

Three Takes at the War in Iraq [excerpts from WEB sources]

1. Saddam's longstanding efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction reveal the fundamental nature of his threat to America. Where others might eventually tire, he will never give up the effort. Once he has these weapons America will confront an undeterrable danger.

Sadam Hussein is a second-rate, second-priority despot worth taking out. Presidents and politicians of both parties have likened the Iraqi dictator to Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin. Small wonder the public perceives Bush as more concerned about dethroning Hussein than disarming him.

The president's father, after building up Hussein as an international ogre, called the U.S. military off when the Iraqi despot's days seemed numbered. But Saddam remained in power. This outcome fed voters' sense of a Bush failure. Since then, the Republican presidential victory in 2000 has not only restored a Bush to the White House but has also brought back the GOP war-management teams of 1974-75 (the end of fighting in Vietnam) and 1990-91 (the Gulf War). Their hunger to finish the job must be almost palpable.

The return of defense secretaries and White House chiefs of staff from previous wartime periods is just as unprecedented. It suggests a rare combination of unrequited frustrations and motivations. Consider: In spring 1975, when the war in Vietnam ended with the fall of South Vietnam to the communists and Cambodians seized the U.S. merchant ship *Mayaguez*, Donald H. Rumsfeld, now Defense secretary, was the White House chief of staff and Dick Cheney, now vice president, was his deputy.

2. Control of global oil has been the prime U.S. national security interest since World War II. One need only look at the extensive U.S. involvement in the Middle East during the cold war to realize that oil, not free nations, was the driving force.

An NSC document released recently on 60 Minutes' told a vast audience that the attack on Iraq was not about national security in the wake of 9/11. It was not about weapons of mass destruction. It was not about Saddam Hussein's possible ties to Osama bin Laden. It was about stealing Iraq's oil, same way the British stole it three quarter of a century earlier. The major oil companies drew up the map, handed it to their man George, helped him (through such trusties as James Baker) steal the 2000 election and then told him to get on with the attack.

3. The buzz in Washington and beyond has been that President Bush's attack on Iraq came straight from the playbook of the neoconservatives, a group of mostly Republican strategists, many of whom have gotten funding from Milwaukee's Bradley Foundation. The neoconservatives differ from traditional conservatives in favoring a more activist role for government and a more aggressive foreign policy.

Led by Weekly Standard editor William Kristol, the neoconservatives have offered a sweeping new vision for U.S. foreign policy: to restructure the Middle East and supplant dictators around the world, using pre-emptive attacks when necessary against any countries seen as potential threats. Taking advantage of America's hegemony in the post-Cold War world they are intent on using America's power to advance American ideals -- spreading democracy through the barrel of a gun.