

The Psychological Origins of Preventive War

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Introduction

One of the most startling and controversial aspects of the Bush Doctrine is its reliance on preventive action. It is this feature of the Doctrine as much as any other that has elicited fervent opinions on either side of the ideological divide. The stated reason for this policy of prevention was a confluence of threats: catastrophic terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and “rogue states.” However, not one of these three threats was a new feature of the international system, or a consequence of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. In fact, these threats very obviously predated President George W. Bush’s administration. The core of the issue then is, why this policy, and why now?

The policy of prevention has been traced to 9/11, to President Bush’s personality, and even to a supposed obsession with removing Saddam Hussein from power. However, these explanations are simply not convincing. If it were Bush’s personality alone, then we could have expected a drastic shift in foreign policy immediately upon his election to the presidency in 2000; if it were only 9/11, then why did the policy take a full one year to emerge after the terrorist attacks; and if it were only a rationalization for removing Hussein from power, then why would the administration have wasted time with a war in Afghanistan, and another full year of diplomacy before the Iraq War?

In fact, the best explanation for President Bush’s policy of prevention must encompass both psychological and strategic factors; alone, neither is sufficient. And the best way to understand how these factors led to the policy of prevention is to think about it in context of other similar decisions. While the adoption of prevention as part of a “grand strategy” may be unique in history, preventive action itself is not.

This chapter addresses the issues of preventive war and the Bush Doctrine by focusing on the psychological motivations for preventive action within the context of the strategic circumstances that the United States faced post-9/11. It is important to be clear about the nature and meaning of that policy and

to analyze what factors are relevant in decisions to initiate preventive action. This is best accomplished by examining how these factors operated in several cases in recent history. Putting the Bush Doctrine in historical context is inherently important, but it also helps to explain why American foreign policy has changed course so dramatically since the turn of the century.

What Is Preventive War?

Before undertaking an analysis of the motivations behind preventive war, it is imperative to distinguish clearly between preemption and prevention. Consider two countries, Country A and Country B, between which there is an adversarial relationship.¹ Let us imagine that Country B has received intelligence that Country A is preparing to launch a military strike against it. If Country B then takes action to make sure that Country A cannot attack it as planned, then they have preemptively attacked. According to Lawrence Freedman, a preemptive action “takes place at some point between the moment when an enemy decides to attack—or, more precisely, is perceived to be about to attack—and when the attack is actually launched.”² True preemption can be thought of as defensive in motivation and offensive in effect. However, since it is primarily defensive, it is generally seen as more morally legitimate than prevention.³

In another situation, imagine that Country B’s capabilities are increasing relative to Country A’s; that is, B is still weaker than A, but the power differential between the two countries is shrinking. If Country A acts militarily to prevent Country B from continuing to increase its relative power, then Country A has launched a preventive war. This is a preventive war in the classic sense of the term, a war fought to preserve the status quo balance of power.

Most previous explanations of preventive war have focused on this particular aspect. For example:

Samuel P. Huntington described preventive war in 1957 as a military action initiated by one state against another for the purpose of forestalling a subsequent change in the balance of power between the two states, which would seriously reduce the military security of the first state.⁴

Jack Levy argues that the “preventive motivation” for war arises from the “perception that one’s military power and potential are declining relative to that of a rising adversary, and from the fear of the consequences of that decline.”⁵

Michael Walzer, coming from a notably different perspective than both Huntington and Levy, also describes preventive war as a war fought to maintain the balance, to stop what is thought to be an even distribution of power from shifting into a relation of dominance and inferiority.⁶

Thus, conventional explanations of preventive war focus on the balance of power, and define preventive war as a war to prevent a change in that balance.⁷

In fact, what these scholars describe is only one possible motivation for a preventive war, not its defining characteristic.⁸ In defining preventive war as a war to maintain the balance of power, previous scholars have conflated a motivation for war, with a type of war. Thus, the War of Spanish Succession (one of Walzer's examples) was, in fact, a preventive war. And, a desire to maintain the balance of power, or status quo, did play a part in England's motivation.

However, not all preventive actions are wars to maintain the balance of power (in fact, not all preventive actions are necessarily wars, either). There can be numerous other motivations at work in states' decisions to initiate preventive action. Thus, a more useful and inclusive definition is that a preventive action is one fought to forestall a grave national security threat. True prevention is a response to a serious threat that lies in the future, not an attack that is already under way. "Action" here refers to an array of forceful initiatives, ranging from limited strikes to total war.

There is a tendency to rely on the term "imminence" in definitions of preemptive war. However, there is also a tendency to confuse the true meaning of the word, and equate it with the time period in which a threat resides. Consider the following terms: "imminent," "impending," "looming," and "gathering." All can refer to threats that are days or weeks away. Because of this, defining "imminent" as a threat that is "days or weeks away" can, and often does, lead to considerable confusion. "Imminence" carries with it the implicit assumption that an attack might happen at any second, that events have been set in motion. An imminent threat is one that must be preempted without delay. Conversely, preventive wars are waged when the threat is in the distance, but that is merely a descriptive comment, not a "key" defining characteristic. Threats are always in the distance—where else could they be? What defines a preventive war is not where in time the threat is, but rather the prime motivation of the decision maker in initiating the war.

Just as we must be careful to not be overly restrictive in our definitions, we must also be careful not to define preventive action too broadly. In a recent article, former Deputy National Security Advisor James Steinberg defined four categories of "preventive force": action taken against terrorists; action taken to eliminate a dangerous capability; interventions in the case of state failure; and the preventive use of force to effect regime change.⁹

However, this is an overly expansive definition, and not all of Steinberg's examples qualify as true preventive action. For instance, consider Steinberg's example of the use of preventive force to handle an infectious disease outbreak. In this case, the state that is supposedly utilizing preventive force is merely going about the ordinary business of government, just as it might raise or lower interest rates, build roads or subsidize the construction of a hospital (the interest rate changes to prevent an economic crisis, the roads to prevent accidents and the hospitals to prevent a high mortality rate). However, to include these as examples of preventive action is quite a stretch. Similarly, Steinberg's example

of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan does not stand up to close scrutiny. U.S. action in Afghanistan was punitive and retaliatory, not preventive.

In fact, almost any action a state (or individual) takes can be framed in terms of stopping something from happening. A state might grant an extension on loan payments to another state, in order to make sure they did not default on their obligations. Does this qualify as preventive action? Following from my earlier formulation, the motivation must be primarily defensive in the minds of the leaders waging war and must be aimed at dealing with what is perceived to be a grave threat to national security.

Not all scholars have associated preventive war with aggression. While Levy focuses primarily on the shifting balance of power as a source of motivation for war, by terming it the “preventive motivation” for war (based on a fear of a negative change in the status quo), he clearly separates aggression from the “preventive” motivation for war.¹⁰ Outside observers, or later historians and academics, might debate whether the leader “had no choice” but to launch a preventive war. But what is central to such a debate is whether the decision maker, operating within the constraints imposed by limited information and his or her own psychological biases, had a reasonable belief that it was necessary in order to prevent a later threat to vital national interests.

One other particularly important motivational factor in preventive war is fear. Fear, or suspicion, of others’ intentions play an important role in preventive war decisions. The paradox that is at the heart of the “security dilemma” in traditional international relations theory is central to our discussion here.¹¹ States’ fears may lead them to take steps to increase their security as a defensive measure. However, these same steps can increase the insecurity of other states; in the end, increasing one’s security too much can have the paradoxical effect of making a state seem more threatening to others, decreasing its security.

This has important implications for preventive war decisions. First, states seeking only to increase their own security may arouse the suspicion or concern of other states, who may initiate preventive action if they feel sufficiently threatened. Second, states that do initiate preventive action for what they feel are primarily defensive motivations may trigger a “balancing” reaction by other states in the system, who now feel threatened by the “aggressive” state that initiated preventive action.

As technology has improved and weapons have become more destructive and easy to conceal, the consequence of making a mistake in underestimating the danger has become an even more powerful factor in leaders’ decisions. This poses a critical dilemma for leaders faced with such threats. If they overreact, their decisions can lead directly to an armed conflict that may have been avoidable, but it will at least be on their own terms; if they underreact, they risk destruction. Leaders have always had to make judgments weighing the consequences of a potential action/event against the likeliness of its occurrence. For some issues, there is a willingness to take a slight risk if the reward

is thought to be worth it, or if the chance of something bad happening is minimal. However, for issues involving chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, the cost of miscalculation is so high that even a small amount of risk is often considered unacceptable. This is especially true when it is combined with the perception that it is possible to take action to eliminate the threat, thereby reducing the risk to zero.

