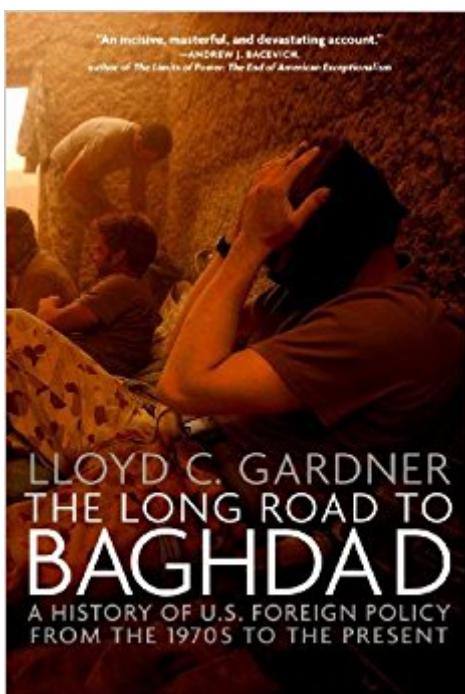


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The Long Road To Baghdad: A History Of U.S. Foreign Policy From The 1970s To The Present



Synopsis

A sweeping and authoritative narrative, *The Long Road to Baghdad* places the Iraq War in the context of U.S. foreign policy since Vietnam, casting the conflict as a chapter in a much broader story of American diplomatic and military moves in the region. Diplomatic historian Lloyd Gardner explains the Iraq War as the necessary outcome of a half-century of doomed U.S. policies. *The Long Road to Baghdad* is essential reading, with sobering implications for a positive resolution of the present quagmire.

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Customer Reviews

Rutgers historian Gardner (*Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam*) makes a convincing case for the parallel between the Vietnam and Iraq wars. The cold war American policy of containment, rather than military force, to discourage Soviet aggression seemed cowardly to early neoconservatives convinced that America should actively seek to defeat communism and replace it with free-market democracy. Gardner names Walt Rostow, Lyndon Johnson's national security adviser, as father of this theory of creative destruction, which he believed justified America's war against Communist forces in Vietnam. Rostow's eloquent exhortations to persist in a failing war foreshadow those of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on staying the course in Iraq. When the U.S.S.R. collapsed, neocons turned to the Middle East, although Iran was initially the major villain. The first President Bush refused to occupy Iraq after the Gulf War, but Gardner points out that by demonizing Saddam Hussein as a Hitlerian monster secretly building nuclear weapons, he provided justification for the second President Bush's 2003 invasion. This well-argued study gives a sharp

historical and intellectual framework for understanding the current Iraq war. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Lloyd C. Gardner is Research Professor of History at Rutgers University and the author and editor of more than a dozen books, including *Three Kings and Iraq* and *the Lessons of Vietnam* both from The New Press. He lives in Newtown, Pennsylvania

The Long Road to Baghdad: A History of U.S. Foreign Policy from the 1970s to the Present found this book by Lloyd Gardner a fascinating history of continuing U.S. deceit. Both Bush administrations dealt in appalling lies in order to "sell" the American public on the two Iraq wars. H.W. Bush hardly had to "sell" the first Iraq war. The Kuwait invasion by Saddam was an obvious reason. Yet, he still lied about the facts. His son, obviously led by Rumsfeld and Cheney, created a disaster. The facts, as transcribed by Gardner, are an embarrassment to the people of this nation.

Provides the necessary continuity to see how the post WWII generation of baby boomers simply continued GI generation Cold War politics in their own era. There was no revolution in the 60s, just some failed movements. Over the past 30 years, baby boomers have proven they were nothing more than a noise in the 60s, and when given the opportunity to change the world, they reverted to their parent's worldview and agenda. If you have ever wondered how the US got to where it is in the 2000s, this is required reading. Gardner, himself, is a history writing treasure, and an infinite joy to read. Not your average historical boredom here. Gardner deftly creates a 40 year window of perception for anyone interested in the "War On Terror" as it has been described in traditional journalistic outlets. Buy it new, but it used, but buy it and read it for an insightful take on today's political scene.

