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Diplomacy, Alliances and War: Anglo-American Perspectives on History and Strategy in the September 11th Era

A Joint University of Texas-Austin and King's College London Conference

Closing Remarks

Keynote Speaker: Melvyn Leffler

November 2, 2013 | 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM
The University of Texas at Austin

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[Note to Reader: When possible, speakers are identified by first name. If not, then Respondent is used for panelists and discusssants, and Audience is used for attendees.]

[Begin File: Closing Lunch Keynote.mp3]

Moderator: Okay. If I can have everyone's attention, please. We'll try that again. I hope everyone is enjoying their meals. We want you all to enjoy your meal, but we do have one of the highlights of the entire conference — which has been a fantastic conference overall. We have one of the great highlights and, in fact, something I've been looking forward to since Will and I first started talking about this a few years ago. But before I introduce our distinguished speaker, I want to make sure that I thank, on behalf of so many of us, I think, the organizers and sponsors of this conference. I can't tell you how much work I've watched Will Inboden do in this — I've watched him do it — and the staff. We're lucky at the Clements Center to have such a phenomenal staff. Maybe we should give the staff a round of applause.

I want to say how happy so many of us all across campus are to be cooperating with King's College. It's a premiere institution that many of us have had an opportunity to work with in different levels, and it's really wonderful that we have this partnership. We're really excited to continue with that, so thank you for coming from so far to work with us. So it's now my great honor and, really, a personal privilege in many ways to introduce someone who I so deeply respect, someone who has been a mentor for me for so long — for, now, almost 20 years, it's scary to say — someone who really is an inspiration for me and someone who has become a good friend and a good family friend, in fact. That's, of course, Professor Melvyn Leffler. You all know him. He is truly — these are not exaggerated statements on my part — he is truly a giant in the study of U.S. foreign policy. Ernest May's name has come up, appropriately, a lot in this conference. I think Ernest May was the precursor to Mel Leffler in many respects, or Mel Leffler is the modern Ernest May. He's a pioneer — as Ernest was — in connecting serious historical research with contemporary policy analysis, using history not to pretend to be a policymaker but to help elucidate many of the key issues in contemporary policy. All of you, I'm sure, have read a lot of his work. Many of his books are famous. I do want to mention one of his earliest books — which all of my graduate students read, and I hope all of you will read — *The Elusive Quest: America's Pursuit of European Stability and French Security, 1919 – 1933*. This is the pre-Cold War Mel Leffler. I still think it is —

Melvyn: I wasn't alive then.

[Multiple Speakers]

Moderator: It's really, I think, an enduring analysis of the intersection of political economy, foreign policy, and transatlantic issues in the interwar years. Many topics that came up today, actually — it seemed to me — resonated more with that period than they did with the Cold War. I think that might be a discussion for us to come back to. Are we moving back to a pre-Cold War world, and is there a lot to learn? I think there is — from this interwar period that Mel and so many others have written about. He, of course, is famous for his books, *A Preponderance of Power* — which my students affectionately call, *A Preponderance of Pages* — and *For the Soul of Mankind: The U.S., the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*. He has also, in recent years, co-edited a number of incredibly valuable volumes applying historical knowledge to contemporary policy issues, co-edited with Jeff Legro, *To Lead the World: American Stability after the Bush Doctrine* and — also co-edited with Jeff Legro — *In Uncertain Times: U.S. Foreign Policy after the Berlin Wall and 9/11*. In many ways, those conferences and those volumes have been a model for us, because what those conferences did is exactly what we've tried to do here — bringing together historians and other scholars with policymakers from multiple societies where the policymakers as well as the scholars write papers and interact with one another. The volumes are incredibly valuable for that.

