



BEYOND THE HEADLINES

“When Should the U.S. Go to War?”

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International Peace Institute's
Trygve Lie Center for Peace, Security & Development
777 UN Plaza, 12th Floor

Featuring

RICHARD N. HAASS

Author of

War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars

Warren Hoge: Good evening. I am Warren Hoge, the Vice President and Director of External Relations for IPI, and I want to welcome you here in the name of Terje Rød-Larsen, IPI's president.

Our guest tonight is Richard N. Haass, the President of the Council on Foreign Relations and author of *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars*.

Now we like to bring globe-trotting officials back to their roots here at IPI. Bruce Riedel, who spoke here last month, was born in Queens right over there. Richard Haass, here tonight, was born in Brooklyn right over there.

Richard should also feel at home in the academic and think tank atmosphere of IPI because he has held positions at the Brookings Institution, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and he has taught at Hamilton College and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

A Rhodes Scholar, Richard earned a BA from Oberlin and both a Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy from Oxford.

In other words, he's a smart guy from Brooklyn who got some learning and made good.

Richard writes his book from a privileged perspective. He was a senior Washington policymaker during both Iraq wars – a member of the National Security Council staff in the George H.W. Bush administration during the first Gulf war and the director of policy planning for Secretary of State Colin Powell under George W. Bush during the initial phase of what was known in felicitous Pentagon phrase-making as Operation Iraqi Freedom.

I first knew Richard in my reporting days for The New York Times when I was covering the peace process in Northern Ireland, and the person in Washington responsible for the American government's involvement in that process was Richard.

I would interview him in overseas phone conversations and see him periodically as he passed through London and Belfast.

I remember in particular one night in London when Richard spoke to a small group of distinguished British guests at the residence of the American ambassador. He conducted a masterful tour d'horizon of the world and the prospects for America's foreign policy interests. It was highly informed and even optimistic, but it was completely turned on its head the next day. The next day was 9/11.

A year earlier, in the summer of 2000, I spent some time with Richard at a moment when he had become a member of a very rare species. He was a Republican on Martha's Vineyard.

We were summering just down the island from him -- and, incidentally, from President Clinton -- and if beach conversations on Martha's Vineyard are obsessively about politics anyway, they are particularly so in the summer before an election.

I recall that in those conversations, Richard suggested that he would return to government if a second Bush administration happened.

It did; and he did, but the experiences – both the two wars and the two Bushes -- turned out to be very different for him, and that contrast led to the writing of this book.

Richard's book is not only compelling for me for what it says about how poorly foreign policy was executed during Bush Two, but also for what it says about how commendably it was conducted under the first President Bush.

It was little appreciated at the time. You may forget it now, but Bill Clinton ran against President Bush in 1992 by charging him with spending too much time thinking about foreign policy. We sure grew nostalgic for that during the past eight years, and, by the way, isn't it interesting how some of the emerging dimensions of Obama foreign policy are shaping up like those under Bush One ?

Anyway, the experience for Richard as an official in the second Bush administration grew so bad that he says he had to defend in public the very policies that he argued against in private. And he couldn't even escape it in his own house. He came home one night, and his wife accused him of being an "enabler."

We have entitled this talk “When Should the U.S. Go to War” because Richard’s book, in declaring quite forcefully when and how the U.S. shouldn’t go to war, posits that there are times when war may be the necessary response.

Such a time occurred, in Richard’s thinking, in January 1991, so let me invite Richard to talk about his book by asking him at the outset the question its title raises: Why was the first Iraq war one of necessity and the second one of choice?

Richard N. Haass:

Let me just be clear that wars of choice are neither good nor bad, they just are, but they do have to meet a higher test, simply because to go to war is the ultimate decision of any government, of any leader. And in order to justify that decision, I would argue a war of choice has to meet two calculations.

The first is that the likely benefits of using military force will outweigh the likely cost. You’ve got to do the analysis, do the projection, but it clearly makes no sense to choose to go to war if you can’t persuade yourself that you will get more from it than it will cost, and you have to measure the benefits broadly and the cost broadly.

Secondly, though, there’s another calculation, which is that even if you’re persuaded that using force will bring you more positives than negatives or benefits than cost, you’ve also got to compare it to other policy options. You’ve got to compare it, say, to using sanctions or to diplomacy or to doing nothing. And you’ve got to persuade yourself, therefore, that the use of force is not only going to lead to more benefits than cost in and of itself, but that ratio of benefits to cost is better than any other policy instrument would likely deliver. And if that’s not the case, you have no business going to war because it’s expensive and people die. And that’s my basic thinking.

Now the first Iraq war, I would argue met the test of war of necessity because the interests at stake were truly vital. It’s important to remember when this was undertaken. Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990 -- that was less than a year after the Berlin wall crumbled. But just as an aside, the Berlin wall came down 20 years ago, 1989, and it was 11/9, in one of the ironies of history. So we will mark the 20th anniversary of the symbolic end of the Cold War in a couple of months.

But Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait eight or nine months into what you might call the post-Cold War era had special significance, because we were very aware --and by we, I mean President George Herbert Walker Bush; Brent Scowcroft, his National Security Adviser; Jim Baker, the Secretary of State; Colin Powell, at that point the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Dick Cheney, at that point the Secretary of Defense; Bob Gates, at that point the Deputy National Security Adviser; and little old me, and I was the senior person responsible for this part of the world on the staff of the National Security Council whose credibility was somewhat impaired at that moment, because up to the last day or two before Saddam’s invasion, I did not think he was going to invade.

But we were very aware that what we did and how we did it in response to his invasion and occupation of Kuwait would, to some extent, define the character of this new era of history, and if we had simply allowed it to stand, we thought it would set a terrible precedent, not simply for what Iraq might do but for what others might do. We thought it was the wrong way to begin the geopolitics of an era.

Secondly, Saddam Hussein as the head of Iraq began with 10 percent of the world's oil. Kuwait gave him another 10 percent. So if he had been allowed to keep Kuwait, that would have been 20 percent, plus, in our view, if he had been allowed to get away with that, sitting on one-fifth of the world's oil, Saudi Arabia would have probably been independent in name only. We thought that if Saddam Hussein had been able to get away with this, the Saudis would have not really had real independence, so the Americans were allowed to use French phrases again. It would have given Saddam Hussein a veto over Saudi decision-making. We thought that was untenable given the strategic importance of the area.

Secondly, what led to our sense that this was a war of necessity were not simply the stakes but was the lack of alternatives. We tried diplomacy. Indeed, we tried diplomacy up to the last minute, with Jim Baker meeting Tariq Aziz, and we gave Saddam Hussein all sorts of opportunities to get out. We passed more than a dozen UN resolutions. He wouldn't buy it. We tried sanctions. We tried sanctions for six months, and we gradually built up sanctions, put them in place, then we enforced them through the UN and so forth.

We were running out of tools, and time was passing, and there was a concern that at some point there wasn't going to be a Kuwait left to save, or Kuwaitis left to save. So we basically concluded that we had exhausted the available alternatives, to use Christian theology. Force in this case, was truly a last resort, and that there were no viable alternatives in the interest warranty, which is why we thought the first war was a war of necessity.

Interestingly, President Bush, the father, was there from the get-go. If you remember, it was he, who --, three to four days into the crisis, I was the young guy with lots of hair at the time meeting him on the south lawn at the White House -- who said, "This will not stand. This aggression against Kuwait will not stand." He was there from the get-go and the policy that unfolded was, over the next six months, very consistent.

With that said, had Saddam Hussein complied fully with all the UN resolutions, this war would never have happened. It was a war of necessity simply because he wouldn't comply in full. It was just that.

The second war was very different. It's a war of choice for two reasons. Saddam Hussein had not done anything new in 2001, 2002 and early 2003 that made the war inevitable or necessary, that warranted it. He hadn't, in particular, done anything new with his weapons of mass destruction because we know now he didn't have any weapons of mass destruction. And what he was hiding was not weapons of mass destruction, but he was hiding the fact that he didn't have weapons of mass destruction.

He didn't do anything new to threaten Kuwait in 2001, 2002 early 2003 or to threaten Saudi Arabia. He had no hand in 9/11 despite the charges or hopes or beliefs of some that he did.

So there was nothing about what Saddam Hussein had done that created a new situation that was intolerable or untenable, and as a result, the administration's use of the phrase "preemptive war" was dead wrong because preemptive wars are wars that are undertaken in the face of imminent threat. Saddam Hussein had not done anything to constitute an imminent threat. He was a latent threat. He could have been conceived of as a gathering threat, but that was it. So as a result, the war that was undertaken by Mr. Bush in 2003 was not a preemptive

war, but it was a preventive war, which is something very different, legally and diplomatically.

The second reason, though, that I believe this was a war of choice wasn't simply that the situation had become intolerable where vital national interests were jeopardized, but we hadn't demonstrated that other policies might not work fairly well. We could have, for example, extended the two no-fly zones over the entire country. If you recall, Saddam Hussein was limited of what he could do over the North and over the South. We could have extended them. We could have extended limits on what he could do on the ground. We could have started off war crimes trials either in Kuwait or somewhere else. We could have, most important, done things to shore up the somewhat eroding sanctions regime.

This institution [the UN] did not shower itself in glory with the oil for food program, but at its worst, the oil for food program provided Saddam Hussein with approximately 15% of his dollars. The other 85% came to Saddam because the United States and the international community chose to look the other way. We chose not to stop the trade with Jordan. We chose not to stop the trade with Iraq. We chose not to stop the trade with Turkey, or Syria or anybody else... Egypt, you name it.

So this was not something we didn't know about. It's something we knew about and decided that we wouldn't interfere with because friends of ours in the region, these countries, didn't want us to stop it in the case of Jordan and Turkey and in the case of Syria, the administration was not willing to take the steps that it might have done in order to stop it.

I believe we never could have made the sanctions airtight, but we certainly could have re-strengthened them. And the cost of so doing then it cost \$2 billion a year. Wow! That was what we ended up spending in about an hour in Iraq. So it would have been cheap by any measure, and it clearly again would have been preferable. Which gets us to my next point, which is it was not only a war of choice, but I believe it was an ill-advised war of choice in the sense that it didn't meet either test.

