly topple Saddam, they have helped establish and environment that threatens him."

"Even if UN sanctions remain in effect, there is only a 20 to 30 percent chance that Saddam will be ousted during the next year"

"we see little prospect that Saddam can improve this security environment or his prospects for survival while sanctions remain in force"

"the longer the sanctions remain in effect, the greater the risk to him" (DCI 1993, v-35).

These quotes reflect a near obsession with the question of how long Saddam would stay in power, showing that the purpose of the sanctions was to weaken him so he would be overthrown.

Furthermore, shortly after taking office in 1993, President Clinton said,

"There is no difference between my policy and the policy of the [Bush] Administration…I have no intention of normalizing relations with [Saddam Hussein]" (in Gordon 2010, 17).

There is more evidence that Deputy National Security Advisor Gates' and President Clinton's statements truly reflected the US's post-war approach towards Iraq.

In May 1991, President Bush authorized "a covert action campaign to 'create the conditions for the removal of Saddam Hussein from power'" (Pollack 2002, 59). In other words, President Bush told the CIA to do everything they could to get rid of Saddam.

Furthermore, the covert action campaign initiated by President Bush in 1991 continued throughout the Clinton years. The CIA needs White House permission to conduct operations targeted at overthrowing a foreign leader (Pollack 283). Because these covert ops continued well into the 1900s, President Clinton clearly authorized their continuation. The presidential orders of the kind Bush had signed did not technically authorize or instruct the CIA to kill SH because assassinating foreign leaders violates international law. However, the CIA might as well have been trying to assassinate Saddam because they "provided funds to groups that it knew were attempting to" do so (Smith and Ottaway 1996).

The CIA backed the Iraqi National Congress (an opposition group) from 1992 to 1996, in its efforts to overthrow regime either through "popular revolt" or military coup. These operations had "ample funding" (Pollack 2002, 288); as of 1996, the CIA had spent around $100 million supporting coup efforts in Iraq (Smith and Ottaway 1996). Furthermore, they did not just provide assistance remotely. At least in 1995-1995, the CIA had agents "on the ground" to monitor the INC and Kurdish partners (Smith and Ottaway 1996).

In 1995 the CIA tried to instigate a "rolling coup" (a popular revolt) in which Kurdish areas would rebel first, and gain support as they moved toward Baghdad (Smith and Ottaway 1996). This ultimately failed because a main Kurdish faction, the KDP, wouldn't back the INC (Frontline 1999).

<u>2) Regime change goal means no interest in changing behavior, and therefore no reward for partial compliance</u>

I have established that for the US, sanctions were intended to bring about Saddam's downfall. I have also stated that unlike France, Russia, or China, the US was not interested in changing Saddam's behavior. This follows logically, and perhaps seems somewhat obvious. However, it is critical to understanding how the US's regime change goal shaped sanctions in a way that gave Saddam no incentive to comply. So, I will present some evidence that the US had no intention of using the sanctions to change Saddam's behavior.

An excerpt from the very beginning of the previously cited 1993 NIE shows that changing Saddam's behavior was not a goal:

"Throughout this Estimate, we assume that:

Saddam Husayn will not alter his basic domestic and foreign policy goals: to maintain his hold on power by any means necessary, to re-impose full control over the country, to rebuild Iraq's military might—include weapons of mass destruction programs—and to make Iraq the dominant regional power…" (DCI 1993, iii).

As implied by the words "will not alter", the goals enumerated are ones that that SH had been pursuing, and which had led Saddam to take actions the US found unacceptable, such as the invasion of Kuwait. It is implied that these goals drive Saddam's actions. SO, what is essentially being said here is not just that Saddam would not change his goals, but that Saddam would not change his behavior. It was *assumed* that Saddam would not change his behavior in response to the sanctions.

There is further evidence of this. In that same NIE, another assumption is listed after the one I have just quoted and discussed. The authors of the NIE wrote:

"(throughout this estimate, we assume that…) Saddam Husayn will not fully comply with UN resolutions" (DCI 1993, iii).

Complying involves taking a course of action you would not otherwise take—that is, changing your behavior in some way. So, by saying that Saddam would not comply, the US was saying in a slightly different way that it did not expect Saddam to change his behavior under the sanctions.

Here we see a government document that discusses the potential impact of the sanctions on Saddam Hussein, and in which it is *assumed* that Saddam would not change his behavior to comply with the sanctions. It is inconceivable then, that the US could be *trying* to change Saddam's behavior—inconceivable that the US could be trying to get Saddam to comply.

If sanctions were the stick, partial sanctions relief would be a carrot. Carrots are given in order to encourage positive changes in behavior. We would expect that if the US had no intention of changing Saddam's behavior the US would have had no intention of giving Saddam any carrots—no intention of giving him any partial sanctions relief. This was indeed the case.

Though this is conveyed in the Gates and Clinton quotes I discussed, there is more evidence of this, too, in in the highly revealing 1993 NIE.

The third assumption listed at the beginning of the document reads: "Maintaining full sanctions and a coherent anti-Saddam will be increasingly difficult" (DCI 1993).

The fact that US was anticipating difficulty it would have keeping full sanctions pressure on shows that they were committed to maintain sanctions no matter what, because it shows they preemptively disagreed with other states' future desires to ease sanctions based on changing circumstances.

The NIE report also showed that where other countries viewed some of Iraq's actions as examples of partial compliance, the US viewed these same actions cynically and suspiciously.

The report described some ways in which (despite Iraq's overall pattern of non-compliance) Iraq had at that point somewhat complied with demands in the UN sanctions:

"In the past year, Iraq has decreased its harassment of UN inspectors and improved its cooperation with aspects of the UN resolutions related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Iraq recently even agreed to abide by the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 715, which calls for long-term UN monitoring of Iraq".

But, instead of commenting on these developments by saying something to the effect of "we take these as good signs that the sanctions are indeed getting Saddam to comply", or even just "Saddam has shown greater compliance lately", the report comments on and summarizes these events by saying "Baghdad has been working hard to reverse its pariah status and weaken international support for the sanctions" (DCI 1993, vi).

So, rather than considering partial sanctions relief in response to these examples of partial compliance, the US lamented them because such partial compliance could weaken the sanctions coalition.

3) Different Goals Meant Different Definitions of Compliance, and No Partial Sanctions Relief

It is critical to understand that having regime change as a goal of sanctions changed the definition of compliance: For the US, full compliance meant "no Saddam".

The fact that there was disagreement over the fundamental goals of the sanctions—the US wanted disarmament as a step along the road to regime change and other major

players on the UNSC France and Russia wanted only disarmament—meant that there was disagreement over what constituted compliance. This was important because in the text of UNSCR 687, partial sanctions relief was conditioned on compliance with certain provisions of the sanctions. So, whether or not Saddam could receive partial sanctions relief depended on whether or not the UNSC found Saddam "compliant" or not.

The goal

"generally accepted by France, Russia and China was that sanctions [were] designed to change the Government of Iraq's behavior in ways defined by the main requirements of Resolution 687" (Graham-Brown 1999, 59).

These countries wanted to see Saddam him specific behavior targets: get rid of WMD; permanently respect Kuwait's sovereignty (stop trying to conquer it) and return any Kuwaiti property taken during war. These countries were not seeking to "deal with the leadership of Iraq", meaning that they were not trying to use the sanctions for regime change (Graham-Brown 1999, 59)

This meant that France, Russia, and China defined full compliance as Saddam taking all these specific actions and demonstrating all these specific behaviors; partial compliance could be defined a taking one or some of these actions or demonstrating some of these specific behaviors.

As I have showed, the US's goal was not behavioral change, but regime change. This meant that the US defined full compliance as the absence of Saddam. Also as a result, the concept of partial compliance was irrelevant to the US. It was only important to recognize partial compliance if you planned to reward it with partial sanctions relief. Because the US

had no intention of lifting sanctions even a little bit (lest this strengthen Saddam's hold on power), it needed no definition of partial compliance.

The text of UNSCR 687 contained an ambiguity that the US exploited in order to block partial sanctions relief for partial compliance. There were two paragraphs in which conditions for sanctions relief were described. In one paragraph, UNSCR 687 said that the oil embargo on Iraq could be lifted if Iraq complied with the disarmament provision that said Iraq must destroy its WMD. In a different paragraph, UNSCR 678 said that lifting any part of the embargo would be allowed only if the UNSC deemed the "policies and practices of" Saddam's government showed compliance with "all relevant" demands in the sanctions Graham-Brown 1999, 78-79).

This second description of the conditions necessary for sanctions relief was so ambiguous it might as well have read, "the conditions for sanctions relief can be whatever you want them to be on any given day". This allowed the US to claim that the conditions necessary for sanctions relief had not been met, regardless of what Saddam had actually done.

One last critical detail is that, under either interpretation, lifting sanctions—even partially—required a unanimous vote of the Security Council P-5. Therefore, no matter how many other members of the UNSC wanted to authorize some sanctions relief, the US could block sanctions relief. Indeed, the US blocked all other P-5 member attempts to grant Saddam some partial sanctions relief. (Gordon 2010, 39-60; Graham-Brown 1999, 56-93).

<u>But what about the Oil-for-Food program?</u>

One could object here that in fact the United States did reward Saddam with some partial sanctions relief in the form of the Oil-for-Food program. Under the Oil-for-Food program, Saddam could sell $1 billion of oil about every three months. The UN monitored the sales and Saddam had to give portions of the money to the UN and to Kuwait. Saddam could use the remainder of the money (about 60-65 %) to import humanitarian goods, all under the watch of the UN (Gordon 2010, 25).

On the surface, this does appear to be a kind of partial sanctions relief. However, we must look at how and why the oil-for-food deal came about.

By the mid-1990s, the sanctions had caused a dire humanitarian crisis in Iraq. Most Iraqis had access to only about 1,100 calories a day (Gordon 2010, 25). Iraq had always produced very little of its own food, and the embargo made it difficult for Iraq to import nearly as much food as needed—both because the government no longer had oil revenue and because it could not import good from any country in the sanctions bloc.. Operation Desert Storm had destroyed most of Iraq's infrastructure, which made it nearly impossible to distribute even what food there was to the people who needed it. The destruction of Iraq's infrastructure also led to extremely poor water sanitation in most parts of the country, resulting in widespread illness. The US also prevented Iraq from importing the technology and equipment that would be necessary to rebuild its infrastructure, in short because the US could not guarantee that Iraq would not use those goods to rebuild its weapons program and military (Gordon 2010, 23-38).

As a result, the US was under enormous criticism for the devastating effects of the draconian sanctions against Iraq. Keeping the sanctions coalition together was proving harder and harder, and the US was afraid it would not be able to sustain economic pressure

on Iraq while the humanitarian situation was so dire and continued to deteriorate. Thus, the US chose to offer the oil-for-food deal not to reward Iraq for any partial compliance with the sanctions, but to fend off critics of its own policies and to keep pressure on Saddam in the long term (Graham-Brown 1999, 81-83). Madeleine Albright made this clear when she said of the US's decision to implement the Oil-for-Food program,

"Frankly it is the best of all possible ways to make sure that the sanctions regime remains in place so that Saddam Hussein is not entitled to pretend he is concerned for his people and shed a lot of crocodile tears" (in Graham-Brown 199, 82).

