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THESIS

COGNITIVE BIASES AND STRUCTURAL FAILURES IN UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY: EXPLAINING DECISION-MAKING DISSONANCE IN PHASE IV POLICY AND PLANS FOR IRAQ

by

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December 2007

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ABSTRACT

After planning from September 2001 to May 2003, the George W. Bush administration failed to implement a coherent national plan at the transition to Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) operations in Iraq. This thesis applies four decision-making perspectives — the rational actor, organizational process, bureaucratic politics, and individual level approaches — to the Phase IV planning process to analyze how senior decision makers within the national security system selected foreign policy options. Despite an experienced national security team, officials were unable to coordinate and integrate various agency planning efforts, failed to decide on specific policy objectives, and limited the consideration of multiple courses of action.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

A.   PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE

This thesis uses the controversy that developed in February 2007 between the United States Departments of State and Defense over which agency had responsibility for coordinating the manning of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and executing Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) operations in Iraq, to analyze decisions directing policy and plans for Phase IV operations. This research applies four theoretical perspectives to explain the decision-making process surrounding the transition to Phase IV operations. The scope of this study ranges from the beginning of Phase IV planning in September 2001 until the transition to Phase IV in May 2003, when a formal plan to execute Phase IV operations would have been directed and implemented in Iraq. As has been widely reported since the end of major combat operations in May 2003, no plan was implemented for SSTR operations because "there was no real planning for post–war Iraq."[1]

This research builds on existing literature by explaining state behavior using four national security decision-making paradigms:

- the rational actor,
- organizational process,
- bureaucratic politics, and
- individual-level approaches.

This thesis shows how cognitive biases manifest themselves into organizational impediments, which distort a rational decision-making process. Rationality in decision making implies that foreign policy objectives are based on factual information and a comprehensive analysis of available courses of actions, while trying to minimize or eliminate the irrational influences of bureaucratic politics and individual biases. The analysis concludes that process assumptions of rational decision making are reasonable

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[1] Jonathan S. Landay and Warren P. Strobel, "Military Unready for Iraqi Response; Welcome Expected, Officials Say Extensive Plans Said to be Undeveloped for Current Occupation, Security Threats," *The Charlotte Observer*, sec. Main, 12 July 2003, http://nexis.com (accessed 24 September 2007).

metrics by which to assess a rational decision-making process that is distorted by individual beliefs and the tendency to process information and rationalize data consistent with those beliefs. Analyzing decision making by applying psychological and organizational perspectives together — while using the concept of rational process as a policy metric — provides a more robust explanation of decision choices, and the quality of those policy options, than by viewing any one decision-making approach on its own.

B.   REAL WORLD RELEVANCE

On 11 January 2007, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice appointed Ambassador Timothy Carney to oversee U.S. reconstruction projects in Iraq.[2] Specifically, Rice stated that "Carney will coordinate with U.S. and Iraqi leaders on reconstruction projects."[3] Rice also testified to Congress on 11 January 2007 — the day after President Bush announced the new Iraq strategy — that she had been in the process of developing a civilian response for reconstruction teams since last year.[4]

At a Senate hearing in February 2007, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates testified that he was unnerved by a memorandum from the State Department to the Pentagon, that called for the Department of Defense to man Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq with civilians from government departments and agencies.[5] Secretary of State Rice's response at the congressional hearing was that the civilian positions were "not State Department positions, they are positions that the State Department took the responsibility for organizing a civilian response."[6] Additionally, Rice stated that "positions like

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[2] Stephen Kaufman, "Rice Appoints Assistance Coordinator as Part of U.S. Iraq Plan," U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs, http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=January&x=20070111130733esnamfuak0.1400873 (accessed 11 January 2007).

[3] Ibid.

[4] *Congressional Testimony of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice: The New Way Forward in Iraq,* House Committee on Foreign Affairs Cong, 2007, http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/110/ric011107.htm (accessed 24 February 2007).

[5] Michele Kelemen, "Reconstruction Teams at Premium in Iraq," National Public Radio, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7299387 (accessed 23 February 2007).

[6] Ibid.

agronomists and engineers and city planners are not positions within the Foreign Service…the State Department positions have been filled."[7] The response from Gates indicated that Defense also was not expecting to be responsible for manning reconstruction teams, coordinating, and leading an interagency response for Phase IV operations in Iraq. In February 2007, however, Rice stated that more than 40% (129) of the 300 State Department positions required for the new strategy in Iraq would need to be filled by Defense. Rice also stated that the "agencies of the U.S. government cannot fill that many posts as quickly as necessary."[8]

In the confusion over agency responsibility for Phase IV — more than five years after contingency planning for Phase IV began — roles and responsibilities directing Phase IV operations continue to elude the Bush administration. Secretary Rice's appointment of Ambassador Timothy Carney to the "new" position of Coordinator for Iraq Transitional Assistance, suggested that Rice believed this new office at State would finally integrate Phase IV operations with various agencies that included both civilian and military personnel to achieve U.S. national interests for Iraq. Those interests were specified in President Bush's declaration that the end state for Iraq is not just security, stabilization, and reconstruction but for the country to become free and democratic.[9]

C. CONTROVERSIAL FOREIGN POLICY

President Bush declared the end of major combat operations for Operation Iraqi Freedom in May 2003. At this transition point, a formal plan for accomplishing Phase IV objectives did not exist. The academic field and research institutions emphasized the complicated nature of transition operations and the requirement for a comprehensive and coordinated strategy among government agencies during the planning period before and

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[7] Kelemen, "Reconstruction Teams at Premium in Iraq."

[8] Karen DeYoung, "Military must Fill Iraq Civilian Jobs: Rice, Pentagon at Odds Over Plan," *Washington Post*, sec. washingtonpost.com , World, Middle East, 8 February 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/07/AR2007020702315.html (accessed 24 February 2007).

[9] Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 284.

after Operation Iraqi Freedom.[10] Many of these outside resources acted as advisors to the national security system. Career civil servants from State, Defense, and the intelligence community, the day-to-day planners and analysts, also were arriving at the same conclusions during contingency planning for Phase IV. Additionally, despite criticisms that there was no real planning, the fact is that considerable planning was underway for Phase IV at lower levels in the national security system.[11] Nevertheless, President Bush and his national security leaders — Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the operational lead for Phase IV and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, the administrative lead for the interagency process — failed to make decisions that provided policy objectives and coordinated interagency planning into a comprehensive Phase IV plan.

Since May 2003, various government agencies — including the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction and the Government Accountability Office — continue to emphasize the daunting task of planning for Phase IV and the absence of a coherent national plan for accomplishing national interests in Iraq. Headlines from February 2007 continue to illustrate interagency confusion and ambiguous decision making that delineates responsibility for Phase IV policy and plans. This thesis analyzes the factors influencing national security decision making that explain why the Bush administration failed to implement a formal Phase IV plan for Iraq.

D.   METHODOLOGY

The thesis applies theory to explain the decision-making process for Phase IV policy and plans in Iraq. It identifies which theoretical perspective best explains decision makers' foreign policy choices and the quality of foreign policy decisions directing transition operations in Iraq.

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[10] Karen Guttieri, "Post-War Iraq: Prospects and Problems," *Strategic Insights* 2, no. 2 (20 February 2003), http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/feb03/middleEast3.asp (accessed 24 September 2007).

[11] Donald R. Drechsler, "Reconstructing the Interagency Process After Iraq." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 1 (February 2005), http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402390500031973 (accessed 15 October 2007). See also Kevin C. M. Benson, "OIF Phase IV: A Planner's Reply to Brigadier Aylwin-Foster," *Military Review* (March-April 2006), http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/English/MarApr06/Benson.pdf (accessed 5 October 2007).

1. Single Case Study Method

The single case study method is utilized because it allows for the observations of conditions within a foreign policy issue that explain the dependent variable, national security decisions. Because the primary hypothesis of this paper highlights the importance of the individual level of analysis in decision making, process tracing through a single case study is a valid method.[12] It provides a foundation for in-depth analysis of decision-making behavior by observing individual statements, interviews, meetings, and official documents that shed light on how leaders make decisions within the national security system. The thesis applies decision-making perspectives to explain the selection of specific foreign policy options directing Phase IV plans.

2. Data Sources and Data Integrity

The sources of data used to investigate the decision-making process consist of documentation from the development of policy and plans for Phase IV from 2001–2003. The primary documents reviewed include agency and interagency correspondence, presidential directives, transcribed verbal statements, personal interviews and statements by leaders and other officials in the national security system.

The personal actions of decision makers and those actors who work close to senior decision makers relies almost exclusively on the works of investigative reporter Bob Woodward in his two books, *Plan of Attack* and *State of Denial*. Woodward conducted personal interviews with the primary actors studied in this thesis. These actors included the president and members of the National Security Council, as well as deputy and under secretaries of departments. Where direct interviews were not conducted, personal accounts of individual actions within the national security system were based on credible and corroborating sources.[13] Woodward not only had access to senior decision makers, but also to processes such as discussions during National Security Council meetings, as well as informal meetings between actors in the national security system.

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[12] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 52.

[13] Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 493.

Additionally, data used for the analysis also relied heavily on decision-making events for Phase IV captured in *Fiasco* by Thomas Ricks, *COBRA II* by Michael Gordon, *Losing Iraq* by David Phillips, and *Rise of the Vulcans* by James Mann.

E.   HYPOTHESES

Independent Variable (IV)➜Intervening Variable (IntV)➜Dependent Variable (DV)

1.   Primary Hypothesis

a.   *Cognitive Biases ➜ National Security Decision Making (NSDM)*

Cognitive biases, specifically excessive consistency seeking, explain how and why decision makers select foreign policy options.

2.   Explanatory (Intermediate) Hypotheses

a.   *Cognitive Biases ➜ Structural Failures (IntV)➜ NSDM Process*

Cognitive biases cause structural failures within organizations, which influence how decision makers select foreign policy options. Leadership function is the most important structural feature of the organizational process. It defines individual and unit roles and relationships within the national security system and affects the standard rules and operating procedures of the decision-making process.

The processing of information between various organizations and individual actors and the communication of information within the interagency process are the foundation for making decisions and formulating policy and plans.[14] Cognitive biases and its influence on organizational behavior and process variables explain biases in decision making and rational foreign policy.

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[14] Burton M. Sapin, "Some Fundamental Characteristics of the System" In *The Making of United States Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1966), 18.

b. ***Cognitive Biases ➔ Structural Failures ➔ Quality of Foreign Policy Decisions***

The stronger the presence of cognitive biases in the decision-making process, the greater the disruption to the structural features of organizations, and the less likely that foreign policy decisions are rational courses of action.

F.   ORGANIZATION

The introduction chapter identifies the purpose of this research, reviews the foreign policy issue analyzed by this study, Phase IV policy and plans for Iraq, discusses the method of observing the empirical data, and states the hypotheses that the analysis will defend.

The literature review discusses the four decision-making perspectives. The application of theoretical perspectives to decision making is the core of this analysis. The review explains how individuals make decisions that shape foreign policy and plans.

The case study analysis chapter applies the decision-making perspectives to the planning process for Phase IV from 2001 to 2003, when operations transitioned from major combat operations to Phase IV and the establishment of the Coalition Provisional Authority in May 2003. Interviews, communications between individuals involved in the decision-making process, and data that documents leaders' and other national security officials' statements are significant for the analysis because this data provides insights into factors that influenced leaders' decisions.

The conclusion defends the hypotheses, states implications for analyzing foreign policy decisions, and offers recommendations to national security decision makers.