It wasn't clear to me that the use of military force [brought] likely benefits weighing the likely cost. Interesting enough, it was the same arguments I used in 1991 in the spring after Kuwait was liberated. The same arguments I used with the father against going on to Baghdad or getting heavily involved in Iraq's internal violence. I used the same arguments in 2002 and 2003, but to less effect, and essentially argued that it would be extraordinarily difficult to do what the administration of George W. Bush wanted to do in 2003. I didn't have confidence that we could go in, remove the government and put something better in its place and leave at an affordable or acceptable cost.

And secondly, I thought there were alternatives that could not solve the problems -- Saddam Hussein would still remain in power, but would have been a tolerable situation at negligible cost. I mean, the administration exacerbated it by the way it chose to go about the war, and I believe they could have improved the results and reduced the cost had they gone about it differently -- used more forces, planned more systematically for the aftermath, and so forth.

But none of that still changes the basic calculation. I believe that it was not simply a war of choice, but an ill-advised one. The fact that it was poorly executed or implemented simply added insult to injury. At the time I was against the war though, in a somewhat hedged way; I use the phrase 60/40 in the book because

I did believe that Saddam Hussein had chemical and biological weapons, as did virtually everybody else I know who looked at the problem.

Had I known then what I know now -- which is that Saddam Hussein did not have any chemical or biological weapons -- I would have been against the war 90/10 or 100%, but that isn't what we knew or thought. It wasn't what we knew or thought to say when Colin Powell gave his famous speech across the street in the run-up to the war.

Let me say one other thing, and then I'll stop -- which is how will history look at this. I believe that history is already looking at the first Gulf War, the first Iraq war quite favorably. Jim Baker tells a funny story which is that for years afterwards, whenever he'd do a talk like this anywhere, people would ask him why didn't you guys go to Baghdad when you had the chance.

After the second Gulf War began -- the second Iraq war began -- people stopped asking that question. Indeed, I think the reputation of the first President Bush will go up, both for what he did and how he did it and also for what he chose not to do. I believe that process of revision is on the way, and I think Warren is exactly right.

If Barack Obama has something of a model in foreign policy, it is the 41st President. And if you look at the emphasis on diplomacy, you look at the emphasis on multi-lateralism, you look at the emphasis of focusing on what the governments do rather than what countries are. This is all very reminiscent of Bush the father.

I believe by contrast that history will be very rough on the son for the decision to undertake this war and for the way it was undertaken. I believe any fair assessment will judge that the cost far outweighs the benefits, particularly when you add in not just all the direct cost -- military, human, economic, reputational and what have you -- but also the opportunity cost. This war absorbed tremendous amounts of policymakers' attention and American attention, and American resources at a moment of history when the United States should've been busy recasting the world which I believe we had an opportunity to do after the end of the Cold War and even more so after 9/11.

Indeed, the book I wrote shortly after I left government -- this was then 2004 to 2005 or so -- was called *The Opportunity*, because I really believe that the United States had a unique historical opportunity to build a new set of international arrangements to deal with the challenges of this era and I believe that one of the real costs of Iraq, part of the opportunity or indirect cost of Iraq, was the United States essentially forfeited or squandered an opportunity, and I believe that history will be very rough.

It doesn't mean that there wasn't anything good that was accomplished. Just getting Saddam Hussein out of power is good and Iraq is a much more open and better place today than it was under him. I was there a couple of months ago, and I could see the progress. But again, I still believe the costs outweigh these benefits.

I also believe that Iraq has not reached the point where it is on a trajectory of sustainable improvement. Indeed, even though I was against the war, I believe that if the United States and Iraq were to keep true to the timetables laid out in the US-Iraqi status of forces agreement, Iraq would more likely than not descend into serious internal disarray again. So I believe that adding to the cost will be

that the United States and Iraq will have to find a way for the United States to remain militarily involved in Iraq for many years to come.

Warren Hoge: Let me just pick up on something you said, and then I'll ask you a question. Something interesting in the book to me was that at the time that President Bush One decided not to go onto Baghdad to get Saddam Hussein, you say in the book that there was no dissent from that view. Two of the people who were there at that point were to become hawks ten years later. Dick Cheney was Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz was the Deputy Secretary of Defense or...

Richard N. Haass: In the first administration, he was the undersecretary. He came back as deputy to Don Rumsfeld.

Warren Hoge: But I mean, the conventional wisdom was that these guys probably in 1991 were pressing to go on to Baghdad and take Saddam Hussein out. In fact, they were not.

Richard N. Haass: They were not at the time, and subsequently Dick Cheney gave on-the-record speeches justifying the decision not to do it. I think Paul Wolfowitz may have wanted to the first time around. He just -- for whatever set of reasons, he decided not to press it.

I think for Dick Cheney and others, what changed more than anything, and I thought about this, was probably 9/11; and it was not direct involvement of Iraq in 9/11 that Wolfowitz charged right at the beginning, literally on 9/11 or 9/12. He was suggesting it without evidence, and Cheney and others may have thought of it, but it was more psychological and political after 9/11.