So did then-UN Secretary for Political Affairs and Former US Ambassador to the UN Thomas Pickering when he said in 1998,

"In a very real sense, the 'oil-for-food' program is the key to sustaining the sanctions regime until Iraq complies with its obligations" (in Graham-Brown 1993, 83).

Of course, we know that the US wasn't really trying to get Saddam to comply with its obligations. So, what Pickering's quote really means is that the oil-for-food program was the key to sustaining the sanctions regime until Saddam was gone.

So, while the US did not bring about regime change under the sanctions, this goal was still enormously consequential; as long as the US maintained its goal of regime change, Saddam would never be fully compliant in the US's eyes, and, given the voting requirements on the UNSC, this ensured that there would be no partial sanctions relief.

Saddam knew all this

He knew that our sanctions goals differed from the goals of the other members of the coalition, and that we would not reward him for partial compliance because we were trying to get rid of him.

I won't spend much time defending this claim, because I think it is fairly uncontroversial. While I've used declassified US documents to provide excellent direct evidence of these things, I think my discussion also shows that these things were not secret; I've relied also on scholarly work that was being conducted during the sanctions, and thus depended on real-time transparency. I've also cited statements made by public officials. There was plenty of circumstantial evidence that there were differences between the American approach to the sanctions and the approach taken by most other countries and that we wanted Saddam gone. If interested and astute observers (such as scholars) could pick up on these things, of course Saddam, the target of all these policies, knew what was happening.

Even so, I will provide a little more evidence in support of these things.

After US forces captured Saddam in 2004, he was interviewed numerous times by the FBI. In one of these interviews, in which Saddam discussed the beginning of the post-Gulf War sanctions period, he said,

"The United States started the cause and others followed. [UNSCR] 661 was agreed upon by all parties while [UNSCR] 687 was not" and that "[UNSCR] 687 was approved at the insistence of the United States" (FBI Feb 13 2004).

In other words, Saddam saw US as ringleader of the post Gulf-war sanctions and further as using the UN as a platform for advancing its own agenda (of regime change), an agenda that other members of UNSC did not fully support.

While Saddam definitely knew the US was using the sanctions as a tool to get rid of him, he knew that our efforts extended beyond this. Pollack, a former intelligence analyst, wrote,

"At the CIA, we used to say that any coup plot we know about, Saddam knew about. This has, unfortunately, turned out to be true." (2002, 289),

This shows that Saddam knew we were trying to get rid of him via covert action.

The overall structure of sanctions gave Saddam no incentive to comply; rather, it gave Saddam an incentive to not comply

Saddam had no incentive to comply with disarmament, which at least on paper was the most important goal of the sanctions. Saddam knew that even if he disarmed, the US would keep the sanctions pressure on him. He had every reason to *not* cooperate with the weapons inspections because these inspections were part of the UN and the US's effort to get Saddam to disarm. Disarming Saddam would make it easier to overthrow Saddam if the US ever got around to conducting an overt regime change effort and in the near term would make him more vulnerable to even the most amateur of coups.

Pollack wrote that

"Iraq was well aware of the CIA covert action campaign and assumed that American inspectors were feeding information regarding the Iraqi security services to the CIA (Which turned out to be largely true, although the UNSCOM itself was unaware of it)" (Pollack 79).

In other words, Saddam believed that the weapons inspections were directly helping the US's covert efforts to overthrow him during that time period—and he was right.

Continuation of sanctions appeared on surface to be conditional on SH's behavior—certainly if you look at the security council resolutions from the time (notably 661, 687) there were defined conditions for sanctions relief. While it was no secret to anyone that the US was using the sanctions to try to oust Saddam and that they would not relent until he

was gone, the US also claimed that SH always had the power to get the sanctions relieved or Saddam could have stopped the sanctions at any time (Rieff 2003). This is a mind-boggling contradiction.

Part of the reason the US assumed that Saddam would never fully comply with what the US saw as the goal of the sanctions was that voluntary full compliance would mean Saddam had capitulated—capitulated in the sense of throwing his hands up and walking off the job, saying, "You wanted no Saddam? Fine. You got no Saddam. I'm headed to Egypt to hang out there for a while. See ya." This is obviously laughable.

The other reason the US assumed that Saddam would never fully comply is because the US understood how draconian the sanctions were that they, with the help of the international community, had imposed; the US knew that if Saddam truly complied with all the disarmament demands in the sanctions and did not cheat the international embargo at all, he would be so economically, militarily, and politically weakened that he would definitely fall from power.

So, in two senses, Saddam *had* to be non-compliant with the demands of the sanctions in order to have any chance of political (and possibly physical) survival: First, voluntary compliance with the US demand of regime change was a nonstarter. Second, material compliance with all the terms of the sanctions—no illegal trade, no obstruction of weapons inspections, no weapons smuggling to rebuild his military—would have been suicide.

Graham-Brown implied this when she wrote and that we wanted to maintain pressure of sanctions because he we knew he "*could not* comply with all the requirements for the lifting of the economic embargo and by implication, therefore, sanctions would

remain in force until the regime collapsed"(Graham-Brown 1999). In other words, we assumed he would not fully comply with the sanctions demands as articulated in UNSC 867 *not* because we thought he was congenitally incapable of compliance, but because we knew the sanctions we kept in place were so draconian that they would have been impossible for any remotely self-preserving leader to comply with. Curiously, this seems to contradict the reasoning behind the need for regime change. If he was really so "irredeemable" that he could not be deterred or compelled no matter what we did, then why did we need to make it structurally impossible for him to comply—wouldn't he have just failed to do no matter how we structured the sanctions?

The worst possible outcome for Saddam of not complying with the sanctions was that he would lose power (and not survive). The worst possible outcome for him of complying with the sanctions was that he would lose power (and not survive). The difference was that as long as he did not comply with the sanctions, he had a chance to stay in power.

Deterrence/Compellence during the sanctions period: Successes Ignored and Opportunities Missed

Additionally, there were other problems with the US's claim that the entire post-war period shows that Saddam is undeterrable.

First of all, even though the overall structure of the sanctions made it impossible for Saddam to fully comply, there were smaller opportunities to deter or compel Saddam. There were incidents in which Saddam was successfully deterred or compelled, which the United States apparently discounted in order to make its claim of categorical non-compliance. Furthermore, the United States missed some of these opportunities to deter or

compel Saddam or to demonstrate threat credibility that could help deter or compel him in the future.

The US successfully used the threat of force to deter and compel Saddam.

Our enforcement of the no fly zones we instituted in the northern and southern parts of the country built our threat credibility and helped us successfully deter Saddam.

In August of 1992, President Bush instituted a no fly zone below the 32nd parallel in order to protect Shi'ite Muslims in the southern part of the country. Iraqi planes routinely tested this no-fly zone, especially at first (Graham-Brown 199, 351). However, we made good on enforcing it every time Iraq tested it, which helped deter Saddam from more serious infringements.

For example, on December 27 of 1992, the US shot down an Iraqi fighter jet that infringed on the NFZ and then the next day US planes chased two Iraqi jets out of the NFZ. Subsequently, at beginning of January 1993, when US, UK, and French learned that Iraq was attempting to undermine coalition ability to enforce no-fly zone by "moving surface-to-air missiles" south of the 32nd parallel, they threatened to take military action if Iraq did not remove the missiles. Iraq complied at the last minute (Graham-Brown 1999 351-352), which was likely a result of seeing that the allies were serious about enforcing the no-fly zone just weeks before.

Another instance in which the US successfully used the threat of force to deter Saddam was in an incident I have already made reference to: in 1994, Saddam started massing troops on the Kuwaiti border—ultimately upwards of 70,000 of them. President Clinton responded by ordering 36,000 US military personnel to mass on the other side of the border (Gordon 1994 October 8). Saddam backed down (Graham-Brown 1999, 353).

No one knew exactly why Saddam massed his troops on the border. However, by 1994, the Iraqi economy was a disaster, and many observers thought that Saddam was trying to create a crisis he could use to negotiate some partial sanctions relief (Gordon 1994 October 8). We cannot know for sure how seriously Saddam intended to invade Kuwait, and therefore we cannot for certain say this was a case of successful deterrence—because if Saddam was never serious about invading then it is unfair to say the US deterred him.

However, Kenneth Pollack noted that, based on information later shared by Hussein Kamel—Saddam's son-in-law who defected to Jordan in 195—it seems very likely that "Saddam was not bluffing but genuinely intended to attack" (Pollack 2002, 267). Therefore, it is more than fair to say that in this instance, the United States successfully used the threat of force to deter Saddam. This threat was credible because the last time Saddam had invaded Kuwait, the US had demonstrated a willingness to go to war and kick him out.

Furthermore, the US subsequently pointed to this incident not as evidence that Saddam could be deterred, but as another example of his noncompliance, and therefore evidence that he was not deterrable. Graham-Brown explained that while while "Russia and France…emphasized that the crisis had resulted in Iraq's recognition of Kuwait's border and sovereignty", and was therefore evidence that Saddam's could be successfully deterred, "President Clinton stressed that the events of October 1994 showed Iraq still threatening its neighbors", showing that it could not be seen as compliant with even the most basic provisions in UNSCR 687 (respecting Kuwaiti sovereignty) (1999, 79) Here we see the US taking an instance in which it successfully deterred Iraq, and warping it to fit the

narrative that Saddam was noncompliant, which we know, later on, became justification for war.

The US also occasionally successfully *used* force to compel Saddam.

For example, also in January of 1993, Iraq had still refused to remove all its forces from the demilitarized zone along the Kuwaiti border, even though the area was supposed to be turned over to Kuwait the very next day. The following day, the US sent 1,200 troops into Kuwait, to try to compel Saddam to remove his forces from the DMZ. When this proved ineffectual, the US leveled a building thought to be involved in Iraq's nuclear weapons program and also conducted missile strikes on a hotel in the middle of Baghdad. Iraq then withdrew its remaining forces from the demilitarized border zone (Graham-Brown 1999, 352).

However, the US also missed opportunities to demonstrate its threat credibility and to use force in a deterrent/compellent way.

The US did potential damage to its threat credibility by failing to follow through on all the conditional threats it made towards Saddam. In National Security Directive 54, issued on January 15 1991—the deadline for Iraq to withdraw its forces from Kuwait—Bush outlined the mission objectives of Operation Desert Storm. Bush made clear that toppling Saddam would not be one of these objectives, but that he would broaden the mission objectives to include forcible regime change if Saddam perpetrated certain specified deeds.

NSD 54 clearly stated that if Saddam either used WMD against coalition forces or burned the Kuwait oil fields, the US military would depose Saddam (Bush 1991). This knowledge was not available only to those high-level US officials who were allowed to read

NSD 54; This condition was included because amidst debate over the war, there was speculation that Saddam might use WMD on coalition forces (Sifry and Cerf 1991, 197-354) and because Saddam had threatened to burn the Kuwaiti oil fields (Shenon 1991) if the United States invaded.

