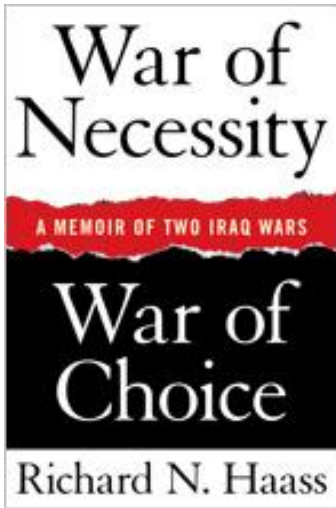


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Teaching Notes

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

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When should the United States go to war? It is arguably the most important foreign policy question facing any president, and Richard N. Haass—a member of the National Security Council staff for President George H.W. Bush and the director of policy planning in the State Department for President George W. Bush—is in a unique position to address it. Dr. Haass is one of just a handful of individuals—along with Colin Powell, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and Robert Gates—involved at a senior level of U.S. government decision-making for both the Gulf War of 1990–91 and the Iraq War launched in 2003. This book, a combination of history, analysis, and personal account, explains not only what happened but why.

At first blush, the two Iraq wars are similar. Both involved a President George Bush and the United States in conflicts with Saddam Hussein and Iraq. There, however, the resemblance ends. This book argues that the first war, following Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, was a war of necessity. Wars of necessity involve vital U.S. interests and, more importantly, a lack of viable alternatives to the use of force that could protect these interests. The first war was limited in ambition, well executed, and carried out with unprecedented international support.

By contrast, the second Iraq war was one of choice. The book contends that this ambitious war was unwarranted, as the United States had other viable policy options. It was also poorly implemented and fought with considerably more international opposition than backing.

Finally, the book goes beyond Iraq to examine the means and ends of U.S. foreign policy: how it should be made, what it should seek to accomplish, and how it should be pursued. *War of Necessity, War of Choice* provides a compass for how the United States can apply the lessons learned from the two Iraq conflicts so that it is better positioned to put into practice what worked and avoid repeating what did not.

This book is suitable for the following types of courses:

- U.S. foreign policy
- Public policy
- Ethics and international affairs
- Middle East history

These teaching notes discuss questions and suggestions for further projects, including mock National Security Council meetings and writing assignments, which may be useful for students in any of the courses above.

Discussion Questions

Courses on U.S. Foreign Policy

1. Was the George H.W. Bush administration right to go to war in 1990–91 to drive Saddam Hussein's forces out of Kuwait? Do you believe that this was a war of necessity for the United States?
2. Was the George W. Bush administration right to invade Iraq in 2003? Do you believe that this was a war of choice for the United States?
3. What should be the role of democracy promotion and attempts to change the nature of societies in U.S. foreign policy? Are such objectives ever a worthy basis for going to war?

4. Are wars of choice ever warranted? If so, under what circumstances?
5. What were the costs and benefits of the first Iraq war? What were and are the costs and benefits of the second? In general, how should an assessment of probable costs and benefits affect consideration of whether to undertake a war of choice?
6. What are the lessons of the two Iraq wars for what the United States seeks to accomplish in the world? How can these lessons be applied to current or future situations in which the United States is using or might consider using force (e.g., Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, North Korea, or Darfur)?
7. How do the two Iraq wars represent competing schools of thought in American foreign policy? How do the outcomes of the wars challenge or support the tenets of these schools? What should be the principal purpose of American foreign policy?
8. What are other examples of wars of necessity and wars of choice that the United States or other countries have fought? How are they similar and how do they differ from the two Iraq wars?

Courses on Public Policy

1. What should government officials do when they disagree with policies being put in place? What factors should influence their thinking on how to handle their disagreement (e.g., the importance of the issue, strength of the individual's objections, opportunities for their arguments to receive a fair hearing)?
2. Under what circumstances should government officials resign? How should they evaluate the trade-off between, on one hand, staying in government and trying to influence a policy they disagree with and, on the other, making a statement by resigning but losing their direct influence?
3. Based on his argument in the book, should Richard Haass have resigned when the 2003 Iraq war was launched? Should Colin Powell have done so?
4. What actions other than resignation are appropriate for officials to make their disagreements known? Is leaking information or undermining a policy ever justified?
5. Compare the decision-making approaches of the two Presidents Bush. How do they differ in their levels of formality, inclusiveness, and other characteristics? What are the merits and drawbacks of each approach?