Preventive War Factors

In a recent work, I developed a theory of the psychological motivations for preventive action that drew on five case studies: British action in the Suez Canal Crisis; Israel's strike on the Osiraq nuclear reactor; American preventive war thinking, 1946–54; Indian preventive war thinking, 1982–2002; and the American preventive war against Iraq that began in 2003.¹² In examining those cases, I found that several variables appear to be associated with decisions concerning preventive war; the declining power motivation, inherent bad faith relationship with an adversary, a belief that war is inevitable, the belief that there is only a short window in which to act, a situation that favors the offensive (or is believed to), and black-and-white thinking.

While all of these factors appear to be influential in preventive war decisions, the leadership and the psychology of the decision maker prove very important in developing a theory of preventive war. The importance of leaders' psychology, motives and choices are elements that not only run through the cases, but help to explain the outcomes as well. Rather than a "factor" that can be categorized as either present or not present, leadership psychology appears to act as a catalyst that can either emphasize or diminish the importance of the other variables.

Leadership Psychology The importance of individuals runs contrary to many mainstream theories of international relations. Most such theories concentrate on "big picture" factors, such as the structure of the international system or relative national capabilities and the balance of power. To the extent that they refer to motivation at all, it is usually in the form of imperatives such as "human nature" that leave little room for individual psychology, leadership or choice.¹³ The case studies I examined make clear that individuals do, in many circumstances, exercise vast influence over the course of events. One basic reason is that individual leaders filter similar information in different ways. Another is that not everybody reacts the same way to similar circumstances or reaches similar judgments about them. President Bush saw Iraq as a serious threat and invaded, while Al Gore says he would not have done so. Or to take another example of the way in which different leadership psychologies lead to potentially different outcomes, it is not at all difficult to believe that Shimon Peres would have acted very differently than Menachem Begin had Peres been Prime Minister in 1981. Thus, central to any analysis of preventive war deci-

sion making is a close examination of individual motivation, perception and ultimately, judgment.

Of course, individual decision makers face constraints. They must deal with the realities of their circumstances, whatever their personal inclinations and views. Some options are too absurd or dangerous to even contemplate. It would be difficult to imagine Israel's Menachem Begin ordering a strike against the nuclear capabilities of the United States, or a land invasion and occupation of Iraq; Israel simply does not have the necessary capability, and it would be unlikely that anybody within the Israeli government would consider such foolhardy courses of action. However, most potential choices facing decision makers are not nearly so black-and-white. In many circumstances, there is ample room for discretion and choice.

No theory is able to predict with certainty when or whether preventive or preemptive action will occur. However, I believe that the following factors substantially increase the odds of a state initiating preventive action. They also provide considerable explanatory power after the fact.

Declining Power in Relation to an Adversary Leadership psychology and leaders' beliefs are instrumental in understanding decisions to initiate preventive war, but they are not the only factors leading to such decisions. Jack Levy noted in his work on the "preventive motivation" for war (see also his Chapter 7 on Iraq as a preventive war) that preventive wars are fought not by rising powers seeking to change the status quo, but by declining powers seeking to preserve it.¹⁴ Thus, a decline in power relative to an adversary might lead a state to initiate preventive war in order to "put down" the challenger. It might also lead the declining power to initiate preventive action in order to forestall the rising power from attaining a particular capability (such as the ability to produce nuclear weapons). In both cases, the declining power seeks to maintain its position relative to an adversary. It should be noted, though, that the status quo does not have any inherent value. Therefore, a change to the status quo, if it did not pose an unacceptable risk to the status quo power, might not compel preventive action. The type and degree of change of the status quo would seem to be at least as important as the fact of the change itself. It is also important to define what, exactly, is meant by "declining power." Is it declining power if the country believes that the rise in power of its adversary will result in rough parity? Or does the situation have to result in a substantial and real material power imbalance? I define "declining power" as a situation in which a state believes that its power is declining relative to another country, and is fearful of the consequences of that decline—without specifying what the consequences must be for the factor to be present.¹⁵ One reason for focusing on relative decline (as opposed to an absolute decline) is that by doing so it is possible to link material realities with the psychology of perception. It

is likely that a leader's perception of the end result of the decline, parity or imbalance, will affect his or her behavior.

Inherent Bad Faith Relationship with Adversary A relationship where both parties believe the other to be an enemy is a pervasive and important factor in preventive war decisions. This factor has two separate but linked facets. A leader might perceive a state to be an enemy, but the leader might also hold the belief that the other state sees them as an enemy. As long as there is the possibility that a conflict might be resolved by peaceful means, war becomes less likely. However, in conflicts that are marked by a history of mutual suspicion and hostility, confidence and trust-building measures may not be very effective, as each side fervently believes the other side will never cooperate. This is a psychological version of the security dilemma, in which even actions taken in good faith are assumed by the adversary to be a trick of some kind. As Robert Jervis has pointed out, certain cognitive beliefs can become reified, even in the face of conflicting information.¹⁶ The inherent bad faith model describes an image of the enemy that has become rooted in moral absolutes, and is closed to conflicting or dissonant information.¹⁷

The bad-faith image contributes to the desire to initiate preventive action by making war or conflict seem inevitable, and by increasing the chances of escalation (and thus preventive or preemptive war) in even a relatively minor crisis.

Related to this is the image of the enemy. Are they perceived as a relatively minor threat, regardless of their intentions? Or are their capabilities potentially dangerous enough that malicious intentions alone might be enough to compel preventive action? How trustworthy are they? After all, international agreements and treaties are only useful in solving disputes so long as states are trusted to keep their end of the agreement.

Arthur Gladstone outlines the basic framework of the psychological conception of the enemy:

Each side believes the other to be bent on aggression and conquest, to be capable of great brutality and evil-doing...to be insincere and untrustworthy.... Many actions which are ordinarily considered immoral become highly moral.¹⁸

Heikki Luostarinen writes that an enemy image is a belief held by a certain group "that its security and basic values are directly and seriously threatened by some other group."¹⁹ An inherent bad faith image is simply a negative "enemy image" extended over time, and hardened in the mind of the decision maker. This is a particularly important factor, as the perception of an enemy's intentions can be much more significant than their material capabilities.²⁰ Additionally, strong enemy images may also cause a greater polarization of good and evil in the mind of the decision maker.²¹ This has particular

relevance for decision makers whose worldview is already predisposed toward a black-and-white view of the world.

A Belief that War (or Serious Conflict) Is Inevitable Strategic advantage, coupled with a belief that conflict is likely or inevitable, dramatically increases the probability of preventive action. In these circumstances, it is in the state's interest to act while it is in an advantageous position. Again, leadership perception is relevant. Who believes war to be inevitable is important. Is it just a single leader? Is that leader in effect the chief or only decision maker? Is it all, or most, of his trusted advisors? Is there a broad consensus that conflict is inevitable? Is the strategic advantage diminishing or increasing? While the specific belief that war is inevitable is very important, the more general manifestation of this is that time is working against a country. This belief, though it can sometimes be no more than a vague notion in the minds of decision makers, is no less powerful for its ambiguity. In fact, this belief appears to correlate closely with decisions to initiate preventive war. This vague sense of foreboding about the future permeates many of the key decision makers' statements in the cases that I examined.

A Belief that There Is Only a Short Window in which to Act The belief that there is only a short window in which to act increases the time pressure felt by decision makers and can lead them to believe that "something must be done before it is too late." This window is a limited period of time during which one state has a strategic advantage over another. The crisis might not be directly observable to the public at large. It is even possible for things to appear normal on the surface while a crisis mentality begins to form within the leadership. This type of window-thinking usually prescribes some positive action to either reverse or forestall the trend toward a period of danger in the future. It might be thought of as a "slow-motion crisis."

The idea of "windows of opportunity" has been thoroughly documented, though scholars give different accounts of its importance.²² However, I present evidence that the concept of perceived windows of opportunity can be an important factor in decisions to initiate preventive action.

A Situation that Favors the Offensive (or Is Believed To) A situation that is believed to favor the offensive is a contributing factor toward preventive war because it leads decision makers to believe that the most likely way to win a war is to strike the first blow.²³ If the threat of war is great enough, striking the first blow (although it changes war from a possibility to a certainty) might be seen as the only, or best, option. This type of thinking is exacerbated by the highly destructive nature of nuclear weapons, which precludes any state willingly waiting to be struck first.