The reason the Bush administration had decided *not* to include forcible regime change as an outright goal of Desert Storm was that they feared getting bogged down in a lengthy and messy occupation of Iraq (Frontline, 1997). It is safe to say that the US government hoped they would not have to make good on their threat to overthrow Saddam. Therefore, the inclusion of the WMD use/Kuwaiti oil field provision in NSD 54 was intended as a threat to deter Saddam from perpetrating those deeds.

While Saddam did not use WMD against coalition forces, he did set the Kuwaiti oil fields on fire (Shenon 1991). The US did not do what it had promised. The US did not march its forces on Baghdad to remove Saddam.

The US also missed opportunities to practice using force in a compellent way. One of the largest such failures occurred in the 1998 Operation Desert Fox. Operation Desert Fox was a four-day bombing campaign launched by the US after Iraq expelled all UNSCOM weapons inspectors from the country.

The strikes, however, were purely punitive, because they were not designed to get Saddam to re-admit the inspectors. The strikes were not designed to get Saddam to *do* anything.

In a speech given at the end of Operation Desert Fox, President Clinton said that the US's "objectives in this military action were clear: to degrade Saddam's weapons of mass destruction program and related delivery systems, as well as his capacity to attach his

neighbors" (Clinton 1998). Nowhere in these articulated goals for the strike was some action that the US wanted Saddam to take.

Critically, too, the continuation of the strike was not conditional on anything Saddam did or did not do. If we were trying to use force in a compellent way, we would have said "we are going to bomb you and keep bombing you until you take steps x y and z". But, as Pollack expresses succinctly,

"There were no demands placed on Saddam. He was never told that if he allowed the inspectors back in the operation would cease." (2002, 94).

Thus, in Desert Fox, the US missed an opportunity to use force for compellent purposes. Moreover, Desert Fox was an especially *large* missed opportunity to compel Saddam given the scale, intensity and success.

According to a Department of Defense press release in aftermath, (Kozaryn "Strikes damaged more") the operation "involved more than 30,000 U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf and 10,000 more from outside Central Command". The military also flew over 600 sorties, deployed 40 ships, and launched 300 cruise missiles, all in just four days. The military hit 64 out of 66 intended targets and declared an overall "effectiveness" of "85%" for the operation (Kozaryn 1999, "Strikes Damaged").

If we had instead marshaled this use of force in a compellent way—if we had tried to use the force to elicit some concession from Saddam, isn't it at least possible we would have succeeded? After all, this was the US's most extensive single use of force of the post-war sanctions period. Perhaps the fact that this force was punitive rather than compellent and is evidence not just of missed opportunity but further evidence that we had no desire to truly compel Saddam to change his behavior.

Furthermore, after the operation was over, the Defense Department gladly called attention to Saddam's continued "non-compliance". In another press release, the Defense Department highlighted this apparent obstinacy, saying that Saddam was **"**venting his frustration by challenging coalition forces patrolling U.N.-mandated no-fly zones" (Kozaryn 1999, "US Confronts"). Referencing Saddam's non-compliance with the NFZs, a Military leader is quoted in the same article as saying "we're going through a period of challenge". This statement suggests that Saddam's behavior was posing more difficult than usual. But challenging NFZs was not new behavior for Saddam, so this statement suggests an *increase* in no fly zone testing. Thus, the purely punitive Operation Desert Fox actually worsened SH's behavior.

However, this wouldn't stop the US from using this behavior as further evidence that Saddam was undeterrable/uncompellable; The US could point to this and say "look, he lashed out even after we bombed the crap out of him. The guy won't quit no matter what we do".

In fact, Dick Cheney did exactly this. In his August 2002 speech at a Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention, Cheney used Saddam's behavior after Operation Desert Fox to help beat the war drums to tune of "Saddam is undeterrable", saying

"Nothing in the last dozen years has stopped him—not his agreements; not the discoveries of the inspectors; not the revelations by defectors; not criticism or ostracism by the international community; *not four days of bombings by the United States*" (in Ehrenberg et al 2010, 78).

It is almost impressive how seamlessly Cheney managed to fit this into the Saddam-the-undeterrable narrative, given that Operation Desert Fox was not designed to deter or compel Saddam in any way.

Even within a sanctions structure that, on the whole, gave Saddam no incentive to comply or bet deterred, the US ignored instances in which it successfully deterred or compelled Saddam during the sanctions period and the US missed obvious opportunities to bolster its threat credulity and use force in a compellent way.

Perhaps we can view these instances as more evidence that the US was truly not interested in changing Saddam's behavior. This, as we know, stems from the US's goal of regime change.

But *why* was this a goal from the end of the Gulf War on?

Since Saddam was apparently such a big problem in the US's eyes, it would have made the US government's life easier if they could have gotten Saddam to shape up and stop doing all the things they didn't want him to be doing. And after all, war is costly, and they had already fought one against Saddam. So, we can only assume that the US had very good reason for making regime change its goal in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War. In the next section, I will examine just how sound the US's reasons for this were.

Section III:

The Gulf War Period

In this section, I'll try to answer the question: why *did* the US decide to set regime change as a goal of the post-war sanctions period? I will also analyze how justified the US was in deciding to do so.

Why did the US enter the post-Gulf war sanctions period with the goal of regime change?

It seems that after the war, the US saw regime change as the only permanent way and ultimately the most efficient way to keep Saddam from doing things the US didn't want him to do. That's because, in the US's interpretation, the Gulf War had shown that Saddam could not be made to comply by any means other than war. War is costly and not always feasible. So it would just be better to get rid of Saddam once and for all. On the surface, this reasoning seems fair enough. After all, Saddam invaded Kuwait, we gave him more than five months to withdraw, he refused, and we had to go to war to drive him out. The basic narrative is that US did everything someone possibly could do to compel Saddam to back down, and yet he wasn't deterred. But this, like the US's narrative about Saddam's conduct during the post-war sanctions period, is not the full truth.

First, it will be helpful to review the basic and relevant facts of the period between when Saddam invaded Kuwait and the US launched Operation Desert storm to understand the timeline of events. And, because we are talking about whether or not the events prior to the Gulf war really demonstrated that Saddam could not be compelled, it is important to understand the basic demands that were being made of Saddam.

<u>Motivation for War</u>

By all accounts, Saddam invaded Kuwait out of economic desperation and a sense that Kuwait was contributing to his country's economic woes. Saddam was in massive debt after the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Kuwait (among other countries) had leant Saddam money to finance his war effort. Saddam felt that this debt should be forgiven, because in his mind, he had protected all the small Persian Gulf countries from Iranian aggression. Kuwait, also, was producing and selling more oil than its OPEC quota allowed. This was driving down the price of oil, making Saddam's own oil sales less profitable. Additionally, Saddam accused Kuwait of having stolen a significant amount of oil from Iraqi rigs (Freedman and Karsh 1993; Timmerman 1991; Baram in Danchev in Keohane 1994; Rubin in Baram and Rubin 1993; among others).

Timeline of Events

August 02 1990: Saddam invades Kuwait

August 06 1990: UNSC issues resolution 661(imposes sanctions)

August 1990: Saddam announces annexation of Kuwait

January 09 1991: Meeting between Iraq's Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz and US Secretary of State James Baker.

Baker gives a letter from President Bush to Aziz. The letter, intended for Saddam, demands unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. Aziz objects to hostile language in letter and refuses to pass it along to Saddam. Last meeting between US and Iraqi high level officials before January 15

January 15 1991: Deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, after which, Coalition forces would take military action to drive him out of Kuwait

January 17 1991: Operation Desert Storm begins

February 28 1991: Operation Desert Storm ends

April 03 1991: UNSC 687 Passed

Demands Made of Saddam

The demands made of Saddam were issued in UNSCR 660, which denounced Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, and reaffirmed in UNSCR 661, which imposed international coalition sanctions on Iraq, and in each of the subsequent UNSCRs between August of 1990 and January of 1991. These demands were simple: Iraq was to "withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces" from Kuwait and to begin "intensive negotiations" with Kuwait to peacefully resolve the differences between the two countries (UNSC in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 137-156).

To understand why the US entered the post-war sanctions period with the goal of regime change, we have to first look more specifically at how the US has substantiated its claims that the history of the Gulf War showed Saddam to be undeterrable and uncompellable.

By combing speeches made by US and allied statesmen and by reading contemporaneous pro-war arguments by scholars and other government officials, I identified common themes and consolidated them into a few broad claims the US made about why the Gulf War period shows Saddam cannot be deterred. I will then detail what seem to be the US's explanations in support of those big claims, so we can get an idea of how the US viewed the relationship between their own actions and Saddam's responses. I will assess whether, in each case, either of these claims is actually borne out by the historical facts.

TO keep these broad claims as succinct as possible, I will state them in this way: "Saddam was crazy to think or do x thing", in which the party expressing the opinion is the US. So, an expression that "Saddam was crazy to do thing x" is another way of saying "we in the US cannot for the life of us figure out why Saddam would make choice x because to our minds, any rational person would not have made choice x" and therefore, Saddam is not rational and therefore not deterrable.

The claims are as follows:

1) He was crazy to invade Kuwait in the first place, because he should have known we would care
2) He was crazy not to back down and withdraw his forces from Kuwait before the January 15 ultimatum expired

The Second of these claims needs to be broken down into an assumption underlying the claim and into two some sub-claims:

2a. (Assumption): The US gave Saddam ample chance to avoid war and it was totally within Saddam's control to avoid war

2b. (Sub-claim): Saddam was crazy to think he could win the war

2c. (Sub-claim): He was Crazy to think the war wouldn't really happen.

This last sub-claim needs to be broken down still one step further.

2c-i: Assuming he believed the US threat to go to war was credible, he was crazy to think war might somehow have been averted unless he made the unconditional withdrawal demanded of him

2c-ii He was crazy if he didn't believe the US threat to go to war was credible

Now, I will take each of the claims and sub-claims in turn and explain why they are not as justified as they first appear.

1. He was crazy to invade Kuwait in the first place, because he should have known we would care

Of course Saddam knew we would "care" if he invaded Kuwait. Saddam knew that the US would prefer Saddam not go around invading other countries, just as the US would prefer that no country go around invading other countries, as this is potentially destabilizing action. Saddam made this much clear when he ultimately met with Ambassador Glaspie to discuss his dispute with Kuwait, saying "we do not ask people not to be concerned when peace is at issue… It is natural for you as a superpower to be concerned" (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 130).

What Saddam did not know was how much the US would care or be concerned. But it does not matter how much we "cared" or were "concerned" in some abstract way. In terms of deterrence, all that mattered is what Saddam thought we'd be willing to do about it.

There's preferring Saddam not do something, and then there's preferring Saddam not do something so strongly that the US would be willing to take action against him to stop it. This is what Saddam did not know.

The United States did not give Saddam a clear indication before he invaded Kuwait that we would use military force to drive him out.

For example, on July 25 1990, Saddam Hussein met with Ambassador April Glaspie to discuss his disagreement with Kuwait. By many accounts, she might as well have given Saddam a "green light" on his invasion of Kuwait. This incident is discussed in virtually

every piece of writing that has attempted to explain Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. Most commonly cited is that in this meeting, she said,

"We have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait…All that we hope is that these issues are solved quickly" (in Sifry and Cerf, 130). Moreover, after her meeting with Saddam, she reported back to Washington that Saddam was committed to a peaceful settlement, making everyone think Saddam would not actually invade.