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II.   LITERATURE REVIEW: NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION-MAKING PERSPECTIVES

A.   RATIONAL ACTOR

The rational actor paradigm has been described as the theory with the greatest utility in explaining state decisions across a broad range of empirical cases.[15] Foreign policy choices are the consequence of government organizations and individuals behaving rationally because the preservation of national interests is at stake. Although not synonymous with realism, the rational actor model incorporates general assumptions and propositions from realist theory. Realists make significant assumptions regarding the behavior of individual decision makers and the international system.

The theory assumes that state behavior is quite predictable if decision makers view the national interest in terms of a state's power relative to other states.[16] If a state is more powerful than others, it seeks to maintain that status or defend it when threatened. Weaker states seek to balance power inequities by becoming strong enough to challenge the power of other states. An anarchic (ungoverned) international system is what determines state behavior, and foreign policy decisions are made in response to problems or threats in the international system.

Another assumption, which gives the theory its explanatory power and parsimony, is that decision makers will behave rationally when the security of the nation is stake. Why? Because national security is so vital that it cannot be trivialized by internal pressures from within the state. The theory suggests that the decision-making process will not react to bureaucratic imperatives; organizations and individual perceptions are not biased because state self-preservation and not self-interest determine foreign policy

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[15] Glenn P. Hastedt, "Models of Policy Making: Overview" In *American Foreign Policy: Past, Present, and Future*, Third ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), 235. See also Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 13.

[16] Hans J. Morgenthau, "A Realist Theory of International Politics" In *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace Brief Edition*, ed. Kenneth W. Thompson, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 5.

decisions.[17] It is the necessity to preserve the national interest (power) that forces institutions and individuals within the state to behave rationally.

Rational actor theory makes further assumptions to support the proposition that leaders select courses of action based on information certainty. Assuming factual information as the basis for formulating policy, the state makes a rational choice that is value maximizing.[18] Graham Allison posits that states select courses of action where the likelihood of achieving "goals and objectives" for a given policy option rank high.[19] Decision makers "think and act in terms of power, which brings rational order to international politics."[20] Power is used by the state to impose its will or to defend itself, and it is from this proposition that foreign policy decisions are made.

Because of the constant challenges to sovereignty, leaders have no choice but to formulate the most optimal (rational) foreign policy to preserve the national interest; they must be able to bypass or overcome the political and individual biases that affect decision making. If individual biases and organization agendas affected decision making, a state runs the risk of not sustaining its relative power and position in the international system. Decisions made by state leaders should represent a comprehensive, unified, and optimal response of the decision-making (interagency) process.

B.   ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS

In this model, foreign policy decisions are not based on the most optimal solution to achieve national interests. Instead, they are based on the most optimal outcome for the organization. Structural features of organizations are the variables that explain decision making and resultant organizational options to address policy issues. These features consist of rules, standard operating procedures, roles, and organizational relationships.

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[17] Amy B. Zegart, "Introduction" In *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 4.

[18] Graham T. Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis" In *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays*, ed. G. John Ikenberry (New York: Harper Collins, 1989), 338.

[19] Ibid., 339.

[20] Morgenthau, *A Realist Theory of International Politics*, 5.

Standard operating procedures, for example, explain whether decisions are made in a hierarchical or flat organizational system. Standard operating procedures also explain how routine processes such as information processing and communications influence decision making. Allison states that rules and "parochial priorities such as group pressures and the tenure of individuals," also impact the decision-making process.[21]

The most important structural feature of organizations is authority and control, conceptualized as leadership functions, which influence organization roles and relationships. It is human action that affects changes to all other structural features influencing the decision-making process.[22] Leaders hold the power to make and influence decisions through their control over the subordinates that produce policy options from within the unit.[23] Organizations are social systems, with defined rules of behavior and relationships predicated on one's position in the organization and its environment. The national security system is one example of a social system. Leaders, particularly in hierarchical and centralized decision-making systems, affect the behavior of organizations and decision outputs because of the strong role of positional authority over units and individuals. There is a *pecking order* of who reports to whom, who gives direction, and who takes direction.[24] The career civil servants who are subordinate to their politically appointed leaders play an important role because of their indirect connection to the president through their unit leader and their ability to produce decision outputs that can directly impact presidential decisions.[25]

The organizational perspective also places importance on analyzing the functions of process variables, information processing and communication, which are structural

[21] Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis" In *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays*, 346-347.

[22] Charles Perrow, "Perspectives on Organizations" In *Organizational Analysis: A Sociological View* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1970), 5.

[23] Richard C. Snyder, H. W. Bruck and Burton M. Sapin, eds., *Foreign Policy Decision-Making* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), 88-89, 222.

[24] Charles Perrow, "Why Bureaucracy?" In *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*, eds. Albert J. Reiss and Harold L. Wilensky (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1972), 32.

[25] Sapin, *Some Fundamental Characteristics of the System*, 20.

features of organizations and units (interagency) within a system that impact decision making.[26] These structural features show how disruptions to the decision-making process influence the availability and quality of data required to make foreign policy decisions. For example, in the weeks prior to President Kennedy's blockade decision during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the "September estimate" by the Central Intelligence Agency believed that Soviets would not place missiles inside Cuba, despite the fact that intelligence from the agency's own sources indicated missiles had already been delivered to Cuba.[27] Intelligence processing errors, and the failure to communicate inaccurate intelligence assessments weeks earlier, could have altered the administration's policy. When correct intelligence assessments materialized weeks later, the administration's decision to blockade was based in part on the assessment that missiles were already stationed in Cuba. The role of the Central Intelligence Agency in the Cuban Missile Crisis is an example of both an organization's output and process variables influencing the decision-making process.

The organizational perspective also explains how various applications of leadership functions change the decision-making dynamic. The traditional approach views foreign policy decisions as organizational outputs requiring presidential action. The president may delegate decisional authority to subordinate leaders, however, empowering them to make foreign policy decisions that address national interests. Organization leaders, by virtue of their role or title, may also command considerable influence on the decision-making process so that foreign policy decisions have already been made by an organization's leader instead of as a policy option influencing the president's decision.[28] Whether it is a unit output requiring presidential decisions or delegated authority and control to a unit, organizations and the decision makers that lead them, not the state, are the decisional units.[29]

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[26] Sapin, *Some Fundamental Characteristics of the System*, 18.

[27] Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis" In *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays*, 353.

[28] Ibid., 346.

[29] Snyder, Bruck, and Saipan, *Foreign Policy Decision-Making*, 92-100.

C.   BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS

According to this perspective, it is unrealistic to believe that the formulation of foreign policy and national security decisions occur without the influence of bureaucracies and individual agendas. Peter Gourevitch states that decisions are derived from ideas, and for an idea to win approval it must "acquire power."[30] The process by which an idea wins approval in the form of a decision and course of action entails a competition against other agendas. Ideas are influenced by both human and resource constraints, and it is these various forms of power that are captured under the concept of the bureaucratic politics paradigm. For example, Gourevitch states that bureaucratic competition requires "the support of various power rivals: money (budgets), arms, or institutions."[31] Institutions and individuals compete to perpetuate organization or group ideas that result in decisions favoring political goals.

Graham Allison and Morton Halperin characterize decision making in bureaucracies as the "pulling and hauling" that occurs between various power brokers as the struggle to have agendas (ideas) acquire political power; it is the power required to win presidential approval for a course of action over other choices.[32] Unlike the rational actor model, decisions and courses of action are not rational choices that are agreed on by decision makers and influenced by purposeful behavior between states. Allison and Halperin argue that foreign policy is and can be influenced by threats from the international system, but national security decisions are influenced by differences, not rational choices, between "domestic, organizational, and personal interests."[33] Bureaucratic politics and foreign policy outcomes are interdependent.

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[30] Peter Gourevitch, "Interacting Variables: September 11 and the Role of Ideas and Domestic Politics," *Dialogue IO* 1, no. 1 (January 2006), http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FDIO%2FDIO1_01%2FS7777777702000067a.pdf&code=cb7f2448493b4cc0d69390f92ddf4fcd (accessed 2 February 2007), 7.

[31] Ibid., 7.

[32] Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and some Policy Implications," *World Politics, Supplement: Theory and Policy in International Relations* 24 (Spring 1972), http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0043-8871%28197221%2924%3C40%3ABPAPAS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-6 (accessed 22 March 2007), 43.

[33] Ibid., 57.

In the bureaucratic politics perspective, positional power plays a significant role in how agendas get carried out as presidential decisions. For example, the Secretary of Defense, in general, wields more power than the Secretary of State. This is not to say that individuals with positional power can monopolize the decision-making process. No one individual can always win, and bureaucratic politics is a give-and-take process, where decisions are based on compromise, relinquishing certain aspects of one's own personal position to achieve *buy-in* and approval from the larger group (bureaucracy) involved in the formulation of policy and decision making.[34] Individuals do have their own ideas of foreign policy outcomes, but achieving a decision requires building consensus and negotiating comprises that result in a bargaining outcome. The process is neither an individual nor a unitary action. Gourevitch states that "majorities have to be built, coalitions constructed, and legitimating arguments developed."[35] Decision making in the bureaucratic politics paradigm, is a political or government action, not an individual action.

D.   INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Robert Jervis states that "it is impossible to explain crucial foreign policy decisions without reference to policy makers' beliefs about the world and the motives of the actors in it."[36] An individual level of analysis approach to national decision making explains how state leaders use beliefs and images from their past and the present-day environment to make future decisions. The study of decision making through cognitive psychology explains how the use of cognitive shortcuts distorts a rational decision-making process. Alexander George states that individuals develop, over time, "beliefs,

[34]   David A. Welch, "The Organizational Process and Bureaucratic Politics Paradigms: Retrospect and Prospect," *International Security* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 1992), http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0162-2889%28199223%2917%3A2%3C112%3ATOPABP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N (accessed 22 March 2007), 117.

[35]   Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization* 32, no. 4 (Autumn 1978), http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0020-8183%28197823%2932%3A4%3C881%3ATSIRTI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-6 (accessed 27 August 2007), 904.

[36]   Robert Jervis, "Hypotheses on Misperception," *World Politics* 20, no. 3 (April, 1968); quoted in Richard N. Lebow, "Cognitive Closure and Crisis Politics" In *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981), 104.

images, and social constructs about their physical and social environment."[37] Individuals display a natural tendency to frame decisions based on data that resonates with one's environment. The potential consequence is marginalizing factual information, impeding the consideration of rational policy objectives. The reliance by individuals on personal belief systems and images of their environment is the tendency of the mind to make order out of new information, consistent with known beliefs.[38] As a result, personal beliefs can affect the quality of foreign policy when they dominate the policy process by limiting the consideration of multiple courses of action.

This natural process is termed cognitive consistency seeking.[39] The brain is a consistency-seeking device that strives to formulate decisions that do not deviate from or contradict internal beliefs and perceptions of one's environment. Decision makers simplify incoming data by using established beliefs to frame decision choices. Beliefs and images influencing decision making can be based on one's moral or ideological beliefs. Decision makers may also use historical analogies based on events that personally affected them or which support and frame current beliefs to counter new information that challenges their existing views.[40] This subjective bias is dangerous because individuals have a tendency to ignore new or unfamiliar information in the formulation of policy if that information does not meet the familiarity criteria of the decision makers' personal image of the world; that is, on what they know and what they have seen.[41]

Cognitive psychology identifies the biases in decision making based on over-reliance of belief systems and familiar images, excessive consistency striving. Consistency seeking becomes dangerous in decision making when it is excessive,

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[37] George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective use of Information and Advice*, 55.

[38] Richard N. Lebow, "Cognitive Closure and Crisis Politics" In *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981), 103.

[39] George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective use of Information and Advice*, 61.

[40] Ibid., 43.

