

**The Securitization of a Despot: How the Bush Administration
securitized Saddam Hussein**

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ABSTRACT:

This paper applies securitization theory to the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq and the removal of its president, Saddam Hussein. First, it examines securitization theory in the field of international relations, and then applies the components of securitization to the Bush administration's actions leading up to the war in Iraq and in particular the capture of Saddam Hussein. Those three main components are the securitization actor, a securitization act (speech act), and the audience. In our case study, the Bush administration is considered the actor; the speeches delivered by President Bush and his administration regarding Saddam Hussein and his potential threat level to the US form the speech act and the audience is the American public, which ultimately had to accept the speech acts in order for the securitization to occur. The acts were aided by US media outlets, such as the *New York Times* and created headlines that reflected the view of the US government, which in turn impacted the audience in order to try to garner support. The speech acts given by the Bush administration and news stories created by the *New York Times* were powerful enough that securitization was able to occur and was accepted by the audience even though the Bush administration lacked evidence that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.

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INTRODUCTION

Governments try to protect their citizens against threats or individuals they feel could cause harm to either their state or the international community writ large. They devote large amounts of time and resources to keep their citizens safe and protected. However, in order for governments to label issues or individuals as security threats, they must convince the public of the potential threat. This can be achieved, for example, through the use of the media. The media, amplified by modern technology, is all around us and influences our views a great deal. Newspapers, radios, the internet, social media outlets, and TV stations among others have become major parts of our daily lives.

As numerous studies have shown, well-structured arguments on TV can instantly shift an individual's view on a specific policy issues or policy decisions more generally. It is therefore important for these media outlets to present both sides of any major argument or controversial decision as objectively as possible to the public for them to make an informed decision on those issues. "Every news article, television, and internet report should be balanced, Journalists should report as if they were Independents" (Rosenblum, 2012, pg. 781).

In contrast, a biased view will not allow the public to hear the other side of the story, and they are likely to form opinions to support the story they consume via their preferred media outlets. More specifically, the public often becomes aware of major issues nationally or internationally by reading newspapers, listening to the radio, surfing the internet or watching the news on TV; if the media sources for these outlets focus only on the federal government's perspective then only partial information is being reported to

the citizen. Moreover, when media outlets base their stories solely on one source, such as information provided by the government in power, there is a risk that reporting is being presented in a biased way and one that may be most favourable for the government of the day.

This was essentially the case in 2003, when the US government chose to go to war with Iraq based on (faulty) US intelligence information that the regime of Saddam Hussein was operating a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) program and publically showed his willingness to use such weapons against the United States. Thus, the US government felt that they needed to eliminate Saddam Hussein by going to war in Iraq. While doing so, it appeared that the media outlets in the US largely adopted the US government's rationale for going to war with Iraq. Indeed, as this study will show, major newspapers such as *The New York Times* based their reporting and analysis on the speeches given by senior members of the Bush administration, which claimed that Iraq with its WMD program posed a vital threat to international peace and security, and the United States in particular. That discourse started to gain momentum with 9/11.

The terrorist attacks that occurred in the US on September 11, 2001 significantly changed the world of security. "On September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States resulted in the greatest number of civilian deaths in a single day in U.S. history" (Levine, Whalen, Henker & Jamner, 2005, pg. 497). The large number of casualties ultimately put the Bush administration on notice that terrorists were looking to strike in the US. Politicians of all colours asked themselves how a country as powerful as the US could be caught so off guard to make these attacks possible. In the aftermath of 9/11, the US government appeared shocked but determined to respond to terrorists and terrorist

organizations. President Bush made it clear that these organizations would suffer the consequences for the havoc they had caused in the US. While his attention and that of his administration was clearly on capturing Osama Bin Laden and eliminating Al-Qaeda. In the President's speech on the War on Terror delivered nine days after 9/11 to the joint session of Congress, Bush outlined a detailed plan to go to war with Afghanistan and to eliminate the leader of Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden:

Tonight, the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban: Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating. These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate. (Bush, 2001).

According to government officials, the war in Afghanistan, although controversial was justified because of the threat posed to the American public by the Taliban. The question that is interesting to ask is when and how the US framed Saddam Hussein as a security threat? Interestingly enough, Saddam Hussein was mentioned just once in President Bush's war on terror speech, and that was when the President was giving an

historical example of when the US had attacked Iraq under President Clinton in December of 1998.

This paper applies securitization theory to the Bush administration's actions leading up to the war in Iraq and tries to explain how the war was made possible through the usage of speech acts and media outlets. More importantly, the paper examines how the Bush administration was able to frame Saddam Hussein as a major threat to the United States of America through speeches by senior US government officials and the media. Moreover, this study uses the insights produced by securitization theory to better understand how the Bush administration was able to securitize the public discourse on the threat posed by Saddam Hussein. President Bush believed that if Saddam Hussein did not stop Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program then he was a threat to the US, and President Bush felt that he had to do something about it in order to keep America safe. The President made this known in his State of the Union Address to the 108th Congress in Washington on January 28th, 2003 by noting that "We will consult. But let there be no misunderstanding: If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him (Bush, 2003A).

The paper consists of two parts. The first part outlines and briefly discusses the ontological and epistemological assumptions of securitization theory, and how it operates in a real world setting. The second part applies securitization theory and its elements to the case study, namely the Bush administration's discourse in the lead up to the war in Iraq in order to eliminate Saddam Hussein.

SECURITIZATION THEORY

Securitization theory, some have argued, is seen as the most sophisticated and systematic approach to the study of security practices (Barthwal-Datta, 2012, pg. 5). Securitization is defined as “the claim that something is held to pose a threat to a valued referent object that is so existential that it is legitimate to move the issue beyond the established games of normal politics to deal with it by exceptional, i.e. security, methods” (Stritzel, 2007, pg. 360). In order to securitize an issue, it must be done through the use of a securitization act. The basic components for a securitization act are the actor, the act, and the audience. Essentially, the actor is responsible for establishing an act, such as a speech act, in order to be able to convince his or her audience that the threat a person or state is presenting is a serious security threat and requires immediate attention (I will discuss the details in a separate section below). Founders of securitization theory suggest that once something is classified as a security issue, this issue becomes more important than any other issue on the political agenda and takes absolute priority (Buzan, Waever & De Wilde, 1998, pg. 24). In other words, by securitizing an issue one is changing any existing agenda setting because the issue being securitized will take up the majority of the government’s time and attention. Thus, the actor’s main priority becomes to deal with the securitized issue by creating speech acts, and focusing on portraying their message to the audience so that the audience will accept their newly elevated security issue. As Buzan, Weaver, and De Wilde note, “Security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics” (Ibid., pg. 23).

Individuals can view the concept of security differently from one another. With the end of the cold war, some people think that the concept of security has shifted from conventional military threats posed by states and their military establishments to non-military threats, such as the environment (Ibid., pg. 38). Meanwhile, others argue that even though the field of security studies has transformed over time to “better accommodate concerns for such non-military threats on the one hand, and understandings of security which prioritize the safety and well-being of individuals and communities on the other, it continues to be dominated by a focus on states as the primary security actors” (Barthwal-Datta, 2012, pg. 4).