It is hard to argue that this was not a serious blunder, and that it may temporarily have made Saddam more inclined to invade Kuwait. Those who maintain that Saddam "should have known" will counter by saying that the United States took measures to correct for this blunder after-the-fact. However, these measures were totally inadequate. According to the Israeli Scholar of Iraq, Amatzia Baram, the "strongest message the US delivered" read, simply: "We believe differences are best resolved by peaceful means" (in Danchev and Keohane 1994). It is hard to argue that this would have corrected Glaspie's blunder, considering she said the exact same thing at one point in her July 25 meeting with Saddam (in in Sifry and Cerf 1991)

Even if, after the Glaspie meeting, the US had issued an unequivocal threat that it would declare war on Saddam if he invaded Kuwait (which the US obviously came nowhere close to doing), it still would have been difficult to correct for Glaspie's blunder.

The context in which the Glaspie meeting occurred rendered it much more influential than you might expect any one meeting to be.

To support this, however, I need to back up, and look at the events that led up to Saddam's meeting with April Glaspie.

On July 17 1990, Saddam gave a revolutionary day speech in which he implied that he would take military action against Kuwait (and possibly the UAE) if they did not agree to raise their oil prices and stop exceeding their production quotas.

The threats in Saddam's speech alarmed the Bush Administration. State department officials told the Iraqi Ambassador to the United States that it was committed to the sovereignty of all Gulf States and any disputes needed to be "settled peacefully and not by threats or intimidation". The US then began to detect Iraqi troop movements near the Kuwaiti border, and soon, large numbers of Iraqi troops had massed on the Kuwaiti border. In response, on July 24, President Bush ordered and announced naval exercises intended to show support for Kuwaiti sovereignty and issued a statement that the exercises were in keeping with the US's commitment to the "free flow of oil through the Straight of Hormuz" (Freedman and Karsh 1993, 51). Saddam called a meeting with US ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie for the very next day (Freedman and Karsh 1993, 52). Therefore it seems this was when Saddam realized that perhaps the US "cared" enough if he invaded Kuwait that they might be willing to take action against him. He wanted to get a better idea of how the US would react if he did invade Kuwait. This was what he wanted to learn from his meeting with Ambassador Glaspie.

In Saddam's mind, there was no inherent tension between his invading Kuwait and the free flow of oil from the Gulf. We was made aware however, after the US's reaction to his July 17 speech, that the US perhaps saw a tension there.

Saddam certainly recognized that the United States was committed to the free flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. If anyone doubted this, it was made clear in the transcript from his July 25, 1990 meeting with Ambassador April Glaspie, when he stated, "The United

States wants to secure the flow of oil. This is understandable and known" (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 125).

But, both in Saddam's mind and in fact, Saddam Hussein's plan to take Kuwait didn't necessarily pose a threat to the free flow of oil through the Straight of Hormuz. There is no doubt that Saddam intended to take over Kuwait's oil when he invaded. Saddam was in massive debt from the Iran-Iraq war, and as he made clear both in his July 17 speech (Freedman and Karsh 51) and in his July 25 meeting with April Glaspie the whole reason he wanted to control Kuwait's oil in the first place was because (for a number of complicated reasons) Kuwait's oil sales were making Iraq's less profitable (Hussein and Glaspie in Sifry and Cerf 1991,122-133).

Many people, such as Andrew Kopkind, then associate editor of The Nation, and Doug Bandow, former special assistant to President Reagan, wrote editorials during the US internal debate leading up to Operation Desert Storm that elaborated on this point: if Saddam controlled Kuwait's oil as well, he could have marginally more control over the price per barrel, but more importantly, he could sell it and keep the profits to alleviate his debt problems (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 216-220). Pat Buchanan, a conservative politician and political columnist made the point especially clearly in an editorial that appeared in several national newspapers. He wrote,

"The Thief of Baghdad stole Kuwait's oil, not to sit on it, but to sell it. He is desperate for cash" (Buchanan in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 213-215).

Furthermore, in Saddam's July 25 meeting with Ambassador Glaspie, when she expressed that President Bush was concerned about Saddam "charging too high a price for oil", Saddam responded by saying "We do not want too high prices for oil. And I remind you

that in1974 I gave Tariq Aziz the idea for an article he wrote which criticized the policy of keeping oil prices high" (Hussein and Glaspie in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 129).

So, keeping oil flowing through the straight of Hormuz was just as important to Saddam as it was to the United States—perhaps even more so.

Therefore, while the United States saw Saddam's invasion of Kuwait as something that might restrict the oil supply, either through deliberate action, or simply by destabilizing the entire region (Bush 1990), Saddam did not conceive of his plan in this way. Saddam called a meeting with Ambassador Glaspie in order to get a sense of the US view only *after* the US had announced Naval exercises and pointedly declared support for the free flow of oil through the Straight of Hormuz. This shows that Saddam did not automatically assume the US would be so distressed by his invasion of Kuwait.

So, in his meeting with Glaspie, Saddam's intent was not just to see how much the issue mattered to the US in an abstract way, but to get a sense of whether or not the US would be willing to take concrete action against him. This is supported by the fact that he alluded repeatedly to a hypothetical military conflict with the US if he invaded Kuwait.

Saddam said of the US's commitment to the free flow of oil, that the US

"must not deploy methods which the United States says it disapproves of—flexing muscles and pressure. If you use pressure, we will deploy pressure and force. "

He said of his of his disagreement with Kuwait that "the solution must be found within an Arab framework and through direct bilateral relations" (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 124-125).

Later in the meeting, he said, “We don’t want war because we know what war means. But do not push us to consider war as the only solution to live proudly and to provide our people with a good living.”

And he said “We want friendship, but we ware not running for it. We reject harm by anybody. If we are faced with harm, we will resist” (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 126).

These statements make clear that 1) Saddam understood it was possible that the US might react with force, 2) Saddam wanted the US to understand he would not back down from such force but that 3) Saddam did not want it to come to this, and would prefer the US stay out of the matter.

By communicating these things, Saddam floated a test balloon to April Glaspie not on whether or not the US cared about his disagreement with Kuwait, but specifically on whether the US would be prepared to take military action against him over the matter.

Glaspie responded as I have quoted above. But she said other things that added to the damage. The slightly expanded version of that quote on the border disagreement with Kuwait is this:

“I admire you extraordinary efforts to rebuild your country. I know you need funds. We understand that and our opinion is that you should have the opportunity to rebuild your country. But we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait” (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 130).

So, not only did Glaspie communicate, as is so often cited, that the US was ambivalent towards Saddam’s designs on Kuwait; In trying to appear sympathetic to Saddam’s economic woes, Glaspie made statements that to Saddam’s ears probably sounded like affirmation and validation of some of his most basic reasons for wanting to invade Kuwait.

Just a couple of sentences later, Glaspie added:

"[Secretary of State] James Baker has directed our official spokesmen to emphasize this instruction" (Hussein and Glaspie in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 130).

This added credence to her statement by conveying that this really was the position of the Bush Administration, and not just her best guess on the spot.

Glaspie also told Saddam that she was there on "direct instruction from the president to seek better relations with Iraq" (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 128) She also told him that on the subject of Iraq's dispute with Kuwait, while the US wanted to know Saddam's "intentions" towards Kuwait, Glaspie was there "in the spirit of friendship—not in the spirit of confrontation" (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 130).

So, returning to the accusation that Saddam should have known: Saddam went into his meeting with April Glaspie knowing that the US was concerned about the possibility he might invade Kuwait, but not knowing *how* concerned and therefore not knowing what the US would be willing to do in response. The message Saddam received was that, while the US would prefer Saddam not invade Kuwait, the US did not want to get involved in it, and that to the US, maintaining at least working relations with Iraq was a higher priority than confronting Iraq over any funny business in Kuwait.

This, and the great and lasting impact the July 25 Glaspie meeting had on Saddam's thinking about our intentions is supported by how Saddam later characterized the meeting in a 1992 interview:

"I…asked her to persuade him [President Bush] to pressure Kuwait if necessary. She [Glaspie] replied: 'I will convey your message immediately.' However she continued, 'the US does not want to be involved in inter Arab disputes.' I then said: 'we do not want you to be

involved either'…They said they would not interfere. In so saying they washed their hands. What response should I have waited for? We entered Kuwait four days later…Bush rallied the world…and attacked Iraq. What was the problem? They had said that they would not intervene!" (Baram in Danchev in Keohane 1994, 28).

Furthermore, let's not forget that the US Congress did not issue authorization for the use of military force until January 12th—just three days before the withdrawal deadline. Furthermore, the country was locked in very public debate over whether it should go to war from August until that time.

It is hard to argue that Saddam should have known that if he invaded Kuwait, the US would go to war, when the US wasn't even sure what it would do if he invaded Kuwait.

In one chapter of *A World Transformed* (1998), authors former President George H. W. Bush and Former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft discuss the administration's immediate reaction to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. Bush's explanation of why he did not immediately announce he would use force against Saddam was simply that he wasn't immediately sure what the US could or should do in response (315). President Bush wasn't even sure what he would do in response to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait *after it happened*. How then, was Saddam supposed to know what the US would do in response to his invasion of Kuwait *before he had even invaded*?

The US, then, has no grounds on which to claim that it truly attempted to deter Saddam from invading Kuwait.

There is another problem with asserting that SH just "should have known" that the US's threat was credible. Setting aside the fact that it is simply tautological, it contradicts another argument the US has at various points used to suggest it is difficult to deter

Saddam; The US says that Saddam makes decisions in an echo chamber, surrounded by yes-men who don't dare say anything other than what Saddam wants to hear. This means that Saddam doesn't always receive all the information an outsider might think was obvious, which in turn makes it hard for the US to predict what Saddam will do. (Pollack 2002, 250; 258-271) So, in effect, the argument that "Saddam should have known we would be willing to go to war because it's just so obvious (and therefore he can't be deterred)" contradicts the argument that "Saddam doesn't know stuff that we would think everyone would know (therefore he can't be deterred)". This problem is comparatively minor, but worth mentioning because it shows internal inconsistency in the US's "logic" behind The Claim.

2. He was crazy not to back down and withdraw his forces from Kuwait before the January 15 ultimatum expired

2a. (Assumption): The US gave Saddam ample chance to avoid war and it was totally within Saddam's control to avoid war.

The United States government kept up a narrative that Saddam had total control over whether or not the United States went to war with him. On January 9th, 1991, six days before the deadline for Iraq to withdraw its forces, Secretary of State Baker and Tariq Aziz met in Geneva in a last effort to settle the matter peacefully. Shortly after, that same day, President Bush held a press conference at the White House, in which he described the meeting and said that while Secretary of State Baker had

"discerned no evidence whatsoever that Iraq was willing to comply with the international community's demand to withdraw from Kuwait and comply with the United Nations resolutions"

and while he, President Bush, was "discouraged" by what he saw as a "total stiff-arm, a total rebuff",

he concluded his statement by saying:

"it isn't too late" and that "now, as before, as it's been before, the choice of peace or war is really Saddam Hussein's to make."