[41] Ibid., 57.

resulting in an illogical interpretation of information.[42] A serious consequence of excessive consistency striving is the strong tendency to misdiagnose the policy issue that needs to be addressed. The potential for introducing error or bias into the decision-making process also can explain the low quality of certain foreign policy decisions. Subjective images and beliefs can inject themselves into policy formation and prevent rational decisions. Consistency seeking need not be viewed as negatively impacting decision making and the quality of policy choices, as long as its use remains logical and policy makers are cognizant of the tendencies to rationalize data into a policy prescription that makes sense to an individual's view of the world. The implications of cognitive influences on the quality of foreign policy are significant. Misperceptions of one's environment and the tendency of the mind to filter and simplify new data to pre-existing historical or personal images, can lead to poor decisions that fail to address the foreign policy issue.[43] Awareness of cognitive traps are crucial to ensuring that excessive consistency striving does not take over the decision-making process.

E.   DEFINING COGNITIVE BIAS CONCEPTS FOR THE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Consistency seeking occurs as a normal thought process in decision making. The mind naturally seeks to sabotage complicated decision processes by simplifying the interpretation of imperfect and unfamiliar information, especially when under stress or operating in a crisis mode.[44] Leaders, through awareness, can control the tendency of the mind to inject biases and limit its excessiveness in impeding objective decision making.

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[42] George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective use of Information and Advice*, 63.

[43] Robert Jervis, "Hypotheses on Misperception," *World Politics* 20, no. 3 (April 1968), http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0043-8871%281968804%2920%3A3%3C454%3AHOM%3E2.0.CO%3B2- (accessed 26 February 2007), 461.

[44] John S. Hammond, Ralph L. Keeney and Howard Raiffa, "The Hidden Traps in Decision Making," *Harvard Business Review* 76, no. 5 (September/October 1998), http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&jid=HBR&site=ehost-live (accessed 24 September 2007), 47.

Alexander George provides a number of criteria that, when one or more of these principles is identified, excessive consistency striving is considered to be distorting decision making from a rational process.[45]

- when the beliefs preserved thereby are not well-grounded to begin with

- when the individual relies upon inappropriate beliefs or irrelevant rationalizations in order to ward off incoming information

- when the assimilation of the new information into preexisting beliefs involves violations of generally accepted rules for treating evidence

- when the individual fails to notice events of obvious importance that contradict his beliefs or theories

- when the individual displays an unwillingness to look for evidence that is readily available, which would pose challenges to existing policy beliefs

- when the individual refuses to address the arguments of those who disagree with his interpretation of events

- when he repeatedly shifts rationales on behalf of his policy in response to new facts

The following cognitive traps identify excessive consistency striving. These concepts are a means of categorizing Alexander George's criteria for detecting the presence of excessive consistency striving, which is hypothesized as explaining decisions for Phase IV policy and plans in Iraq.

1. Framing Trap

The most dangerous cognitive distortion is the *framing trap*, because of its ability to compound excessive consistency striving errors by simultaneously introducing other cognitive traps into the decision-making process. When presented with courses of actions that have equal outcomes, decision makers display a tendency to be risk averse when the

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[45] George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective use of Information and Advice*, 63.

decision choice is framed as a gain, and risk seeking when the decision choice is framed as a loss. John Hammond, Ralph Keeney, and Howard Raiffa state that the framing trap confirms that decision makers "tend to adopt the frame as it is presented to them rather then restating the problem in their own way."[46] This psychological trap often leads to the emergence of a number of other traps such as anchoring, status quo, sunk cost, and confirming evidence.

2. Anchoring Trap

Hammond and his colleagues state "when considering a decision, the mind gives disproportionate weight to the first information it receives."[47] This trap biases information processing and decisions in many ways. Individuals who have routine or privileged access to the president, more so than other decision makers, can steer the president's decision choices in a certain direction by pre-empting a policy option before the consideration of alternate courses of action from other leaders. Other anchoring mediums can take the form of a forecast read in a newspaper related to a decision issue where, for example, numerical ranges lead to a pre-conceived notion that limits decision options around the stated forecast. Anchoring traps also take the form of stereotypes about individuals that bias a decision maker's view.[48] The use of historical anchors is the tendency to forego rigorous data analysis by referring to previous solutions as a base to address current issues.

3. Status-Quo Trap

The tendency of individuals to label decision choices as rational without realizing, as Hammond et al., state, that the mind has invoked "a strong bias toward alternatives that perpetuate the status quo."[49] The primary reason for falling into this trap stems from

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[46] Hammond, Keeney and Raiffa, *The Hidden Traps in Decision Making*, 54.

[47] Ibid., 48.

[48] Ibid., 48.

[49] Ibid., 50.

a subconscious defense mechanism to avoid responsibility and the potential for accountability. That is, making a decision involves action, allowing critics to find fault with the decision or, in the case where the decision choice is poor, to hold the decision maker accountable. When presented with multiple policy options, the decision maker is even more inclined to resort to the status quo of *do nothing*. That is, to stick with the original decision that supports the original frame instead of having to consider alternate options that further complicate the decision-making process or that conflict with existing beliefs.

4. Sunk-Cost Trap

This trap results in the tendency of decision makers to devote more effort, for example, monetary, manpower, and other resources, to a course of action to rationalize one's choice selection as rational, even when the decision is a poor choice or no longer relevant to the issue at hand. This is yet another attempt to protect one's ego; Hammond and his co-authors state that individuals are "unwilling, consciously or not, to admit to a mistake."[50] The sunk-cost trap is more pronounced in the public sector. It is one thing to admit poor decisions in private, but in government, decisions are open for scrutiny by numerous critics such as Congress, partisan politics, media, public, academic and research institutions, think tanks, and international observers.

5. Confirming-Evidence Trap

Hammond et al., state "this bias leads us to seek out information that supports our existing instinct or point of view while avoiding information that contradicts it."[51] This cognitive distortion is powerful because decisions are based on analyzing information; it strengthens familiar frames by seeking out data or rationalizing ambiguous information consistent with known beliefs. According to Hammond and his colleagues, there are two forces working against rational decision making that are caused by consistency striving.

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[50] Hammond, Keeney and Raiffa, *The Hidden Traps in Decision Making*, 50.

[51] Ibid., 52.

First, the mind decides "what we want to do before we figure out why we want to do it. Second, it is our inclination to be more engaged by things we like than by things we dislike." The trap determines "where we go to collect evidence but also how we interpret the evidence we do receive, leading us to give too much weight to supporting information and too little to conflicting information."[52]

If a decision maker is not aware of this natural tendency, the interpretation of information objectively and resultant foreign policy decisions become easily biased. The tendency to make poor foreign policy choices is greatly enhanced by this trap's presence in the decision process when factual information becomes marginalized to information supporting one's beliefs or frame of reference.

6.   Estimating and Forecasting Traps

Estimating and forecasting traps have a particularly strong tendency to influence and impede the decision-making process when confronted with uncertainty. There are three common forecasting traps that attempt to resolve uncertainty and imperfect information: overconfidence, prudence, and recallability traps. When forecasting or making estimates as to future outcomes that are uncertain, overconfident decision makers set a narrow range of possible courses of action or assign narrow high and low value ranges to forecasted results because of overconfidence in one's ability to predict outcomes. The prudent forecaster thinks exactly the opposite. These decision makers, according to Hammond et al., over estimate "just to be safe" or conduct "a worst-case analysis" that involves significant costs with little benefit to have a decision not achieve a specific course of action.[53]   The recallability bias causes decision makers to frame estimates or forecasts on what a course of action can accomplish based on past events, either historical precedent or even past events that are "dramatic…those that leave a strong impression on our memory."[54]

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[52] Hammond, Keeney and Raiffa, *The Hidden Traps in Decision Making*, 52.

[53] Ibid., 56.

[54] Ibid., 56.

The recallability trap can take the form of historical analogies. It is one form of heuristics or rules of thumbs (cognitive shortcuts). The mind invokes this heuristic to simplify forecasting or estimating future courses of action. Historical rules of thumb can eliminate the requirement for rigorous analysis of imperfect information and uncertainty in outcomes by applying past foreign policy decisions to future decision options. There are dangerous consequences of allowing the recallability bias to dominate decision making. The new foreign policy issue may be a completely different situation than the historical analogy. Because a comprehensive process of analyzing data and the current foreign policy issue is abandoned for a heuristic, policymakers do not realize the differences between past and current issues. Second, the historical prescription applied may have been the wrong course of action in the first place, convoluting the current foreign policy analysis even further with the inaccurate belief that the historical rule of thumb and its application to present courses of action are analogous. Historical analogies characteristic of the recallability trap ignore statistical probabilities.[55] That is, forecasts and estimates that might assist decision makers in value-maximizing decisions supplant cost/benefit analysis for impressions.

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[55] Hammond, Keeney and Raiffa, *The Hidden Traps in Decision Making*, 58.

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III.   ANALYSIS OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR PHASE IV POLICY AND PLANS IN IRAQ

A.   INTRODUCTION

In January 2001, President Bush went to great lengths to revamp his decision-making process for national security affairs. This was a deliberate attempt to address the organization of the national security system as it related to the formulation and execution of foreign policy. The goal of the National Security Council (NSC) transformation was to make the security council and Principals Committee the central decision-making authority for ensuring interagency cooperation. Despite restructuring decisional units, procedures, and defining agency roles, by 2003, departmental relations were considered the worst in twenty years.[56] Analysis of the decision-making process for Phase IV policy and plans during this time period explains how national security leaders failed to produce a formal Phase IV plan for Iraq.

B.   RATIONAL ACTOR

It is difficult to explain the decision-making process of the Bush administration using the rational actor model. That is, the security of the United States was assessed by decision makers to be threatened by Iraq and that resulted in the rational foreign policy decision to use force to remove the Saddam Hussein regime. To explain a rational process of deciding on foreign policy objectives for Phase IV in Iraq, one has to view this phase in the context of the decision to invade Iraq — a decision based on perceived

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[56] Gabriel Marcella, "National Security and the Interagency Process" In *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy*, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees, 1st ed. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, 2004), http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=409 (accessed 2 February 2007), 243.

threats in the international system. In this sense, rational actor explanations resulted in the requirement to plan for Phase IV as a consequence of the decision to conduct regime change.

Regime change through the use of military force, however, was not in the national interest of the United States because Iraq was a weaker state that had not threatened the power or security of the United States. President Bush believed that the security and national interests of the state were challenged by the regime of Saddam Hussein and terrorists that he supported. Nevertheless, realists were unable to make the case for rational foreign policy decisions action against a weak state like Iraq on the basis of Iraq being connected to non-state actors (terrorists).[57] It was not in the national interest of the United States, in rational terms of value maximizing (long-term costs vs. benefits) to make a free and democratic Iraq a national objective.

Even though Phase IV decisions could not be explained by the paradigm's focus on decision making based on threats in the international system, it could be analyzed in the context of assumed rational behavior of state leaders. Policy decisions for the Phase IV end state in Iraq were not made by rational decision makers. The national end state for Iraq as a result of removing the Saddam regime was based on moralistic and ideological decisions: Bush administration officials believed that a free and democratic Iraq would be the inevitable result of U.S. action. Additionally, President Bush believed it was his duty to save Iraqis and other states from brutal regimes and terrorists.[58] The rational actor paradigm does not advocate decision making based on moralistic, ideological, and legalistic beliefs.[59]

Assumptions of the rational actor make it difficult to explain state decisions below the international system of analysis. This thesis explains decisions surrounding a foreign

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[57] Mohammed Nuruzzaman, "Beyond the Realist Theories: "Neo-Conservative Realism" and the American Invasion of Iraq," *International Studies Perspectives* 7, no. 3 (2006), http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1528-3585.2006.00249.x (accessed 29 August 2007), 244.

[58] Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 132.