Ultimately, securitization theory, which evolved from the Copenhagen school in the field of international relations, has three essential components. But before studying these essential components, it is important to see how the Copenhagen school conceptualizes securitization theory. The Copenhagen school’s argument is essentially that securitization involves the fabrication of a discourse that presents an important issue as a security threat, i.e. it poses an extreme and immediate danger to a particular group(s) of people in question, and which must be dealt with immediately using emergency measures (Ibid., pg.6). In other words, once there is a threat present or looming that will affect the public, a higher authority such as a government must do everything in its power in order to prevent it from occurring and causing harm to the public.

Securitization theory is known to have three essential components: first, there needs to be a securitizing actor that believes that a certain issue is a threat to one’s security. Securitizing an issue is considered an act, and the securitization actor is responsible for such an act. Actors usually arise from high standings in society, and most

usually emerge from politics, in particular, leaders of states'. As Barthwal-Datta notes, "common players in this role are political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists, and pressure groups" (2012, pg. 6). Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde go even further and argue that the securitizing actor requires social capital and should be in a position of authority (1998, pg. 33). This is not to say that a lower level individual cannot be a securitizing actor, but it is considered much harder to accomplish. Williams, however, puts it into more relative terms and notes that, "Not all claims are socially effective, and not all actors are in equally powerful positions to make them" (2003, pg. 514). Securitizing actors also tend to have "a sufficient degree of social capital-credibility-with the audience" (Hughes, 2007, pg. 86) meaning that most actors tend to be in a position of power. Presidents and Prime Ministers of certain states would be considered individuals with a high degree of social capital and are generally expected to have credibility with their audience (e.g. their electorate). Moreover, securitizing actors are considered preachers to the public. They preach that something, someone, or everything is in great danger and actions need to be taken sooner rather than later in order to securitize the threat and prevent such danger from occurring.

The second component of the securitization theory is that the actor needs to use some sort of act or otherwise referred to as a securitizing move in order to replay his or her message to the audience. Historically it has been a speech act, which is used to prove that there is an existing security threat and there is a need to be protected. The speech act usually presents a potential threat to society by using the language of security. The intention is to gain the audience's support that something poses an existential threat to a referent object using the language of security (Barthwal-Datta, 2012, pg. 6). Speech acts

today can be promoted through the use of media – such as newspaper headlines and articles, radio shows or through televised speeches that are given by the actor. Indeed, as McDonald reminds us, speech acts are essential for securitization theory because speech acts are defined as “securitizing moves that became securitizations through audience consent” (McDonald, 2008, pg. 566).

More specifically, the Copenhagen school holds that regular issues become security issues through the power of language: “It is language that positions specific actors or issues as existentially threatening to a particular political community, thus enabling securitization” (Ibid., pg. 568). Speeches delivered by actors are worded very strategically when trying to initiate a securitization: “It is important to note that the security speech act is not defined by uttering the word security. What is essential is the designation of an existential threat requiring emergency action or special measures and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience” (Buzan, Waever & De Wilde, 1998, pg. 27). The ultimate goal is to make something or someone seem as they were a major threat to the audience, so that the audience takes your side.

The third component of securitization theory focuses on the main aspect of the theory, that being the audience. In order for an act to be considered a success, the audience must accept the act. According to the assumptions of the Copenhagen School, “Successful securitization is not decided by the securitizer but by the audience of the security speech act: Does the audience accept that something is an existential threat to a shared value? Thus security ultimately rests neither with the objects nor with the subjects but among the subjects” (Ibid., pg. 31). The actor requires the support of the audience in order to accomplish his or her securitization “The security act is negotiated between

securitizer and audience – that is, internally within the unit – but thereby the securitizing agent can obtain permission to override rules that would otherwise bind it” (Ibid., pg. 26). The audience can be the general public of a country or other states if the threat is considered international.

The theory allows for a particular issue to be transformed into one that is believed to be a potential cause of harm to one’s physical security. “Once an issue is accepted as a security issue, political actors are able to justify the extreme actions intended to stop it eventuating” (Hughes, 2007, pg. 87). The majority of the audience will begin to accept many if not all actions taken by the actor because they understand the actor is trying to protect them. However, “The security act is negotiated between the securitizer and the audience, and if the audience accepts the argument being made, the securitizing agent can obtain permission to override rules that would otherwise bind it” (Barthwal-Datta, 2012, pg. 8). Once an actor has a certain effect on the audience, and the audience accepts that the security threat requires the actor to violate rules, securitization is beginning.

Moreover, as Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde remind us, “Securitization is not fulfilled only by breaking rules (which can take many forms) nor solely by existential threats (which can lead to nothing) but by cases of existential threats that legitimize the breaking of rules” (1998, pg. 25). Once the actor is allowed to break rules that should otherwise be followed, securitization is occurring: “If by means of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat the securitizing actor has managed to break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by, we are witnessing a case of securitization” (Ibid., pg. 25).

Securitization theory can perhaps best be summarized by using an analogy from the business world. In a way the actor is a strong salesman who is trying to sell a threat to the consumer, which would be considered the audience. The salesman's act is the sales pitch of how lethal a threat can possibly be to the audience. Good salesmen, such as strong and powerful political leaders, could make a strong sales pitch because of the resources available to them. This would lure in the audience into buying the threat, allowing for the sale of the threat to occur, and the threat to be securitized.

SECURITIZING SADDAM HUSSEIN

Securitizing Actor: The Bush Administration

In the securitization of Saddam Hussein, the Bush administration can be viewed as the securitizing actor that lobbied for actions to be undertaken against Iraq and its President, Saddam Hussein. US President Bush can be considered a strong securitizing actor that managed to convince his audience of the security threat. He also had a great deal of social capital, meaning he had many different and powerful connections in the social world such as with, for example, other powerful agents (Smith & Kulynych, 2002, pg. 155). He also held a great deal of credibility with the public, since a large majority of the country voted for him to become the 43rd President of the United States of America in 2001, and thus, as some analysts have noted, the leader of an unrivaled superpower (Carranza, 2010, pg. 416).

Meanwhile, Saddam Hussein had become a rising threat to the western world in the late 1980's and early 1990's, and was known to have an extensive nuclear program within the country of Iraq. "When it [Iraq] invaded Kuwait in August 1990, Iraq was

believed to possess an extensive arsenal of chemical and biological weapons and a well-established nuclear weapons programme” (Pilat & Busch, 2011, pg. 407). Saddam’s WMD program was believed to be very advanced by the early 1990’s and the US intelligence community estimated that Iraq posed a significant threat to US national security. It was also known to the agencies that President Hussein was looking for ways to expand the WMD program. President Bush claimed that he had evidence for this assertion and explained in a speech he delivered in Cincinnati in 2002 on the threat posed by Iraq that:

The evidence indicates that Iraq is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program. Saddam Hussein has held numerous meetings with Iraqi nuclear scientists, a group he calls his "nuclear mujahideen" -- his nuclear holy warriors. Satellite photographs reveal that Iraq is rebuilding facilities at sites that have been part of its nuclear program in the past. Iraq has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes and other equipment needed for gas centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons (Bush, 2002C).