Bush kept up the narrative, even as the war was underway.

On January 16th, as US forces were dropping bombs on Saddam's forces in Kuwait, President Bush gave a speech to the American people in which he declared that the "liberation of Kuwait" had begun. In that speech, Bush construed the war as a totally avoidable outcome that Saddam Hussein had willfully chosen. In explaining his decision to use force against Saddam, he said that, "Saddam met every overture of peace with open contempt" and that "While the world prayed for peace, Saddam prepared for war" (Bush in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 312).

In statements like these, Bush asserted that Saddam had the last clear chance to avoid war. The problem is, this isn't entirely true. President Bush did things in the lead up to the war that compromised Saddam's last clear chance.

Bush did this in two ways. First, he said and did things to bind the US less *conditionally* to war, by indicating that the US would not negotiate with Saddam, and that therefore Saddam could avoid the war only by unconditional compliance with US and UN demands. At the same time, Bush raised the costs for Saddam of this unconditional compliance, making it more costly for Saddam to back down than to stand and fight.

As I have mentioned, Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz and Secretary of State Baker met in Geneva on January 9th in what was ostensibly a final effort to resolve the crisis

peacefully. Originally, however, Secretary of State Baker had been planning to follow this meeting by traveling to Baghdad and meeting with Saddam Hussein, in a yet greater effort to avoid war. President Bush prohibited Baker from doing so, according to then Washington Correspondent of The New Yorker, Elizabeth Drew, because "of suspicions that Baker might be too interested in negotiating" (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 186). This seems like a reasonable assessment given that Drew also said Secretary Baker was known as "congenitally more of a deal maker than other officials", and because Bush justified this decision with statements like, "I'm not in a negotiating mood", "They must withdraw without condition", and "There will be no give" (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 186).

With this action and these statements, Bush eliminated whatever chance there may still have been of negotiations and a peaceful compromise. Critically, though, this kind of tough, macho rhetoric—"I'm not in a negotiating mood", etc.—made it harder for Saddam to back down without looking weak in comparison. According also to Drew, one "key senator" said that this unbending threat "stirred Saddam's Arab macho." This assessment is consistent with everything we know about Saddam.

The Glaspie-Saddam meeting gets discussed almost exclusively for Glaspie's blunder, but there is a wealth of information Saddam's psyche and how he approached potential conflict. Consider, for example, the following excerpts:

"You can come to Iraq with aircraft and missiles but…when we feel that you want to injure our pride and take away the Iraqis' chance of a high standard of living, then we will cease to care and death will be the choice for us...Because without pride life would have no value."

And

"…we are determined to either live as proud men, or we all die" (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 126).

These quotes show that whenever pride was at stake, Saddam considered it unthinkable to back down. This goes beyond a personal difficulty backing down from a challenge; Both Brandon J Kinne, in his 2005 article "Decision making in Autocratic Regimes: A Poliheuristic Perspective" and F. Gregory Gause III, in his 2002 article, "Iraq's Decisions to Go to War, 1980 and 1990" have suggested that Saddam believed that his political survival depended on being viewed both by his people and by his peers as strong. Support that this played into Saddam's decision not to back down comes from Saddam's Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, quoted in the Baghdad Observer after the war. He said that, "After 15 January [1991] there was a military battle. Before 15 January, retreat….meant a political and morale collapse…This collapse would have a domino effect…when you give in politically, it means you have lost your cause even before putting up a fight" (in Baram 1994, 46).

To Saddam, it was more costly to back down than to stand and fight in the face of US calls for unconditional surrender.

This shows that Bush's narrative that Saddam had the last clear chance to avoid war was not accurate. However, being wrong wasn't Bush's only fault. The United States government knew that Saddam would be unlikely to back down if presented with no way out but unconditional surrender. To help them understand Saddam's decision making, the House Armed Services Committee commissioned a psychological profile of Saddam. This was completed and presented to them in December 1990 by Dr. Jerrold M. Post, a renowned scholar of political psychology. In that profile, Post wrote:

"It is important not to insist on total capitulation and humiliation, for this could drive Saddam into a corner and make it impossible for him to reverse his course. He will only withdraw from Kuwait if he believes he can survive with his power an dignity intact."

and

"In the wake of the announcement of the increase of force level, Saddam intensified his request for "deep negotiations", seeking a way out in which he can preserve his power and his reputation. That President Bush has signaled his willingness to send Secretary Baker to meet one-on-one with Saddam is an extremely important step" (Post 1990).

We see here that the US government had been warned not to "insist on total capitulation". So, the US government had explicit warning that Saddam's sense of pride would make it not just difficult, but "*impossible"* for him to back down under a demand for unconditional surrender. And the US government had been told that it was for exactly these reasons it was so important that Secretary Baker meet with Saddam.

Yet, as I already explained, President Bush cancelled the Baker/Saddam meeting proposed for mid-January, and demanded that Saddam "withdraw without condition." He did the exact opposite of what was recommended to him, knowing that as a result Saddam would feel locked into war. Far from giving Saddam the last clear chance to avoid war, President Bush knowingly yanked it away. Then he deliberately kept up a refrain that the choice to avert war lay in Saddam's hands.

I want to emphasize this: contrary to Bush's claim in his January 16 speech that the US had "exhausted all reasonable efforts to reach a peaceful resolution and [had] no choice but to drive Saddam from Kuwait by force", the US purposely avoided doing all it knew it could to avoid war, and in fact did things it knew would result in war. Thus the US didn't

fail to compel Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait; the US deliberately chose not to compel Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait.

2b. (Sub-claim): Saddam was crazy to think he could win the war

The obvious problem with this claim is that "win" is totally unspecified. Certainly, Saddam would have been crazy to think he could pull off some epic rout of US and coalition forces. But this is not at all how he conceived of "winning" the war. Evidence suggests Saddam thought that if he could inflict significant damage on US forces and prolong the conflict beyond any timetable the US had considered, US fears of getting bogged down in another quagmire might make the US more willing to abandon their "unconditional withdrawal" stance or even perhaps give up on Kuwait entirely.

First of all, Saddam entertained no illusions that his military rivaled the US's, and that Iraq would be hard hit by the US forces. As documented by Israel's eminent scholar on Iraq, Amatzia Baram, Saddam anticipated that his forces 'would suffer grave causalities' because he knew the US's "weapons are more advanced' (in Danchev and Keohane 1994, 45). While he expected to take heavy casualties, he also believed he could inflict significant pain on the United States. To this point, in his July 25 meeting with Ambassador Glaspie, he said,

"We know that you can harm us although we do not threaten you. But we too can harm you. Everyone can cause harm according to their ability and their size" (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 125).

He knew he had an inferior air force, but also thought the air campaign—which was to constitute a large portion of the coalition's offensive—wouldn't be decisive. SH believed

that “the air force can not settle a ground battle, regardless of the sophisticated weaponry.” that this was “a rule governing all conventional and liberation wars.” (Baram in Danchev and Keohane” Indeed, with respect to conventional war, the notion that decisive superiority in land power is critical to any conflict has been long a part of US military thinking (U.S. Army 2014) and is a view reflected in US Foreign Policy scholarship (Mearsheimer 2001).

With respect to liberation wars, Saddam further pointed to the failure of the extensive air campaign strategy in Vietnam as evidence that the coalition air strikes wouldn’t be decisive. The reality in the Gulf War ended up being that the coalition’s air strikes were more damaging than Saddam imagined and most importantly, facilitated ground effective ground operation. Because of Saddam’s counsel comprised a bunch of yes-men too afraid to tell Saddam the truth when it contradicted his beliefs, none of his advisors dared to point out important strategic differences between the Vietnam jungle and the Iraqi desert (Baram in Danchev and Keohane 1994, 45). It is easy to look at this in hindsight and because Operation Desert Storm was so successful say “how foolish—he was crazy to think this!”.

So, it must be noted that in the planning stages of Operation Desert Storm, some decision makers in the US expressed doubts over the success of an air campaign, even though they recognized it would be more successful than in a jungle. Furthermore, the US expected the Iraqi military to be stronger and put up a better fight than it ended up doing, and also though that the American forces would suffer much higher casualties than ended up being the case; The US thought they would lose 1,000 American soldiers (Woodward in Mintz 1993, 611) even though they ended up suffering only 149 combat deaths. The US was

deeply worried that an invasion of Iraq could lead to a Vietnam-like conflict from which they would have difficulty extracting themselves. US decision makers knew that there would be no public support or patience for such a conflict. This reflected in Bush's January 17 1991 speech to the American people in which he declared that operations were underway in Kuwait, but also tried to reassure them, saying

"I've told the American people before that this will not be another Vietnam. I repeat this here tonight (in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 313).

Saddam too knew that the American public would not tolerate another quagmire. While the Bush Administration hoped to god that Iraq did not become another Vietnam, Saddam to god that it would.

There is evidence for this in a speech broadcast on Baghdad Radio that Saddam gave On January 20 1991, just a few days after the coalition forces had begun their military campaign.

Commenting on President Bush's apparent incredulity that Saddam had refused to back down, Saddam said,

"He (Bush) is wondering how the Iraqis can confront his fading dreams with such determination and firmness. After a while, he will begin to feel frustrated, and his defeat will be certain…" (Hussein in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 315).

Here we see that Saddam equated US frustration with Iraqi victory, meaning he thought if he could put up enough of a fight, the US might give up. The manner in which Saddam planned to incite that frustration was not complicated. As shown by comments later in the speech, Saddam hoped that

"the scale of death and the number of dead [would], God willing, rise among the ranks of atheism, injustice, and tyranny",

wherein the phrase "ranks of atheism, injustice, and tyranny" refers to US soldiers (Hussein in Sifry and Cerf 1991, 316).

While we now know that the Gulf War was not another Vietnam, this was owing to the immense amount of careful planning that went into the operation. But this planning was motivated by the genuine US fear that an invasion of Iraq *would* become a quagmire of its own (Mintz 611-613). So, while Saddam's vision ended up not being accurate, it is not fair to dismiss this view as crazy or irrational, because US military planners and many in the Bush administration also—at least before careful planning—considered this outcome highly plausible.

2c. (Sub-claim): He was Crazy to think the war wouldn't really happen.

2c-i: Assuming he believed the US threat to go to war was credible, he was crazy to think war might somehow have been averted unless he made the unconditional withdrawal demanded of him

There is some evidence that Saddam thought the Soviets and French would convince the US and Britain not to go through with the war by negotiating some compromise between the status quo and unconditional withdrawal. For this to be a viable explanation in western eyes, Saddam must have thought they had the power to stop the war and also wanted to do so, and there has to be evidence that it was reasonable for him to believe these things. Evidence that Saddam thought France and USSR could and would stop war come in Saddam's statements after the war "that Gorbachev and Mitterrand 'mislead' him

and that he had thought "everything would be rectified at the last minute" (Baram in Danchev and Keohane 1994, 44). There is also evidence that Saddam had some rational reasons for thinking this: Amatzia Baram wrote that SH's resentment of "Mitterand had some justification" because, at the last minute, Mitterand canceled the trip the Foreign Minister was supposed to take to Iraq on January 14 (the day before the allied ultimatum expired) to work on negotiating some settlement other than war (in Danchev and Keohane 44).