They were looking for an opportunity to send a "message to the world" -- to use a phrase that Richard Nixon made famous or infamous -- that the United States was not a "pitiful helpless giant". They wanted to send the message that the United States was not simply a victim of history, but the United States could still be an agent and a shaper of history. And even though they ousted the Taliban from Afghanistan, that didn't do it for them, just didn't excite them.

I mean, the phrase, the unfortunate phrase I use in the book was "it didn't scratch the itch," and they wanted to do something bigger because "as went Afghanistan so went Afghanistan." It was a one-off. But as went the rock, people thought would go the entire Arab world. They thought the potential prize was far greater, so they believed they could not only transform Iraq cheaply and easily, a number of academics who should've known better reinforced that thinking.

But they then believed that Iraq would be something of a model. It would establish an irresistible momentum for the rest of the largely authoritarian-ruled Middle East. So they thought this was going to be, to use Mr. Bush's favorite word, "transformational." And it was, just not in the way he intended.

Warren Hoge: By the way, a moment on that point, another piece of conventional wisdom is that the United States took its eye off the ball on Afghanistan because it was so interested in going to Iraq, but you don't agree with that, do you?

Richard N. Haass: No, because I know everyone suggested it, and it's used as one of the arguments against the war, and as I wrote and as I said, I was against the war. But it's simply not true that the United States didn't do things in Afghanistan initially because of Iraq. It's true the United States didn't do much in Afghanistan initially after 9/11 -- I know, because one of the hats I was wearing at the time was that I

was chosen by President Bush after 9/11 to be the U.S. coordinator for the future of Afghanistan. So I have fairly intimate knowledge of U.S. policy at the time, and we did very little in Afghanistan, particularly militarily.

We never joined the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). We limited that force to Kabul. The United States limited its military operations in Afghanistan at that time to simply pursuing and at times, not even pursuing Al Qaeda. We limited our role; we helped diplomatically in fashioning the new government.

We didn't do a lot economically, but that was largely because people were what you might call "strategically pessimistic" about Afghanistan's prospect, which is too bad. I argued we should do a lot, and I believe if we had done that -- what we could and should have -- something like we are doing, that I actually think it might have made a big difference. We'll never know.

The other reason that we were not saving things from Afghanistan for Iraq is -- look what we did in Iraq, we went in light. We didn't need *not* to commit to Afghanistan to do Iraq, because all the people who favored doing Iraq, favored doing it lightly and cheaply, because they thought that would be more than enough. So you didn't need to keep forces in reserve, because we only used 140,000 forces anyhow. So the whole argument just doesn't bear logic. If the people who favored going into Iraq thought it was going to be expensive and difficult, it would have made much harder for them to justify a war of choice.

Warren Hoge:

Dick Cheney -- you say in the book that Dick Cheney or someone in his office was reading U.S. intelligence accounts of your conversations abroad trying to see, you think, whether you were having illegal contacts with Iran. Was Cheney trying to get you fired?

Richard N. Haass:

I didn't know about it at the time. I should say that I didn't know about this until I got called by Bart Gelman [Washington Post reporter]-- who was writing this biography of Cheney called *Angler* and he said, "What do you have to say about this?" I said, 'It's news to me, you know, kind of interesting.' I never heard from Powell that he was trying to get me fired. It's kind of interesting to me. He was alleging that I was having illegal contacts with Iran. I know he disagreed. He and I disagreed profoundly about Iran policy, and I wanted to start a diplomatic process with Iran. I was myself involved with the Iranians on the Afghan question, and I thought the Iranians played a somewhat helpful role. I promoted the radical idea of getting Iran into the WTO and other such revolutionary concepts, and he just clearly opposed anything to do with Iran, because he and others around him believed that Iran was on the precipice of failure and thought that any American engagement would interfere with the inevitable failure and fall of the regime, which I thought was not strategy; I thought it was just, not just terrible analysis, but wishful thinking. So we just disagreed profoundly on Iran, on North Korea, and on many others...

I'll tell you a funny story which came after the book. When *Angler* came out and in *The New York Times* review of the book, they mentioned the fact the Cheney's office was essentially "spying" on me. One of the people who worked for him called me up and said, "I just want you to know, I wasn't the source." I was pretty dumbfounded, so I said, 'Okay, now I feel better.' Anyhow, so I guess it was true.

Warren Hoge:

You mention people being mad at you. In those days, in that period, you and Colin Powell were basically losing every single argument you were fighting.

Richard N. Haass: Thanks, Warren.

Warren Hoge: I'm quoting from the book. I've actually got the list. Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Israel, the Palestinians, Kyoto protocol and the International Criminal Court -- you lost all those arguments. I know you've already answered the question why didn't you quit; I think your answer is "you don't quit over 60/40." But why didn't Colin Powell quit, and had he quit, would it have made a difference?

Richard N. Haass: Well, I didn't quit over Iraq alone because you don't quit over even major issues where you disagree 60/40. I really do believe you only quit when your disagreements are much more fundamental. If you quit every time you lost a close one, you couldn't function and organizations couldn't function.