It seemed as though President Bush was very confident with the intelligence assessment his national security team had produced on Saddam Hussein noting that he was becoming a growing threat to international peace and security and the US in particular. Saddam Hussein had also previously used WMD’s against the ethnic Kurdish minority in northern Iraq in the late 1980’s. Moreover, during revolts that broke out after the Gulf War, it was well documented that he had a strong WMD program in the country (Pollack, 2004, pg. 80). It could thus be assumed that this program continued to exist and operate in secrecy.

The history of Saddam Hussein's government and its previous use of chemical weapons played a major role in the US government's practice to securitize the threat. During the Iran-Iraq war in 1982, Iraq had used advanced chemical weapons to attack Iran (Brands & Palkki, 2012, pg. 635). This wasn't the last time that Saddam Hussein would use Iraq's chemical weapons. In the late 1980's he also used them against his own people. This time the attacks were on the Iraqi Kurds who are an ethnic minority living in the border regions of northern Iraq. As Fredman reminds us "Iraqi forces had embarked on a resettlement campaign, destroyed some 300 Kurdish villages, and used chemical agents to crush the Kurdish insurgency" (2012, pg. 542). Indeed during the Saddam Hussein era, Iraq had negative relationships with most of its neighbours.

Based on this information, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) felt that something had to be done about President Hussein and Iraq's WMD program more generally. In order to stop Iraq from advancing its WMD's and nuclear program or even using its WMD's, the United Nations Security Council imposed both financial and trade sanctions against the country. These sanctions were levied on in the aftermath of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 based on the United Nations' Security Council resolution 687 (United Nations, 1999). In particular, the sanctions called for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, to pay reparations, and to eliminate any WMD's that they still possessed (United Nations, 1999).

After the first Gulf war in 1991, the UN and a reluctant Iraqi government abided by resolution 687 and worked together with the help of nuclear weapons inspectors to destroy both WMD's and the equipment related to the nuclear program that they were able to locate through their inspections. UN weapons inspections went on for a few years

without much interruption but the controversy began in 1998. Due to the lack of cooperation by the Iraqi government along with the mistreatment of weapons inspectors, the UN withdrew all UN WMD inspectors from Iraq by late 1998 (United Nations, 1999). Prior to that, Iraq wanted all US citizens working under the UN weapons inspection team removed from Iraq, which led to just a skeleton staff of inspectors remaining in Iraq until late 1998 (Ibid., 1999). However, it is important to note that Saddam Hussein did not ask the UN weapons inspectors to leave the country as some analysts have claimed. It was the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, who decided to withdraw all UN staff inspectors from Iraq “after he was informed by the United States the day before that it would be prudent not to leave our staff in the region” (Lehmann, 2005, pg. 83). The lack of cooperation by the Iraqi government raised many questions about the nuclear program in Iraq and Saddam Hussein’s intentions. The most important question was whether or not he was hiding stockpiles of WMD’s and advancements of his nuclear program from the UN inspectors and thus the UN Security Council.

The lack of cooperation with UN inspectors and not abiding by United Nations Security Council resolutions led the world to believe that Saddam Hussein was hiding WMD, which resulted in “Operation Desert Fox” in 1998, which consisted of the US and UK bombing major security and military targets that had allowed Iraq to produce and store WMD’s (Burford, 2002, pg. 70). It was believed that Operation Dessert Fox had destroyed a majority of Iraq’s chemical program and its capabilities.

The Iraqi government responded to the 1998 bombings by banning UN weapons inspectors entirely from entering the country. This ban may have actually hurt Saddam

Hussein's image a great deal in the public because governments and leaders wanted to know what else he could have been hiding.

Ultimately, Iraq under the rule of Saddam Hussein had a problematic past. Iraq had fought a war with Iran between 1980 and 1988; had also attacked Israel with Scud missiles in 1991, and had used chemical weapons against its own people. The Bush administration was able to use these events to their advantage by addressing these issues in their speech act, to make sure the public was aware of Saddam's history. The speeches given by the Bush administration regarding Saddam's past will be further examined below when discussing speech acts.

In assessing the attacks on 9/11, the US government did not only blame Osama Bin Laden for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Some high level officials in the Bush administration also tried to link Saddam Hussein to the attacks as well (Logevall, 2010, pg. 92). Assuming that Saddam Hussein directly played a role in 9/11, the US government started preparations how to respond to this threat. Watson holds that "Between the 12th and 17th of September 2001, President George W. Bush and his chief national security advisers met daily to consider the range of options for how to respond to the September 11 attacks. In those sessions, the discussions frequently turned to whether Saddam Hussein had any role in the attacks and whether the United States should include an attack on Iraq as part of its response" (2005, pg. 106). It was precisely around this time that questions arose again from the US government about what Saddam Hussein was up to since 1998 and what had happened to his WMD program since then. By September 17th President Bush received intelligence reports stating that Iraq was in no way involved with the terrorist attacks of September 11th, and thus realized that he would not be able to

garner the support of the American people or the international community for military actions against Iraq (Western, 2005, pg. 106) unless he could convince his fellow citizens to go to war with Iraq. Speaking with the language of securitization theorists, President Bush was the securitization actor who knew that he could not act on Saddam Hussein without the backing of his audience (the American people) or else he may face the consequences at the next election.

More and more, the US government was becoming suspicious of Iraq, and looking for a legitimate reason to justify a war against Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein. "From the administration's first day's, Iraq was high on the agenda" (Logevall, 2010, pg. 90). The US government required a good rationale quickly because they had already begun assembling troops in Iraq's neighbouring countries, which were ready to invade at any time. President Bush dispatched troops to the region, sending 25,000 followed by another 62,000 more in January 2003 (Ibid., pg. 106). In addition, "CIA agents around the world were told to seek information about Iraq's progress toward obtaining WMD. This made sense, but the obvious danger in asking people to be on the look-out for certain kinds of information is that they and their sources will find it" (Jervis, 2006, pg. 25).

President Bush put forward two main arguments on why the US needed to go to war with Iraq and eliminate Saddam Hussein. The first was that Saddam Hussein was deceiving the world regarding his country's WMD programs. He argued that

The cease-fire that ended the first Gulf War in April 1991 required Iraq to give up weapons of mass destruction and to accept UN inspectors who would inspect and

monitor the destruction and removal of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. The Iraq government led by Saddam Hussein accepted these terms, but Saddam deceived the world, continuing to develop weapons of mass destruction. Hence he was in breach of the cease-fire, and the coalition that had fought Iraq in 1991 was free to resume hostilities (President Bush quoted by Singer, 2004, pg. 155).