So, we see that all of these elements of Iraqi behavior in the prelude to the Gulf War that the US found inexplicable and from which it therefore concluded that Saddam was undeterrable are, on the contrary, quite explicable, and therefore not evidence that Saddam was undeterrable.

There is one element of Iraqi behavior I have not yet addressed:

2c-ii He was crazy if he didn't believe the US threat to go to war was credible

As I stated at the beginning of this essay, words are not enough to make a threat credible. If an adversary is trying to decide whether or not your threat is credible, he will look more at your actions than your words. In particular, he will look at his own experience of interacting with you in the past. So, in the next section, I will examine the question: was there anything in the US's history of relations with Iraq that might have led Saddam to believe the US's 1991 threat of war was not credible? To answer this question, I will jump back in time about a decade.

Section IV:

The Tilt, 1982-1990

Could US Relations with Iraq in the decade before the Gulf War give Saddam reasons to doubt the US's threat credibility?

The US and Iraq had closed off formal diplomatic ties in 1967 because of the Arab-Israeli war. Later, Iraq had been somewhat of a USSR client state, while the Shah's government in Iran had US backing. The US saw its influence in Iran (and Saudi Arabia) as balancing Soviet influence in Iraq and elsewhere in the region. It was not until after the Shah was overthrown in 1979 and the US watched a hostile, vehemently anti-American government take over the country, that the US had any interest in Iraq. Moscow's material support for Saddam came with many strings attached, and Saddam was tired of the USSR meddling in the internal affairs of Iraq. So, at the same time the US was worrying about the loss of it's twin pillar in Iran and about the need to constrain the new Iranian government's influence in the region, Saddam was looking to reduce his dependence on the Soviet Union. The US mostly watched from sidelines for the first couple of years of the Iran-Iraq war. But when Iran looked like it was gaining the upper hand and might beat Iraq, the US became concerned enough to want to tip the scales in Iraq's favor and, hurting badly from two years of war, Saddam was desperate enough to accept help. So, in 1982, the US began their "tilt" towards Iraq—that is, the US began providing Iraq indispensible material and strategic aid, and consequently, relations began to re-open and improve between the two countries.

I will examine the US and Iraqi relationship in the previous decade, and what I will seek to show is that from 1982 to 1900, the United States pursued better relations with

Iraq by providing it both material and strategic aid and by promoting US business interests in the country. At the same time, the US consistently turned a blind eye to Iraq's nefarious conduct whenever it could. And when it couldn't, the US responded with, at the most punitive, nothing but reluctant censure.

Nowhere is the evidence for this more compelling than in US's demonstrated indifference to Iraq's chemical weapons use, so I will start by discussing the US's reactions to Saddam's earliest CW use.

No one has better documented the history of American and western support for Iraq's weapons programs than Author Kenneth R. Timmerman in *The Death Lobby: How the West Armed Iraq* (1991). According to Timmerman's research, that the US knew certainly no *later* than September of 1983 that Iraq was developing CW. CIA Intel and "diplomatic cables" showed that German companies were supplying Iraq materials needed to produce poison gas support. And, while the U.S. sent the German Foreign Ministry a "series of diplomatic notes" expressing concern over German's willingness to provide Iraq these material, the German government paid no attention to the notes, and did not prohibit Germany companies from continuing these sales. In response, the US did not press harder, tacitly accepting Germany's conduct, at least for the time being. Yet, the very next month, at Tarek Aziz's behest, the US leaned heavily on France to go through with a loan of fighter jets to Iraq for use against the Iranians (Timmerman 1991, 135-136).

In December 1983, President Reagan sent Donald Rumsfeld, Special Envoy to the Middle East, to Baghdad to propose a re-opening of formal diplomatic relations with Iraq. The US irrefutably knew by November 1st 1983 that Iraq was using CW on an "almost daily" basis against the Iranians (USDS 1983 November 1). The same state department memo,

directly after mentioning this CW use, mentioned an upcoming meeting in which the National Security Council would discuss ways in which the US would help Iraq in the war against Iran. The memo further said, that the US needed, "in keeping" with general and unconditional US disapproval of CW use by any country, to get Iraq to curb CW use, and that perhaps the best way of doing this might be to bring the CW issue up in the same conversation that the US offers Iraq some aid for its war efforts (USDS 1983 November 21).

This shows first that revelations or confirmation of Iraq's CW use in no way changed the US's desire to aid Iraq. This shows second that the US planned, or finalized plans, to re-open formal diplomatic relations with Iraq after knowing for certain that SH violating the Geneva Convention rules of war by employing CW against his enemy. These facts, taken together with the fact that the US stated, in an internal memo, that its own opposition to Iraq's CW use stemmed from a need to be "consistent" in their policy on CW issue (USDS 1983 November 21) shows that the US didn't really care about the CW use except insofar as it made a diplomatic and political headache for the US.

While the US was tiptoeing around the issue of Iraq's CW use, it continued trying to nurture the relationship between the two countries by giving Iraq some help in its war against Iran. In a December 20 1983 meeting between Saddam and Donald Rumsfeld, Saddam conditioned re-opening of formal diplomatic relations on the US blocking worldwide arms sales to Iran (Timmerman 1991, 140). The US had undertaken exactly this task when it launched "Operation Staunch" earlier in 1983 (Kemp), but according to a diplomat also on Rumsfeld's trip to Iraq, Saddam's message in the December meeting led the US to redouble its efforts (Timmerman 1991, 140), including pressuring Israel to stop its arms shipments to Iran, whereas previously, Washington had given "tacit approval" to

Israel's Iran dealings (Timmerman 141). To further facilitate blocking arms sales to Iran, and thereby show Iraq that the US was committed to re-opening formal relations with it, the US put Iran on the state-sponsored terrorism list (Timmerman 142) from which it had removed Iraq two years previously (Battle 2003).

In February 1984, Iraq used large scale CW attacks in response to Iranian troop offensives, in response to which Iran appealed to both the UN and worldwide public opinion for justice (Robinson and Goldblat 1984).

It is clear that that the US government's eventual public condemnation of Iraqi CW use came only because the US felt it was no longer politically and diplomatically possible to ignore the issue. In a Department of State memo from just a few days before the US did finally issue that condemnation, a sentence saying that the department was working on a press statement "that will forcefully condemn Iraq for its use of Chemical weapons" is immediately preceded by a sentence saying "the issue of Iraqi use of chemical weapons has been receiving greater media attention in the United States" (USDS 1984 March 04), showing that the US was pressured into giving this condemnation when it did partly as a result of internal political pressures.

On March 05, the US declared what it in fact knew at least four months earlier, "that the available evidence substantiates Iran's charges that Iraq has used chemical weapons". Moreover, the US's March 5 statement, ostensibly intended to condemn Iraq's CW use, devoted almost as much time to condemning Iran for perpetuating "the bloodshed" in the war and even condemns the very nature of the Iranian regime (USDS 1984 March 04).

Later in March, Iran brought the issue to the UN Commission on Human Rights, seeking some kind of censure or punishment for Iraq. In a telegram to the US delegation in

Geneva, Secretary of State George Shultz instructed the delegation to push other western countries to "take 'no decision' on [the] Iranian Draft resolution" on Iraq's CW use and to vote in favor of the resolution only if efforts to sway allies failed and most other western countries were going to voting in favor of the resolution (USDS 1984 March 14). This shows that the US was committed to doing exactly the bare minimum that diplomacy required in response to Iraq's CW use.

A State department internal memo dated March 5th—the same day the US issued their public condemnation of Iraq's CW use—provides further evidence of the US's determination to help Iraq despite Iraqi transgressions. The memo's author writes that the Commerce Department, after consulting with the State Department, was allowing the sale of 2000 American-made dual-use trucks. The author further notes that a congressional staffer asked a State Department official if they thought Iraq was planning to use the trucks for military purposes, to which the official responded that the State Department "presumed that was Iraq's intention" so they "had not asked" (USDS 1984 March 05). The US approved the sale to Iraq of many different kinds of dual-use equipment throughout the 1980s, instructing Iraq that this equipment was not to be used for military purposes (Timmerman 1991). This provides direct, confirming evidence that the US sold this equipment to Iraq expecting Iraq to use it for the very purpose the US had forbidden.

After Iraq's CW was more widely known as a result of Iraq's large scale February 1984 attacks on Iranian troops, staff at the American Embassy in Baghdad would describe Iraq CW's use as "the one serious hitch in our relations" (Timmerman 1991,144), just as one might say of a new boyfriend or girlfriend "I like everything about them, except that they smoke and I think cigarettes are gross. That's the only hitch in our relationship."

On March 30, during a press conference, a US official said in response to a journalist that Iraq's confirmed CW use had not changed the US's desire to be "involved in a closer dialogue with Iraq" (USDS 1984 March 31). This is unsurprising, of course, considering, as previously discussed, the US knew about Iraq's CW use before March 5 and before they sent Donald Rumsfeld to Iraq the previous December to initiate the re-opening of formal diplomatic relations with Iraq. It is consistent with the US's commitment throughout this period to backing Iraq regardless of what the regime was doing.

Furthermore, it was in 1983 that the US started extending huge lines of credit to Iraq under export credit program of the Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). This allowed Iraq to import huge quantities of grain and other food from US producers—a huge boon to Iraq because it was spending so much money on military equipment it did not have much to spare to keep its people and soldiers fed (Frantz and Waas 1992).

Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Richard Murphy, reportedly told Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz in early 1984 that Iraq's CW use was "totally unacceptable", but never commented on the CW use in any of his subsequent meetings with Saddam Hussein (Timmerman 1991, 144). While Donald Rumsfeld, too brought the Iraq's CW use up with Tariq Aziz during his visit (USDS 1983, December 20), he did not address the issue of CW in his December 20, 1983 meeting with Saddam Hussein (USDS 1983, December 21), acting on the White House and State Departments' belief that "the restoration of diplomatic ties" with Iraq far outweighed any concern about the regime's behavior (Timmerman 1991, 144).

The US's aid to Iraq during its war with Iran took on other forms as well.

On May 17, 1987, An Iraqi fighter jet shot missiles as a US frigate named the USS Stark, ultimately killing 37 US sailors (Cushman Jr. 1987). Iraq did not admit wrong doing, claimed that the incident was an accident, claiming that the pilots must have mistaken the Stark for an Iranian vessel. Iraq also blamed Iran for the incident. However, Saddam Hussein personally apologized to President Reagan and declared that he would investigate the matter further (Brummer and Hirst 1987).

In response, President Reagan accepted Saddam's apology, and essentially parroted the official Iraqi line, telling the American public the incident was an accident and saying that Iran 'was the real villian' in the incident because it was responsible for continuing the war by refusing to negotiate a ceasefire (Cannon 1987).

The Navy's own inquiry found that the Stark commanders did not take all standard measures to prevent an attack, such as warning the Iraqi plane to stay away or turning the ship so that its anti aircraft weapons could hit the approaching plane. Though the Navy decided not to court martial the commanders, it made a point to paint this decision as lenient and it relived the USS Stark commanders of their duties, essentially terminating their careers (Cushman 1987). Thus, there were no serious repercussions for Iraq, and the only people that did get punished for the incident were Americans.