Black-and-White Thinking The last important factor in preventive war decision making is the individual leader's worldview and its permeability, or openness, to change. A worldview/belief system is, in essence, a leader's assumptions about the nature of the world, which operate as a cognitive filter. As Alexander George put it, it is a set of general beliefs about the fundamental issues of history and central questions of politics.²⁴ The specific content of a leader's worldview matters, but so do some of its structural aspects. How open is that view to new or conflicting information? How nuanced or complex is it?²⁵ Consider Betty Glad's work on black-and-white thinking. She describes the structure of such a worldview as one that sees the "world as divided into two camps, with all morality on one side, all evil on the other, with two possible outcomes—to win or to lose. There is no political middle ground." Glad notes that this type of Manichean view of the world is also linked to certitude that this is the "correct" view.²⁶ Glad presents this as a criticism however; it is also the case that this self-confidence allows leaders to make difficult decisions that are sure to provoke heavy criticism such as undertaking a preventive war.

The black-and-white worldview also has implications for the inherent bad faith image, with which it interacts and can reinforce. Additionally, both the black-and-white worldview and the inherent bad faith image are connected to a leader's propensity to see the world in moral dichotomies: good and evil, right and wrong.

It is important, however, to distinguish between two types of black-and-white thinking. First, there is the idea of black-and-white thinking as essentially a simplistic way of processing information. In this view, people take in new information that is immediately categorized internally into one of two possible categories. This, I think, is the sense in which the term is often used, and carries with it the implicit assumption that this is a poor way to process information.

The second type of black-and-white thinking is more complex. In this case, leaders are able to process information in a much more complex and nuanced manner before deciding which of the two categories it fits in to. This is an important distinction to make, as it carries with it significant implications about the type of leader we are dealing with. In the first type, there is little room for complexity or nuanced understanding; while in the second there is, but the end result is "boiled down" so that the decision maker is not lost in endless shades of grey.

It is important not to assume a direct link between either a leader's worldview or its structure and the output, the foreign policy action that results in the end. There are numerous sources of "slippage" between decisions and implementation.²⁷ However, to the extent that individual leaders and advisors are important in preventive war decisions, their individual worldviews are critical to the decision-making process. All of the factors mentioned above interact with the fundamental beliefs of the individual leader. A leader's worldview has important implications for what types of action he believes to be the

most effective (i.e., diplomatic, military, economic), the prospects for peaceful resolution (whether conflict is inevitable), and the nature of their perception of political opponents (how fixed, or rigid, his “enemy image” is).

Preventive War in Historical Perspective

There is no doubt that President Bush’s enunciation of a doctrine which is, at its core, predicated on preventive action is unique in American history. However, preventive action itself is less unusual than is commonly thought, and a short survey of other cases in which preventive action was either taken, or seriously considered, can provide important context for understanding this aspect of the Bush Doctrine.

This section will describe two cases of preventive war planning in which a state eventually initiated preventive action. Each of these two mini-cases contains elements that will help to shed light on the U.S. adoption of the Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War.

Israel’s Preventive Strike

On June 7, 1981, six Israeli F-15 and eight F-16 fighter jets dropped their payload of 2,000-pound bombs on the Osiraq nuclear reactor in Tuwaitha, outside Baghdad.²⁸ The bombs were dropped in a single pass, and in just over two minutes, Iraq’s nuclear ambitions suffered what would turn out to be a devastating setback. The significance of this action has become even more clear in the ensuing years. Israel’s strike on the Osiraq reactor was the first preventive strike on a nuclear facility in history, and the first example of “the forceful nonproliferation” policy that the United States would follow over two decades later. But just as important as the fact of the action itself was its outcome: it was successful. Israel suffered no casualties and effectively ended one of its most serious security threats, one that had preoccupied Israeli leaders for over a decade.

This case also very clearly illustrates the inherent bad faith image of an enemy, and black-and-white thinking. Israel’s estimate of Iraqi capabilities (or potential capabilities) played an important role in the process, but as with all decisions of war and peace, the crux of the matter is capabilities *plus intent*. It was Menachem Begin’s perception of Saddam Hussein’s intentions, based on a combination of Saddam’s stated goals and Begin’s personal frame of reference, that led to the decision to destroy the Osiraq reactor.

Iraq’s nuclear program was begun with assistance from the Soviet Union in 1963.²⁹ However, because of the low capacity of the reactor and the Soviet Union’s historic caution with nuclear technology, it did not seem to arouse much outcry in the international community, including Israel.³⁰ The Director of Israeli Military Intelligence in 1974, Shlomo Gazit, recalled later that Israel “knew the Soviet Union would not permit its [the reactor’s] exploitation for the production of nuclear arms.”³¹

However, the 1963 project had the benefit of training Iraqi scientists in nuclear technology. Under Saddam Hussein's leadership, Iraq pursued an aggressive modernization program. During the 1970s, Iraq had the sixth largest oil reserves in the world and Iraqi leaders counted on this natural asset to provide them leverage in acquiring more advanced nuclear technology.³²

During the 1970s, French dependence on Iraq was on the rise. In 1973, France's imports of Iraqi oil came to 357,000 tons and 15% of all French oil. By 1979, those numbers had risen to 489,000 tons and 21%.³³ In December 1974, newly elected French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac traveled to Iraq. During his visit Chirac signed a general "nuclear cooperation agreement" with Iraq.³⁴

In 1976, the budget for Iraq's Atomic Energy Commission jumped from \$5 million to \$70 million a year. But it was not just Iraqi expenditures that had begun to concern Israeli leaders. The rhetoric of Iraqi leaders had also become increasingly belligerent. In 1973, Iraqi Oil Minister al-Baqi al-Haditi told a Greek journalist that "Israel must be eliminated...by armed struggle and threats against the imperialist powers that protect Israel."³⁵

In 1975, France signed a deal with Iraq to provide it with a 70 MW Osiris-type reactor, and a smaller 800 kW Isis-type reactor, as well as over 70 kg of uranium enriched to over 92%.³⁶ The Osiris reactor was worrisome on multiple accounts. It required enriched uranium which might be diverted by the Iraqis to manufacture weapons; the reactors had the capability to produce significant amounts of plutonium as a side-reaction; and finally its size seemed to indicate that Iraq's intentions might not be only in the realm of peaceful nuclear energy. Additionally, although Iraq had claimed to be interested in a civilian power-generating program, the natural choice for such a program would be a much different reactor. However, civilian-power reactors are not useful for the production of excess plutonium, nor do they use enriched uranium. The Iraqis chose a reactor that was completely unsuited to their stated needs, but well suited to a clandestine nuclear weapons program.³⁷ Iraq also successfully lobbied to buy 93% enriched uranium instead of a new type of fuel dubbed "Caramel," which was enriched to only 6-10% and would have been much less useful in producing nuclear weapons.³⁸

All of these developments played a significant role in the Israeli decision to launch a preventive strike against Iraq. But the linchpin of this decision was the psychology of Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his fervent belief that a nuclear Iraq represented a dire threat to the existence of Israel.

By 1980, Begin and other Israeli leaders had focused on the Iraqi program as one of the top of threats of Israeli security. A campaign of diplomacy had borne little fruit. Even strong U.S. pressure could not dissuade France from providing enriched uranium to Iraq and the International Atomic Energy Agency's complete inaction when Iran's Revolutionary Council banned IAEA inspectors provided Israel even less reason to put their faith (and their security) in the hands of international diplomacy.³⁹

In the summer of 1980, the Israeli General Staff Senior Officer Forum met to discuss the growing threat of Iraq's nuclear program. We have evidence that the issue was discussed at length, and a variety of opinions were put forward. Those who opposed the attack on Osiraq did so on the grounds that it would not destroy the 12 kg of enriched uranium the French had already supplied to Iraq, nor any other small stockpile it had acquired from other sources.⁴⁰ Those who supported the raid argued that if Iraq were able to activate the reactor, it would continue to acquire up to 37 kg of enriched uranium a year indefinitely, and eventually produce enough plutonium to construct two to three bombs per year. They also argued that a strike now might induce Italy and France to reconsider their assistance to the Iraqi regime, and perhaps add stricter controls.⁴¹

Labour Party leader (and Begin's main opponent in the coming elections) Shimon Peres expressed his concerns to Begin in a top-secret note in May, 1981. Peres was convinced that the French President-elect Mitterand, a socialist and a personal friend, would provide a solution to the Iraq problem.⁴² He declared in his note to Begin that should Israel continue on this course of action, it would be "like a tree in the desert" in the international community.⁴³

In response to the idea that Mitterand's election might solve the problem, Begin declared in a cabinet meeting that such an event would only delay Israeli action, not change the actual situation. "It was not a French reactor," he said, but an Iraqi reactor. And "the problem was not France, but the existence of the state of Israel."⁴⁴

Biographer Amos Perlmutter wrote that, for Begin, it was an "ideological decision," a question of averting another Holocaust.⁴⁵ Begin refused to listen to expert advice when, as he saw it, the very existence of the state of Israel was at stake.