The second argument was that the US President wanted to liberate the Iraqi people from the suppressive regime of Saddam Hussein's regime. The President noted that "A change of regime in Iraq would liberate that country from a tyrant who had, during the long years of his rule, been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of his own people and allowed others to remain in grim poverty while he poured the country's oil revenues into military projects and extravagant palaces for his own luxury" (President Bush quoted by Singer, 2004, pg. 155).

However, these two arguments seemed to cover up the real truth about why President Bush wanted to attack Iraq. It appears that senior level policy makers within the Bush administration wanted the President to eliminate Saddam Hussein. America's relationship with Saddam dates back to the Gulf War when the US was able to force the government of Iraq to stop the occupation of Kuwait and withdraw its military forces from there. However, the US government did not pursue a regime change in Iraq itself, which allowed President Hussein to stay in power. As a result, as Logevall argues, "For these officials, and especially those such as Vice President Dick Cheney and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, who had served under then President George H. W. Bush in 1991, it was a piece of unfinished business" (2010, pg. 90). In other words, it appears that officials in the administration pressured President George W. Bush to

securitize Saddam Hussein and Iraq, something his father did not do. Donald Rumsfeld “cared little about democracy promotion or remaking the Middle East; for him, ousting Saddam would complete a job left undone and would serve America’s geopolitical interests. The same was true of Vice President Dick Cheney” (Ibid., pg. 92). In short, it appears that President Bush was surrounded by individuals that simply wanted to oust Saddam Hussein and did not care about how the job got done, as long as it got done.

However, less than a year later there had been no new intelligence information on Iraq and somehow President George W. Bush began to raise the threat of Saddam Hussein producing WMD’s in Iraq. The President labeled Iraq, North Korea, and Iran “as states that posed a threat to American interests either because they supported terrorists or because they had developed weapons of mass destruction, or both” (Ibid., pg. 95). He claimed publically that Saddam’s WMD program could be a major threat to the US and the rest of the world if nothing was done about the situation. The President labeled the Iraqi regime under Saddam Hussein as one of the most dangerous in the world (Ibid., pg. 95). He also began linking Saddam Hussein to terrorists, claiming that Saddam could provide terrorists with WMD. The President made this claim in the 2003 State of the Union address and he claimed that: “The America people must recognize another threat. Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of al Qaeda. Secretly, and without fingerprints, he could provide one of his hidden weapons to terrorists, or help them develop their own” (Bush, 2003A).

The outlook on Iraq changed very quickly in the months following the 9/11 attacks. Before the attacks, the views of the Bush administration about Saddam Hussein’s

WMD's were that "even if Saddam were building WMD, he would not use them against the US or its allies because he knew that this would trigger a massive US military response" (Tunc, 2005, pg. 341). Before the events of 9/11 took place, Condoleezza Rice wrote an article on Iraq stating that "Iraq's WMD could be unusable because any attempt to use them will bring national obliteration" (Condoleezza Rice quoted by Tunc, 2005, pg. 341). But the Bush administration's views shifted after the 9/11 attacks as they realized that "Saddam posed an intolerable threat against the US, not only because he displayed extreme hostility towards the US, but also because he was irrational enough to pass WMD to Al Qaeda" (Tunc, 2005, pg. 342). Most intelligence agencies around the world, however, believed that Saddam Hussein had no link with Al-Qaida and the 9/11 attacks because "over the years, Bin Laden consistently denounced Hussein in the strongest terms" (Kaufmann, 2004, pg. 19). The Bush administration thought differently and felt that something had to be done about Saddam Hussein and his WMD's. President Bush himself made this clear in a speech he delivered in 2002: "The American people must recognize another threat. Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of al Qaeda. Secretly, and without fingerprints, he could provide one of his hidden weapons to terrorists, or help them develop their own" (Bush, 2003A).

During this time, Iraq was served with Resolution 1441, which was adopted by the UN Security Council in November 2002, and gave Iraq "a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations under relevant resolutions of the Council." To that end, it called on Iraq to accept an enhanced system of inspections" (Singer, 2004, pg.

156). Iraq accepted the inspectors, but once again the issue became whether Iraq had actually disarmed and destroyed all of their WMD's? President Bush clearly felt that Saddam Hussein had not disarmed based on the intelligence he and his staff used to later securitize Saddam Hussein. In a speech the President delivered in Cleveland in 2004, he made it clear that his administration had the intelligence to suggest Saddam Hussein was developing WMD and that he was a threat: "In Iraq, this administration looked at the intelligence and we saw a threat to the American people. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence and it saw a threat" (Bush, 2004).

After the UN weapons inspectors left Iraq in 1998, no inspectors entered the country again until 2002 and during that time the US argued that President Hussein had enough time to get his WMD program started again. The US believed that he maintained the same policies with regards to his nuclear program after the inspectors left and was hiding his WMD's. Specifically, the US felt that Iraq had kept its chemical stock, their nuclear program was maintained, and that they could also have developed a biological weapons program.

At the level of the UN, the President thought that Saddam Hussein would definitely reject the call for inspectors to be allowed in Iraq to search for WMD. Bush supported UN resolution 1441 knowing that Iraq would reject the intense inspection requirements, which could lead to President Bush accomplishing a bigger goal that he and his administration had in mind. As Singer notes, "Bush no doubt thought that Saddam's refusal to accept the inspectors would provide a justification for the US to

overthrow Saddam with the backing of the United Nations” (2004, pg. 161). President Bush thought that he could make his attack legitimate after getting approval from the UN.

UN inspectors actually reported back that they were unable to find Iraq’s WMD and Iraq was also destroying their missiles:

The inspectors reported back to the Security Council on several occasions. Iraq denied having any weapons of mass destruction. Although it did not provide complete documentation of what had happened to some chemical and biological agents it had once possessed, the inspectors failed to find proof that the Iraqis were lying. The inspectors’ report indicate that, after a slow start, Iraq was, by February, showing a significant amount of cooperation. When the inspectors established (using information supplied by Iraq) that one of Iraq’s missiles had, in test firings, slightly exceeded the 150 km range set by the cease-fire terms, Iraq agreed to destroy the missiles, and had already destroyed sixty-five, or more than half of them, by the date of the American attack (Ibid., pg. 158).

In other words, Saddam Hussein and Iraq were actually abiding by UN resolution 1441, but the Bush administration kept claiming that Iraq had chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and active programs that they were ready to use. The US intelligence accounts noted that Saddam Hussein had hidden the weapons in the mountains, or transferred them to other states, as he had more than enough time to do so (Hersh, 2004, pg. 241). However, in order to go to war in Iraq, the US needed intelligence that suggested that Saddam Hussein actually was in possession of WMD’s and that his chemical and nuclear program was active and running.

