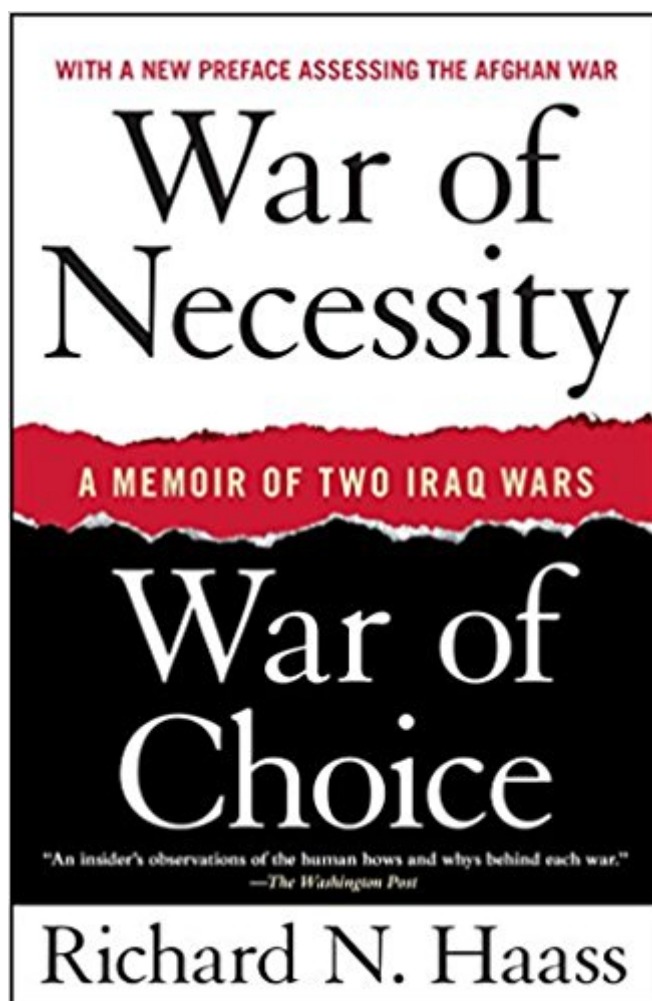


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War Of Necessity, War Of Choice: A Memoir Of Two Iraq Wars



Synopsis

War of Necessity, War of Choice—part history, part memoir—provides invaluable insight into some of the most important recent events in the world. It also provides a much needed compass for how the United States can apply the lessons learned from the two Iraq wars so that it is better positioned to put into practice what worked and to avoid repeating what so clearly did not. Indeed, in a new preface to this paperback edition, Haass argues that Afghanistan has become a war of choice. "Doing more militarily may not result in lasting improvements in the security situation that are commensurate with the costs."

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Customer Reviews

Haass (The Opportunity), president of the Council on Foreign Relations and a former adviser to Secretary of State Colin Powell, offers a combination of memoir and analysis on two wars that, he says, began in 1990: Desert Storm, the response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Haass describes Saddam's attack on Kuwait as undertaken in the face of U.S. efforts to persuade him to stand down. The 2003 war emerges as a consequence of 9/11, a radical initiative to oust Saddam and restructure the Middle East. In a pattern common to senior advisers without ultimate responsibility for decisions, Haass repeatedly describes perceptive memoranda ignored and perceptive insights rejected by those at the levers of power. He claims neither prescience nor precognition. Instead he presents himself as a realist and a moderate, preferring diplomacy to force while recognizing the necessary synergy of soft and hard power. Haass concludes that the first war succeeded because its limited aims were accomplished: Iraq was

defeated and Kuwait's sovereignty restored. Whether or not Iraq eventually stabilizes, the second war ultimately failed because it was neither necessary, desirable nor just. Bungled execution only highlighted the waste of finite moral and material resources. Wars of choice are not inevitably mistaken, Haass concludes, but they are best avoided. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Given the recent elections and other positive gains in Iraq, it seems premature to call the Second Gulf War a disaster. However, there is an emerging consensus that the current war was unnecessarily launched and that the subsequent occupation was poorly planned and implemented. Haass served Bush I as senior director of the National Security Council from 1989 to 1993 and was director of policy planning for the State Department under Bush II. Privy to the planning and execution of both Gulf wars, Haass paints a stark contrast between them. He asserts that the first war was one of necessity, since diplomatic options had proved futile and Saddam Hussein's control of Kuwait was a clear threat to our national security. He also illustrates how a patient, competent administration carefully got diplomatic ducks in a row before acting. Haass views the second war as one of choice, planned to transform the nature of regimes in the area. More disturbingly, he reveals an administration that, at the highest levels, refused to seriously consider alternatives to war. A devastating insider account. --Jay Freeman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I became aware of this book when author Richard Haas made reference to it while being interviewed on Fox Network News with respect to the current situation in Iraq and Syria. What grabbed my attention was the book's title. Contrary to what the title implies the book is not a chronological and analytical, nor a comparative and contrasting history of the two Iraq wars; but a Washington insider's view of the political analysis, policy and strategy involved. As a member of the National Security Council (NSC) for the 1st Iraq war and director of policy and planning under Secretary of State Colin Powell in the 2nd Iraq war the author presents a very detailed memoir of the origins, intelligence gathering, discussions and decision making and the results in both cases. One could also title this book "Correct Foreign Policy vs Incorrect foreign policy" With the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 the U.S under President George H.W. Bush was presented with a foreign policy crisis; although Iraq under the rule of