However, his certainty in his own decisions did not mean that he was oblivious to the potential consequences of the attack.⁴⁶ In an article published after the attack, William Claiborne reported that Begin was warned that the strike could result in the suspension of U.S. arms shipments to Israel.⁴⁷ What is relevant here is that Begin—with a full understanding of the potential consequences—still chose to initiate preventive action. The decision to initiate an operation that carried such risks for Israeli citizens, the security of Israel, and even his own political career, is a testament to the strength and rigidity of his image of the enemy that Begin held.

Britain and Suez

On October 29, 1956, Israel invaded the Sinai. This action followed months of negotiations between Egypt, France, Britain, and the United States regarding Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. It is now known that Britain secretly colluded with France and Israel to wage a preventive war against Egypt. The plan called for Israel to launch an attack on Egypt at a prescribed time, and Britain and France to send troops to Egypt

in the guise of “peace keepers” in order to reestablish control over the canal. However, economic pressure by the United States soon forced Britain and France out of Egypt in a humiliating fashion.

British action in this case was not intended to crush a rising power, though the end goal of the military action would certainly have accomplished that. Nor was it intended to prevent Egypt from acquiring a particular capability; Egypt had already drastically altered the balance of power by seizing the canal. British action was intended to prevent the utilization of Egypt’s newly acquired power. In this case, Egypt’s seizure of the canal had given it the ability to exert influence over the British Empire through control of British oil shipping routes. The possibility of blackmail by Egypt was exacerbated by British perceptions of Nasser as a “mortal enemy” and Prime Minister Anthony Eden’s belief that a showdown was inevitable.

The Suez Crisis originated with the building of another major project in Egypt, the Aswan High Dam. On December 14, 1955, Great Britain and the United States made a formal offer to finance the Aswan Dam. Part of the impetus for this came from British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, who became even more agitated after the Soviet Union (through the Czech government) sold Egypt a large shipment of MiG fighters, tanks, and other heavy equipment.⁴⁸ Yet, far from placating Nasser and drawing him closer to the West, funding for the dam seems to have spurred him to further antagonize the West without fear of reprisal.

However, the United States soon reversed course and backed out of the Aswan Dam loan, with Eden and the British government following suit. The French Ambassador to Washington, Maurice Couve de Murville, accurately predicted of Egypt: “They will do something about Suez. That’s the only way they can touch the Western countries.”⁴⁹

On July 26, 1956, Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal in a public speech in Alexandria.⁵⁰ However, though Britain was understandably shocked by the move, it was difficult to make the case to the international community that it was an illegal seizure. The Suez Company was registered as an Egyptian company, and Nasser had indicated that he intended to compensate its shareholders. Though Britain condemned the act as a “high-handed act of seizure against an international company,” it was clear even to British leaders that they did not have a compelling legal argument.⁵¹

Anthony Nutting, a Deputy Foreign Minister, wrote:

In fact, as frequently happens in international disputes, both arguments could be supported on legal grounds, which made it all the more necessary that the issue should be resolved by political and diplomatic negotiation and agreement.⁵²

In addition, British leaders recognized early that economic pressure was not feasible. In the first cabinet meeting after the nationalization, the possibility of using economic pressure was discussed and quickly abandoned.⁵³

Thus, only one day after the nationalization of the Canal, both economic and legal pressure had been ruled out as effective means to resolve the dispute. The only options still available were (1) do nothing, and let Nasser's action stand; (2) the use of political pressure and diplomacy; or (3) the use of military force to take back control of the canal.

Contributing to the developing crisis was the changing perception of Nasser by British leaders. In 1952, Selwyn Lloyd (then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs) reported being "favorably impressed" with Nasser during their first meeting.⁵⁴ And, as late as March 1954, Evelyn Shockburgh reported that Eden had "come to the conclusion that Nasser is the man for us."⁵⁵

However, between 1954 and the 1956 Suez Crisis, the British perspective on Nasser had changed dramatically. By March of 1956, Eden had already taken to comparing Nasser to Mussolini.⁵⁶ In fact, Eden compared Nasser to Hitler so often that Winston Churchill once remarked, after a conversation with Eden, that he "never knew before that Munich was situated on the Nile."⁵⁷ In March 1956, Nutting wrote a memo to Lloyd asserting that "appeasement of Nasser" would not work, and that Nasser would likely break any deal that he made. Lloyd reports that this memo confirmed his own intuition.⁵⁸

The allusion to "appeasement" and fascist dictators by British leaders is telling in what it reveals about the historical analogies that resonated with them. World War II was obviously fresh in the minds of British leaders; but it was the year 1936 that was probably in the back of the minds of Eden, Lloyd, and Nutting. 1956 was the 20th anniversary of the 1936 remilitarization and reoccupation of the Rhineland by Hitler. It was also the 20th anniversary of Western Europe doing nothing to oppose Hitler, a decision that had been widely condemned in the intervening years. Harold Macmillan (then a backbencher MP) had gone against the tide in advising forceful action in March 1936. Eden, however, had not; claiming that public opinion in Europe would not support action against Germany for "returning to their own backyard."⁵⁹ However, he had a falling out with Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in 1938 after the Munich conference, from which we can infer that the "lesson of appeasement" had been quickly learned.⁶⁰

For instance, one letter written by Eden to President Dwight D. Eisenhower read:

In the nineteen-thirties Hitler established his position by a series of carefully planned movements.... It was argued either that Hitler had committed no act of aggression against anyone, or that he was entitled to do what he liked in his own territory, or that it was impossible to prove that he had any ulterior designs.... Similarly, the seizure of the

Suez Canal is, we are convinced, the opening gambit in a planned campaign designed by Nasser to expel all Western influence and interests from Arab countries.... You may feel that even if we are right it would be better to wait until Nasser has unmistakably unveiled his intentions. But this was the argument which prevailed in 1936 and which we both rejected in 1938. Admittedly there are risks in the use of force against Egypt now. It is, however, clear that military intervention designed to reverse Nasser's revolutions in the whole continent would be a much more costly and difficult undertaking.⁶¹

This letter clearly indicates that importance of this historical analogy for Eden. This "lesson" was most likely learned by most people of his generation. However, Eden's experience was somewhat unusual. In 1936, as British Foreign Secretary, he personally had a hand in appeasing Hitler. Then, in 1938, after learning his lesson, he was unable to exert influence over Chamberlain. In 1956, confronted again by aggression, he was in the position to act. Eden made a public comparison of Nasser to fascist dictators:

Why not trust him? The answer is simple. Look at his record.... Instead of meeting us with friendship Colonel Nasser conducted a vicious propaganda campaign against this country. He has shown that he is not a man who can be trusted to keep an agreement.... The pattern is familiar to many of us.... We all know this is how fascist governments behave, as we all remember, only too well, what the cost can be in giving in to Fascism.⁶²

On Sunday, October 14, Nutting and Eden met with French representatives. Albert Gazier, the French Minister of Labour, cautiously asked Eden what Britain's response would be if Israel were to attack Egypt. Eden replied that Britain "had no obligation...to stop the Israelis attacking the Egyptians."⁶³ Eden then asked his secretary to stop recording the minutes of the meeting and asked General Challe, a French representative, to speak openly. The plan was that Israel would be invited to attack across the Sinai Peninsula. Upon being "informed" of the attacks, Britain and France would simultaneously make appeals to the Israeli and Egyptian governments to halt the fighting after which Britain and France would order both sides to withdraw from the Suez Canal, at which point the canal would be under de facto Anglo-French control.⁶⁴

On October 21, Eden decided that Selwyn Lloyd should travel incognito to Paris the next day to meet French and Israeli leaders.⁶⁵ Finally, upon Israeli urging, a document containing the details of the aforementioned plan, which later became known as the "Sevres Protocol," was signed.