To demonstrate this link, the US government put together a separate team of intelligence officers to help them find evidence that Saddam Hussein indeed was a security threat. A small group of policy analysts and advisors were put together after the September 11th terrorist attacks. They were based in the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans (Ibid., pg. 207). This team of advisors and analysts "produced a skein of intelligence reviews that have helped shape public opinion and American policy toward Iraq" (Ibid., pg. 207). As Hersh notes "Special Plans were created in order to find evidence of what Wolfowitz and his boss, defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, believed to be true-that Saddam Hussein had close ties to Al-Qaeda, and that Iraq had enormous arsenal of chemical, biological, and possibly even nuclear weapons" Ibid., pg. 209).

However, the team was unsuccessful in finding intelligence information that linked Saddam Hussein to Al-Qaeda and WMD. Such disappointment led to Donald Rumsfeld's public feud with the US Central Intelligence Agency charging "that the C.I.A. was simply unable to perceive the reality of the situation in Iraq" (Ibid., pg. 210).

In his book titled *Chain of Command*, Seymour Hersh examines the stories brought forward by Iraqi defectors. Hersh found that during the search for intelligence regarding Saddam Hussein and his WMD, it seemed as though a lot of Iraqi defectors were coming out with intelligence about Saddam and his "active" weapons programs. These individuals were part of the Iraqi National Congress, who, in particular, searched for Iraqi defectors. These defectors were helping the Bush administration because they were portraying the message that the Bush administration wanted the American public to hear. But it turns out that defectors could not be relied upon because the Iraqi National

Congress “has a track record of manipulating information because it has an agenda. It’s a political unit-not an intelligence agency” (Ibid., pg. 211).

An example of defectors misleading was seen with a civil engineer who fled Iraq in 2001 with the help of the Iraqi National Congress. The engineer “claimed that he had visited twenty hidden facilities that he believed were built for the production of biological and chemical weapons. One, he said was underneath a hospital in Baghdad” (Ibid., pg. 216). The United Nations Chief weapons inspector Hans Blix debunked this claim in a briefing to the United Nations Security Council on March 7th, 2003 where he stated that “During inspections of declared or undeclared facilities, inspection teams have examined building structures for any possible underground facilities. In addition, ground penetrating radar equipment was used in several specific locations. No underground facilities for chemical or biological production or storage were found so far” (Blix, 2010, Pg. 108). Ultimately, defectors are not a good source of intelligence to rely on because they can be biased. They seem to be treated poorly in their home countries and then try to flee and give their country a bad name or make them seem like a potential threat to the outside world.

The Iraqi National Congress was not the only one operating under their own agenda. Hersh argues that “The White House was also twisting facts and ignoring unwanted evidence as it strove to continue Americans of the pending nuclear threat from Saddam Hussein” (2004, pg. 212). Indeed, the Bush administration got their breakthrough on Saddam Hussein and Iraq when the National Intelligence Council (NIC) put together a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), which portrayed a picture of Iraq exactly in the way that the US government wanted to see. The key points the NIE

highlighted provided the US government with ammunition to make a case to invade Iraq. The report made five key points. First, that Iraq has continued its WMD program and was ignoring UN resolutions (NIE, 2002, pg. 5). The NIE went as far as stating that Iraq could have a WMD capability in roughly five to seven years. Second, after inspections stopped in 1998, Iraq had continued its chemical weapons effort, and had heavily invested in its biological program (Ibid.). Moreover, NIE analysts began claiming that Iraq was rebuilding its WMD program. Third, if Saddam Hussein was able to acquire weapons-grade fissile material from other countries, Iraq could have had a nuclear weapon in the span of a year (Ibid.). The goal was to not allow the Iraqi President to gain access to other countries that could aid him. Fourth, Iraq had once again started working on chemical warfare agents, including mustard gas (Ibid., pg. 6). The NIE claimed that Saddam had likely stock piled more than a hundred metric tons of chemical weapon agents at that time (Ibid., pg. 6). Fifth, all key components of Saddam's biological warfare program were active and larger than they were before the Gulf war (Ibid., pg. 6). The NIE stated that Iraq had mobile facilities for their biological warfare program that cannot be detected. The NIE report helped the Bush administration build a strong case against Saddam Hussein and made him appear to be a major threat to the US.

But when examining the NIE report more carefully, it seems as though even the report is unsure about the intelligence it is providing to the US government. The NIE, when focusing on Iraq's WMD program consists of words like "potential" or "might" or "5-7 years". It seems as though none of the information provided in the report is conclusive and the NIE is simply suggesting what Iraq could have or what it could do in a broad time frame. However, even with such wording within the report, it was able to

assist the Bush administration, and help support their claim regarding the threat posed by Saddam Hussein.

The case can also be made that the NIE report was designed to further the existing views of the US government, and it wasn't just the NIE report but also the entire US intelligence collection strategy that contributed to the government's decision making process. "Looking for information on a particular subject with preconceptions of what is needed is almost certain to result in data that reinforces existing assumptions" (Kerr Group Report, 2004). The Kerr report states that the US government was searching for intelligence that would assist their case to go to war with Iraq rather than taking into account the evidence that suggests the contrary. For example, a report released by the CIA in 2002 stated that, "Saddam probably does not yet have nuclear weapons or sufficient materials to make any" (Chang & Mehan, 2008, pg. 463). Ultimately the Bush administration was able to decide what course of action they wanted to follow, "and then selected and massaged the intelligence to make it support that action" (Singer, 2004, pg. 166). This was the case when the Bush administration interpreted the NIE findings against Iraq.

In Hans Blix's briefing to the United Nations Security Council in March of 2003, he was able to debunk a majority of the claims made by the NIE report, which obviously was not what the Bush administration wanted to hear. Blix claimed that after inspections once again began in late 2002, as it was required under UN Security Council Resolution 1441 (2002), Iraq was very cooperative with the inspectors, unlike from 1991-1998 (Blix, 2010). As for the NIE's claim that Iraq had mobile facilities for their biological warfare program, such claim could not be verified. Blix claimed that several inspections had

taken place in relation to mobile production facilities and they had found no evidence of such events occurring: “Food testing mobile laboratories and mobile workshops have been seen, as well as large containers with seed processing equipment. No evidence of proscribed activities have so far been found” (Ibid., 2010). Rather, Iraq was cooperating with the inspectors, having meetings and discussing the range of particular missiles they had with the inspectors. Blix recalls that “While during our meetings in Baghdad, the Iraqi side tried to persuade us that the Al Samoud 2 missiles they have declared fall within the permissible range set out by the Security Council, the calculations of an international panel of experts led us to the opposite conclusion. Iraq has since accepted that these missiles and associated items be destroyed and has started the process of destruction under our supervision” (Ibid., 2010). Iraq had also unearthed eight complex bombs, and the Iraqi government adopted a presidential decree, which prohibits both individuals and companies from engaging in any type of work related to WMD production (Blix, 2010). From this insight and evidence provided by Blix above, Iraq and Saddam Hussein were cooperating with inspectors and were doing all they could to disarm their dangerous weapons. Ultimately the threat that Saddam Hussein and Iraq was posing to the international world was slowly being eliminated.