The other reason you quit is not because of the single decision, but a pattern of decisions, which is why I ultimately was open to leaving. I just lost too many issues, and as you mentioned before, it gets really old to lose battles.

The reason I didn't quit sooner is (1) it took two and a half years for all this to happen, to build up this impressive track record, and in many cases also, I kept thinking -- and I had to basically prove it to myself that it was false -- that I could still have influence. Okay, so I didn't like the decision on the war, but then like Powell thought we could have influence over using the UN and the Congress -- which we did, as it turned out -- . I thought I could have impact on the aftermath and in the book I published the memo I wrote about preparing for the aftermath. If you'll read it, you will see I lost that completely, every single one of my recommendations was tossed out. But you have to go through things to reach the conclusion that you are not really having much, if any, influence or impact.

Powell is a great believer that you work issues and that you will, over time, have influence and impact. And had he quit, no, I think it wouldn't have made a difference. I think if he had quit over the policy, the President would have essentially said, "Sorry, I appreciate Colin Powell's service. Clearly we disagreed on this one. Next." I just think he would have marched on.

Warren Hoge: Even though he [Powell] was the most popular guy in the administration at that point?

Richard N. Haass: Yes, sir.

Warren Hoge: I want to ask you two questions on the same subject and then we're going to throw it open to the floor and it's about the two Bushes.. There's endless fascination about this father and this son. The first question is: In August of 2002, Brent Scowcroft Bush One's National Security Adviser and basically, I think it's fair to say, the formulator of his foreign policy, wrote a famous Op-Ed in *The Wall Street Journal* in August 2002 when Bush the son is revving up to go to war, basically questioning the war, saying it would be ill-advised to go to war. I think I either remember or I read it in a book, Richard, the Bush Two people were furious that he wrote that article, and everybody assumed that this must be the father talking.

You write in the book that Brent Scowcroft, to sort of insulate the father from that belief, did not show him the article beforehand and sent it to him, I think, the day it was published. So the one question on this issue I want to ask you is: Do you think the father ever expressed any disapproval for the war or other things going on in the son's administration to the son? And the other question is the other side

of it – the psychobabble about the son being motivated, at least in part, by a desire to show that he was more forceful and resolute than his wobbly father was before him. Could you answer both those questions? I mean, you are in a privileged position. You knew both Bushes, though you knew the father better than the son.

Richard N. Haass: On the former, I believe the President was reticent to have that conversation with his son for two reasons; one, fathers have to be careful what they tell their sons and secondly, ex-presidents have to be careful what they tell current presidents. And I think the combination of the two, plus, given George Bush's personality, his respect of the space of others, it leads me to believe he did not. I don't know that; it's just my guess. Which is not to say he agreed with the policy.

Just another funny aside on that: Brent, when he wrote that Op-Ed, thought he owed it to Condi Rice, who was sitting in his old job in his old office, to give her a heads-up on the basis that you don't surprise your friends. So he sends her the article two days before it appears in the *Wall Street Journal*. It sits in the in-basket. Her staff does not give it to her. She finally picks up the paper that morning and goes through the roof, angry and all that, and picks up the phone and calls Brent and starts screaming at him. The first thing was like, "Why didn't you give me this in advance?". So staff work matters.

By the way, the speech that Dick Cheney gave a couple weeks later was a direct result. Cheney basically saw that Scowcroft's Op-Ed had tremendous resonance, and Cheney's speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars at the end of August was an attempt to regain control or to put the movement toward the war back on the proverbial tracks.

On your second point about what motivated – saying it is in the land of psychobabble -- I don't know, but my own hunch is yeah, it wasn't about revenging the attempt on the father's side. I think the son took the lesson that his father failed to get reelected because his father was not a decisive or forceful president. He didn't go to Baghdad. He reversed himself on "read my lips, no new taxes". He didn't say and do dramatic things after the Cold War ended, and I believed the son modeled himself more after presidents like Reagan and others who he saw as consequential. And he was determined to be a consequential president and again he got his wish -- just not in the way he wanted.

Warren Hoge: Very good. And by the way, Richard said ahead of time, he is happy to answer questions about things other than the book, Iran, Afghanistan, Obama, whatever you like. Let me call on John Hirsch first in the front row here.

John Hirsch: First of all, thank you very much for your presentation. I think basically your analysis on why one was a war of necessity and the other one was a war of choice is very cogent. What I want to ask you about, Richard, is, who ultimately makes these decisions, and specifically, what you think the role of the media and the role of the Congress in these kind of decisions ought to be? There is a general view, putting Scowcroft and that Op-Ed aside, that the media gave the administration a pass [because] it was after 9/11. Scripps-Howard brought out all these inconsistencies, but *The New York Times* put Judy Miller on the front page and so on, kind of gave the support to the arguments about WMD and so on, and the Congress was viewed generally as kind of rolling over or accepting these arguments. So, if under President Obama, or some other president, there were to be a discussion about whether United States should go to war in another situation, let's say Iran -- but any example you would want to give -- what do you

think the role of the media and the Congress ought to be? Or do you think this is only a decision, an analytical one, inside an administration?