British initiation of a preventive war in this case hinged on the belief that conflict with Egypt, with Nasser, was inevitable. In Eden's mind, the ambition and intentions of Nasser were destined to be in fundamental opposition to the

interests of the British Empire. The constant use of World War II-era analogies by Eden and other British leaders prescribed a specific solution: aggression must be met with force. But more than prescribing a solution to a problem, the analogies give us insight into how the leaders framed their relationship with Nasser. After all, the fundamental lesson of the “Munich analogy” is not just that you cannot appease dictators (although that follows from the real lesson), it is the *reason* you cannot appease them: leaders such as Adolf Hitler are, at their core, expansionist, and there is no way to avoid an eventual showdown with them. The best that you can hope for is to confront the threat before it is fully formed (e.g., during the Rhineland phase, or at Munich).

The Transformation of the United States Security Strategy

Security Strategy

Some of the preventive war factors that were exhibited in these case studies are also very clearly exhibited in the Bush Doctrine. However, of the factors delineated earlier in the chapter, not all are evident in the Bush Doctrine nor in the more general transformation of U.S. national security strategy. Window thinking, for example, does not seem to be evident in the Bush Doctrine. There is an important distinction to be made here, between the Doctrine itself and certain actions (such as the Iraq War) that followed from it. A case can certainly be made that there was a closing window of opportunity before the Iraq War (i.e., before Iraq’s nuclear program produced an arsenal of WMDs). However, the Iraq War was not itself part of the Bush Doctrine, but rather a logical extension of it. There is no evidence of window thinking in the Doctrine itself.

The declining power motivation for preventive war is not present in the Bush Doctrine either. Quite the contrary, in fact, the Bush Doctrine is an attempt to grapple not only with new threats, but also with the changed reality of American power in the twenty-first century. The last grand strategy of the U.S. was in response to the Cold War, and was premised on a bipolar system, with the U.S. and the Soviet Union balancing each other. Rather than being in response to declining American power, the Bush Doctrine is a response to American hegemony in the post-Cold War international system.⁶⁶ Thus, the aspects of the Doctrine that are related to a strategy of prevention have nothing to do with declining power, but rather a change in the nature of the threats facing the U.S.

Inherent Bad Faith Image of the Enemy

One important aspect of the Bush Doctrine (discussed in greater depth in Post, Chapter 6) is its stance on deterrence. In fact, this is intrinsically related to one of the most important psychological factors related to preventive war thinking: the inherent bad faith image. How a leader perceives his adversary

has a direct correlation to how much faith he places in his ability to deter that adversary.

Here one can see the importance of global norms of accepted behavior. Describing the superpower relationship during the Cold War, Thomas Schelling wrote, “Khrushchev [and the Soviets] understood the politics of deterrence.”⁶⁷ Successful deterrence is based on mutual understanding, and some base level of agreement on what constitutes an unacceptable loss. Therein lies the problem: it takes some type of mutual understanding for deterrence to work. The assumption of mutually assured destruction (MAD) provided a measure of safety because both the U.S. and the Soviets believed it to be true. The basis of deterrence was that although neither side would be able to prevent an attack, either side would be able to retaliate and inflict disastrous harm on the perpetrator, thus deterring potential aggressors by the threat of harsh retaliation.

Part of the bad faith image that is illustrated by the Doctrine is the view, declared in the National Security Strategy (NSS), that the enemies of the U.S. are undeterrable. There are two important components of Bush’s bad faith image of these enemies. The first is the view that conventional strategies of deterrence will not work against terrorists and rogue regimes because they play by a fundamentally different set of rules (or norms).

The 2002 NSS recognizes that there can be no mutual understanding between the U.S. and terrorists. How does one deter suicide bombers whose goal is to die? Does the logic of deterrence work on extraterritorial groups such as loosely linked terrorist networks? Robert Jervis writes of terrorists that “[they] cannot be contained by deterrence. Terrorists are fanatics, and there is nothing that they value that we can hold at risk.”⁶⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, a historian of the Cold War, agrees, asking, “How does one negotiate with a shadow?... How does one deter somebody who’s prepared to commit suicide?”⁶⁹ This was certainly the conclusion of President Bush in the aftermath of 9/11.⁷⁰

The other aspect of the bad faith image of the adversary is that the United States cannot trust either terrorists or rogue states to stand by any agreement that is made. This belief, especially with regard to Iraq, is made clear by the many statements by Bush stating that Saddam Hussein cannot be trusted to keep his word on any inspection agreements.⁷¹

In his West Point address, Bush foreshadowed the conflict with Iraq by declaring: “We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systemically break them.”⁷²

This image of the adversary—as one with whom no agreements can be made and who does not conform to the norms of international conduct—will be explored in further depth shortly, but at this point, it is striking how clearly this imagery is enshrined in America’s National Security Strategy.

The NSS states that there can be no mutual understanding between the U.S. and terrorists. Because of this belief, as well as the realization that successful deterrence is more difficult to achieve with shadowy terrorist groups than with traditional nation-states, the NSS proposes that the U.S. no longer rely exclusively on deterrence, and instead meet threats before they have fully materialized: a doctrine of prevention, not preemption.

Offensive Thinking

One factor that is clearly evident in the Bush Doctrine is the lure of the offensive in strategic calculations. The “ideology of the offensive” is a well-documented phenomenon, but in this case it comes with something of a twist. The reason for the offensive emphasis, in this case, is not the result of a military culture biased toward offensive action, or even the development of a new technology that renders existing military planning obsolete. Instead, strategic evaluation of the nature of the threat led to the prominence of the offensive in the Bush Doctrine.

Bush’s comment that “the only path to peace and security is the path of action” makes clear the importance (in the minds of the administration) of taking the initiative.⁷³ In fact, it is not just that the situation favors the offensive, but rather that it requires the offensive. The implication of this argument for Iraq is clearly spelled out in the NSS: the scale of destruction made possible by rogue states (and terrorists) equipped with WMDs makes preventive action necessary. The risk is too great to wait on events.

The NSS groups terrorists and certain “rogue states” (Iraq, Iran, and North Korea) together in declaring that the nature of these new threats means that the U.S. “can no longer rely on a reactive posture.” Terrorism and these “rogue states” are inextricably linked in that there is always the possibility that rogue states that have or are pursuing WMDs might give these weapons to terrorists and attack Western countries by proxy. In fact, this possibility was mentioned specifically in Bush’s commencement address at West Point, where he declared: “Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.”⁷⁴ Bush’s use of the term “unbalanced” indicates his perception that there is something intrinsic to the psychology of leaders like Saddam Hussein that makes any kind of mutual understanding very difficult, and makes deterrence impossible to achieve.

A Belief that War Is Inevitable

The last factor that is illustrated by the NSS is the view that war, or serious conflict, is inevitable. In a striking parallel to similar declarations by leaders in the two case studies reviewed above, the NSS is clear in enunciating that not only is war inevitable, but it has already begun. However, this “war” is different in nature from previous wars. Unlike wars of the past, the war described

in the NSS is not against a single adversary, country, group, or individual. Instead, this broad-based war is a “War on Terror.”⁷⁵

It is clear from Bush’s actions and words that this was not just a clever turn of phrase meant to make a rhetorical point. Rather, Bush seems to feel that the U.S. really is in a state of war, whether or not others agree with him. Moreover, it is not just the words that count, but also the actions behind them. For President Bush, the “war on terrorism” is not just a rhetorical device. War is not meant in the figurative sense utilized by so many past presidents. Instead, it is meant in the very real sense that any U.S. action is a response to a war that is already under way.

The implication of this is that it is not business as usual; the rules and even laws that govern peacetime do not necessarily apply anymore. Whether or not one agrees with the policies they embody, the passage of the Patriot Act in 2001, the controversy over the status of detainees and their treatment, the semantic wrangling over the issue of torture, and the status of “enemy combatants” indicate clearly that Bush perceives the United States to be in a time of extraordinary circumstances that require something above and beyond the usual methods.