In spring of 1988, Iranian troops and pro-Iranian Kurdish forces won control of the Iraqi city of Halabja, which sits very close to the border between the two countries (Hiltermann 2013). Saddam tried to retake the city by bombarding it with conventional weapons. After two days of this, Saddam resorted once again to using chemical weapons. On March 16, 1988, Iraqi warplanes doused the city of Halabja in mustard gas and the

nerve agent Sarin. About 5,000 people died, most of who were Iraqi Kurdish residents of the city (BBC 2008).

Joost Hiltermann, author of *A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja*, wrote a New York Times article on the subject that pre-dated and previewed his 2007. In this article, he partially blamed the US government for Halabja, saying that because it failed to punish Saddam for previous chemical weapons uses for this, Saddam sensed he had "carte blanche" from the US government to carry out whatever kind of brutality he wished (2003). This seems a reasonable conclusion given what we know about the US's responses to Saddam's CW use earlier in the 1980s.

Furthermore, the US government tried at first to shield Iraq from blame, shown in Hiltermann's claim that

"Analysis of thousands of captured Iraqi secret police documents and declassified U.S. government documents, as well as interview with scores of Kurdish survivors, senior Iraqi defectors and retired U.S. intelligence officers, show [that]…the United states, fully aware it was Iraq [that carried out the attacks], accused Iran, Iraq's enemy in a fierce war, of being partly responsible for the attack. The State Department instructed its diplomats to say that Iran was partly to blame".

Thus, we can see that in response to the Halabja massacre, Saddam's most egregious use of chemical weapons to that date, the US maintained its previous pattern of responses to Iraqi chemical weapons use. It did its best to downplay the issue, turn a blind eye, and in this case, it even tried to shield Iraq from blame.

Furthermore, when the UN Security Council finally condemned the attack, it did not single out Iraq, rather calling for "both sides to refrain from future use of chemical weapons" (UNSC in Hiltermann 2003).

On August 25th, 1988, just five days after the official end of the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam began bombing Kurds with Chemical Weapons in retaliation for their collaboration with the Iranians and other rebellious activities during the war. Saddam perpetrated so much violence against the Kurds that it has been fairly characterized as an effort to exterminate the Kurdish population of Iraq (Human Rights Watch 1993).

In response, the Senate passed the "Prevention of Genocide Act of 1988". The Act would impose severe economic sanctions on Iraq by stopping US loans and impeding loans from multilateral organizations, halting the sale of all dual-use equipment, stopping all lines of credit to and all oil and petroleum imports from Iraq (100th Congress 1988).

However, Duke University Professor of Political Science Bruce W. Jentleson documented in his 1994 book, *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam, 1982-1990*, that the Reagan administration immediately came out against the bill and indicated that President Reagan was prepared to veto the bill if it reached his desk. At the same time, the Reagan administration pressured members of the House to water down the sanctions provisions through amendments. Ultimately, the Senate and the House could not agree on a version of the bill before the session of Congress ended, so the bill died (78-92).

By thwarting the Senate's effort to finally punish Iraq for one of its misdeeds, the Reagan administration certainly acted in character. More damningly, its actions appeared to be directly pressured by Saddam Hussein.

Saddam tried in numerous ways to coerce the US government into killing the bill. When news of the bill reached Saddam, he "bussed 18,000 people in double-decker busses to the US embassy for a three hour protest denouncing American 'interference' in Iraqi internal affiars" (Jentleson 1994, 80). Saddam applied further pressure by making conditional threats to the US's interests; Saddam threatened not to make good on the restitution payments he had promised for the Iraqi strike on the USS Stark (Jentleson 1994, 92). This would have been damaging not just financially, but politically, given that the US had let Saddam off of the hook for the incident. Saddam also threatened that, if the bill passed, he would stop importing American agricultural products and that he would not pay his remaining CCC agricultural debts (Jentleson 1994, 83). The US had granted Iraq $3.4 billion in export credits under the CCC since 1983, and US agricultural producers and exporters considered Iraq a valuable market with even greater market potential. Not only would the US take a heavy financial hit on any loans Iraq refused to repay and on the lost profit from future agricultural sales; the agricultural lobby would be furious with the government. Representatives from agricultural districts understood this, and that's why, as Jentleson points out, many House members opposed the bill even before they were pressured b the Reagan administration to do so (84).

Instead of lobbying counter threats against Saddam, or otherwise trying to get him to back down, the Reagan administration acted as Saddam's megaphone, making sure that Congress heard his threats loud and clear (Jentleson 1994, 83).

A September 13 1988 telegram from the US embassy in Baghdad to the Secretary of State documents a meeting between Saddam's Minister of Industry (and also son-in-law),

Husayn Kamel, and representatives of the Bechtel Corporation. Bechtel had won a contract to rebuild much of Iraq's infrastructure in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war.

Bechtel Group was also a member of the US-Iraqi Business forum, which served as an unofficial pro-Iraq lobby in Congress. According to the telegram, Husayn Kamel went on a "lengthy diatribe" conveying his (and more importantly, Saddam's) anger that the Senate had passed the 1988 Prevention of Genocide Act. The Bechtel representatives then pressured Congress by promising that if Congress imposed sanctions, Bechtel would simply fulfill their $2 billion contract with Iraq without using any US suppliers The US stood to lose big if US suppliers were shut out of Bechtel's project because US firms had already won hundreds of millions of dollars in sub-contracts for this project (USDS 1988 September 13). Letting this happen was a non-starter, and Saddam knew it. This was one more way in which Saddam was able to pressure the House of Representatives to kill the bill.

The next year, the US was rocked by the BNL scandal. The Atlanta branch of BNL, an Italian bank, had lent Iraq billions of dollars in excess of what it was permitted to, some of which happened to be CCC money. In concert with BNL Atlanta, Iraq was abusing the CCC program by illegally buying weapons and weapons technology with US money intended for agricultural and other civilian goods. The scandal first came to public attention in August of 1989 By September, it was clear that Saddam had used the US aid program that had sustained his regime and country during the Iran-Iraq war for the most nefarious of purposes. Embarrassingly, this made the US an unknowing tacit accomplice to his illegal activity (Sciolino 1992).

Many players in the US government were furious. According to historian Zachary Karabell, in response to the BNL revelations, various departments in the US government

began “internal reviews of policy toward Iraq” (1995, 34). The most immediate policy question the government needed to answer was whether or not they should terminate CCC credit lines to Iraq.

The Department of Agriculture worried that the still unfolding BNL scandal could “blow the roof off the CCC” (35-36)—that is, ruin the entire program, not just as it applied to Iraq.

However, they were more afraid that cutting off CCC (Commodity Credit Corporation) credit would tank relations with Iraq—relations that had been “carefully nurtured” during the previous seven or so years. Furthermore, the USDA knew that the agricultural lobby in the US would be vehemently opposed to terminating the CCC credit. Meanwhile, the Department of Treasury, the Federal Reserve, and the OMB argued in favor of cutting off CCC credit to Iraq because of its worsening credit. Not surprisingly, the State Department—ever a cheerleader for Iraq—sided with the USDA. The State Department agreed that terminating CCC credit to Iraq would jeopardize US-Iraqi relations and hurt US agricultural producers. The DoD further justified their position by saying that cutting of CCC credit to Iraq would not be “in line” with NSD 26 (Karabell 1995, 35-37).

The FBI’s investigation and the USDA’s own investigation of the BNL affair were both still underway, so there were as yet no formal findings. This meant the Bush administration did not yet have either exhaustive knowledge of Iraq’s wrongdoing or incontrovertible proof of the wrongdoing they already strongly suspected. Jentleson’s documentation of the internal deliberations over continuing or terminating the CCC program during this time shows that the protracted nature of the BNL affair allowed US government officials to say something to the effect of “we are still gathering the facts”,

which in turn served as private and public justification for continuing the CCC credits. This was true—they were still gathering the facts. But, Jentleson's documentation of these internal deliberations makes clear that agency leaders had little doubt that Saddam had massively scammed the US (1994, 139-145)

From the US's perspective, this was likely Saddam's most egregious action to that point, because it posed the greatest potential harm to the US. And yet, the US did nothing to punish Iraq. They plowed ahead, business as usual.

At no time during the deliberations did any of these parties discuss Saddam's copious human rights abuses, WMD use, or continuing WMD programs (Karabell 1995, 37). This shows that these issues were not ones the US considered when trying to decide if they should continue business with Iraq. This is perfectly in keeping with the US's attitude towards Saddam's human rights abuses and CW use throughout the previous seven years; to the US, these unsavory activities were besides the point and did not at all impact US policy towards Iraq.

In early October, the US sent Secretary of State Baker to reassure Tariq Aziz that the United States wanted good relations between the two countries and that the US viewed the BNL scandal as "nothing but a temporary setback" (Karabell 1995, 35).

Again, we see that the US was committed to plowing ahead with business as usual. Meanwhile, Saddam plowed ahead with transgressions as usual. In early March of 1990, Iraq convicted a British journalist named Farzad Bazoft of espionage for trying to investigate an explosion at a "military-industrial" site that the Iraqi government had gone to great lengths to keep under wraps. On March 15 1990, Iraq executed Farzad Bazoft despite repeated pleas for clemency or at least a stay of execution from Margaret Thatcher

and diplomats of other western nations. Britain immediately withdrew their ambassador from Iraq (Freedman and Karsh 1993, 33-35).

The US had a government spokesperson declare that US "deplore[d] Iraq's decision", but the US took no action in response. When a reporter asked the spokesperson if the US government was "going to do anything about it" (it being Iraq's execution of Farzad Bazoft), the spokesperson responded by saying, "What do you mean, are we going to do something about it?" and followed up by saying "We have made a very strong statement." (Jentleson 1994, 153).

The United States once again took no concrete action in response to an egregious Iraqi transgression. More strikingly, as this exchange shows, it seemed to not even have *occurred* to the US to make any kind of punitive response to this incident.

A few weeks later, on April 02, Saddam Hussein gave a speech in which he spouted more bellicose and anti-American rhetoric than usual. But what truly alarmed the United States and other members of the international community was the threat he made to "make the fire eat up half of Israel", or in other words, to bomb Israel with chemical weapons if Israel attacked Iraq (as it had done in 1981 by bombing Iraq's only nuclear reactor) (Freedman and Karsh 1993, 32).

In response, President Bush tried to mollify Saddam by communicating assurances from Israel that Israel would not strike Iraq unprovoked. And, in classic US fashion, President Bush delivered a strongly worded statement—although, to his credit, this time it was in written form and delivered to Saddam by Ambassador April Glaspie. The main admonition in the statement reads:

"Iraqi actions in recent weeks and months have caused a sharp deterioration in US-Iraqi relations. Iraq will be on a collision course with the US if it continues to engage in actions that threaten the stability of the region, undermine global arms control efforts and flout US laws" (Jentleson 1994, 156)

While this text can certainly can be seen as a strong rebuke, the ominous warning that the two countries would be "on a collision course" if Saddam kept up certain activities is so vague that it does not really amount to a concrete threat. The US does not identify *exactly* what activities it wished Saddam to stop. The activities described are described only by their consequences, as perceived by the United States. No doubt Saddam did not think of his own actions as ones that would "threaten the stability of the region". On the contrary, we know that Saddam viewed himself as a strong leader that had saved the Persian Gulf region and the greater Middle East from destabilizing Iranian aggression (Hussein and Glaspie in Sifry and Cerf, 131). Nor did the US clearly identify what the consequences would be of failing to stop those unspecified activities. What was Saddam to take "collision course" to mean? Another strongly worded statement?