political despot Saddam Hussein presented no immediate threat to the U.S. the Bush administration determined that not only was the invasion a direct violation of the United Nations Charter, in addition this brutal invasion threatened to destabilize the entire middle east where most of the world's oil comes from, that already had a long history civil wars and political conflict. The book in very readable detail describes how President G.H. W. Bush put together an effective team under the NSC and other agencies, with the right credentials and background (Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, General Colin Powell to name a few) who forged an effective international coalition to drive the Iraqi Army out of Kuwait, disable it and contain Saddam Hussein in Iraq while preserving Iraqi political structure with Saddam Hussein still in power. An important quote in the book "You can break the pot, but now have a broken pot" (General Colin Powell) implied that it was important to liberate Kuwait but not occupy Iraq or change the regime under Saddam Hussein since the nation of Iraq was little more than an artificial state of 3 historically warring factions. This policy proved very effective and Iraq War 1 ended with relatively little cost and very few American casualties; with Saddam Hussein contained throughout the remainder of the G.H.W Bush administration and subsequent President Clinton administration. War of Choice, War of Necessity delineates in part two how the 9/11 terrorist attack, largely prorogated President George W Bush to decide, that because intelligence showed that the Saddam Hussein regime was hiding weapons of mass destruction and in the process of developing nuclear weapons, that regime change was necessary in Iraq in addition to changing Iraq into a republic more acceptable to the international community. Although President G.W Bush put together an experienced team of advisors and political analysts; with the exception of Richard Haass, this team simply told the president what he wanted to hear since the 9/11 attack irrevocably motivated the reactionary president to attack Iraq again and oust Saddam Hussein. The U.S. policy in Iraq War 2 proved untenable because it speculated with little analysis the U.S. invasion would be highly praised and welcome by the Iraqi people, had no plan to control the populace during the interregnum of regime change and there essentially was no actual alternative regime to change to. The intelligence that cited WMD and "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud" (Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice) were completely inaccurate. War of Necessity, War of Choice published in 2009 did not know the outcome, but correctly predicted the Iraq War 2 would fail to achieve sought objectives; and we now know in 2015 that American involvement would end in 2011 at a cost of nearly 1 trillion dollars, claim more than 6000 American lives and launch ISIS a far greater threat than Saddam Hussein ever was. War of Necessity, War of Choice is a good read for anyone interested in

the behind the scenes making and planning of good versus bad foreign policy, a good selected read for a college level political science class. The book stresses that American people should not assume any decision to go to war is a correct one just because Washington politicians advocate it. My quote "Before you attack your enemy question your leaders".

"War of Necessity, War of Choice" is Richard Haass' memoir/analysis of the two Iraq wars. Haass worked at the NSC during the first war, playing a key role shaping U.S. policy. He was marginalized at the State Department during the second war, yet nonetheless had a ringside seat on the decisions that led to the invasion of Iraq. He is now at the Council on Foreign Relations. His book is partly autobiographic, but the heart of it is a treatment of the two Iraq wars as case studies of two different approaches to foreign policy. The main takeaway is the need for a foreign policy that aims to influence the external behavior of foreign states, not their domestic structures. The first Iraq war was blessed by the UN and fought by an international coalition for limited objectives. Within a matter of months, Kuwaiti independence was restored, at minimal cost to the coalition. The coalition did not push on to Baghdad. In contrast, the second Iraq war was driven by a U.S. administration scornful of international law and drunk on the idea of remaking the entire Middle East. Born of hubris and ideological thinking, the war turned into a quagmire, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths, the near-destruction of the Iraqi body politic, the empowerment of Iran, and global hatred of the U.S. Bad ideas DO have consequences! The book is elegantly written and wise about the world. Among its key lessons: intelligence agencies are often wrong; U.S. power is enhanced, not weakened, by multilateralism; it is hard for outsiders to change the culture and institutions of a foreign society, especially one they barely understand; wars (and their aftermaths) are unpredictable; the quality of policy is enhanced by careful planning and open debate; military power has its limits; and "just" wars are usually the only ones that make pragmatic sense. These truths are almost axiomatic in diplomatic and military circles, but they were out of sync with the "tough guy" mentality that permeated the Bush II Administration. Bullies like Cheney and Rumsfeld didn't take counsel or even think very hard before they deployed armies and wrecked nations. Bush II was too green to know HOW to think about foreign policy. That said, "War of Necessity, War of Choice" has its flaws. For one thing, it's polite to a fault: at times the reader wonders whether Haass hopes to work in a future moderate Republican Administration. The book is also unfairly derisory about opponents of the first Iraq war. At the time, it was widely assumed that thousands of U.S. troops would die evicting the Republican Guard from Kuwait. It was legitimate to ask whether cheap oil prices could justify

casualties on such an epic scale, and this concern motivated calls in Congress and elsewhere to give sanctions time to work. In retrospect, our air campaign was incredibly effective and the ground war was a cakewalk. It is also clear from the experience of the 1990s that sanctions alone would not have dislodged Hussein from Kuwait. But no one knew this at the time, and Haass could have done a better job of recapturing the nuances and seriousness of the debate in 1990/91. (At a minimum, he could have disclosed the official casualty forecast.) Similarly, he is laughably defensive about the reasons why we went to war in 1991. At one point he even argues that Bush I's "sense of decorum" was offended by the invasion of a small country like Kuwait. Yet this was the same Bush who invaded Panama and supported the Contra war against Nicaragua. His "sense of decorum" was pretty selective. But these lapses aside, "War of Necessity, War of Choice" is excellent. It is a must reading for anyone interested in modern diplomatic history or in the real-world consequences of sloppy, ideological thinking about foreign policy.

No issues

Lost me in the details. Boring.

Useful account from the inside but also a biased one. Useful for students of foreign policy who are interested in The First Gulf War!

An amazing inside look by Richard Haass in how we got into this mess and why. Richard can be regularly seen on MSNBC's "Morning Joe", and his knowledge of the real story lends credibility to his book.

I bought the book even after I read it free from the library. A necessary read if you want to understand the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Great book

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