While America’s war on terror might have started out as essentially a metaphorical concept, it has come to take on greater significance. Gilles Andreani, Head of Policy Planning in the French Foreign Ministry, wrote that “in the case of 11 September, the use of the word ‘war’ has gone far beyond metaphor to acquire a strategic reality.”⁷⁶ Andreani lists the reasons why the war on terror has taken root in American consciousness, the most important of which was that, having suffered an “unprovoked and unjustifiable attack...psychologically, America found itself at war.”⁷⁷ It is exactly this sensibility that informed the Bush Doctrine’s assumption that America is already at war.

Worldview

At least as important as any of the other factors mentioned in this chapter is President Bush’s worldview. In fact, Bush’s worldview—both its content and its relative rigidity—has acted as a catalyzing factor, magnifying the importance of the other psychological factors.

Bush took office viewing the world as a dangerous place, a world in which America is threatened by powerful and dangerous enemies. 9/11 dramatically confirmed that view. He also sees America’s enemies as implacable and evil, and therefore sees force as the appropriate means to combat them. The morality of the conflict flows easily from this view: they are evil, the U.S. is simply protecting itself, and thus has right on its side. Also relevant is Bush’s perception of the “War on Terror” as part of a historical trend of good versus evil, and the stark morality implied by such a conflict.

In an address to Congress nine days after the terrorist attacks, Bush described al-Qaeda, and other terrorist organizations, as heirs to the “murderous

ideologies of the 20th century,” such as fascism, totalitarianism, and Nazism.⁷⁸ Thus, in a manner similar to the fight against Nazism in World War II, the fight against extremist and terrorist ideologies was a fight for the future of civilization.

Only days after the terrorist attacks, Bush spoke at the National Cathedral, and declared: “Just three days removed from these events, Americans do not yet have the distance of history, but our responsibility to history is already clear; to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil.”⁷⁹ This remark clearly illustrates Bush’s view of America’s war on terrorism as a struggle of good versus evil. However, it also shows that Bush feels the responsibility to history, the sense that the U.S. stands at a pivotal moment in history, and must act not just for the present, but also for the future.

The events of 9/11 confirmed Bush’s view that the world is a dangerous place, but they did more than that. They made the world seem much more dangerous than it had been before. Whereas before Saddam Hussein might have been contained, in the light of 9/11 his actions and intentions looked much more menacing. In an interview two years after 9/11, Bush spoke of the effect of the terrorist attacks: “Saddam Hussein’s capacity to create harm...all his terrible features became much more threatening. Keeping Saddam in a box looked less and less feasible to me.”⁸⁰

The second aspect of Bush’s worldview that is significant for his Iraq decision is his stark sense of morality. This is the “with us or against us” mentality that has been so often criticized. Bush has taken the rhetorical stance that there is no neutrality in the war against terror, no shades or degrees of cooperation. He takes the position that any “shades of grey” are simply ways of obfuscating what is readily apparent to him: there is good and there is evil, and all of the degrees in between just confuse the issue. It follows from this that there could be no conceptual distinction between the actual terrorists and countries that harbor terrorists, although in practice (Saudi Arabia and Pakistan being two obvious examples) there is obviously a difference between statements and policy.⁸¹

This has particular bearing on preventive war decisions. A stark, black-and-white sense of morality does two things. It tends to throw into sharp relief the dangers and risks of a given threat once a leader such as Bush decides that such a threat exists. The lack of degrees, in essence a lack of gradation or subtlety in viewing adversaries, also exacerbates the effects of the inherent bad faith image of one’s adversary. Evil is evil, and one simply cannot negotiate with evil, especially if its goal is your destruction. By invoking the specter of Nazism in his speeches, Bush consciously or unconsciously implied the natural course of action when dealing with such a serious threat. The use of the Nazi/Fascism analogy holds important implications for action: the type of threat is dire, negotiation is not possible, and the conflict will end only when one side has been decisively defeated.⁸²

The second effect of this worldview is the implication for Bush's view of the United States in this matter. If terrorism—embodied in the threat of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda—is evil, then it follows that the United States is on the other side, the side of good. This imbues the actions of the United States with an inherently virtuous quality, and in Bush's eyes, legitimacy. Obviously, many people domestically and abroad do not see things this way (see Foyle, Chapter 3, on domestic and world opinion). However, this sense that America is on the right side of history does contribute to Bush's resilience to criticism, discussed earlier. For Bush, believing that he is on the right side, fighting evil, makes him more resilient to outside critics, who simply don't see the threat in the same way as he does.

The Future of Preventive War

The Bush Doctrine, and the subsequent war against Iraq, brought preventive war to the forefront of the world's attention. However, like many important events in history, the aftereffects for the future of preventive war are not yet apparent, and will not be for some time. Will the Iraq War be viewed as successful by later generations? Will world and American public reluctance to support such ventures prove insurmountable in the future? Does a successful campaign of preventive war lessen the need for such strategies in the future, or does it guarantee future conflict? Certainly, the lethal mix of WMDs, rogue regimes, and catastrophic terrorism will remain a dire threat. But will preventive war continue to be utilized as a strategy?

Preventive Wars and Deterrence

One of the most important questions raised by the Iraq War is what effect it will have on the stability of deterrence in the future. Deterrence theory is inextricably linked to questions of preventive war, since it is a failure of deterrence that leads to strategies of prevention. More specifically, it is the perception that a specific threat cannot be deterred that leads decision makers to consider (and sometimes take) preventive action. A strategy of preventive war is the result of the perception that deterrence is likely to fail. Note that it need not have failed already, but there must be the perception that it is likely to fail, combined with the belief that the consequences of such a failure would be unacceptable. Here is the sliding scale of decision making: the potential consequences of an event balanced against the likelihood of that event occurring.

Preventive war is linked to deterrence in another critical way as well. Preventive war may help to strengthen a state's deterrent ability for the future, especially in cases where states had previously been thought of as weak, or unwilling to suffer casualties. Recall that Osama bin Laden specifically called attention to the weak American response in Lebanon, Vietnam, and Somalia as evidence that the U.S. was, if not a "paper tiger," then at least a timid one. A determined and clear-cut willingness to go to war and stay there, despite

intense difficulties and international pressure, is one method of revitalizing one's credibility, and with it the viability of future deterrence.

More generally, preventive war may affect deterrence in any of three ways: it may damage it, strengthen it, or not have any effect at all. Historical example suggests that there is no one answer to the difficult question of which is most likely. Different circumstances will bring different outcomes. The Israeli attack on the Osiraq reactor is generally deemed a successful preventive strike, and it is true that the strike brought a level of relief to Israeli leaders and citizens. Yet, Israel was and still is under the shadow of Iraqi SCUD missiles. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. chose not to initiate preventive action against the Soviet Union, and yet a relatively stable deterrence evolved. Anthony Eden's preventive war against Egypt likely destroyed any moral credibility that Britain had left after the decline of its empire, and its forced departure from Suez at the insistence of the United States did nothing to burnish its credentials as a power to be reckoned with. In a similar vein, the U.S. action in Iraq might have increased the credibility of American will and resolve, but the perception that the U.S. is bogged down in Iraq and weakened by an overstretched military might negate any potential gains from the war in terms of benefits to future deterrence, surely a paradoxical effect.

It seems likely that if preventive war does have a positive effect on deterrence, its benefits would primarily be in the short term. Certainly, demonstrating commitment and resolve ("will") is one likely consequence of preventive action. But what is the shelf life of resolve? Is one precision strike enough? Is one major war enough? Do preventive actions (whether strikes or wars) have to be followed up by other actions to sustain credibility? Do these follow-up actions risk labeling the actor as a bully, or worse, an aggressor? In short, how much "maintenance" does deterrence require?

There is another shelf life question: Do the deterrent effects of a preventive war outlive an administration? Assume that President Bush has demonstrated his resolve to potential adversaries. Will his successor need to do so as well? There is reason to suppose that this credibility is "nontransferable." President Eisenhower demonstrated his resolve by threatening to bomb the North Koreans, breaking the stalemate in talks about ending the Korean War. Yet, when Kennedy succeeded to the presidency, he was immediately tested by the Soviet Union's Nikita Khrushchev. Eisenhower's "will" did not carry over to the next administration, and there is no good reason why it should in other circumstances. The nature of democratic government means that the credibility of any one administration is destined to be short lived. Authoritarian governments do not suffer from this same problem, and it is conceivable that their deterrent capability might improve and last for quite a while. As long as a dictator remains in power, there is no reason to believe that their deterrent capability would diminish without some precipitating event, such as failing health.