Mel is a model of intellectual integrity. I do not know anyone else who reads documents as carefully as Mel does. He really does. Many of us find ourselves — as we're professors — spending less and less time in the archives. Somehow, Mel Leffler has avoided that problem. He brings an analytical acuity that I always try to mimic as best I can myself — a deep questioning of evidence. But most importantly — and this is the last thing I'll say, because I know I'm embarrassing him — Mel is a model of rigorous fairness, and I mean that in both sense of the term — rigorous in that there is not a part of Mel that I know that's not serious about what he does. There's a seriousness to which he brings his analysis of material. But there's a fairness. I can't think of a fairer historian, someone who tries harder to understand the actors he's studying, tries harder to empathize with them, tries harder to really see the world through their eyes — and then here's the rigor — to, then, assess them accordingly. Our job as historians is not to tell policymakers what to do. Our job as historians is to elucidate for policymakers many of the enduring issues that come from trying to understand what their predecessors tried to do and assess the outcomes of their predecessors' efforts. No one has done that better for so many parts of American history, and particularly for the Bush administration, than Mel Leffler, and I'm really proud to introduce him to you. Thank you.

Melvyn: I know I'll knock it over. Thanks very much, Jeremi, for that introduction. Those of us who know Jeremi and love him know that he's usually inclined to hyperbole, so take much of what he said with a true grain of salt. Speaking on a Saturday afternoon at noon before a football game actually makes me think back to my years at Cornell. I'm old enough to have been a student when there actually were classes on Saturday mornings, and I can remember having an economics class on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at 12:00 and what it was like to go to a 12:00 Saturday class before the 1:00 football game. I remember how focused I really was on the lecture. So I'm actually humbled to speak as a lunchtime or dinner speaker after Lord Reed and Mike Gerson. I mean, they've both given terrific talks. As Jeremi indicated, unlike both of them, I've never worked in the British government or in the U.S. government or if I did, only very, very briefly — lucky for both governments, by the way. I never worked for Bush or Tony Blair — fortunate for them, once again. I've spent much of my life as an historian working in archives, and searching

through documents, and trying to examine them very carefully. But a few years ago when I sort of made up my mind that maybe I would try to write something about the Bush administration, because the policies so engaged my attention, I realized that I would not have many documents available.

Melvyn: So I've had the very, very good fortune over the last few years, actually, of spending quite a few hours interviewing people like Paul Wolfowitz, and Eric Edelman, Scooter Libby, Steve Hadley, Richard Armitage, and many other people. I'm still hoping to talk to yet others. Those interviews have proved remarkably fruitful, but frequently after the interviews, I'm thinking, I wish I had documents that would illuminate this point or that point. So I think it's perfectly fitting at the end of a conference on history and strategy to say something that is really important for all of us historians, and that is that if we're really going to understand this period of history, we need to get records declassified. With the opening of the Bush Library just a few months ago and with the passage of at least a five-year period of time now, I'm hoping that some of the people here who really do have some influence will try to push forward the declassification process here in America. Those of us who've been reading the testimony of Chilcot Committee Inquiry in England know that they've done a pretty good job interviewing many top policymakers and. actually, on the website disseminating documents from virtually every agency of the UK government. But we have nothing comparable to that in the United States. Fortunately, Dough Feith, when he published his book, he put some documents up on the website. That's enormously beneficial to us. Don Rumsfeld did a little bit of that as well, but we really do not have the materials that are necessary to examine this period of time with any degree of objectivity.

I've been trying to tackle this subject for the last two, or three, or four years, and I've written a number of articles on this. I thought, rather than try to synthesize the very good talks that we've heard for the last day and a half, I would take my time today to talk about the decision to go to war in Iraq. Why did the unites states and the United Kingdom actually go to war in March 2003? This question, obviously, continues to attract a huge amount of journalistic and scholarly attention, much of it very critical, as you know. The critics of the decision focus on hubris, and power, and politics, and personality, ideology, greed in the form of oil, and secrecy. The critics focus on the influence of a small group of neocons, who, they claim, wanted to go to war long before 9/11. On the other hand, the defenders of the decision to attack Iraq — the defenders — including many top officials in the Bush administration who have written their memoirs, they stress their perception of threat, their diminished tolerance of risk after 9/11, their reliance on faulty intelligence, their exasperation with Saddam Hussein's defiance, and their hopes to effectuate salutary regime change in Baghdad, and bring about a democratic transformation of the Middle East.