As Logevall argues, “Saddam Hussein was not threatening his neighbours, and his WMD capacity was lower than that of Libya, North Korea and Iran. The desire for regime change alone did not justify invasion in legal terms” (Logevall, 2010, pg. 99). Indeed, the Bush administration had to create a securitizing move, something that they could sell to the American public in order to justify an invasion of Iraq and a removal of its President, Saddam Hussein. “This began the phase we might call the “selling of the

war.” The American public was starting to pay close attention” (Ibid., pg. 100) to what view the Bush administration was taking on Saddam Hussein and his WMD. It was now up to the Bush administration to convince Americans that Saddam Hussein was a security threat that needed to be eliminated.

The Act: The Bush Administration’s Speech Acts:

Securitization theory calls for an actor, in this case the Bush administration, to present an act to the audience in order to securitize the situation. The Bush administration was able to use speech acts that were delivered to the audience by its senior members. Senior government officials, including the President himself, were also able to display their acts through newspapers headlines and news stories in papers like the *New York Times*, which is perhaps one of the most read newspapers not only in the US, but also internationally.

Before examining news stories on Iraq’s WMD program in the *New York Times*, it is essential to mention the study of Gordon Chang and Hugh Mehan who analyzed syntactic and grammatical strategies in political argument construction on the threat of WMD posed by Saddam Hussein. They claim that a modification of simply one word can make all the difference (Chang & Mehan, 2008, pg. 471). When looking at Iraq’s WMD capabilities the two analysts realized that focusing on words like developed, possessed, possesses, produces, when speaking about Iraq’s WMD program makes a world of a difference (Ibid., pg. 470) in the sense that these words are able to make speech acts sound more threatening to the audience, and can make the audience feel insecure about their safety regarding a threat. They also found that “the possibility that Iraq still

possesses or produces WMD; such a possibility indicates that Iraq retains the unambiguous ability to cause massive damage to other countries” (Ibid., pg. 471). In other words, the frequency with which these words were used by senior government officials and the fact that these words were associated with Iraq prior to the invasion in 2003, gave the international community as the audience the perception that Iraq may still have chemical weapons. But it is important to not forget that “A WMD program could merely be a set of ideas; but without the necessary infrastructure, expertise, raw materials, and technological equipment, pure ideas per se could not amount to tangible threats” (Ibid., pg. 471).

In any case, the Bush administration had a strategy to exploit that tangible threat and link Saddam Hussein to WMD and terrorism in order to convince the US public about the security threat Iraq and its dictator posed to international peace and security. But there was a problem: the story about Saddam Hussein possessing and being ready to use WMDs was not true; nor was it confirmed by any American intelligence agencies (Logevall, 2010, pg. 100). However, this did not stop the Bush administration to continue pursuing its speech act. In fact, Vice-President Cheney put the story out to the public in order to garner support by arguing that “Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt that he is amassing them to use them against our friends, against our allies, and against us” (Dick Cheney quoted in Logevall, 2010, pg. 100). These blunt statements were all part of the Bush administration’s securitizing move. As Logevall argues, “Publicly, it was all about presenting Saddam Hussein as a direct and immediate threat to America’s security, who would do immense harm to the United States if given the chance” (2010, pg. 104). Indeed,

it appeared that President Bush and his team did all they could to make Saddam Hussein seem like the biggest threat facing US at the time.

This was done through speeches delivered by the Bush administration leading up to the Iraq war. Those speeches were strategically formed in order to make Saddam Hussein seem like a bigger threat than he actually was to the US. President Bush would use words and phrases like ‘has WMD’, ‘has used WMD’, ‘has invaded other countries’, ‘tortures people’, ‘is a murderer’, and ‘has trained terrorists’ (Chang & Mehan, 2008, pg. 471). These claims were all linked to Hussein’s past, and the US government was able to use them to their advantage. Specifically, through the use of speeches President Bush was able to convince the American public along with the help of the media that Saddam and his regime were a threat to American society. President Bush, for example, told the nation in one of his weekly radio addresses leading up to the war that “The Iraqi regime possesses biological and chemical weapons, is rebuilding the facilities to make more and, according to the British government could launch a biological or chemical attack in as little as 45 minutes after the order is given” (President Bush quoted in Logevall, 2010, pg. 101). What was never considered was the possibility that Saddam would not attack the US because he feared retaliation not only from the US but also from its international allies.

The verbal attacks continued on Saddam Hussein from the Bush administration as they were able to use past accusations against Hussein to make him appear like a major threat to the US. These accusations are presented below along with quotations from President Bush’s speeches that discuss and present them to the public. The first accusation was linked to Saddam’s history. He had used chemical weapons on his own

people in the past so why would he hesitate to use them again if he was able to obtain such weapons. President Bush outlined this in his “Iraqi Threat” speech, stating:

We know that the regime has produced thousands of tons of chemical agents, including mustard gas, sarin nerve gas, VX nerve gas. Saddam Hussein also has experience in using chemical weapons. He has ordered chemical attacks on Iran, and on more than forty villages in his own country. These actions killed or injured at least 20,000 people, more than six times the number of people who died in the attacks of September the 11th (Bush, 2002C).

The second accusation was that Saddam Hussein was involved in the 9/11 attacks against the US and that Hussein supported Al Qaida. President Bush reiterated this in a speech in 2002 delivered in Cincinnati where he explained to the American people that Saddam Hussein was linked to the attacks:

We know that Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network share a common enemy -- the United States of America. We know that Iraq and al Qaeda have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. Some al Qaeda leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq. These include one very senior al Qaeda leader who received medical treatment in Baghdad this year, and who has been associated with planning for chemical and biological attacks. We've learned that Iraq has trained al Qaeda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases. And we know that after September the 11th, Saddam Hussein's regime gleefully celebrated the terrorist attacks on America (Bush, 2002C).

President Bush's speeches linking Saddam Hussein to the 9/11 attacks were strategically developed as "without quite saying so, President Bush and other officials routinely used carefully juxtaposed formulations that placed the September 11 attacks and the alleged threat from Hussein within a few words of each other, giving the impression that there was a causal link without actually saying so" (Kaufmann, 2004, pg. 43).

The third accusation was that Iraq maintained an active and running WMD program in the country. President Bush addressed this issue in his 2003 State of the Union Address to the 108th Congress in Washington D.C. on January 28th, where he argued that "Year after year, Saddam Hussein has gone to elaborate lengths, spent enormous sums, taken great risks to build and keep weapons of mass destruction. But why? The only possible explanation, the only possible use he could have for those weapons, is to dominate, intimidate, or attack" (Bush, 2003A).

Taken together, these three exemplified accusations above had made Saddam Hussein a threat in the American political discourse. The speeches delivered by President Bush explain these three accusations against Saddam Hussein and were strategically worded in a way that his past behavior could be used against him to construct a security threat. In order to securitize the threat, the US government relied on its intelligence gathering and those agency's assessments on Saddam's WMD program.