[59] Morgenthau, *A Realist Theory of International Politics*, 12-15.

policy issue as a consequence of the decision to conduct regime change. Foreign policy issues for Phase IV were the by-products of a response to perceived threats in the international system, the former Iraqi regime. It is illogical to argue that foreign policy decisions for nation building in Iraq were a response to power imbalances or a threat to U.S. security after the Iraqi regime was removed from power. The rational actor perspective contributes little to explaining decisions surrounding policy and plans for Phase IV in accomplishing the national interest. It requires analysis within the black box of the state. Bush administration foreign policy making highlights many of the weaknesses of the rational actor model, especially its inability to explain more than how states respond to each other's behavior.

C.   ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS

1.   Leadership Functions

President Bush's first directive, National Security Presidential Directive 1, Organization of the National Security Council System, outlined decision making as "a process to coordinate executive departments and agencies in the effective development and implementation of national security policies."[60] The Council and Principals Committee, which crafted the presidential directive, were unable to execute the tenets of their own decision-making process. The decision makers responsible for Phase IV policy and plans, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith, did not believe in a specific Phase IV plan because they believed transition operations were too dynamic to allow identifying specific policy objectives in advance. By April 2003, after almost twenty months of planning, President Bush,

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[60] George W. Bush, *Organization of the National Security Council System* (Washington, DC: White House Press Office, 2001), http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-1.htm (accessed 15 February 2007), 2.

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, had not decided on a policy for accomplishing key Phase IV stability, security, and reconstruction functions.[61]

a.   *President George Bush*

The failure of leadership explained how leaders were unable to coordinate organizational and interagency outputs into a formal Phase IV plan. Decision makers failed to combine basic leadership functions — such as deliberating on the feasibility of specific policy options, deciding on policy options, and directing policy decisions —to create an integrated plan to accomplish Phase IV objectives. The absence of analyzing intended consequences of decisions and courses of actions was reflective not only in President Bush's decision-making style, but was representative of the leadership style of national security decision makers. Although Bush was a decisive President, as Bob Woodward stated,

> the new factor was the absence of doubt at the top. Bush displayed no hesitation or uncertainty. It might be prudent to overrule an earlier decision, step back, and debate the merits, but Bush was not that way.[62]

> the president listens but does not push back or drill down into the details. He displays considerable "uncertainty of fully grasping the potential consequences" of policy options.[63]

Former Secretary of Treasurer Paul O'Neill, who attended NSC meetings, stated that the president

> "does not make decisions in a methodical way; there is no free-flow of ideas or open debate." At cabinet meetings, the president is "like a blind man in a room full of deaf people. There is no discernible connection,

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[61] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 169-170, 173, 179.

[62] Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 139-140.

[63] Ibid., 152.

forcing top officials to act on little more than hunches about what the president might think."[64]

Characteristic of his hands-off leadership style and confidence in his senior decision makers, when it came to making decisions on specific policy objectives for Phase IV, President Bush delegated decisions to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who he formally put in charge of leading Phase IV by January 2003.[65] However, Rumsfeld had assumed control of the decision-making process, marginalizing Rice and her role by September 2002.[66] What became problematic for President Bush over the course of a year-and-a-half of planning was that, with his hands-off leadership style, he became a disengaged leader. He was not holding any of his appointees to account for failing to produce a national Phase IV plan and failing to address or resolve what was recognized by most national security leaders as a distorted decision-making process.[67]

President Bush was not completely removed from making presidential decisions involving Phase IV. By January 2003, Bush indicated that the United States would not install an Iraqi regime.[68] By March 2003, he clearly made the decision that an exiled Iraqi leader, for example Ahmed Chalabi, was not going to be the governing authority post–Saddam.[69] These types of presidential decisions did rule out a specific course of action for Phase IV, but senior decision makers were not carrying decisions to its logical end state. No one took the president's decision on governance that resulted in ambiguity and asked the follow-on questions. For example, the president was not going to install Iraqi diaspora to lead government post–Saddam, so what were the other governance options requiring a decision?

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[64] Leslie Stahl, "Bush Sought 'Way' to Invade Iraq," *60 Minutes,* 11 January 2004, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/01/09/60minutes/main592330.shtml (accessed 19 October 2007).

[65] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 162.

[66] Ibid., 91.

[67] Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 321-322.

[68] Ibid., 259-260.

[69] Ibid., 339-340.

What typified decision making under President Bush's leadership during National Security Council meetings was the absence of in depth communication that resolved clear planning gaps. In December 2001, the military commander responsible for operations in Iraq, General Tommy Franks, briefed the president and the security council on the limitations of the military leading Phase IV operations. As Franks stated, "the military did not do nation building very well."[70] Franks also briefed key assumptions that the State Department would establish a provisional government. On 15 August 2002, Franks reiterated the support role of the military in Phase IV as well as the briefed assumptions of the State Department. Eight months after the original briefing, no decisions had been reached as to who would be responsible for leading Phase IV or deciding on specific policy objectives. For example, who would govern Iraq after regime change?[71]

b. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

In decision-making moments, Rumsfeld, as operational lead for Phase IV, did not make major policy and planning decisions. On key policy objectives requiring a decision, Rumsfeld asked his subordinate, Jay Garner, what his (Garner's) policy for governance was, despite the fact that, organizationally, Garner and the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance received policy direction from Rumsfeld and Feith. In March 2003, Garner realized war was approaching and continued to direct the governance question at Rumsfeld. As Woodward noted, "Who was going to be in charge?"

> At one point Rumsfeld had asked Garner a key question in a Rumsfeldian way. "By the way, what are you going to do about de-Baathification? Do you have a de-Baathification process? "You can't do de-Baathification of the ministries," Garner replied. "There won't be anybody left. Most of the jobs were filled by party members. So what we'll do is take out the top

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[70] Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 62.

[71] Ibid., 148-152.

guy. We'll let everyone else return and over time people in the ministry will begin to point out the bad guys." "Well that seems reasonable to me," Rumsfeld replied.[72]

After eighteen months of planning, in March 2003, Rumsfeld and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas Feith, were still briefing the president and security council on assumptions for Phase IV. What was missing from meetings were identified objectives and a plan to accomplish Phase IV end state. Woodward stated that the meeting "was a wish list of high hopes with no how-to."[73] On 10 March 2003, after a National Security Council meeting, President Bush ruled out a course of action to install exiled Iraqis, specifically, Ahmed Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress. Despite the presidential decision, when Garner briefed Feith the day after, noting that Chalabi would not have a role as a leader of post–Saddam Iraq, he was reprimanded by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Feith for "creating problems and ruining everything."[74] They had ignored the president's decision from the day before. Typical of senior leaders' failures to address planning gaps for Phase IV, after the president ruled out a specific course of action, Rumsfeld and Feith failed to address alternate policy options with Garner. Without any direction from Feith and Rumsfeld, who created the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, or from Rice as the president's policy advisor, Garner set out to come up with the best Phase IV plan. Like other lower level agency planners, he was acting without decisions on policy objectives from the national leadership.

c. *National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice*

National Security Advisor Rice's failure to execute her leadership responsibilities also explained how leaders made decisions for Phase IV. She had been absent from fulfilling her role of communicating policy, coordinating interagency planning, and overseeing the decision-making process since the start of contingency

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[72] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 140.

[73] Ibid., 136.

[74] Ibid., 148-149. See also Ricks, *Fiasco*, 104-105.

planning. When Garner briefed Rice on Phase IV planning before the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Garner stated that he had received "no funding for basics such as food, law enforcement, and energy." Rice told her assistant, Stephen Hadley, and her executive steering group director, Frank Miller, to "get going on this," two weeks before the start of OIF.[75] When Garner asked Rice for the president's policy on Iraqi governance, Rice did not have an answer for him.[76] The absence of detailed discussion regarding national policy, and follow through on planning gaps, exemplified decision making even when these issues were communicated to the president and the security council by lower-level decision makers such as Jay Garner.

2. Roles and Relationships: The Future of Iraq Coalition

Although leadership errors explained the absence of decision making for Phase IV, the offices of the Secretary of Defense and Vice President were not interested in making decisions through the interagency because leaders within these two offices had already established their own policy objectives for Phase IV. A powerful coalition, labeled The Future of Iraq Coalition for identification purposes in this thesis, was an ad hoc decisional unit, established in September 2001, that began to significantly distort the decision-making process for Phase IV. The most senior group members, Richard Cheney, Ahmed Chalabi, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and I. Scooter Libby, had strong relational ties and a common foreign policy doctrine that had been established over the previous decade.[77] The members of this Future of Iraq Coalition included Vice President Richard Cheney, Iraqi National Congress leader, Ahmed Chalabi, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee Chairman, Richard Perle, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, Chief of Staff and NSA for the Vice President, I. Lewis Scooter

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[75] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III.*, 137.

[76] Ibid., 137-138.

[77] James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2004), 238-243. See also Phillips, *Losing Iraq*, 57-62, 67-76, Ricks, *Fiasco*, 31, 56-57, and Woodward, *State of Denial*, 128.

Libby, Under Secretary of Defense and lead for the Office of Special Plans, William Luti, Director of Operations for Special Plans, Abram Shulsky, Special Assistant to Rumsfeld, Steve Herbits, Chief Pentagon spokesman, Larry Di Rita.

Loyalty to the president was a strong attribute of the Future of Iraq Coalition, and it was used to advance its overall agenda and to dominate decisions. The concept of loyalty was an organizational norm that emerged during Phase IV planning, altering established roles, relationships, and decisional power. Under the Bush administration, the price of loyalty eliminated contrary views normally associated with a healthy vetting process and significantly disrupted standard operating procedures and rules for decision making. Individuals who presented courses of action and opinions contrary to the majority consensus were labeled as unsupportive of the president and marginalized from the decision-making process.[78] Although Rumsfeld was quite removed from making national decisions directing policy and a formal Phase IV plan, he and Vice President Cheney were heavily involved in making decisions that removed primarily State Department officials from the policy process. The conclusion that Cheney and Rumsfeld drew from dissenting views and courses of action contrary to that of the coalition was that these personnel, as Woodward stated, were not committed to postwar planning and "not supporters of change . . . There were too many at State, Powell included, who were neither sympathetic nor supportive of the President's goal of democracy in Iraq."[79]

The coalition's decisional authority was empowered by its independence from operating as a formal organization. Coalition members operated officially in the capacity of their assigned organization, as in, for example, the Offices of the Vice President and Secretary of Defense. However, the members of the coalition used their formal leadership positions and colluded together as a decisional unit to perpetuate their common agenda for Phase IV. This decision was made at the expense of ignoring the planning outputs of

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[78] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 411.

[79] Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 284.

their formal unit, primarily within the Department of Defense.[80] The coalition presented the appearance of a broad-based consensus among the majority of senior decision makers as to Phase IV policy and plans.

3.   Altered Rules and Standard Operating Procedures: Ad Hoc Units

Historically, ad hoc units have emerged within national security decision making to address foreign policy issues. Under the Bush administration, the creation of ad hoc units became an impediment to the decision-making process. National security leaders, primarily Rice and the principals, failed to prevent the Future of Iraq Coalition from limiting policy options and courses of action characteristic of decision making that was defined by the council's own directive. Additional units redefined roles and relationships, rules, and standard operating procedures within the national security system and assigned additional decisional powers (authority and control) that negatively impacted the development of a national plan for Phase IV. For example, the establishment of the Office of Special Plans by Rumsfeld and Cheney, the assignment of Rumsfeld's Policy office as the lead Phase IV decisional unit headed by Feith, and enabling Ahmed Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress as an intelligence source influencing Phase IV policy objectives, strengthened the coalition's control over Phase IV policy.