I think there are three key variables that explain the decision for war: fear, opportunity, and power. I'd like to take the short amount of time that I have today to discuss how historical sensibilities, memories, and experiences shaped two of these factors — that is, fear and power. In my view, most critics of the decision woefully neglect threat perception. Most defenders of the decision elide acknowledgement of their sense of power. In short, fear and power shaped the decision for war. The historical sensibilities, memories, and experiences of the decision-makers influenced the threat perception and their confidence in their capacity to effectuate meaningful change. Now, much of the debate about the decision to war actually revolves around the question of whether officials should have believed that Saddam Hussein was contained or not contained,

whether he should have been perceived as a dangerous threat or not. Critics say Iraq was contained and weak. There was no reason, therefore, to go to war. These critics are not only lefty-liberals like Michael Isikoff, and influential journalists like Peter Bergen, analysts like Seth Jones, prominent scholars like John Mearsheimer, but also former policymakers like Richard Clark and Paul Pillar, Richard Haass and General Hugh Shelton.

Melvyn: In contrast, most top policymakers in both Washington and London — including Blair, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, President Bush, Vice President Cheney, National Security Advisor Condi Rice, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. All these people insist that containment was faltering. So was containment faltering? Actually, I think there can be little dispute about this. Containment was faltering. The testimonies of Blair, Straw, and Geoff Hoon before the Chilcot inquiry clarify the reasons why top officials in London and Washington thought containment was floundering. Sanctions were eroding. Turkey and Syria were conspiring with Saddam to smuggle and sell oil. The French and the Russians did not want to sustain sanctions. The Arab [unintelligible 0:19:00] was assailing the United States and Britain for the heartless suffering of millions of Iraqi children. The Iraqis themselves were modernizing their air defenses and becoming more determined to interfere with the no-fly zones. Actually, I don't think the critics of the war much disagree with the above. Critics, however, question whether in the aftermath of 9/11 the erosion of sanctions meant the revival of a dangerous Iraqi threat. That's the key question. Basically, critics do not think that Saddam constituted a danger, even if sanctions were eroding. They point out, as did some military and intelligence analysts at the time, that Saddam's military capabilities were vastly diminished compared to 1990. Nobody really thought he possessed nuclear weapons, that his stockpile of bio and chemical weapons — if they existed at all — were small, that his links to Al-Qaeda were trifling, and that is responsibility for 9/11 was nonexistent.

What's even more interesting, I think, is that most defenders of the war would not dispute the claims of these critics — certainly not the British officials who supported the war. Among the U.S. proponents for war, few contested that Saddam's strength was much diminished compared to his capabilities at the onset of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Now, some officials, like Dick Cheney, and Doug Wolfowitz, Doug Feith, and Scooter Libby spent considerable time trying to establish links between some of the perpetrators of 9/11 and Iraqi officials and trying to make a case that Saddam was seeking to acquire fissile materials or aluminum tubes. Yet, much of these efforts were designed to build a public case and to must the evidence to confirm preexisting beliefs. In other words, their fears, much like the concerns of top British officials, were not based on newly-acquired information but on long-standing assumptions about Saddam's intentions. To say the above, in my own opinion, is not really to say anything provocative. One of the most common explanations of the war is not that the threat changed after 9/11. What changed was the tolerance for risk and the perception of threat.

Don Rumsfeld stated this more succinctly and bluntly than anyone. Quote, "The coalition did not act in Iraq because we had discovered dramatic new evidence of Iraq's pursuit of mass murder. We acted," said Rumsfeld, "because we saw the existing evidence in a new light through the prism of our experience on September 11th." The truth of the matter is that a vast amount of the writing on the war that dwells on intelligence, the alleged manipulation of intelligence, and the distorted presentation of the intelligence misses a critical point in my opinion. New intelligence about Saddam's capabilities — although sometimes alarming — was not critical to the decision-making process. Before 9/11 and

after 9/11 there was little doubt that Saddam possessed some chemical and biological weapons and that he had been trying to acquire or develop nuclear weapons. The great fear was that he would hand off biological or chemical weapons to other terrorists. The great fear was that he would erode the sanctions regime and begin anew his effort to develop nuclear weapons. If he did so, U.S. officials worried that he would be able to blackmail the United States or stymie America's willingness to take actions Washington deemed necessary to protect its own interests or those of its allies.