Still another issue is whether credibility gained by preventive war (and the benefit to a state's deterrent ability) is transferable over geographical and political circumstances. Some have argued that Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon was a short-term result that followed from the change in risk calculations brought on by Bush and his policies. On the other hand, so far the preventive war against Iraq does not seem to have had much of an effect on North Korea's behavior. In retrospect, it seems mistaken to assume that preventive war will compel changes in behavior in all circumstances; but there is, as yet, no delineation of those circumstances that favor it and those that do not. Consider the situation of North Korea. President Bush has repeatedly stated that he favors a diplomatic solution. Why? Is it that North Korea is thought to already have multiple nuclear weapons? That it has large numbers of soldiers stationed a few miles from the capital of South Korea? That its leader, Kim Jong-il, is considered by many to be wildly unreliable and unpredictable, possibly even unbalanced? (See Post, Chapter 6, on deterring rogue leaders.) What separates situations that are perceived to require or call for preventive action from those that do not?

The Likely, the Unlikely, and the Improbable

In considering the future of preventive war, one point is very clear after September 11: leaders must worry about the unlikely and the improbable, especially if the consequences of inaction are high. Nineteen terrorists hijacking four planes simultaneously and using them as missiles to attack the United States was unlikely, and yet it happened. That they lived for years in the United States undetected by American intelligence services is even more unlikely, yet it, too, happened. In fact, the entire course of events that led to the events of 9/11 might be considered unlikely. And yet, they happened. Catastrophic consequences lower the threshold at which the "unlikely" must be taken seriously by leaders.

There are two types of events that fall into this category of high-impact, relatively low-probability events: the proliferation of nuclear weapons to unstable regimes and potential terrorist attacks. After the end of the Cold War rivalry, it appears that these two threats have emerged as two of the most pressing problems of the early twenty-first century. It is worth exploring why it is precisely these types of threats that seem most appropriate for preventive action.

The Appeal of "Positive" Action: From Deterrence to Prevention

In order for preventive action to be a viable choice, the threat must entail particularly disastrous consequences, such that the decision maker sees guaranteed conflict now, on his own terms (even with the risks it carries), as better than possible conflict later. But it is not enough for the stakes to be high. After all, the stakes were as high as they could go during the Cold War, when the fate of the world rested on the restraint of two opposing superpowers.

In addition to severe consequences, deterrence must not be an option in order for preventive war to appeal to leaders. In the case of terrorism, it is generally accepted that deterrence is not possible against suicide terror attacks. Deterrence is at its heart an understanding between two parties, where one party “deters” the other by threatening retaliation against something of value. To the extent that deterrence worked during the Cold War, it did so because the Soviet Union and the United States shared some core values, an understanding of the “rules of the game” and a secure second-strike capability.

There are numerous reasons for a leader to believe, given some circumstances, that deterrence will not work against another state. A leader might believe that his adversary is irrational and unpredictable, that he is risk-prone in his decision making, that at some basic level there is no agreement on fundamental values (such as the sanctity of human life), or that the adversary will find some indirect way to attack (such as giving WMDs to terrorist groups) that would make retaliation difficult. For any of these reasons, once a leader believes that deterrence is no longer viable, there are few options left. The leader may do nothing, in the hope that an “unlikely” scenario will not become reality, or he may take positive action to either realign the balance of power or capabilities (as in Israel’s strike on the Osiraq reactor) or to remove a threat completely (as in the war in Iraq).

The Future of U.S. National Security Strategy

The Iraqi insurgency and the difficulties of nation rebuilding have proved to be much more difficult than the Bush administration anticipated. Saddam Hussein is gone, and a new elected government is in place, but the long-term prospects are hardly a given. Even more than the long-term effects in Iraq, the immense costs of the war (in political capital, relationships with allies, money, and lost lives) for the United States raise the question of whether another American-led preventive war is likely in the future.

The presidency of George W. Bush has been remarkable in the enormous consequences that followed from one initial judgment, and has had important ramifications throughout the world. The recognition that terrorism represents a unique type of threat, wholly different from that faced by the U.S. during the Cold War, was arguably an inevitable conclusion after 9/11. However, the implications drawn from that one conclusion were far-reaching and controversial. That Bush linked terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and rogue regimes together in the national security strategy was enormously significant for America’s post-9/11 stance toward the world. Yet, his decision to use Iraq as a “test case” for preventive action was equally significant. Many policy makers agreed that the United States and its allies must actively prevent acts of terrorism; that deterrence would not suffice to keep the U.S. safe from further attacks. However, it was a huge risk, both for the country and his own political career, for Bush to have initiated a war not because of a direct and immediate

terrorist threat, but because of his judgment that Iraq posed a long-term threat to U.S. security.

If the Iraq War was a test case for preventive action, then did it pass the test? Will this preventive war be an isolated incident, an anomaly in the history of modern U.S. foreign policy? Or did Bush's National Security Strategy signal a major and long-lasting change of "grand strategy"? Will the Iraq War mark the beginning of a new era of increased international conflict and suspicion, marked by more and more states acting preventively? Will the policies of Bush outlast his presidency?

How we answer these questions in the future will depend on a great many factors: how well the war in Iraq goes and how deeply democracy takes root there, how successful the U.S. and its allies are in eradicating the most dangerous terrorist cells throughout the world, and how well the U.S. can help other countries deal with some of the root causes that allow terrorists to flourish by earnestly helping countries on the path to economic and political development. What is certain, however, is that in the near future, the United States will face severe threats from a number of quarters that will force dire situations and stark choices upon our leaders. Underestimating the threat might lead to catastrophe. And yet, preventive war is a blunt instrument, not a panacea. If used unwisely, or without thought given to the likely consequences, its effects may be more detrimental than beneficial.

As always, American presidents and allied leaders will be forced to make decisions with profound consequences, and yet they will often be required to do so on the basis of incomplete or imperfect information. This is inevitable. As a result, the security of the United States will ultimately still hinge on the best judgments of leaders and their advisors. These decisions will engage their motives, worldviews, perceptions, and emotions. To the extent that there are answers to the questions posed in this chapter, they will be found in the recesses of the human mind, and not solely in material circumstances. It is critical, therefore, in examining preventive war to focus substantial attention there.

Endnotes

1. An adversarial relationship may result for many different reasons, such as economic competition, territorial disputes, ideological disputes, "sphere of influence" conflicts, ethnic conflict, historical events, access to trade routes or resources, etc.
2. Lawrence Freedman, "Prevention, Not Pre-Emption," *The Washington Quarterly* 26 (Spring 2003): 106.
3. For this line of argument, see Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 75-80.
4. Samuel P. Huntington, "To Choose Peace or War: Is There a Place for Preventive War in American Policy?" *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 83 (April 1957): 360.

5. Jack S. Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War," *World Politics* 40 (October 1987): 87.
6. Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 76.
7. Another such explanation can be found in Robert Gilpin's *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 191.
8. Interestingly, neither Levy nor Gilpin make a distinction between the "preventive motivation" for war, and "preventive war" as a *type* of war. However, both authors still overemphasize balance of power calculations in their explanations.
9. James Steinberg, "Preventive Force in US National Security Strategy," *Survival* 47 (Winter 2005-06): 59-62.
10. Levy, "The Preventive Motivation for War," 87.
11. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30 (1978): 167-214.
12. See Jonathan Renshon, *Why Leaders Choose War: The Psychology of Prevention* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006).
13. See Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 192, 200.
14. Jack S. Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War," *World Politics* 40 (October 1987): 87.
15. In fact, this is very close to Levy's definition.
16. Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 288-291.
17. Douglas Stuart and Harvey Starr, "The 'Inherent Bad Faith Model' Reconsidered: Dulles, Kennedy, and Kissinger," *Political Psychology* 3 (Fall/Winter, 1981-82): 1. Much of the work on inherent bad faith relationships and enemy image is derived from the path-breaking work of Ole Holsti, who examined the belief system of John Foster Dulles in a graduate dissertation. Holsti noted that "the more his [Dulles'] image of the Soviet Union was dominated by ethical rather than political criteria, the more likely it would be that the image would resist any change." See Ole Holsti, *The Belief System and National Images: John Foster Dulles and the Soviet Union* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation; Stanford University, 1962, 231-232).
18. Arthur Gladstone, "The Conception of the Enemy," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3 (June, 1959): 132.
19. Heikki Luostarinen, "Finnish Russophobia: The Story of an Enemy Image," *Journal of Peace Research* 26 (May 1989): 125.
20. Hermann and Fischerkeller correlate an "enemy" image with the perception that the enemy will be exposed as a "paper tiger" if met with strong opposition. However, the results of the cases in this book indicate that the enemy image is often associated with the opposite belief: that capabilities of an enemy are greater than empirical evidence suggests. See Richard K. Hermann and Michael P. Fischerkeller, "Beyond the Enemy Image and Spiral Model: Cognitive-Strategic Research After the Cold War," *International Organization* 49 (Summer 1995): 428.
21. David J. Finlay, Ole R. Holsti, and Richard R. Fagen, *Enemies in Politics* (Chicago: Rand McNally Press, 1967), 21.