Richard N. Haass:

On the wars of necessity, I don't think Congress and the media much matter because that's why they're called wars of necessity [inaudible]. And interestingly enough in the first war, I am not 99 percent positive; I am 100 percent positive that George Herbert Walker Bush would have gone to war even if the Congress had voted against it. He wouldn't have cared. And if you remember, the war of necessity was a much closer political debate in the United States than the war of choice. Support was far more decisive in favor of the war of choice –not the merits, that was just the politics. Let's be honest. That was about politics, pure and simple after 9/11.

When it comes to wars of choice; the second war as a war of choice is a good case study. I do not believe that President George W. Bush was led to this by either the Congress or the media. There wasn't a big campaign to go to war in the media. There wasn't a big campaign to go to war in Congress. He had a lot of support, but he didn't have his hands tied. He wasn't pushed into this war. This was not the Spanish-American War in a sense where you had a big media thing or the Boer War. This was a war that he early on decided he wanted to do. He wasn't listening to the media or the Congress. He just kind of did what he wanted.

I think all things being equal, the media more than the Congress can influence wars of choice. Where the cameras are puts pressure on an administration to act, particularly in areas where you have discretion. I think in wars dealing with so-called genocides, I think, the media can have a big... the so-called CNN effect can put pressure on governments to act where they might be reluctant to otherwise.

Shamina de Gonzaga: I just wanted to comment on something you said in your opening remarks because we're sitting in the International Peace Institute and you said wars of choice are neither good nor bad, they just are, and I'd like to ask on a personal note if you really believe that.

Richard N. Haass:

Shockingly enough, I tend to believe most things I say. Yeah, wars of choice are policies. Not to go to war is a big choice. The fact that the world did not use force meant that a million innocent men, women and children died in Rwanda. So not choosing to go to war has consequences.

When there were moments where the world could have used force in Darfur, the world didn't, it had consequences. I'm not a pacifist. Now, I just think, again, I have these two standards of what makes war of choice justifiable. I've got to be persuaded in the narrow calculation that using force will result in more good than harm, more benefits [for] the cause, and I've got to persuade myself it's better than the alternatives, including doing nothing or everything else.

So each time you've got to ask yourself those questions. Each time you've got to do really honest and systematic analysis. I've written after doing this book on a Web site... I tried to develop a concept of justifiable war which is different than just war. I find just war- thinking under the theology of the church too narrow. It's only as a last resort. You've got to have all sorts of international approval.

Take Kosovo. Kosovo was a war where the United States and Europe went to the UN Security Council, couldn't get Security Council backing. They went and did what they did. So you're going to say under Christian theology that would

have been unacceptable, but from where I sit it wasn't unacceptable, it was a justifiable war compared to the... I think, you've got to be intellectually demanding, but the alternative is pacifism, which is intellectually consistent, but pacifism has consequences, and I am not one who believes in it.

Monica Serrano: Monica Serrano, Director of the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect. Back in 2/03 some tried to justify the war along the line that the job had not been properly finished a decade earlier, and could that war have ended differently?

Richard N. Haass: It could have ended differently; the United States could have done, in 1991, what essentially the United States did in 2003. It could have gone beyond the liberation of Kuwait, which was a limited war range. The United States in 1991 could have gone on Baghdad, could have ousted Saddam Hussein, and could have done all that. It would have meant jeopardizing a large number of lives -- American, Coalition, and Iraqi. It would have meant bringing down the wrath of the international community for the major domestic problems the U.S. military wasn't prepared for, wasn't trained for, wasn't equipped for, hadn't planned for.. So in a sense, all the things that happened in 2003 could have happened in 1991.

I believe we were wise not to do it then. Indeed, the argument I used, and I write about it in the book, in 1991 was the Korean analogy. Korea began in 1950, as you all know, when the North Koreans invaded, and I call that a war of necessity when the world pushed back. And where that war changed from a war of necessity into a war of choice was after McArthur had landed in Inchon, restored the 38th parallel as the border and then he and Truman went north up to the Chinese border, up to the Yalu river. Chinese "volunteers" came across and three years later and 30,000 more Americans have lost their lives and we're back to the 38th parallel. And that was a war of necessity that unfortunately, morphed or transitioned into a very expensive and wasteful and costly war of choice.

We could have done the same kind of transition in 1991. I actually argued against it on part on the basis of Korea, and I said you should never allow war range to change simply because you're experiencing tactical success. The President was there, he agreed completely with me because he felt that it was a real mistake to go beyond his original writ where there was tremendous consensus and he thought he was going to bank a lot of good will, and he was right. One of the ways he banked good will showed up several months later in the Madrid Peace Conference. I believe the war actually provided a tremendous amount of diplomatic backing that ultimately translated into the success of convening Madrid. So sure, we could have done more. I just believed it would have been ill-advised, and again you've got to have to think twice.

One last thing: Barack Obama has done to some extent a similar thing. Afghanistan after 9/11 began as a war of necessity. United States went in, ousted the Taliban for their facilitation of Al Qaeda. I would argue that was a war of necessity.