Melvyn: These fears sprung not from new intelligence about Saddam's capabilities, but from deep-seated suspicions about his intentions. Saddam was not an imminent danger. He was a looming danger. Tony Blair felt this way, and so did President Bush. After 9/11, these anxieties about his intentions assumed a portentous meaning. Former Prime Minister Blair stated this succinctly to the Chilcot Inquiry. "The calculus of risk," Blair emphasized, "changed after 9/11. Terrorists now might have the capacity, and they certainly seem to have the will to kill tens of thousands of people." Although there was no evidence of Iraqi links to Al-Qaeda, stressed Jack Straw, quote, "There was evidence that Saddam was ready to sponsor terrorism when he thought it was appropriate," end quote. This is the same point that Condi Rice stressed in her own memoir. "It was not," she said, "a connection between Saddam and September 11th, but rather a potential link between Iraq's WMD and terrorism going forward.

Historical memory and experience shaped the assessments of Saddam's intentions and the perception of threat, not ongoing intelligence. We had assumptions, quote, "Based on history," explained Jonathan Powell, Blair's Chief of Staff. Although British officials were not inclined to rank Iraq as a greater threat than Iran, North Korea, or Libya, they accepted the U.S. priority. Quote, "If you wanted to start somewhere on WMD," said Tony Blair, quote, "You started with the person who had used them and who was in breach of UN resolutions," end quote. In other words, Saddam's historical record shaped perceptions and assessments. "His pattern of recklessness," Condi Rice insisted, "could not be dismissed. We'd failed to connect the dots on September 11," she said, "when coupling Saddam's proclivity towards calculation. With his past support of terrorist activity, it was not unreasonable," said Rice, "to suspect that he might supply extremists with a weapon that could be detonated in an American city." This is exactly what Sir John Scarlett, the chairman of Britain's Joint Intelligence Committee, had in mind when he explained that it was Saddam's, quote, "strategic intent," end quote, that commanded his own attention. Saddam's strategic intent was extrapolated from a reading of history and an accumulation of experience. "I took Iraq seriously," said Jack Straw, "because Iraq had invaded two neighbors, launched missile attacks on five neighbors, and used chemical weapons on its own population. Saddam had defied UN resolutions," said Straw, "and lied for more than a decade. Saddam was showing few signs of changing even after he accepted a new round of inspections and was facing military coercion."

Straw's colleagues felt similarly. "Saddam already had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and against the Iranians," Geoff Hoon told the Chilcot inquiry. So, quote, "There was little doubt that having got that capability, Saddam was capable of using it," end quote. David Manning stressed the same point. "Saddam," Manning said, "had a quote, 'track record,' and you could not avoid the sense that he was very dangerous," end quote. "Even if the intelligence was patchy," stressed Richard Dearlove, the head of the SIS, "there was no reason to doubt the intelligence. Over time," Dearlove emphasized, "Saddam had complied an extraordinary record of misjudgment and miscalculation

constantly behaving in ways that were provocative and belligerent," end quote. "After 9/11," explained Michael Laurie, the Director General of Britain's intelligence collection, "after 9/11," he said, "there was the risk of non-state actors replicating bin Laden's action. Saddam Hussein was someone," said Laurie, "who had the intention of doing it and proved in the past that he would be prepared to do it. So it seemed to me," said Laurie, "entirely reasonable to put a stop to it," end quote. Although no weapons of mass destruction were subsequently found, Laurie still thought that the decision to intervene militarily, quote, "was entirely reasonable," end quote, even though he conceded that intelligence did not drive that decision.