In January 2001, Cheney had propositioned President Bush to make him the chair of the Principals Committee, giving him considerable influence over the decision-making process. The National Security Advisor had traditionally been the chair of this most senior decisional unit. Although Bush kept Rice as the Principals' Chair, he granted Cheney permission to attend all of the meetings. In the context of Cheney's influence and power within the Bush administration, privileged access to the president, positional power as vice president, and the special relationships that he maintained with the Future of Iraq Coalition, the non-traditional and frequent presence of the vice president in the

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[80] Kevin C. M. Benson, "OIF Phase IV: A Planner's Reply to Brigadier Aylwin-Foster," *Military Review* (March-April 2006), http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/English/MarApr06/Benson.pdf (accessed 5 October 2007), 61-63.

decision-making process disrupted the objective consideration of alternate viewpoints.[81] Cheney created his own national security council and advisor within the Office of the Vice President. David Phillips stated that Cheney's office, "functions like an independent body in the national security decision-making process, wielding enormous influence."[82] The elimination of individuals, such as those from State, from the planning process was one such example of influence.

After 11 September 2001, the administration's anti-terrorism chief, Richard Clarke, sent a report to the White House stating that intelligence assessments were unable to link Iraq to the September 2001 terrorist attacks. The report was vetted through and signed by various intelligence agencies. National Security Advisor Rice and her assistant Stephen Hadley sent the report back, as Richard Clarke stated, with the comment "wrong answer."[83] Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld subsequently set up his own information processing unit within the Office of Special Plans to hedge against the established intelligence community's assessments on Iraq.[84] The Office of Special Plans was authorized by Rumsfeld after 11 September 2001, as the primary source for processing information that supported the coalition's options for regime change and post–Saddam Iraq. Because Special Plans dealt with the interpretation of information, it explained how coalition members subverted agency outputs from State and the intelligence community in favor of one policy option: that Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress were the solution to accomplishing Phase IV end state. Seymour Hersh stated

> Ahmed Chalabi, an Iraqi exiled opposition leader and his party the Iraqi
> National Congress (INC), became a favorite candidate of the Defense
> Department to lead Iraq after regime change. Chalabi and the INC
> provided Special Plans with alternate sources of information that

[81] Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 391-392, 409-411.

[82] David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2005), 59.

[83] Stahl, *Clarke's Take on Terror.*

[84] Seymour M. Hersh, "Selective Intelligence: Donald Rumsfeld has his own special sources. Are they reliable?" *The New Yorker,* 12 May 2003, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/05/12/030512fa_fact (accessed 28 August 2007).

established Saddam Hussein as a threat to the United States as well as an intelligence source regarding the conditions to expect in Iraq after regime change. The relationships between Cheney's and Rumsfeld's office and the INC strengthened its position over intelligence disputes with the CIA and gave the Secretary of Defense's office leverage over both the CIA and the Department of State in deciding on policy and courses of action for the future of Iraq. Special Plans became a conduit for intelligence reports from the INC to officials in the White House.[85]

Rumsfeld set up numerous decisional units overseeing Phase IV policy and plans but was himself indecisive over whether he wanted to lead Phase IV and asked subordinate leaders such as Garner for policy decisions. Although U.S. Central Command planners began developing concepts for Phase IV in February 2002, the Office of the Secretary of Defense ordered Central Command to leave Phase IV planning to the State Department.[86] In May 2002, Rumsfeld ordered planning for Phase IV operations through his Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[87] By August 2002, Rumsfeld controlled both the decision-making process, the responsibility of Rice, as well as policy decisions directing Phase IV plans.[88] In September 2002, Rumsfeld and Feith agreed that the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy, Feith's office, would lead all aspects of Phase IV. Woodward stated that

> Rumsfeld wanted reconstruction and political issues worked out in advance because, as Rumsfeld said, "we do not want to be in a position where the failure of somebody to do those things ties our forces down indefinitely the way they seemed to be tied down in Bosnia indefinitely." Rumsfeld stated that Feith would be in charge and as a specific goal: "unity of effort and unity of leadership for the full range of reconstruction activities that need to be performed."[89]

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[85] Hersh, *Selective Intelligence: Donald Rumsfeld has his own special sources. Are they reliable?*

[86] Donald R. Drechsler, "Reconstructing the Interagency Process After Iraq." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 1 (February 2005), http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402390500031973 (accessed 15 October 2007), 7.

[87] Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 133.

[88] Drechsler, *Reconstructing the Interagency Process After Iraq*, 8.

[89] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 91.

The September 2002 meeting was a key decisional event impacting Phase IV plans. During this meeting, General Franks and his operations director, Major General Victor Renuart, were present and took away significant assumptions from the meeting with none of the four leaders clarifying assignment of responsibilities for Phase IV. After the discussion over responsibility for Phase IV

> Major General Victor Renuart commented to Franks, "boss, did you hear what I think I heard?" "What do you think you heard?" Franks inquired. Well, Renuart said, "it sounds to me that OSD Policy (Feith) has responsibility for planning post-conflict and our responsibility is security. And we don't own the reconstruction stuff." "That's the way I see it too," Franks said. "I just think we dodged a big bullet," Renuart said. "Well, you may be right," Franks said. "I've got my marching orders. The secretary wants us to focus on security."[90]

In January 2003, Feith convinced Assistant National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley to set up an additional decisional unit for Phase IV planning under Feith's Policy office. Rumsfeld and the White House agreed on the concept, established the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance headed by Jay Garner, and assigned planning and implementation authority for Phase IV to Garner's office.[91]

Rumsfeld's indecisiveness over national policy for Phase IV precluded him from integrating a formal Phase IV plan among various agencies. This paralysis was most notable within his own organization as he was unaware of the various levels of planning occurring within the Defense Department. Rumsfeld's solution was to direct his new head of Phase IV operations, Jay Garner — who had less than eight weeks to develop a Phase IV plan — to provide leadership to his own organization and the interagency in making decisions that materialized as a coherent Phase IV plan. Rumsfeld stated to Garner in January 2003

> "regardless of what you have been told, there's been an awful lot of planning throughout the government for this." But that it had all been done in the "vertical stovepipe" of each of the federal agencies, including the

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[90] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 91.

[91] Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 282.

Defense Department. "I recommend that you try to horizontally connect the plans and find out what the problems are and to work those problems and anything else you find."[92]

Rumsfeld's office, Feith's policy shop, the Office of Special Plans, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, United States Central Command, and the Office of the Joints Chiefs were units that existed within Defense. The senior leaders within Defense were incapable of making decisions that integrated plans within their own organization, let alone the planning options produced by other agencies for Phase IV.

The organizational process perspective offers an explanation of the organizational structural features impeding decisions on specific policy objectives. Leadership failures and the establishment of ad hoc units such as the Future of Iraq Coalition explained decision making that prevented the development and implementation of a coherent formal plan for Phase IV. However, it did not explain why a very senior and experienced national security team acted in a manner that was counterproductive to ensuring the execution of a rational decision-making process that they created. Although the perspective concluded that the coalition had a defined policy for Iraq — when faced with information certainty that supported more optimal alternate courses of action than the coalition's agenda — senior leaders such as President Bush and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice were incapable of steering the decision-making process away from the dominance of the coalition to an organizational process that made decisions based on integrated agency outputs.

D.   BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS

Two competing agendas emerged on how to proceed with Phase IV operations. One side consisted of the Future of Iraq Coalition, a mix of senior leaders primarily belonging to the Offices of the Secretary of Defense and Vice President. The competing agenda was in the State Department, in particular with Secretary of State Colin Powell and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage. The Central Intelligence Agency and

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[92] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 108.

State shared similar assessments on certain courses of action, agreeing, for example, that Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress should not hold any leadership position in post–Saddam governance. Although the compatibility of agendas between the Central Intelligence Agency and State for Phase IV was not completely clear, in general, a bifurcated agenda existed between Central Intelligence Agency staffers and its director, George Tenet, who sided more with the president's or the coalition's agenda.[93] As a result, Central Intelligence Agency intelligence assessments that might otherwise have gained power as a consensus output to influence presidential decisions were marginalized by the politicized agenda of the Central Intelligence Agency director and the coalition. As a data source for developing policy options, the marginalization of the Central Intelligence Agency and State was exacerbated by the creation of the Office of Special Plans, which strengthened the coalition consensus because it was controlled by majority decision makers with the power to influence. This was a level of power unattainable by Secretary of State Colin Powell and the Central Intelligence Agency without bureaucratic power (Tenet).[94]

At first glance, it is reasonable to view the Future of Iraq Coalition versus State as the two competing agendas seeking to build a consensus strong enough to win a presidential decision. However, when applying the bureaucratic perspective to Phase IV options, it is difficult to argue that that the coalition had to acquire power for its ideas and agenda. The coalition that came to dominate Phase IV decision making existed as an informal group of individuals over the past decade prior to 2001.[95] Because the coalition consisted of members of the National Security Council, Principals and Deputies Committees, Office of the Vice President, and Office of the Secretary of Defense, it did not have to, using Peter Gourevitch's concepts, "acquire power" to compete with other

93 Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 68, 194-195.

94 Hersh, *Selective Intelligence: Donald Rumsfeld has his own special sources. Are they reliable?* See also Stahl, *Bush Sought 'Way' to Invade Iraq* and Smith, *Truth, War, & Consequences* (Frontline).

95 Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, 238-243.

agendas, nor did it need or seek the "support of various power rivals."[96] The coalition began contingency planning for Phase IV with absolute power, consisting of the most senior leaders within the national security system with the authority to control decision outcomes.

Leadership or positional power also played an important role in the bureaucratic politics paradigm because of the leaders' ability to influence the formation and selection of agendas into a consensus. The paradigm states, however, that individuals cannot perpetuate their own agendas without bureaucratic buy-in. Agenda seekers have to negotiate compromises to build a majority consensus that can win over the president in selecting proposed options. The pulling and hauling required to achieve compromise and buy-in from other power brokers to form a larger consensus was absent in Phase IV planning because the coalition had absolute decisional power: presidential power delegated to Cheney and Rumsfeld for Phase IV policy and plans. The coalition did not have to consider negotiating compromises. In fact, the pulling and hauling for Phase IV characteristic of decision making in bureaucratic politics became dysfunctional infighting under the Bush administration. Cheney and Rumsfeld's Future of Iraq Coalition eliminated Powell, the State Department, and others from the decision-making process.[97]

The Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Office of the Joint Chiefs asked Colonel Paul Hughes, head of national security studies at the National Defense University, to lead a conference in November 2002 on Phase IV requirements. Hughes, who became a staff member on the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, proposed an interagency and international plan for Phase IV. Woodward stated that Feith's policy office at Defense responded with a "simple no to an interagency plan because National Security Presidential Directive 24 put authority and responsibility for postwar planning with the Defense Department."[98] Even though Rumsfeld's office initiated the conference, the coalition's mission superseded their own organization's

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[96] Gourevitch, *Interacting Variables: September 11 and the Role of Ideas and Domestic Politics*, 7.

[97] Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco*, 63-64.

[98] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 129-130.

agenda and effectively eliminated policy options that compromised the coalition agenda. There was no bargaining process to achieve a majority consensus that was characteristic of bureaucratic politics.

The actions of Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Feith are examples of what makes explaining decision making through the bureaucratic politics' perspective difficult. Decision making and planning for Phase IV became neither a governmental action nor the pulling and hauling characteristic of the bargaining game necessary to build a consensus to sway presidential decisions in favor of a policy option. President Bush was removed from the decision-making process, and by delegating presidential power to Rumsfeld, he delegated it to the coalition, who did not make decisions directing policy and plans for Phase IV. By April 2003, after the fall of the Saddam regime, key Phase IV issues such as political and economic policy had not been formally decided on by the president, the NSC, or the coalition.[99]

When assistant National Security Advisor Hadley forced the Deputies Committee to sit down, in April 2003, to generate the organization of the Iraqi government with a U.S. special envoy in charge, Feith and his deputy, Under Secretary of Defense William Luti left the meeting. Woodward stated that

> Steve Hadley called a deputies committee meeting to come up with the final organization chart. He indicated the president was antsy, and said he was going to keep them locked in the Situation Room until they finished. Feith and his deputy, Luti, got up to leave. "You heard what Steve said, Frank Miller interjected, "We're going to sit here and work." "We will try and send someone back," Luti replied and left but no one came back from the Pentagon.[100]

When Rumsfeld saw the organization chart the next day at a Principals meeting, Woodward stated that

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[99] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 173.