Courses on Ethics and International Affairs

1. Was the first Iraq war a “just war?” Was the second?
2. Can wars of choice ever be just?
3. Can any war be just if it lacks broad support among the American public? In Congress? In international public opinion?
4. Is just war thinking an adequate framework for deciding whether to undertake a war today? What are the benefits and limits of this thinking?
5. What should be the criteria for determining whether a conflict is a war of necessity? What should be the criteria for deciding whether to begin a war of choice?
6. Under what circumstances is it advisable or justifiable to talk to objectionable regimes, such as that of Saddam Hussein? Under what circumstances should contact with such regimes be cut off?
7. Did the United States respond appropriately to Saddam’s crackdowns on the Kurdish and Shia uprisings in the aftermath of the Gulf War?

Courses on Middle East History

1. Do you agree with the George H.W. Bush administration’s attempts to maintain a relationship with Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in the 1980s? What, if anything, could the United States have done to head off the threat that Saddam came to pose to the region and to U.S. interests?
2. Was the George H.W. Bush administration right to limit U.S. goals to evicting Saddam’s forces from Kuwait and to refrain from “going to Baghdad” to oust Saddam’s regime? Was it right to stay aloof from the Kurdish and Shia intifadas?
3. Was the second Iraq war the wrong choice? Was it the right choice poorly implemented?
4. What were the consequences of the first Iraq war for the region? What were and are the consequences of the second?
5. What would have been the consequences had the United States not used force to liberate Kuwait in 1990–91 or to oust Saddam in 2003?

Further Projects

Mock National Security Council Meeting

Assign students to play the role of senior administration officials such as the president, vice president, secretaries of state and defense, national security adviser, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and others. Conduct a mock National Security Council (NSC) meeting in order to:

- Reenact the deliberations surrounding the Gulf War, with a focus on important decision points such as:
 - The initial response to the possibility of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait
 - Response to the invasion itself
 - How to deter Saddam from attacking Saudi Arabia
 - Whether and how to consult Congress and the United Nations
 - Whether to liberate Kuwait by force
 - How to build a broad coalition to liberate Kuwait
 - Whether to press on to Baghdad and remove Saddam from power
 - How to respond to the Kurdish and Shia intifadas in the aftermath of the war
- Simulate a debate over whether to undertake the second Iraq war
- Examine a scenario in which the United States might consider using force (e.g., state failure in Pakistan, nuclear advance in Iran, instability or immediate threat on the Korean Peninsula, genocide and humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur).

In each case, participants should present their analysis of the situation consistent with the role they have been assigned, lay out policy options, and argue for their preferred course. In a reenactment of deliberations over the Gulf War or a simulation of a debate over the 2003 Iraq War, the goal should be to see whether students arrive at the same decisions made by the relevant Bush administration. In a hypothetical scenario, the goal should be to apply lessons from the two Iraq wars in considering both what policy to adopt and how to ensure the effective operation of the national security policymaking process.

Memorandum to the President

Invite students to assume the role of presidential advisers. Then assign them to write a memorandum to the president on a scenario in which the United States is considering or might consider using military force. These could be real-life possibilities, such as Iran, Pakistan, North Korea, or Darfur, or imaginary cases laid out by the instructor. Memoranda should analyze the situation and the U.S. interests at stake, outline a series of viable policy options (both involving force and not), and argue for a particular course of action. They should explicitly take account of lessons from the two Iraq wars and other conflicts in considering possible U.S. military intervention.

Analytical paper

Assign students to write papers analyzing the arguments surrounding one of the central questions laid out in the book. Examples include:

- Whether the first Iraq war was one of necessity
- Whether the second Iraq war was one of choice, and whether it was the right choice
- What government officials should do when they disagree with an important policy decision and when resignation is appropriate
- What circumstances make a war necessary
- Under what circumstances wars of choice can be justified
- What lessons the two Iraq wars offer for potential U.S. military intervention, both in specific cases and in general
- Whether popular support (domestic, international, or both) is necessary for a war to be justifiable
- What role democracy promotion should play in U.S. foreign policy and in decisions to go to war

Papers should consider arguments on different sides of the issue, weigh lessons from the experiences discussed in the book, and make a case for the student's preferred view.

Supplementary Materials

Atkinson, Rick, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993).

Bush, George, and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998).

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Packer, George, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005).

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