Melvyn: American officials concurred. According to Doug Feith, Saddam's record made it, quote, "impossible to dismiss the danger as theoretical or remote," end quote. Saddam had started wars, brutalized his own people, given aid to terrorists, violated the treaty provisions, pursued WMD, and used WMD on foreign enemies. You did not need any secret intelligence to know these matters. As understood by Anglo-American officials, you needed only to know the rudiments of recent history. Now, critical to the understanding — to the Anglo-American understanding of recent history was the nature of Saddam's regime. Quote, "My assessment of the security threat," said Tony Blair, "was intimately connected with the nature of the regime. We were dealing," Blair's words, "with a profoundly wicked and, I would say, almost psychopathic man. His two sons," said Blair — "Saddam's sons," said Blair, "seemed even worse. Such a regime," Blair insisted, "could not be allowed to develop weapons of mass destruction." Since such regimes, experience taught, responded only to military pressure, coercive diplomacy had to be employed. "Diplomacy was not going to work," said Jack Straw, "unless Saddam realized that arms would be employed if diplomacy failed." That was history's lesson according to Straw.

When signs started to appear in early 2003 that perhaps Saddam did not have WMD, history, too, provided a rationale for dismissing such evidence. After talking to ElBaradei, Rice reported to President Bush that there seemed mounting evidence that Saddam had not reconstituted the nuclear program. The President shrugged off such findings, and his National Security Advisor did not press the matter. Why? They remembered that the IAEA had underestimated Saddam's nuclear program in 1991, and they believed that analysts were likely to be repeating that same mistake again. Of course, they might have waited for the inspectors to assemble more information, as Hans Blix, ElBaradei, the French, the Germans, the Russians, and many other critics argued at the time. They might have waited, but American officials would not postpone military action any longer. The troops had gathered, and U.S. credibility was at stake. Rice felt that Saddam was, quote, "playing with the inspectors much as Saddam had done for much of the 1990s." If the United States did not act, Bush remembered, quote, "We would shatter our own credibility and embolden him," end quote.

Donald Rumsfeld in particular felt the United States needed to stay on the offensive. Weakness, Rumsfeld loved to say, was, quote, "provocative." According to Rumsfeld, history taught, quote, "that America's risk aversion in prior years had emboldened terrorists and rogue regimes worldwide," end quote. So fear inspired a desire to act, and Bush, Rumsfeld, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Rice, and their associates also felt that the United States had the power to effectuate desirable change. History, they believed, proved that the United States had the power to spread American ideas and values, topple Saddam, and remake the Middle East. They were emboldened by the very quick, unanticipated, and oft-

criticized military success they had just experienced in Afghanistan. Experience showed that their instincts were wise. "I was overjoyed by the scenes of liberation," Bush wrote in his book. Apparent victory — apparent victory — confirmed the sense of rectitude and the desire to move forward. Ending Taliban rule was just the opening shot, Rumsfeld insisted, quote, "To keep the pressure on, we would need to continue to pursue the terrorists wherever they took refuge and isolate the regimes that harbored them and could give them weapons of mass destruction."

Melvyn: The United States alone had the capabilities, not just to isolate the regimes, but to transform them. Power infused a willingness to confront threats — not essential threats, but looming threats. The confidence of American policymakers was infused by their sense of America's exceptional history, by their belief in the universal appeal of freedom, by America's record in defeating the Axis in World War II, and by the Truman administration's success in constructing democracy in former enemy countries like Germany and Japan. The decisive experience in the professional lives of almost all of the Bush advisers was the U.S. victory over the forces of Soviet-led world communism. They believed that strength, toughness, determination, and conviction were the values that shaped history. Moral clarity was imperative. "Now, as then," exclaimed President Bush, "our enemies are, quote, 'totalitarians.'" "Defeating terrorism," insisted Rumsfeld, "was the logical sequel to vanquishing fascism and communism." "The toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad," Bush subsequently exclaimed, "will be recorded alongside the fall of the Berlin wall as one of the great moments in the history of liberty," said Bush.