President Bush also delivered many other speeches regarding Saddam Hussein such as his so-called 'Axis of Evil Speech' in the 2002 State of the Union address. This speech had a major impact internationally as it outlined the countries that posed a potential threat to the US; Iraq was one of them:

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens -- leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections -- then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world (Bush, 2002A).

This speech “prompted many anxious diplomatic inquiries from the Middle East and Europe. These inquiries were address by Vice President Dick Cheney, his goal was to explain the US position to allies and attempt to build a coalition for another invasion of Iraq” (Hersh, 2004, pg. 187). States from the Middle East and Europe inquired because they wanted to know what actions the US was planning on taking regarding the countries mentioned by President Bush in the State of the Union Address.

In the majority of President Bush’s speeches he preached to the public that Saddam Hussein had not disarmed his WMD’s. The President made this clear, for example, in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York on September 12th, 2002, where he stated that

We know that Saddam Hussein pursued weapons of mass murder even when inspectors were in his country. Are we to assume that he stopped when they left? The history, the logic, and the facts lead to one conclusion: Saddam Hussein's regime is a grave and gathering danger. To suggest otherwise is to hope against the evidence. To assume this regime's good

faith is to bet the lives of millions and the peace of the world in a reckless gamble. And this is a risk we must not take (Bush, 2002B).

In other speeches the President noted over and over again, that Saddam has weapons of mass destruction. In the speech in which he issued his forty-eight-hour ultimatum, he noted that “Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised” (President Bush quoted in Singer, 2004, pg. 158). He also frequently linked Saddam Hussein to weapons of mass destruction, and kept the national security threat level elevated at all times. The President was able to do so by delivering speeches like the one he gave to the United Nations General Assembly in 2002:

Today, Iraq continues to withhold important information about its nuclear program -- weapons design, procurement logs, experiment data, an accounting of nuclear materials and documentation of foreign assistance. Iraq employs capable nuclear scientists and technicians. It retains physical infrastructure needed to build a nuclear weapon. Iraq has made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon. Should Iraq acquire fissile material, it would be able to build a nuclear weapon within a year. And Iraq's state-controlled media has reported numerous meetings between Saddam Hussein and his nuclear scientists, leaving little doubt about his continued appetite for these weapons (Bush, 2002B).

President Bush continued to elevate the threat of Saddam Hussein in speeches he made the following months, and continued to link Saddam Hussein with WMD and his

willingness to use them. On October 7th, 2002, the President gave a speech in Cincinnati, Ohio where he stated that actions must be taken against a dangerous Saddam Hussein:

“Some ask how urgent this danger is to America and the world. The danger is already significant, and it only grows worse with time. If we know Saddam Hussein has dangerous weapons today -- and we do -- does it make any sense for the world to wait to confront him as he grows even stronger and develops even more dangerous weapons?” (Bush, 2002C).

When Hussein allowed United Nations inspectors to enter into Iraq and they were unable to find proof of any existence of WMDs, President Bush became concerned and addressed the US public on CBS News defying the UN: “I’m confident the American people understand that when it comes to our security, if we need to act, we will act, and we really don’t need United Nations approval to do so...as we head into the twenty-first century, Mark, when it comes to our security, we really don’t need anybody’s permission” (President Bush quoted in Singer, 2004, pg. 162). In other words, the President was sending a strong message to the American public that potential security threats need to be dealt with. He was also garnering the support of the public as the public was realizing that this President will go to great lengths to keep the country safe.

Vice President Dick Cheney also helped the Bush administration’s case against Saddam Hussein by delivering a fair amount of speeches about Hussein and his nuclear weapon program. He made it clear many times that Saddam Hussein is a dangerous man and an immediate security threat. In his own words, the Vice-President stated in 2002 that Saddam Hussein continues to pursue a nuclear weapons program; later that year, Cheney

also claimed that Saddam Hussein had nuclear capabilities and could use his weapons on any individual or state that he chooses (Hersh, 2004, pg. 230).

While the Bush administration continued to deliver speeches regarding the threat posed by Saddam Hussein, they also sought approval and support from the UN for their plans of going to war with Iraq. Specifically, the Bush administration went to the UN Security Council and asked them whether or not the UN would side with the US or not. However, as Singer (2004) argues, in the end, President Bush was going to attack Iraq no matter what the UN decided, which had negative implications for America's image abroad: "The record of the Bush administration in taking its case for the disarmament of Iraq to the United Nations, and then, when it could not get its way there, going ahead anyway, is not one that puts Bush in a good light" (pg. 161).

Though the Bush Administration was an advocate for invading Iraq, it should be noted, that most US generals were against the invasion for a number of reasons. They feared that "Saddam would use WMD against US troops, or that an invasion would enmesh their forces in urban warfare, or that the postwar occupation would be costly and messy" (Logevall, 2010, pg. 102). In retrospect, especially these two latter concerns appear justified as this is precisely what US troops experienced in their mission in Iraq. In any case, the securitizing move by the White House was even affecting the military that increasingly became convinced that Saddam Hussein had WMD's and was willing to use them.

Colin Powell, Secretary of State, was selected by the Bush administration to present the case for going to war with Iraq to the United Nations Security Council. Powell was asked to present the case because, as Western argues, "Bush's senior political

advisor had suggested that Powell be the one to take the evidence to the UN and sell the case to anyone still sitting on the fence. Powell's reputation as a moderate – indeed a reluctant warrior – would bring further credibility among those with doubts" (Western, 2005, pg. 134). The speech was to be televised and the Bush administration expected that they would be able to garner more support for their position.

However, in retrospect, most of Powell's speech was based on flawed intelligence. The background information given to the Secretary of State was "coming from sources who had motives to mislead the United States, from pictures that may have been misinterpreted, or from intercepted communications that were translated from Arabic possibly without capturing every nuance in the original" (Zarefsky, 2007, pg. 292). Colin Powell confessed after the United States had intervened militarily in Iraq that both he himself and CIA Director George Tenet were misled by faulty intelligence information produced by the agency that relied almost exclusively on non-reputable information (Ibid., pg. 298).

The consequences are well known and the anticipated benefits of this televised speech act were negative and led to a disgrace of the US government and its foreign policy establishment in particular. Nonetheless and surprisingly, the presentation received favourable reviews in the American media (Logevall, 2010, pg. 107). Indeed, this speech built further credibility to the securitizing move being undertaken by the Bush administration regarding the dangers posed by Saddam Hussein to international peace and security, as Saddam now "posed an imminent danger to the world" (Hughes, 2007, pg. 84).

More specifically, the securitizing move by the Bush government was so convincing that they had experienced members of the media fooled at the time. For example, the Washington Post's well-known investigative journalist Bob Woodward was asked by Larry King on CNN what would happen if the United States went to war and didn't find any WMD's? Woodward answered that "I think the chance of that happening is about zero. There's just too much there" (quoted in Logevall, 2010, pg. 109). This, to be sure, was not a one-time perception of one particular journalist. Indeed, the majority of journalists, especially those working for national newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, among others, were in agreement with the Bush administration that Saddam Hussein had WMD and was hiding them and was willing to use them (Western, 2005, pg. 135). Their reporting was found to be non-objective.