22. For two opposing points of view on this issue, see Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War* (doctoral dissertation; Berkeley, University of California, 1984), 61-71, 89-95, 330-339, 650-654; and Richard Ned Lebow, "Windows of Opportunity: Do States Jump Through Them?" *International Security* 9 (Summer 1984): 149.
23. This is the theory underlying Jack Snyder's work *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). This is also the premise behind Stephen Van Evera's *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*, which explores the different reasons for which the offensive comes to be favored by leaders (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).
24. Alexander George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13 (June 1969): 191. George reformulated Leites' concept of an operational code into a series of questions, the answers to which formed a leader's operational code. These questions regard different aspects of the decision maker's relevant political beliefs: (1) What is the essential "nature" of political life? Is the political universe essentially one of harmony or conflict? What is the fundamental character of one's political opponent's? (2) What is the utility and role of different means for advancing one's interests?
25. Peter Suedfeld and Philip E. Tetlock, "Integrative Complexity of Communications in International Crises," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 21 (1977): 169-184.
26. Betty Glad, "Black-and-White Thinking: Ronald Reagan's Approach to Foreign Policy," *Political Psychology* 4 (Spring 1983): 33.
27. Stephen G. Walker, "The Interface between Beliefs and Behavior: Henry Kissinger's Operational Code and the Vietnam War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 21 (March 1977): 131.
28. Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services* (New York: Grove Press, 1991), 332.
29. Jed C. Snyder, "The Road to Osiraq: Baghdad's Quest for the Bomb," *Middle East Journal* 37 (Autumn 1983): 565.
30. *Ibid.*, 566.
31. Quoted in Shlomo Nakdimon, *First Strike: The Exclusive Story of How Israel Foiled Iraq's Attempt to Get the Bomb* (New York: Summit Books, 1987), 57.
32. Snyder, "The Road to Osiraq," 566.
33. Nakdimon, *First Strike*, 47.
34. Shai Feldman, "The Bombing of Osiraq—Revisited." *International Security* 7 (Autumn 1982): 115.
35. Quoted in Nakdimon, *First Strike*, 48.
36. Feldman, "The Bombing of Osiraq—Revisited," 116; and Nakdimon, *First Strike*, 62.
37. Snyder, "The Road to Osiraq," 569. There were a host of other worrying developments during this time, such as Italy's sale to Iraq of a large-scale plutonium separation facility and a "hot lab," capable of separating plutonium from uranium and other fissile materials. Iraq also purchased (from Brazil, Portugal, and Niger) over 20 tons of uranium. This was particularly suspicious given that Iraq's reactor was not powered by natural uranium. [Perlmutter, Handel, and Bar-Joseph, *Two Minutes Over Baghdad*, 47; and Feldman, "The Bombing of Osiraq—Revisited," 117.]

38. Milton R. Benjamin, "France Plans to Sell Iraq Weapons-Grade Plutonium," *Washington Post*, February 27, 1980, A29.
39. Edward Cody, "Israel Angered as French send Uranium to Iraq," *Washington Post*, July 20, 1985, A15; Amos Perlmutter, Michael I. Handel, and Uri Bar-Joseph, *Two Minutes Over Baghdad* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 52; Feldman, "The Bombing of Osiraq—Revisited," 121.
40. Amos Perlmutter, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 363.
41. *Ibid.*, 363.
42. Perlmutter, Handel, and Bar-Joseph, *Two Minutes Over Baghdad*, 69.
43. *Ibid.*, 69.
44. Nakdimon, *First Strike*, 191.
45. Perlmutter, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin*, 365.
46. In addition, Yehoshua Saguy, Chief of IDF Intelligence Services, had warned Begin that the strike would lead to the reestablishment of the "anti-Israeli Eastern Front" composed of Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, and might even compel Iran and Iraq to forget their differences and turn their collective wrath toward Israel. (Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 335.)
47. William Claiborne, "Begin's Raid Tied Hands of U.S., Astonished His Own Cabinet." *Washington Post*, June 14, 1981, A29.
48. Selwyn Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account* (New York: Mayflower Books, 1978), 28.
49. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 530.
50. Keith Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 133.
51. Lloyd, *Suez 1956*, 83-85.
52. *Ibid.*, 47.
53. Quoted in Anthony Gorst and Lewis Johnman, *The Suez Crisis* (London: Routledge, 1997), 57 [emphasis added].
54. Lloyd, *Suez*, 15.
55. Shockburgh, *Descent to Suez*, 155.
56. *Ibid.*, 341.
57. Quoted in Ann Lane, "The Past as Matrix: Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs," in *Whitehall and the Suez Crisis*, eds. Saul Kelly and Anthony Gorst (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 206.
58. Lloyd, *Suez, 1956*, 54.
59. Alistair Horne, *Harold Macmillan, Volume I: 1894-1956* (New York: Viking Press, 1988), 112.
60. Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East*, 11.
61. Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), 519-521.
62. Quoted in Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East*, 184.
63. Anthony Nutting, *No End of a Lesson: The Story of Suez* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1967), 92.
64. *Ibid.*, 93.
65. David Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 63.

66. In fact, some have linked the doctrine of preventive war *directly* to America's hegemonic position. Robert Kagan offered the following parable: "A man armed only with a knife may decide that a bear prowling in the forest is a tolerable danger, inasmuch as the alternative—hunting the bear only with a knife—is actually riskier than lying low and hoping the bear never attacks. The same man armed with a rifle, however, will likely make a different calculation of what constitutes a tolerable risk? Why should he risk being mauled to death if he doesn't have to?" Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 31.
67. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 39.
68. Robert Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* 118 (Fall 2003): 369.
69. John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 70-71.
70. Robert Pape has recently argued for the "strategic logic" of suicide terrorism. Pape's conclusions are based on his view that, in the past, terrorism has been moderately successful at achieving political goals. However, while *leaders* of terrorist organizations might be "rational" in the conventional sense of the word, those who carry out suicide attacks do not necessarily share that quality. Moreover, even Pape seems to acknowledge "deterrence" of suicide terrorism is difficult to achieve, and instead suggests that the best course of action is to make suicide terrorist attacks as difficult to carry out as possible, by improving domestic security. Surely this is a reasonable suggestion, but taken alone it is unlikely to appeal to a leader given to forceful, proactive solutions. See Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97 (August 2003): 1-19.
71. For instance, see David Stout, "Bush Calls Iraqi Vow a Trick," *The New York Times* (September 18, 2002); Richard Stevenson, "Bush Says Iraq Isn't Complying With Demands to Disarm," *The New York Times* (January 21, 2003).
72. "West Point Commencement Address," June 1, 2002. [<http://www.whitehouse.gov>] (Accessed February 5, 2005)
73. *Ibid.*
74. George W. Bush, "President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point," June 1, 2002, www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html.
75. The National Security Strategy of the United States, September 17, 2002, 5, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>.
76. Gilles Andreani, "The 'War on Terror': Good Cause, Wrong Concept," *Survival* 46 (Winter, 2004-05): 31.
77. *Ibid.*, 32.
78. George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People; President Declares 'Freedom at War with Fear,'" September 20, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.
79. "President's Remarks: 'We Are in the Middle Hour of Our Grief,'" *New York Times*, September 15, 2001, A6.
80. Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 27.

81. It should be noted that Bush is very capable of carrying out policy based on a more subtle and nuanced perception of the world. For instance, though Iran, North Korea, and Iraq were all mentioned as the “axis of evil,” Bush was clear that there were very important differences between the three countries that necessitated different approaches.
82. For one of many such references by Bush, see David E. Sanger and Julia Preston, “Bush to Warn U.N.: Act on Iraq or U.S. Will,” *New York Times*, September 12, 2002.