Lessons extrapolated from the past, historical tropes, the mystic chords of memory usually influence the assessment of the enemy's intentions, the perception of threat, and the capacity to use force to effectuate salutary change. These lessons, reinforced by ideological zeal, are often treated as hubris by the critics of the administration. Are they right? We now know a lot more about Saddam Hussein and his regime than did Blair, Bush, and their advisers in 2003. We know that Saddam did not possess weapons of mass destruction at that time. We know that he wanted to feign possession in order to deter his archenemy, Iran, in order to intimidate foes at home, and in order to neutralize Israel's nuclear arsenal. Analysts and officials largely overlooked these considerations and mistakenly believed at the time that Saddam's chicanery concealed, not only his evil intent, but also his existing capabilities. But did they misjudge Saddam's strategic intent? I think the evidence increasingly suggests otherwise. Mostly, I think they got his strategic intent right. Their assessments based on Saddam's history captured his intent. The inspectors who went back after the war and found no weapons of mass destruction, nevertheless, found ominous signs of a reckless regime in the hands of a ruthless leader whose intentions could never be trusted.

David Kay, who initially led the post-war search for WMD, acknowledged, quote, "What we learned during the inspection made Iraq a more dangerous place, potentially, then, in fact, we thought it was even before the war," end quote. Like Kay, Charlie Duelfer, who concluded the investigation of Iraq's WMD, testified that Saddam complied with disarmament restrictions only as a tactic. His strategy was to reconstitute the programs, perhaps in different configurations, as soon as circumstances would allow. Saddam was already using the revenues he illegally aggregated from violating the terms of the Oil for Food program to vastly increase his conventional capabilities. The Duelfer Report found, for example, that between 1996 and 2002 Iraq's overall military industrial commission budget increased forty-fold. Saddam's own records, some of which we now possess,

indicated that he believed he was accruing strength and that none of his opponents — including the united states — possessed the ruthlessness, competence, or ability to thwart his own aims over the long run. Now, although Duelfer also has written that American officials partly misconstrued Saddam's long-term aims, Duelfer nonetheless stresses that Saddam was proof, quote, "that darkness exists," end quote. Other researches into Saddam's records put an even greater stress on Saddam's long-term desire to use an Iraqi nuclear deterrent to, quote, "free him to initiate violent destabilizing policies toward Israel," end quote.

Melvyn: Nor were American and British officials wrong to worry about Saddam's links to terrorists. Yes, he did not have any connection to 9/11, and he did not have any operational ties with Al-Qaeda as far as we know. But Saddam did provide safe haven, training, and support to some Al-Qaeda operatives. By the end of 2002, the U.S. intelligence community was saying that Iraq not only planned and sponsored international terrorism in the preceding year but that it had — and I'm quoting — "laid the groundwork for possible attacks against civil and military targets in the united states and Western countries."

What's really significant is that U.S. suspicions and British fears about Iraq's links to terrorists, if not to Al-Qaeda, seemed to be amply borne out by the capture Iraqi documents. The editors of these captured Iraqi documents who've been translating and publishing them seem to be, in my opinion, scrupulously careful in their claims. They state that there is no smoking gun linking Saddam to Al-Qaeda and nothing at all linking him to 9/11. But their report on Iraq and terrorism does say the following. First, from 1991 to 2003, Saddam regarded the inspiration, sponsorship, direction, and execution of acts of terrorism as an element of state power. Two, after the '91 Gulf War, pursuing regional domination motivated Saddam and his regime to increase their cooperation with and their attempts to manipulate Islamic fundamentalists and related terrorist organizations. They were not always successful, but there were many such attempts. Third, captured documents reveal that the regime was willing, quote, "to co-opt or support organizations it knew to be part of Al-Qaeda as long as the organization's near-term goals supported Saddam's long-term vision," end quote.

Captured Iraqi documents show that Iraqi terrorist acts took place in London, Iran, the Kurdish areas of Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Captured documents confirm that Iraqi intelligence service collaborated and interacted with the Abu Nidal organization, Hamas, the PLF, the Afghani Islamic Party, and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Lastly, capture documents, in the words of the editors, reveal that Saddam's regime regarded suicide missions as, quote, "routine state activity," end quote. U.S. and British suspicions and worries about Saddam's intentions inferred — not so much from existing intelligence as from a reading of history and an observation of his actions over a long period of time — seemed to be borne out. He was a looming threat if not an imminent one — not an existential threat, but a threat nonetheless.