The US went on to be marginally more specific, saying that Saddam Hussein's government needed to

"Take some concrete steps particularly in areas involving human rights and illegal procurement activities…to reduce tensions." (Jentleson 1994, 157)

One can only speculate, but it is easy to imagine that Saddam had a good belly laugh over this. The United States had never shown any committed concern over Saddam's cornucopia of human rights abuses. Just months earlier, the US had done basically nothing in response to the Halabja massacre, and just weeks earlier, had barely batted an eye in

response to his grossly unjust execution of Farzad Bazoft. The US hadn't even been willing to punish Saddam for the "illegal procurement activities" that had defrauded and embarrassed the US government and jeopardized the legitimacy and existence of the entire CCC export credit program in the process. It is easy to imagine that Saddam read the memo with an eyebrow raised, and after some good chuckles, tossed it in the wastebasket and said "Yeah, OK." Saddam would have been justified in doing so, since, unsurprisingly; the US did not follow up these demands with any concrete action to make Saddam comply.

Just days later, on April 10, British Customs agents intercepted critical final components of the now infamous Supergun that Saddam was close to completing (Freedman and Karsh 1993, 33-37). The weapon would have been the pièce de résistance of a weapons development program called "Project Babylon", started by Saddam in 1988, which Timmerman called "a doomsday project to annihilate [Iraq's] neighbors"(1991, 380). The massively powerful Supergun would have been able to hit targets as far as 1,000km away (Directorate of Intelligence 1991, i)—a distance within which Israel was well within range.

A delegation of 5 US Senators happened to be in Iraq at the time, met with Saddam Hussein the very next day. The Senators did communicate concerns over the Supergun revelation, and over Saddam's weapons programs more generally, but framed these concerns within in a larger, louder narrative of wanting to improve relations with Iraq. To this end, Senator Dole told Saddam:

> "…President Bush has assured me that he wants better relations, and that the U.S. government wants better relations with Iraq."

Inconveniently, there was yet another round of sanctions against Iraq under consideration in Congress at the time. So, Dole went on to further assure Saddam that President Bush opposed the sanctions, and if necessary, would likely veto them. Senator Dole qualified this assurance only vaguely and unconvincingly, adding,

"…Unless something provocative were to happen, or something of that sort"

Ambassador Glaspie, who was also party to the meeting, immediately affirmed Dole's message of support, saying,

> "As the ambassador of the U.S., I am certain that this is the policy of the U.S." (in Sifry and Cerf, 1991, 119-120).

The Supergun incident, combined with Saddam's April 02 speech, did spur the US government into a little bit of action: On April 16, Deputy National Security Advisor Robert Gates headed a meeting of deputy directors many government agencies to discuss possible changes in official policy towards Iraq. Despite all of Saddam's transgressions since Bush had taken office, it was the "first meeting at such a senior level to assess relations with Iraq since the issuance of NSD-26" in 1989 (Jentleson 1994, 157). The group resolved to tighten US export controls on materials that could be possibly used in weapons programs, and to spearhead a multilateral effort to the same end (Jentleson 1994, 158).

President Bush and, not surprisingly, State Department officials, did not want to anger Saddam by making him feel as though Iraq had been singled out, even though, of course, that was exactly what the export controls were designed to do. The administration wanted to find a way to make it seem like the tighter export controls on Iraq were part of a larger effort as well. But apparently no one came up with a way to do this, because Jentleson's documentation of the period shows that US export controls were not tightened

at this time (158-159). It seemed that concern for Saddam's feelings trumped the April 16 interagency consensus that tightening export controls was an imperative action step.

By late May, the USDA had apparently gathered enough damning facts in the BNL case that it decided to terminate CCC program in Iraq. The State department accepted this decision, but knew it would incense Saddam, and did not want to draw more attention to it than was necessary. So, they prevented the USDA from making an explicit statement to this effect (Jentleson 161-162).

The decision therefore received such little publicity that even government officials involved in Iraq policy, such as members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, did not become aware of the policy change until later (Karabell 1995, 43).

The Bush administration had judged Saddam Hussein's conduct undeniably troubling that it was finally, after 8 years, willing to make a punitive response (which, let's not forget, consisted of taking away *aid*). But this effort to downplay publicity on the decision shows that even in taking punitive action, the Bush administration prioritized relations with Iraq to some extent by taking pains to protect Saddam from international and domestic embarrassment.

Just a couple of months later came events that I have already discussed, but that I will briefly review in order to bring this narrative full circle. Saddam gave his July 17 speech in which threatened to take action against Kuwait if it did not comply with his various demands regarding debt forgiveness and oil production and pricing. A few days later, US satellite imagery showed Iraqi military contingents moving towards the Kuwaiti border. As I have previously described, these events precipitated the now famous meeting

between Saddam Hussein and US Ambassador April Glaspie (Freedman and Karsh 1993, 42-64) that I have already discussed.

We can say a few things for sure about the way the US presidential administrations interacted with Iraq between 1982 and 1990. This period can be seen as a string of Iraqi Transgressions and US responses, wherein the US responded to Iraqi transgressions in several different ways: by turning a blind eye for as long as it could; by giving perfunctory and toothless statements of condemnation when international diplomacy and domestic politics made it necessary for the US to censure Saddam; by diverting blame from Iraq even when the US knew perfectly well that Iraq was at fault (e.g. USS Stark and CW use); by quashing all congressional efforts to punish Iraq for its bad behavior. A common trait unites these responses; none of them come anywhere close to being punitive; in fact, these kinds of responses are exceedingly non-punitive—accommodating, even.

By responding to Iraqi transgressions in this way, the US had demonstrated a benevolent indifference to Saddam's nefarious conduct and shown that it would not take action to stop such conduct, even when the United States found that conduct abhorrent, and even when the US expressed this to Saddam.

In plainer terms, this pattern of response to Iraqi behavior between 1982 and 1990 would have made it hard for Saddam to believe that the US would be willing to take action stop Saddam from doing practically anything—even if that "anything" was really, really bad, and even if the US told him to stop it.

In short, the US behavior towards Iraq between 1982 and 1990 meant that, going into the Gulf War period, the US had zero threat credibility.

Conclusion

It is important to understand why, after the first Gulf War, the US concluded that Saddam could not be deterred, and therefore needed to go. It is also important to understand how this conclusion the US came to in 1991 shaped all subsequent US-Iraqi relations and ultimately led to a second war.

After the Gulf war was over, the US looked back at the prelude to the war and observed that it had not successfully deterred Saddam from invading Kuwait or compelled him to leave. The US did not appreciate how its actions and pattern of behavior towards Iraq from 1982 to 1990 rendered its threat of war less credible. Nor did the US appreciate that by failing to deter Saddam from invading Kuwait, the US made it much more difficult to compel him to leave. The US believed that it had truly done everything it should have done to compel Saddam to leave Kuwait. Therefore, the US concluded that deterrence just wouldn't work on Saddam.

The US decided in 1991 that Saddam was not deterrable. Saddam lived up to this label during the 1990s because the United States structured the sanctions in a way that incentivized *non*-compliance. The US then used this record of manufactured noncompliance as justification for the 2003 invasion.

Perhaps, by 2003, the US had so ruined any ability to credibly use both assurances and threats together that it was fair to say that it could not deter Saddam at this point. But at the very least, we can say that indeed *the US* was to blame for ruining that ability by first feeding Saddam carrots for a decade and then doing nothing but whacking Saddam with a stick for more than a decade. And we can say that the US's original conclusion that Saddam

was not deterrable (made in 1991) was 1) totally unjustified, because we had never actually properly tried to deter Saddam and was 2) the reason we structured the post-war sanctions in the way we did, and so therefore, to the extent the sanctions period really made us less able to deter Saddam in the future, was 3) responsible for this outcome, too. Therefore, the 2003 claim that Saddam was undeterrable was not justified, even if there was a kernel of truth in it, because it came from a thoroughly unjustified conclusion.

So, Why does this matter? Why does it matter if the US's claim that Saddam was undeterrable was an unjustified one?

Well, it matters because that claim convinced enough people that the Iraq war was necessary, and the Iraq war has become an ever-mutating disaster. It matters because, though the war was full of screw ups once it got going, if we had never gone in the first place, we wouldn't be dealing with the particular set of atrocious consequences we have reaped from our efforts.

I said before and I will repeat now, I am not interested in developing elaborate counterfactuals. We do not know what the outcomes would have been of not invading Iraq in 2003. The outcomes of that choice may well have been grizzly. We just cannot know. It is hard to imagine that the damage resultant from that counterfactual choice could be much worse than the damage we see still unfolding from the Iraq War. Either way, we see that the stakes of betting either on or against deterrence can be enormous.

When we find ourselves in a situation we have to decide: are we betting that deterrence will work or are we betting that it won't—it is imperative that we base that decision on the soundest possible reasoning. The reasoning that led the US to bet against

deterrence 2003 was totally unsound. So, regardless of whether or not the US bet "right" or "wrong" on Iraq, it is certain that the US bet foolishly.

As I have shown, most of the US's argument for war centered on The Claim, i.e., deterrence would not work on Saddam. Perhaps because the administration knew there were those who would not be convinced by that argument, there was also a nuanced add-on to it:

Part of the US's argument in 2003 was that, if there was any doubt as to whether or not deterrence would work, it was a safer bet to just go ahead and do pre-emption. In fact, unlike the Bush administration, this is the *primary* argument that Kenneth Pollack makes his case for invading Iraq (2002).

The outcomes of the Iraq war show that we cannot accept the argument that if there is any doubt on the matter, it is categorically better and safer to decide deterrence won't work and therefore take pre-emptive action of some kind. We should expect to hear this argument cropping up in the future, because on the surface, it sounds very convincing. Now, however, we know better.

We cannot afford another Iraq. So, how, in the future, do we make our best bet?

The goal of both deterrence and compellence is to manipulate an adversary's actions. In order to deliberately manipulate an adversary's actions, you have first to know in what ways your actions already have influenced or are influencing your adversary's actions.

In the course of researching and writing this essay, I read and engaged with many scholars' and statesmen's' efforts to understand Saddam's seemingly nonsensical behavior

during the Gulf War period. They all asked questions of the form, “Why did Saddam do x?” and “Why did Saddam believe y?”

I have come across almost no questions of the form “Did we do anything that might have made Saddam think he should do x?” or “Did we do anything that might have made Saddam believe y?”

We cannot afford another Iraq. What that really means is that when we consider any course of foreign policy action, but especially when we take a bet either on or against deterrence, we cannot afford to have an incomplete or incorrect understanding of the full impact of our own actions; we cannot afford to interpret actions—especially hostile actions—of other states without first placing them in complete and completely frank context of our own.

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