[100] Ibid., 176-177.

Rumsfeld came in swinging. "This isn't an interagency product," he said. "My people weren't involved." "Mr. Secretary, Miller said, "Hadley said to do it. Your people left and said they might send somebody back. There was no other option. Your people left the game." Rumsfeld didn't respond, but the charts and diagrams were only so much abstraction. Under the President's directive, NSPD 24, he was in charge.[101]

These were the bureaucratic attributes of the coalition. If one did not like alternate policy options, coalition members left the policy process, blamed the interagency (Deputies Committee), or when in error of making accusations, Rumsfeld reminded himself that the bargaining process no longer applied because he maintained the power to control decisions. Pulling and hauling was best described as significant infighting, not characteristic of cooperating and bargaining to achieve consensus.

Although the coalition marginalized competing agendas, it was not able to sell key policy options to the president. President Bush ruled out the coalition's plan to prevent Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi from governing Iraq. It is difficult to apply President Bush's actions or that of the coalition to the bureaucratic politics model for the reasons that the consensus power was unable to co-opt the president into a policy decision, nor was the Future of Iraq Coalition's agenda representative of a bargaining process between agencies.

In the case of Phase IV planning under the Bush administration, bureaucratic politics did not explain how policy options won presidential approval as decisions that represented a consensus group's agenda. The president, as senior decision maker, was almost completely removed from the decision-making process for Phase IV.[102] As a result, President Bush did not behave according to an important tenet of the paradigm, as a president involved in the game of competing interests, which must build consensus through negotiating agendas to obtain a presidential decision. The Future of Iraq

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[101] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 177.

[102] Ibid., 129-130, 130-132, 136-138.

Coalition did not require presidential decisions because President Bush delegated foreign policy decision making to subordinate leaders, as in the case of Rumsfeld.

E.   INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

The organizational perspective explained, through the failure of structural features, how decision makers were unable to implement a Phase IV plan. It did not, however, answer an important question: Why did a very senior and experienced national security decision-making team, the National Security Council and Principals, behave in a manner that distorted a rational decision-making process? The individual level of analysis offers explanations of why, through excessive consistency striving, cognitive biases negatively influenced the decision-making process. Although consistency seeking is a natural cognitive process, its excessive presence in decision making led to biased policy and plans for Phase IV, as Alexander George stated, by "narrowing or distorting the processing and appraisal of information about a situation."[103]

1.   Framing Trap

The decision-making process for post–Saddam policy and plans was framed by three major themes. First, over a decade-long relationship between the most senior members of the Future of Iraq Coalition — specifically, Richard Cheney, Ahmed Chalabi, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and I. Scooter Libby — framed the initial policy approach advocating regime change and the assumption that installing Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress would solve major Phase IV issues: political stability, security, and reconstruction.[104] This belief not only became an assumption, under Chalabi and his political party, it grew to become considered the most reliable information source by the coalition over the U.S. intelligence community, despite

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[103] George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective use of Information and Advice*, 63.

[104] Hersh, *Selective Intelligence: Donald Rumsfeld has his own special sources. Are they reliable?*

corroborating assessments that Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress' informant network had not been considered a reliable source for over ten years.[105]

Second, Phase IV decisions and policy were excessively influenced by idealistic and moralistic beliefs of senior decision makers. On a macro level, the national end state for Iraq, freedom and democracy, was based on the specific foreign policy philosophy perpetuated not only by the Future of Iraq Coalition but embraced also by President Bush and National Security Advisor Rice. President Bush and Rice were interim leaders who embraced the belief systems of the senior members of the coalition who held long-standing moral and idealistic beliefs for the U.S. role in the international system: freedom and democracy were necessary at any price regardless of the consequence. As James Mann stated, "the liberal ideals of freedom and democracy would eventually take root in Iraq and the Middle East, albeit not easily."[106] The "not easily" part, the part that involved Phase IV, the nation-building mission, became too myopic a concept for the Bush administration who viewed their moral and ideological beliefs of the world as the big picture end state. What happened to democracy in between regime change was trivial when it achieved the broader goal of spreading democracy and freedom in Iraq and the Middle East.

These moral and ideological beliefs were based on faulty historical anchors. As Mann stated, "other countries who did not appear ready for democracy really were, they just needed to be given the chance."[107] The simplistic nature of this ideology translated into the simplistic approach to Phase IV planning. This characterization of senior coalition leaders, as well as President Bush and Rice, on their macro foreign policy beliefs, as Mann stated, was an "extraordinary optimistic (and simplistic) assessment of American capabilities and influence" in Iraq, the Middle East, and the international system, which took root within the policy process of the national security system and

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[105] Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 56-57.

[106] Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, 362.

[107] Ibid., 362-363.

prevented sound policy decisions.[108] That is, planning for, committing resources to, and forecasting costs for nation building (Phase IV) were not to become obstacles to accomplishing macro foreign policy objectives. Interagency planners and non-government advisors indicated that planning for Phase IV would not be simple. Rather, it would be a daunting task, as cost estimates and forecasts of conditions for a post–Saddam Iraq materialized. When moral and ideological beliefs of the administration became challenged, individuals who offered opposing views were marginalized or removed from the decision-making process by the decisional power of the Future of Iraq Coalition.

On specific Phase IV policy objectives for achieving freedom and democracy in Iraq, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas Feith, both acknowledged that their Iraq policy was shaped by historical precedent and personal tragedies. Both of their families were affected by the Holocaust and both felt the appeasement of Hitler was bad policy and that in the postwar phase for WWII, de-Nazification was a policy that could be applied to Iraq and de-Baathification.[109] Additionally, Ahmed Chalabi strengthened the frame by backing the policy for the primary reason that it provided him and the Iraqi National Congress, an avenue to insert themselves into power post–Saddam. Wolfowitz, although primarily the most influential leader in making the case for regime change, minimalized any challenges to Phase IV planning by framing expected conditions for nation building based on the reconstruction of Europe in WWII. Trudy Rubin stated that the administration's view was that "postwar Iraq would resemble post–World War II France and Chalabi and the INC would come back and establish a democracy; the likelihood of postwar instability was virtually nil."[110]

At first glance, it was not problematic to frame policy based on historical precedent. The problem with applying the WW II reconstruction and the de-Nazification

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[108] Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, 362-363.

[109] Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq,* 16-17, 77.

[110] Trudy Rubin, "Iraq Chaos a Result of Blinkered Arrogance," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, sec. Currents, 27 June 2004, http://w3.nexis.com (accessed 24 September 2007).

analogy to Iraq was that the comparisons were not analogous. The Central Intelligence Agency, United States Agency for International Development, the State Department, outside advisors such as the Army War College, National Defense University et al., assessed throughout Phase IV planning that ethnic, regional, religious, and other rivalries in Iraq would be a major obstacle to sovereignty and security.[111] The makeup of Iraq was quite different from the homogenous societies of France, Germany, and Japan, as well as the established institutions of these countries. Yet de-Baathification, which became a policy decision for Phase IV by May 2003, was based on the historical policy of de-Nazification during WWII. De-Baathification in Iraq became the complete disbanding of the longest-established institutions in Iraq — the civil service and Iraqi army — by the Coalition Provisional Authority.

The de-Baathification order of Iraq ministries and the military also did not follow the historical precedent on which it was based. James Fallows noted that de-Nazification was executed without "dismantling the bureaucracy or excluding everyone who held a position of responsibility."[112] What emerged was a policy based on moral and ideological principle. Baathists were likened to Nazis in the sense of suppressing and cleansing ethnic and religious ethnicities, and it was a moral obligation of the United States to de-Baathify Iraq. Although Feith supported de-Baathification, he did not want complete de-Baathification initially, wanting to retain some semblance of the military for reconstruction.[113] Complete de-Baathification, however, is what the Coalition Provisional Authority ordered in May 2003. The consensus opinion by military planners, academia (Army War College), and think tanks (RAND) was that, historically, both in WW II

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[111] James Fallows, "Blind into Baghdad," *Atlantic Monthly,* January/February 2004, http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200401/fallows (accessed 18 October 2007).

[112] Ibid.

[113] Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, 162.

reconstruction and the follow-on wars of liberation over the past fifty years, "successful occupation suggested that it is best to go in real heavy (force size) and then draw down fast."[114]

This historical precedent, "to go in heavy for Phase IV," ran counter to the third and last major frame, the Bush administration's military transformation and nation building doctrine. The Bush administration had a moral obligation to stop oppressive regimes and those that threatened the security of the United States through pre-emptive action. Postwar responsibilities were primarily the responsibility of the occupied country, however, with U.S. assistance as required. The de-emphasis on nation building, while advocating preemptive action, was a belief secured by Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld prior to the decision for regime change, but which framed the administration's decisions for Phase IV planning.[115]

The conceptual philosophy and historical precedent that Phase IV required a force size larger than the Phase III (combat operations) force, and that Phase IV planning was the more difficult and daunting task than Phase III, was anathema to the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld transformation doctrine of preemption without nation building.[116] They believed that future wars could be fought with fewer resources than in previous wars of liberation, and they were highly skeptical of the associated risks of nation building. That is, the smaller the force size, the less the impact of a relatively small invasion force on reconstruction operations. As a result, Rumsfeld and other coalition members placed little emphasis on the consequences regime change had on post–Saddam Iraq.[117] The Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld military transformation doctrine framed the approach to Phase IV, that future wars could be conducted with small force sizes, lessening the reconstruction

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[114] Fallows, *Blind into Baghdad.*

[115] Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, 256-257.

[116] Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, 151-152.

[117] Fallows, *Blind into Baghdad.*

impact and the forward-leaping assumption that postwar responsibilities and costs could be assumed by and fall primarily to the occupied country, for example, Iraq.[118]

2. Anchoring Trap (Accepting the First Frame Presented)

What secured a distorted decision-making process for Phase IV were numerous instances of anchoring traps that closed off alternate courses of action and the consideration of intelligence that questioned the policy ideas of the most powerful decisional unit (Future of Iraq Coalition). The three frames were very compatible with each other and became a circular process of idea and policy validation, resulted in the formulation of poor foreign policy, and enabled the anchoring trap's most powerful tenet even further. As Hammond et al., state, "the mind gives disproportionate weight to the first information it receives."[119]

Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld established the Office of Special Plans in his Policy Office headed by Douglas Feith. Special Plans was led by Feith's deputy, William Luti. The office's purpose was to research information on Iraq's capabilities that the Central Intelligence Agency might have overlooked. Richard Perle, the Chairman of the Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee, a board of independent private sectors members, chosen by Feith and approved by Rumsfeld, brought Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress, into the fold of Special Plans and Rumsfeld's office. Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress were longtime favorites of senior decision makers within the coalition for leading Iraq after regime change.[120] The analysis previously established that Chalabi and his political party became an alternate source of intelligence for assessments on conditions to expect in Iraq after regime change. During twenty months of planning, Chalabi convinced the coalition that Iraqis would welcome the American presence and

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[118] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 146, 268. See also Gordon, *Fiasco*, 141-142, 151-152.

[119] Hammond, Keeney and Raiffa, *The Hidden Traps in Decision Making*, 48.