But although history seems to have offered much insight into his intentions, it seems to have offered less insight into our capacity to use power to effectuate positive change. From the information we now have, it seems clear that British officials often doubted the ability of the United States to effectuate an orderly regime change. British officials stressed that disarming Iraq was the only justification for going to war, not regime change. British officials warned of inadequate preparation. U.S. officials seemed to waver between regime change and effective inspections and tended often to conflate the two and assign

priority to the former. Evidence suggests that they did prepare for regime change, but inadequately.

Melvyn: State Department officials and intelligence analysts did warn about the possible deleterious consequences of military action. Their warnings were largely unheeded. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld did submit a list of "horribles" to his NSC colleagues, but these were never explored with any degree of rigor. In his memoir, for example, Dov Zakheim, who was then the comptroller of the Pentagon, illustrates the appalling inadequacy of budgetary planning for Iraq. Some proponents of the war thought that Iraqis would jubilantly embrace democracy, and they hoped that a democratic transformation of the Middle East would ensue. Other proponents did not care much about what would happen in Iraq after Saddam was removed and his alleged weapons of mass destruction were eliminated, much as they cared initially — rather little — about post-Taliban Afghanistan. Almost all accounts of the decision to war, even those by the very highest policymakers, illuminate the dysfunctional and inadequate planning for this so-called Phase Four Post-Hostilities period. The absence of adequate planning, abbreviated preparations, scant funding, and insufficient troop numbers were a product of a misplaced faith in American power and the attractiveness of American ideals and values in an Islamic environment already deeply mistrustful of American policy. A belief in the benign history of American exceptionalism and of America power led to tragedy. It contributed to the failure of an enterprise that had legitimate motivations.

Fear and power motivated the decision for war and led to its shocking aftermath. Fear and power were shaped by historical sensibilities, memories, personal experiences, and ideological predilections. A great sense of threat after 9/11 catalyzed a misplaced application of power, because officials believed that a unique opportunity existed to take action to remove a truly dreadful regime. They saw Saddam as a looming threat, not a current threat. He would be more dangerous in the future, so why not remove him now in the present when there was a unique opportunity to do so? Nobody stated this more explicitly than did Tony Blair himself to the Chilcot Committee. "If the United States and the United Kingdom had not acted when they did," Blair explained, "they might likely have lost their nerve to do so in the future. If Saddam had been left in power," Blair continued, "he would have had to have been dealt with eventually and in much tougher circumstances when he would have been even more dangerous and when public opinion would have been even less receptive to military action." He was a, quote, "monster," end quote, insisted Blair, "and it was best to remove him when circumstances were permissive."

This was precisely the thinking amongst the high-ranking proponents of war in the Vice President's office, in the office of the Secretary of Defense, and in the White House. Saddam's defiance and his hatred of America made it imperative to do so. A unique opportunity existed to achieve American desires and make America safer. A sense of American power and the rectitudes of its values infused such thinking. A sense of history shaped both the threat perception and the willingness to apply power. The results were tragic, albeit very understandable. Thank you.

[Multiple Speakers]

Moderator: Okay. So normally we'd have ample time for Q&A, but Professor Leffler and a number of our other guests actually do have a plan to catch, so I think what we'll do is just have to re-

adjourn a year from now, and [inaudible 0:50:41] a lot of this anyway. What a thoughtful and very stimulating way to close our proceedings. Mindful of all the time, I won't have any lengthy closing remarks, but, please, do join me in applause for Cathy, Jaclyn, Rachel, and Haviland who made all this happen.

[Pause]

Moderator: Thanks also to our esteemed new partners from King's College London War Studies. We look forward to doing a lot more with you in the future. Thanks to everyone for coming, and hook 'em. Again, those going to the game, we're meeting right down there at 1:45 to walk over.

Melvyn: I have about five minutes if you want to come up and [inaudible 0:51:22].

[Multiple Speakers]

[End File. Recorded Time = 53:33 = 54 minutes]