Lloyd Gardner, Charles Beard Professor of history at Rutgers, presents a critical view of American foreign policy. Though he has a point of view, he relies upon the evidence, which often consists of what the administration officials said themselves. Gardner examines how our own actions created greater problems in Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. He contends that both Gulf Wars were years in the making. One of the lesser remembered events was the lead-up to the first Gulf War. Shortly before Saddam Hussein (SH) invaded Kuwait, Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs, told Gen. Schwarzkopf, "I doubt we'd go to war over Kuwait." Bush didn't share that view.

He won UN resolutions condemning the invasion and demanding an Iraqi withdrawal. A key step was securing King Fahd's consent to station hundreds of thousands of troops in Saudi Arabia to launch the attack. Schwarzkopf & Secretary of Defense Cheney told Fahd that SH intended to invade Saudi next, though their evidence was later doubted. Powell didn't share that view of Saddam's intentions, however, and he believed overthrowing the Iraqi dictator would inevitably cause huge disruptions in the Middle East. A 15-year old girl, who said she couldn't give her last name for fear of reprisal, told the media how Iraqi troops burst into a Kuwaiti hospital where she had been a volunteer and thrown babies out of incubators. She was actually the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the US who had not been in Kuwait to witness any alleged atrocities. The truth about this "eyewitness" wasn't revealed until after Bush repeatedly invoked the atrocity in his buildup to war and the war had commenced. Bush began comparing "Sad-dam the invader" to Hitler. Bush warned about Saddam's nuclear weapons program (Cheney said SH would have a nuke within a year) as a reason for military action. The WMD issue was made despite the fact that a prewar decision had been made not to invade Iraq so SH could be disarmed. The decision to end the 100-hour ground war before invading Iraq came back to haunt Bush. One reason is because it permitted the demonized dictator to stay in power with his purported WMDs. Bush and Cheney defended that decision by painting a foreboding picture of what chaos occupation of Iraq would entail. "I do not want one single soldier or airman shoved into a civil war in Iraq that's been going on for ages," Bush said. The repercussions of Gulf War I included the following: Osama bin Laden objected to King Fahd's decision to permit US troops on Saudi soil because it violated the Prophet's injunction that no nonbeliever army be allowed to sully the sacred land. After the war, US troops continued to be deployed in Saudi Arabia and in neighboring Gulf states. A series of bombing attacks on our troops ensued. The 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center was tied to Osama, though Neo-cons tried to pin blame on Saddam. The neo-con book, *Study of Revenge: SH's Unfinished War Against America* (2000, Amer Enterprise Institute), continued blaming SH for the WTC attack. Paul Wolfowitz, Assistant Secretary of Defense under Bush 43, said after Gulf War II that the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia for the last 12 years "has been a source of enormous difficulty for a friendly government. It's been a huge recruiting tool for al Qaeda." The mendacity and blunders in the US lead-up to Gulf War II is also worth reviewing: In Bush's 2002 state of the union speech, he denounced the "axis of evil" -- Iraq, Iran, N. Korea. Since the speech came so soon after 9/11, it shifted the nation's attention from terrorist groups to terrorist nations. Thus began

the selling of Gulf War II as an integral component of a successful war on terror. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld assumed SH was involved in 9/11 despite the lack of evidence. Vice President Cheney pushed an alleged connection between anthrax mail and Iraq -- another bogus tie. Bush encouraged the public to suspect an Iraqi tie to the anthrax letters in his axis of evil speech by noting that SH "had plotted to develop anthrax." Cheney claimed an Iraq - al Qaeda connection based upon an April 2001 meeting in Prague between Mo Atta and an Iraqi intelligence agent -- except Atta had been in the USA at the time! In Sept. 2002, Rumsfeld claimed to have "bulletproof" evidence of Iraq's links to al-Qaeda that was "exactly accurate." NSA Condi Rice and other administration hawks kept tying 9/11 to SH's WMD. By July 2002, Britain's intelligence chief concluded that the decision for war had already been made: "Bush wanted to remove Sad-dam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism & WMD. But the intelligence & facts were being fixed around the policy...There was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action."* Cheney's August 26, 2002 VFW speech tied the purported Iraqi threat to terrorism and made two predictions: Americans will be greeted as liberators by Iraqis, and "Our ability to advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process will be enhanced."* Congress approved a resolution authorizing force on October 2, 2002. One justifying clause of that resolution is the claim of an Iraq-al Qaeda link, without offering any evidence of same. Among the intelligence the administration gave Congress was the bogus Niger uranium "report."* Bush speech on Oct. 7, 2002: (After invoking 9/11) "Knowing these realities, America must not ignore the threat gathering against us. Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof -- the smoking gun -- that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud."* Powell's UN speech used the claim that Iraq had mobile weapons labs, a story fabricated by "Curveball," an Iraqi exile. In the end no UN resolution was brought to a vote after Hans Blix, the head UN inspector, told the Security Council that Iraq had been more forthcoming, no WMDs were discovered, and more time was needed to complete inspections.* Bush told his ally Blair that he envisioned a smooth transition to a new Iraqi government. Bush told Blair it was "unlikely there would be internecine warfare between the different religious and ethnic groups," and Blair agreed.* Paul Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld's Deputy Secretary of Defense, told Congress that it would not take a large force to secure the peace, (contrary to Army Chief of Staff Gen Shinseki's estimate of 300K), and no history of ethnic strife meant a rapid recovery.* Rumsfeld in early 2003: "The burden of proof is not on the US or the UN to prove that Iraq has these weapons. We know they do."* In Vietnam and in Iraq, "the US had truly succeeded the old colonial powers of Britain and France, despite American insistence that its vision and purpose was different."