When Barack Obama became president, he initiated a policy that I would call a war of choice in Afghanistan: 17,000 more American combat soldiers and so forth, and he literally, in his March 27th speech, talked about not simply going after Al Qaeda, but taking the fight to the Taliban in the South and the East. Essentially the United States has now become something of a party to an Afghan civil war. This is a war of choice. I think it's a justifiable one. I am prepared to support it, though I'm uneasy about it. I think it's a very close call. I'm not really confident in my own analysis, and I think it's one that will need to be revisited

regularly in the future. So again, it comes back to the earlier question. I don't think all wars of choice are *per se* bad. I don't think it's necessarily bad to transition from a war of necessity to a war of choice. I would simply say that you've got to be as rigorous in your analysis of any change in war aims as you are of your original decision to use military force. These are not lesser decisions; they are of equal significance.

Warren Hoge: I've got four questions and we'll do them in the order I saw them. James Cockayne, I think you raised your hand.

James Cockayne: Thank you very much. James Cockayne from the International Peace Institute, I just want to press you, Mr. Haass, on this question about wars of choice and whether they are good or bad. You're sitting in front of the United Nations building and you've referred a couple of times to Christian theology, but you haven't referred either to the UN Charter or to international law. Some would argue that by signing the UN Charter 64 years ago, the United States voluntarily submitted to reduce its options in wars of choice to cases where it was responding to an armed attack or had an authorization from the United Nations Security Council.

The question for you is first, would you, as a policymaker, recommend your principle to undertake a war of choice even if it was not in self defense or there was no authorization from the Security Council? And second, if the answer to that is yes, how would you factor in to your cost-benefit analysis the potential long-term damage both to the credibility of the United States in its international legal undertakings and to the UN Charter that might result from that?

Richard N. Haass: I have and I would again, Kosovo. Kosovo was a war of choice that was done in the explicit absence of Security Council's support, and I think it was right. I don't believe the Security Council is the only repository of legitimacy. Sorry, I know it's probably sacrilege to say it so close, but I simply don't. Legitimacy could come from other sources, including the content and purpose of the action. I think when the United States or anyone else acts contrary to the Security Council or without its [authorization], you've got to think about what are the consequences for order in the world, and I would simply say that's one of things you add to your calculation. You also have to ask yourself what are the consequences, say, of not acting. So to me it's just something to factor into your calculation. I don't agree with the view that the United States, by having joined the UN early on, granted that degree of authority that you suggest -- I simply don't, and indeed I wouldn't suggest you're making that argument, because if people thought it was true, the United States would leave the United Nations, to be perfectly honest. That would be too great a constraint on American freedom of decision-making.

Warren Hoge: Gentleman there in the back?

Vincent Kayijuka: My name is Vince Kayijuka. I work for the UN for the Peace-Building Support Office. I wanted to reach out to take us out of the war of choice and if you were to advise the government of the U.S. about the existing strategy and out of this war, what would be your advice to the government of the US? Thank you.

Richard N. Haass: I'm sorry. I didn't follow the strategy.

Vincent Kayijuka: What will be your advice if one was to go out of this war of choice? What will be your strategy to get out of this war?

Richard N. Haass: Which war of choice?

Vincent Kayijuka: The current war of choice in Iraq.

Richard N. Haass: Well, in Iraq, I believe the U.S. policy in Iraq needs to be restructured. I believe if the -- I think I've said this -- if the United States were to implement the timetables and, in particular, to have all U.S. forces to depart Iraq by the end of 2011, I believe it would actually increase the odds of instability in Iraq dramatically.

So I would favor renegotiating that and simply keeping a residual, a smaller U.S. force in Iraq as something of an investment in Iraq's future, given not simply how much we've invested up to now, but given Iraq's importance, and I believe that if we had the support of the Iraqis to do that, I think that would be a viable outcome. Just so you know, my goal in life is not to come up with exit strategies; my goal is to come up with policies where I believe the benefits outweigh the costs. So if I could think of a more modest presence in Iraq that would help achieve stability, that to me, an endurance strategy would be better than an exit strategy.

Again, as I suggested before, I believe we're likely to have a debate in the United States in a year or two, where the current approach in Afghanistan is not seen to be succeeding, and there will then be two schools of thought. There will be those who say increase your resources, increase your effort, and there will be those who say decrease your goals and I believe we're likely going to have a pretty interesting debate about Afghanistan.

I also think there are two wars of necessity that could pop up in the next couple of years, just to further alienate several of you, the few whom I haven't yet alienated. One would be North Korea. If North Korea is seen to be transferring nuclear material to, say, an Al Qaeda-like group, the United States will use force to stop it if we can. If we see this is something that we are aware of, if we can see them doing it or if we see this is happening, I believe that we would take action militarily to stop it, and if it led to something larger, so be it. I also believe that there are situations where if the government of Pakistan proved unable or unwilling to police its own territory in terms of large scale terrorist operations or control of nuclear materials, again, I think the United States would seriously entertain the idea of significant, though focused, uses of force in Pakistan.

Warren Hoge: Another question right here from Gianni.