[120] Hersh, *Selective Intelligence: Donald Rumsfeld has sis own special sources. Are they reliable?*

that he and the Iraqi National Congress would establish security after regime change.[121] This conviction generated a number of assumptions that governance and security for Phase IV would not be problematic.

The coalition solidified the initial frame that Chalabi and his political party would bring democracy and stability to Iraq. Phase IV assumptions were that government and security would remain intact, and the United States would, as Michael Gordon stated, "enable" Iraqis to take charge of their future.[122] The Future of Iraq Coalition dismissed contrary views by Iraqi diaspora competing against Chalabi for power, and removed State Department planners and leaders from the policy process because they did not favor Chalabi as an information source or installing the exiles' opposition leaders post–Saddam. The decision by the coalition to remove the most qualified individuals from the decision-making process was the consequence of needing to keep new information and conflicting policy options consistent with original beliefs. The factual data and analysis that State, the intelligence community, and outside advisors brought to Phase IV planning would have complicated and challenged oversimplified assumptions of the Phase IV environment.

The Bush administration's belief that the United States was not in the nation-building business led to powerful assumptions that validated both the transformation doctrine for future wars and the moral and ideological beliefs that the United States has an obligation to remove tyrannical regimes from power and that, once free of oppression, democracy would follow. Having excluded the international community from Phase IV planning as a general policy, and with no intention of transferring responsibility for Phase IV to the United Nations or non government organizations, senior decision makers assumed Iraqis would, as Gordon and Trainor stated, "do the work of Phase IV

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[121] Jonathon S. Landay and Warren P. Strobel, "Pentagon Civilians' Lack of Planning Contributed to Chaos in Iraq," *Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services,* 12 July 2003, http://www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/headlines03/0712-05.htm (accessed 26 October 2007).

[122] Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, 141-142.

themselves."[123] The assumptions that manifested themselves into numerous supporting anchors throughout the planning process explained how excessive consistency striving distorted the consideration of alternate courses of action; senior decision makers, primarily from the coalition but also from the within the White House, struggled to maintain their initial frames for the future of Iraq. National Security Advisor Rice summarized the administration's expectations for Phase IV conditions.

> The concept was that we would defeat the army, but the institutions would hold, everything from ministries to police forces, you would be able to bring new leadership but we were going to keep the body in place.[124]

3. Status Quo Trap (Rationalizing First Choice as Optimal; Do Nothing with Alternate Choices)

The decision-making process for Phase IV illustrated excessive consistency striving by the most influential decisional authority, the Future of Iraq Coalition, and the Bush administration's desire to reinforce the three major framing themes affecting policy and plans for Phase IV. This trap's roots are grounded in the psychological explanation of the subconscious tendency to avoid responsibility and accountability. But this trap also secured the coalition's future of Iraq frame, as Hammond states, by "doing nothing" with alternate courses of action. Where policy decisions for the future of Iraq after Saddam were pre-determined by existing beliefs within the three major themes, the trap also explained the coalition's bias to perpetuate the status quo of its long-standing beliefs by marginalizing individuals and information critical to a rational process. The result was the failure to seriously consider opposing views and the selection of poor foreign policy choices. The status quo trap explained how and why initial frames were secured and the tendency of the mind to simplify incoming information consistent with known beliefs.

Despite President Bush deciding that Iraqi exiles would not lead Iraq's government post–Saddam in March 2003, and with Vice President Cheney capitulating to

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[123] Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, 142.

[124] Ibid., 142.

the president and telling the coalition to back away from the idea that Chalabi and the INC would lead a provisional government, the power of the status quo trap remained strong. Coalition members could not relinquish themselves from the Chalabi solution for governance and security for all the ensuing problems that would arise: new policy, new plans, and the consideration of new courses of action that potentially contradicted its initial beliefs. By April 2003, with no clear Phase IV transition plan, Rumsfeld's special assistant, Steve Herbits, in searching for a presidential envoy that would eventually lead the Coalition Provisional Authority, recommended Wolfowitz as the envoy because as Herbits wrote:

> the facts were that Wolfowitz enjoys the widest support among Iraqis, that being Chalabi and the INC…that the Iraqi diaspora (Chalabi) were central to the overall strategy.[125]

This was a recommendation to the president, despite that over a month earlier, the president decided that Iraqi exiles were not going to be central to the overall strategy of leading Iraq. By early April 2003, Chalabi still remained influential and the coalition still wanted to place him in Iraq to take charge of governance and security issues. Despite the military not wanting Chalabi and the INC in the middle of combat operations, Woodward stated that "there was pressure to do just that," by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.[126]

4. Sunk Cost Trap (Committing More Resources to a Frame Presented as a Loss)

The Future of Iraq Coalition members never believed that they made poor policy decisions. The dominant leaders of the coalition, such as Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Feith, really believed that individuals with opposing views were trying to sabotage rational policy and plans.[127] As corroborating evidence and other consensus views

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[125] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 168.

[126] Ibid., 156-157.

[127] Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 284.

indicated that Phase IV planning and the post–Saddam environment would be a much more complicated task than originally believed, the coalition's actions supported the traps proposition by devoting more and more resources to strengthen its power in the decision-making process and to ensure that its policy for Iraq, democracy, and minimal planning assumptions for nation building remained intact.

The sunk cost trap also explained the continuous devotion of resources and personnel to fix a poor decision-making process. This bias was specifically evident in two senior leaders: Rumsfeld as lead for Phase IV policy, plans, and operations, and Rice as administrative lead for coordination and integration of decisions within the interagency. Sunk cost traps materialized primarily by the creation of ad hoc decisional units and planning units in an attempt by Rumsfeld and Rice to get their arms around a failed decision-making process.

For Rice, unable to exert leadership within the decision-making system, handed off her responsibilities to a security council staff director, Frank Miller, who uncovered soon after taking over the policy process what Rice and her assistant, Hadley, had not addressed in over ten months of planning: that coordinating planning within Defense was so disorganized, Rumsfeld was incapable of overseeing or managing an integrated Phase IV plan. Woodward stated that

> Miller is surprised that one of his primary jobs becomes not coordinating interagency plans but coordinating among the various sections of Defense. The Pentagon's budget office, Feith's policy shop, General Myer's Joint Staff, and Frank's CENTCOM are all operating independent of each other within Defense on Iraq plans.[128]

> Miller is also the chief of staff for the Deputies Committee. He notes that moving paper and policy decisions out of the Pentagon to the Principals and President is so disorganized and chaotic that Miller has to hold off-line meetings each week with Card, Rice, Hadley, and Libby to outline problems and blow the whistle so that they could nudge Rumsfeld or others.[129]

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[128] Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*, 321.

[129] Ibid., 322.

The creation of ad hoc decisional units by Rumsfeld and Cheney significantly anchored the administration's initial frames by adding spheres of control that perpetuated the coalition's agenda. This was a conscious effort by the coalition to maintain authority and control over policy and plans. But for Rumsfeld, directing ad hoc units served an additional purpose. It obscured direct lines of accountability and, combined with his inability to make concrete decisions on specific policy objectives and plans, the sunk cost trap explained Rumsfeld's desire to protect his ego from criticism for Phase IV decisions. The degree of indecisiveness among national leaders in directing major Phase IV policy decisions into a formal plan and the commitment of resources to bad choices illustrated an unwillingness to admit mistakes, but also supported the administration's initial beliefs for the future of Iraq.

5.   **Confirming Evidence Trap (Seeking Out Information Consistent with One's Point of View)**

The initial framing traps introduced confirming evidence traps at the expense of sound foreign policy decisions during the Phase IV planning process. Confirming evidence traps had a powerful effect of distorting the quality of policy options that were based on analyzing information. The Office of Special Plans was initially set up by Cheney and Rumsfeld within the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy to compile information in making the case for regime change. However, because Rumsfeld's Policy office brought in Ahmed Chalabi and his political group as an alternate intelligence source to make the case for war, Iraqi National Congress sources were critical in shaping data that assessed the postwar phase for the coalition, which believed that the Iraqi National Congress was running a credible informant and intelligence network within Iraq.

Phase IV policy for Iraq was not based on a decision-making process within the national security system, but on Chalabi and his political party. Despite the abundance of criticism from within government, and outside advisors from research and academic institutions that forecasts for postwar conditions in Iraq were grim, especially the security situation, Chalabi convinced the coalition that not only would U.S. forces be, as one Iraqi

exile stated, "greeted with flowers," but that Chalabi would "activate his network of tens of thousands of Iraqis to control security post Saddam."[130] When agencies and the intelligence community, as well as other Iraqi diaspora, questioned the credibility of Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress' intelligence and sources, they were marginalized from the decision-making process. Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress, a political unit of the Future of Iraq Coalition, paid over 36 million dollars by the United States from 2000-2003, were now a U.S. intelligence agency.[131] The Bush administration was unable to make decisions based on forecasts of conditions for Phase IV because its containment policy of the Saddam regime over the last decade prevented the establishment of earnest intelligence collections inside Iraq.[132]

6.   **Estimating and Forecasting Traps (Making Estimates or Forecasts with Imperfect Information)**

This thesis distinguished between the decision actions of leaders belonging to the Future of Iraq Coalition and those of President Bush and National Security Advisor Rice. As is evident in this section on the distorting effects of excessive consistency striving, the beliefs of both the White House (Bush and Rice) as well as the coalition, significantly biased the decision-making process. Feith and Rumsfeld were averse to planning because they did not believe in the accuracy of predictions for the Phase IV environment. Feith stated that

> being ready for whatever proved to be the situation in postwar Iraq. You will not find a single piece of paper…that says, Mr. Secretary or Mr. President, let us tell you what postwar Iraq is going to look like, and here is what we need plans for. If you tried that, you would get thrown out of Rumsfeld's office so fast — if you ever went in there and said, let me tell you what something's going to look like in the future, you wouldn't get to your next sentence.[133]

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130 Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco*, 7.

131 Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 56.

132 Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 96.

133 Fallows, *Blind into Baghdad.*

This quote by Feith on Rumsfeld captured, in essence, how the beliefs of the lead (Rumsfeld) for Phase IV policy, the coalition, and that of the White House, explained the Bush administration's approach to Phase IV policy and plans. As Feith stated, "being prepared for whatever," became the rationale for not having to plan. It was not true, however, that Rumsfeld and the administration did not make predictions and forecasts as to the future of Iraq. Contrary to the stated philosophy on the inability to make estimates as the rationale for not having a specific Phase IV plan, the Bush administration fell into overconfidence traps and made overly optimistic forecasts about the future of Iraq, which influenced its policy for Phase IV.

The intentional decision to ignore predictions had less to do with the belief that Phase IV was unpredictable as it had in validating the three primary frames guiding decisions in the Bush administration. The coalition manipulated estimates and forecasts in two ways. By refusing to make forecasts as to the conditions of post–Saddam Iraq, the administration avoided having to explain decisions that were contrary to their initial beliefs. This was most evident in supporting the administration's military transformation doctrine. Gordon and Trainor stated that Rumsfeld "had a cow" in January 2003 over proposed force sizes for Iraq.[134] This reaction was a response to incoming data that contradicted the transformation doctrine's goal for smaller force sizes in future wars.

> 9 January 2003: Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz wanted Franks to identify points at which the President could stop the flow of reinforcements midstream. If the regime collapsed quickly, units should be off-ramped.[135]

> 25 February 2003: Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki testified to Congress that postwar Iraq would require a commitment of several hundred thousand U.S. troops.[136]

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[134] Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, 97-98.

[135] Ibid., 97-98.