Our self-proclaimed mission in Iraq sounded a lot like the civilizing mission claimed by the European colonialists. There is much more in this well written book, and readers will better understand what went wrong in Iraq. # # #

Professor Lloyd Gardner's account of the process leading to the war in Iraq is the only one I've read that situates the Iraq War in the ongoing struggle within U.S. foreign policy circles to accommodate the Vietnam debacle to the national narrative of ongoing progress. [Disclosure: I studied with Professor Gardner about 20 years ago.] That effort remains unresolved, partly because the immediate post-Vietnam response to that defeat was to change the subject or otherwise refuse to engage the issue in a context inhibited by the ongoing Cold War. Thus Jimmy Carter sought to reorient American foreign policy in the service of morality in his Notre Dame speech, but met with conservative resentment at home of his discussion of foreign policy failures while earning suspicion from the Kremlin. Nor did Walt Rostow's *ex post facto* claim that our defeat in Vietnam was due to a lack of will open the way to meaningful introspection. Indeed, a deeply held popular belief in the inevitability of American progress led to a widespread refusal to admit that we'd lost the war in Vietnam at all. That refusal was the source of the claims (true, but misleading) that our soldiers had never lost a battle on the ground in Vietnam, as well as the enduring controversy over POWs-MIAs, which continued until diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored in 1995. The neoconservative approach to foreign policy was predicated on a Jacobian division of foreign policy thought into categories marked Before and After Reagan. It was based on a blind faith in the myth of national progress and an implicit rejection of the idea that anything other than deficiencies in moral character could account for any failure of the U.S. to achieve its aims. Consistent with a long-running theme among American conservatives, the neocons rejected diplomacy as a sign of weakness and an opening for threats to American interests. The preferred method of attaining U.S. objectives was force. Faced with this sort of thinking, one could agree, acquiesce or be damned as a weakling and traitor. Such a frame of reference made ruthlessness leading to the falsification of evidence for war, the approval of torture and the outing of Valerie Plame inevitable. It has also led, as Gardner points out, to the mutation of the American military into something considerably more privatized, intrusive and isolated from the country it was created to protect. Similarly, the undermining of this country's constitution, the use of facilities outside the United States to detain people without accountability, reliance on now unlimited domestic wiretapping, the use by George W. Bush of signing statements to declare his refusal to obey the laws he signed, all combine to present unprecedented challenges to the oldest representative democracy on this planet. Whether

we can reclaim our country before it slips out of our hands altogether depends entirely on our willingness to confront the things that have been done in our name--in Iraq as well as in Vietnam, and at every stop in between. In addition to discussion of the ideologies involved and the implications of the war for our society, I really appreciated Professor Gardner's extensive discussion of SOCOM, which I'd not seen before anywhere. I would have liked the writing in the introduction to be a bit less elliptical in the introduction, but that is a minor quibble. Overall, Lloyd Gardner's *The Long Road to Baghdad* is a valuable addition to the literature on this most misbegotten of military adventures and is essential to our understanding of modern U.S. foreign policy.

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