Gianni Picco: Thank you very much. Richard. You hinted two minutes ago at the consequences of the 90-91 war as being also the positive mood which led to the Madrid Conference etc., a consequence which I think emerged very clearly at that time, and I could not but agree with you. My question pertains to the results of this war as given the opportunity not only to bring about a peace process in Palestine as we have seen what happened in the 90s, but also perhaps, one could say, to provide the U.S. with a position of influence in the area which it had never achieved earlier and perhaps it had dreamt about it but never achieved. My question is: was this idea of the potentiality of what was going in '91 discussed, analyzed as you said in some way at least partially beforehand? By converse, was it ever analyzed before the 2003 war what it would mean to get rid of the two great enemies of Iran left and right, so to speak, after the war [which] does change the scenario in a way which perhaps those who wanted a war in 2003 were not exactly in favor of?

Richard N. Haass: The answer is yes to both of your questions. In the first, the person making the argument had more influence than in the second time. So one out of two isn't bad.

Warren Hoge: I'm going to do two questions at once here. First, my colleague Naureen Chowdhury Fink, and then, after her, Piet de Klerk and then and then Richard, maybe you can answer both at the same time.

Naureen Chowdhury Fink: Naureen Chowdhury Fink with the International Peace Institute. You eluded a little bit to what I was going to ask, which was about Pakistan, and I was going to ask how you see the U.S. role evolving there in the near future, and as a corollary to that, I was going to ask, if I recall correctly before the first Gulf War there was a significant PR effort to sort of prepare the American public for the first Gulf War. Do you think the public would be ready for a more in- depth intervention in Pakistan as you mentioned?

Richard N. Haass: I'm not going to remember both.

Warren Hoge: Piet, go ahead. Sorry, he raised his hand first if we can get you I'll try to but...

Pieter de Klerk: You called the second of the Iraq wars a preventive war, presumably in light of the potential of weapons of mass destruction. Now at the time I had something to do with nuclear inspections and we were absolutely convinced that there was no nuclear WMD. Now on chemical, there were more uncertainties, but even there I had to make rather unlikely assumptions to conclude that there were substantial amounts of biological or chemical weapons. I've never understood how the idea was so widespread in the U.S. administration that there were these weapons of mass destruction. From your position, you might say something about that? Thank you.

Richard N. Haass: On Pakistan, I don't think the United States has a very good policy right now, which is not to say that I have anything better to suggest. What's so hard about Pakistan is the gap between our interest and our inputs, and the only thing tougher in my experience and my years of doing foreign policy than dealing with your enemies is dealing with your friends. Dealing with Pakistan is extraordinarily frustrating.

Incentives don't seem to be working in many cases. Penalties historically haven't worked and so again, we've got all these interests -- the nuclear interest, the terrorism interest, the Afghan interest, the India interest, you name the interest -- and just our ability to influence Pakistani decision-making and behavior is, shall we say, finite. That's what makes it so frustrating. My first meeting with Powell back in 2001, when I became head of policy planning, we talked for an hour and a half, went through everything, and he said, "Last question: is there anything that really keeps you up at night," and I said, "Yeah, Pakistan." It was true then and was true now.

Do I think to get public support they've kind of.. I think if there were limited interventions, yeah, if it's for known terrorism targets, to secure nuclear material, yes, American people would get that. We wouldn't talk about doing in Pakistan what the United States did in Iraq or Afghanistan. We are not talking about a large nation- building, occupational thing, you would talk about very discrete military and we're doing that. .

The question on why so many people in the United States thought they had chemical and biological weapons; I've thought a lot about it because I was one of

those, and part of my answer is: no one suggested to me otherwise. Part of the policy was why else wouldn't Saddam Hussein comply fully and provide the inspectors with the informational base. People forget, the purpose of the inspections was not to prove that Saddam Hussein was in violation. The purpose of the inspection was to prove that he was in compliance. He was supposed to give us the informational base so we could show that everything he'd imported and all that was used to non-prescribed purposes. He never did that. And all I can then say is that everything we looked at with Saddam Hussein was done almost through a lens or a filter of assumption, and the assumption was he's got it and he is hiding it. And one of the things – it's an expensive lesson -- but one of the things that this has taught me is the danger of assumptions.

It's so interesting; the first Iraq war happened against several, what you would call wrong, assumptions. You had the false-negative that Saddam Hussein was not going to invade, and you have the false-negative that he didn't have weapons of mass destruction. He actually had quite a lot the first time around. The second war was fought against the false-positive. We all thought he had weapons of mass destruction, and he didn't. In all these cases, assumptions mattered tremendously. Policy types and intelligence analysts are heavily influenced, their perception is heavily influenced by their assumptions and you've got to find a way to challenge assumptions or the intelligence will be in some ways tainted, because people will interpret every bit of data they get through the lens of the assumptions, and that can be really distorting.

Warren Hoge:

I think that's all the time we have. A couple of you had questions -- I think Richard is quite approachable, and I've learned tonight something I hadn't known before, which is the question you always ask now is what would Maimonides have done in this case. Anyways, thank you very much for coming here, Richard.