[136] Rieff, *Blue Print for a Mess.*

27 February 2003: Wolfowitz testified to Congress that Shinseki's number was "wildly off the mark" adding, "it's hard to conceive that it would take more forces to provide stability in post Saddam Iraq than it would take to conduct the war itself."[137]

By April 2003, military leaders and the intelligence community voiced increasing concern about future instability since the fall of Baghdad. Much of the concern centered on the notion that the force size in Iraq was too small to conduct security operations. Rumsfeld dismissed this assessment in his famous "freedom's untidy" speech that the deteriorating security condition was a natural consequence of regime change that must run its course. He minimalized the focus on security conditions by painting a rosy forecast of what Iraq would become. Rumsfeld stated

> free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and to do bad things. They're also free to live their lives and do wonderful things, and that's what's going to happen here.[138]

Overly optimistic forecasts anchored the administration's transformation doctrine in addition to validating intelligence estimates by Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress, the coalition's policy choice for post Saddam governance and security.

The belief by Rumsfeld, Feith, Wolfowitz, and others in the Future of Iraq Coalition that forecasting future conditions for unpredictable environments such as Phase IV were futile, eliminated the requirement to plan. As Feith portrayed in his characterization of Rumsfeld, and which exemplified the lengths the coalition went to keep incoming data consistent with its original beliefs, individuals paid a heavy price for trying to forecast requirements to plan for Phase IV. However, coalition leaders, in particular Cheney, Chalabi, and Rumsfeld, were notorious for manipulating information uncertainty to make overconfident forecasts that anchored the administration's existing frames on Iraq and nation building in

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137 Rieff, *Blue Print for a Mess.*

138 Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 136.

general. For example, Woodward noted that on 16 March 2003, Cheney stated on the television program *Meet the Press* that:

> regarding the pending invasion of Iraq, "my belief is we will, in fact, be greeted as liberators," he predicted. The host, Tim Russert, pointed out that General Shinseki had testified to Congress that postwar plans in Iraq would likely require several hundred thousand troops. Cheney responded, "to suggest that we need several hundred thousand troops there after the military operations cease, after the conflict ends, I don't think is accurate. I think that is an overstatement."[139]

When faced with imperfect information, estimating and forecasting traps became more pronounced, reducing the ability of leaders to make objective decisions. Cheney's tactic, adopted by other coalition members, was very successful at taking information uncertainty and turning imperfect data into fact. The coalition perpetuated its beliefs, as Thomas Ricks stated "with a hard-line, dismissive, no debate stance, using certitude" to frame decisions, policy, and make forecasts.[140]

This unique skill served three purposes. The administration used information uncertainty as a justification for not planning, as Fallows stated, "reflecting Rumsfeld's emphasis on the unknowability of the future."[141] The administration avoided criticism and public oversight over costs for Phase IV by arguing that the uncertain environment of Phase IV made estimating costs for reconstruction impossible.[142] When it came to anchoring the administration's long-standing frames on Iraq, moralism and idealism, and the military transformation doctrine, however, the Bush administration was successful in using information uncertainty to make overconfident forecasts about conditions in Iraq and its prospects for democracy.

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[139] Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*, 151.

[140] Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 51.

[141] Fallows, *Blind into Baghdad.*

[142] Ibid.

Forecasting reconstruction costs for Phase IV were noticeably absent in meetings with senior leaders on Phase IV planning. Consistent with what happened to contrary opinions and individuals whose actions threatened the administrations three guiding beliefs, personnel were removed from the planning process or, in extreme cases, forced to resign. James Fallows stated that

> In September 2002, Lawrence Lindsay, White House economic advisor, estimated that war in Iraq and its aftermath might end up at one to two percent gross domestic product, which would mean $100 billion to $200 billion dollars. Lindsay was widely criticized by administration officials…his comment "made it clear Larry just didn't get it." By the end of the year Lindsay was forced to resign. No one who remained in the administration offered a plausible cost estimate until months after the war began.[143]

The primary reason for disciplining personnel for making reasonable forecasts was that objective cost estimates to conducting Phase IV operations and the long-term obligation of nation building ran counter to all three of the Bush administration's original frames for the future of Iraq. First, the belief that a smaller force size lessened the impact on reconstruction efforts and the optimistic prediction that occupied nations would bear the reconstruction costs for being liberated. Second, as the coalition's figurehead for its vision of Iraq, Chalabi anchored the administration's beliefs on nation building by estimating, along with other coalition leaders, that Iraqi oil revenues would pay for reconstruction costs.[144] This assessment was based on overconfident forecasts that oil production would quickly reach pre-war levels, while underestimating the state of the Iraqi oil sector and the security condition in Iraq that would lead to numerous attacks on the oil infrastructure. Finally, the beliefs of the most ardent proponents of United States moral and ideological obligations, those within the Future of Iraq Coalition, minimalized forecasting costs for Phase IV because of the insignificance it placed on what transpired between regime change and the greater context of what the administration would be remembered for historically: the spread of democratic ideals as a strategic foreign policy

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[143] Fallows, *Blind into Baghdad.*.

[144] Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco*, 71, 203.

objective. Estimating the costs of regime change and nation building were not to become obstacles to accomplishing macro foreign policy objectives of freeing oppressed nations and spreading democracy. The Bush administration believed the United States had unlimited resources and power to further moral and ideological foreign policy.[145]

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145 Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, 362-363.

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IV. CONCLUSION

A. DEFENDING THE HYPOTHESES

The individual level of analysis supported the hypothesis that an excessive reliance on belief systems explained decisions affecting policy and plans for Phase IV in Iraq. The analysis also showed how cognitive consistency impacted the quality of foreign policy in addressing national end-state objectives for Iraq. Explaining the decision-making process for Phase IV was enhanced by one intervening variable that was influenced by cognitive biases. The effects of cognitive traps resulted in a failure of leadership, which distorted the normal routine of the national security decision-making process, resulting in the inability of leaders to implement a national Phase IV plan.

The Bush administration adopted moralistic and ideological beliefs, maintained a strong relationship with Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi, and implemented a military transformation doctrine that framed policy and planning objectives for Phase IV. As a result, an important structural feature of organizations — leadership function — failed on three levels. First, established and formally defined leadership positions created ad hoc decisional units to perpetuate the agenda of the most influential decisional power, the Future of Iraq Coalition, headed by Vice President Richard Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, which distorted a rational decision-making process. Second, President Bush and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice failed to resolve disruptions to the decision-making process, for example, the marginalization of alternate policy options that contested the coalition's agenda. Third, the Bush administration was unable to implement its agenda, albeit poor foreign policy, into a coherent plan for Phase IV.

B. IMPLICATIONS FOR ANALYZING NATIONAL SECURITY DECISIONS

The rational actor and bureaucratic politics perspectives offer the least explanatory power for analyzing decisions surrounding Phase IV policy and plans. The

assumptions of rational actor decision making, however, offer a valuable explanation of what constitutes sound foreign policy formulation and is a useful metric by which to judge an objective policy process. Concluding that a rational decision-making process is impeded by individual-level explanations of decision making, for example, cognitive biases, emphasizes to analysts and decision makers the importance of awareness in understanding how psychological factors and cognitive biases effect decision making. Explanations drawn from an individual level of analysis combined with an organizational perspective offer relevant explanations of decision making within the Bush national security system.

The bureaucratic politics model was insufficient at explaining decision making for Phase IV. Many of the salient features of bureaucratic politics, positional power, consensus building, and bargaining that are used to form agendas, fit within the context of structural features of organizations. Leadership functions, such as authority and control, unit roles and relationships, and unit outputs, depict the characteristics of units, but also explain the bureaucraticness of decisions. That is, the organizational perspective is capable of explaining the politics of decisions and the structural features that explain how individual and group agendas are formed. If one views consensus power as a decisional unit, it can be analyzed in the context of the organizational perspective. In this perspective, unit outputs may not materialize from traditional units such as Defense and State, but from the creation of formal and informal ad hoc (bureaucratic) units that have a significant impact on the decision-making process.

Individual and group behavior in the bureaucratic politics paradigm is best explained through psychological and cognitive theories of decision making. For example, motivational analysis of human behavior and the affects of personality in decision making are one of many subfields of psychology and sociology that capture the process of bureaucratic politics.[146] The importance of beliefs and images within the field of cognitive psychology, explain factors influencing agenda formation and group think within the bureaucratic politics model. Factors influencing agendas, such as belief

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[146] Snyder, Bruck, and Saipan, *Foreign Policy Decision-Making*, 137-171.

systems, are more relevant in understanding how individuals make decisions than analyzing the pulling and hauling of ideas to win a presidential decision, which was not characteristic of the Bush administration.

Framing this paradigm as a stand-alone approach to explain decision making implies normative behavior. That is, it validates the proposition that empowering decisions and consensus or coalition politics that forces the senior decision maker's hand is expected behavior in bureaucracies. Winning the argument for a course of action by building consensus becomes more important than validating the effectiveness of the agenda the consensus group seeks to advance to accomplish national interests. This focus on moving an idea through the bureaucracy and not fully vetting the idea was characteristic of Bush administration foreign policy and that of the Future of Iraq Coalition, which negatively effected the formulation of a coherent Phase IV plan.

The counterargument to this thesis is that bureaucratic infighting within government is unavoidable. One either learns to play the game or becomes relegated to the sidelines. This metaphor, unfortunately, described the case for Phase IV decision making, where individuals with alternative policy options and dissenting views to Bush administration preferences were marginalized from the policy process. Although cutthroat politics is considered normal behavior within the national security system, bureaucratic infighting can produce sub-optimal outcomes. Understanding the process of building power for ideas (agendas) is more suitably viewed under the organizational perspective. For those who believe in the predictive power of the bureaucratic politics paradigm because of its innate presence in government decision making, need to consider the impact of belief systems on the practice of government decision making.[147]

C. RECOMMENDATION TO NATIONAL SECURITY LEADERS AND PLANNERS

This offers three recommendations. First, policymakers need to recognize that cognitive traps, manifested as the objective of maintaining cognitive and policy

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[147] Steve Chan, "Rationality, Bureaucratic Politics and Belief Systems: Explaining the Chinese Policy Debate 1964-1966," *Journal of Peace Research* 16, no. 4 (1979), http://jpr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/16/4/333 (accessed 29 August 2007), 333.

consistency, can have a negative effect on the decision-making process. Second, awareness of the effects of belief systems on decision making provides a foundation for studying how foreign governments make decisions.[148] Incorporating an awareness of cognitive biases in the formulation of foreign policy can prevent many of the assumptions made by states with regard to the rational behavior of their own decision makers as well as the dangerous assumption that foreign governments make decisions in a rational manner.[149]

Third, leadership is required to address the introduction of cognitive biases into the decision-making process. It is unrealistic to expect that individual assignment to positions of authority and control within the national security system will be based on leadership experience and qualifications to perform leadership functions. The appointments of decision makers to lead the national security system are made at the discretion of the president. Given the subjective nature of political appointments, the most qualified individuals may not be assigned to leadership positions. This makes awareness of the potential distorting effects of cognitive biases in decision making a more daunting and necessary task.

Individuals are the wild card in the decision-making process that impact the quality of foreign policy. Leaders and policy makers need to understand the implications of seeing the world through their own cognitive lenses and the tendency to make decisions that support familiar frames of reference. Decision makers require a critically thinking and unbiased sounding board. As a prescription, national security leaders should embrace a neutral observer in the decision-making process to thwart group think, personal agendas, and consistency-seeking biases from becoming the driving force behind the foreign policy formulation process.[150]

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[148] Chan, "Rationality, Bureaucratic Politics and Belief Systems: Explaining the Chinese Policy Debate 1964-1966," 333.

[149] Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, "Let Us Know Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (Spring 2001), http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0162-2889%28200121%2925%3A4%3C107%3ALUNPGM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D, 109. See also George, *The "Operational Code,"* 201.

[150] George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective use of Information and Advice*, 86-87, 124-126, 169-173.

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