President Bush and his administration's interpretations regarding Saddam Hussein and his WMD program played a major role in the US government's views becoming news headlines. In particular, the Bush administration's interpretations regarding information and intelligence about Saddam Hussein were not challenged and simply accepted by both people in the administration and in the media. Kevin Desouza and Kristen Lau examine interpretations, in particular, the different forms they can take and they apply these methods to the prewar events leading up to Iraq. They argue that "in the stages leading up to interpretation management, data and information have been captured, synthesized to a degree, and filtered for a specific type of analysis; it is here where it is considered for value in terms of meaning" (Desouza & Lau, 2008, pg. 1484). The meaning of this information is established through what Desouza and Lau believe to be different types of interpretation; the important ones being: generating interpretations,

testing interpretations and sharing interpretations on the WMD capabilities of Iraq prior to the invasion by the US.

Generating an interpretation is where most mistakes occur. There is no difference with the case of Iraq's WMD program. Desouza and Lau found that "the US national Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of October of 2002 offered an extensive technical analysis of Iraq's suspected weapons programs but little serious analysis of the socio-political situation in Iraq, or the motives and intentions of Iraqi leadership-which, in a dictatorship like Iraq, really meant understanding Saddam" (Ibid., pg.1485). Indeed, the estimate only provided a one sided view about what was happening in Iraq at that time. It focused on Iraq's WMD program and avoided the political side of the equation. The interpretations that were generated from this misinformation lead to the creation of poor policy decisions later (Ibid.).

After generating interpretations, Desouza and Lau argue that the next step is to test that interpretation. Testing an interpretation allows one to understand the meaning behind the assumption. However, they argue that in the case of Iraq, "It is worth wondering whether or not there was much testing of interpretations about the conclusions made regarding Iraq's WMD programs" (Ibid., pg.1486). By failing to test interpretations, misinterpretations are created, which then remain untested and become believable. "Within the US intelligence Community there was a failure to test interpretations properly" regarding Saddam's WMD program (Ibid.).

Sharing interpretations on major events and issues is seen as an essential part for interpretations to be correct. Dasouza and Lau argue that interpretations are hard to change, especially within government agencies. However, one way in which they can

change is through sharing explanations about an issue or event. This lack of sharing regarding Iraq's WMD program led to a major US intelligence failure: "There was a lack of sharing within national intelligence agencies and across national intelligence agencies. There were also failures in sharing interpretations with inspectors. The United States in particular faced many challenges with sharing interpretations which led to drastic consequences" (Ibid., pg. 1488). Leading right up until the war, including the night before the Iraq war began, the Intelligence Community failed to provide important intelligence information to policymakers (Ibid.)

It is important to review headlines from the *New York Times* and the role they played as part of the speech act used by the Bush administration to securitize Saddam Hussein. It is important because the *New York Times* is not only one of the most widely read newspapers in the US, but also highly respected nationally as well as internationally. The evidence that will be reviewed was provided by a study conducted by Daniela Dimitrova and Jesper Stromback. Their study examined 236 news articles from the *New York Times* during March to May 2003. The authors show that this paper relied more heavily on official government and military sources to create their headlines and reporting (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2005, pg. 410) rather than doing their own investigative analysis and fact checking. Indeed, the majority of the headlines examined were in favour of the US invading Iraq because they were tied to official government reports during that time. The authors found that "the war reporting in the elite American newspapers closely followed the official government agenda" (Ibid. pg. 412). The predominant use of official government reports led to newspapers focusing a lot less on the anti-war headlines.

Dimitrova and Stromback offer a possible explanation for their empirical findings: “Since the president is commander and chief, there is a tradition of rallying behind the president during times of war. To criticize the president or the war during the war is likely to be viewed as unpatriotic and unsupportive of the US troops” (Ibid.). Specifically, the *New York Times* focused more on the military impact in Iraq, such as the new developments, how the US was succeeding in Iraq, and what strategies the military was focusing on to ensure victory (Ibid.). These headlines helped foster views of the US population that are in favour of the war, which will be discussed in the next section.

President Bush’s securitizing move may have masked the real reason the Bush administration wanted to go to war in Iraq. The Bush administration was able to sell the war by pitching the WMD-terrorism motives of Saddam Hussein, and hide any other motivations they had for going to war: “Relentless public focus on the WMD-terrorism conjunction masked other motivations for war, ones less “salable” to the American people and hence kept largely under wraps” (Logevall, 2010, pg. 103). The Bush administration saw a chance to recreate the American image in the Middle East and Iraq could set the example for the rest of the region (Bush, 2003B). President Bush noted this in his “Ultimatum to Iraq” speech delivered on March 17th, 2003 in Washington D.C. that “As we enforce the just demands of the world, we will also honor the deepest commitments of our country. Unlike Saddam Hussein, we believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty. And when the dictator has departed, they can set an example to all the Middle East of a vital and peaceful and self-governing nation” (Bush, 2003B).

With the US having close ties with Israel, the Bush administration felt that by eliminating Saddam, Israel's security along with the security of the region would improve (Logevall, 2010, pg. 103). Vice President Dick Cheney, for example, addressed the issue in a speech delivered to the Veterans of Foreign Wars 103rd National Convention in Nashville:

Another argument holds that opposing Saddam Hussein would cause even greater troubles in that part of the world, and interfere with the larger war against terror. I believe the opposite is true. Regime change in Iraq would bring about a number of benefits to the region. When the gravest of threats are eliminated, the freedom-loving peoples of the region will have a chance to promote the values that can bring lasting peace (Cheney, 2010).

Also antiwar protest focused on President Bush wanting to attack Iraq in order to gain access to Iraq's oil resources. The President claimed that he did not want access to the oil; it was more about "preventing an unpredictable and hostile Baghdad regime from destabilizing an oil-rich region" (Logevall, 2010, pg. 103).

The securitizing move, as Logevall (2010) suggests, could have also been performed to make sure that President Bush would be reelected because the public would think he is trying to keep them safe from terrorist threats. "White House political strategists, meanwhile, thinking in crass but for them vital terms, believed a swift and decisive removal of a hated dictator would cement Republican domination in Washington and virtually ensure Bush's reelection two years hence" (pg. 103).

Audience: The American Public

In order for securitization to be successful, the speech act established by the actor is required to be accepted by an audience. As shown above, the Bush administration used both public speeches and the media as their main vehicle to convince the American public of their securitization act, which represent the audience of the Bush administration's speech acts.

The US government went to great lengths to prove not only to itself but also to their citizens that Saddam Hussein had an active nuclear weapons program. These government views were displayed in headlines in newspapers throughout the US, such as in the *New York Times*. Exemplary of such headlines are the following: "The right war for the right reasons" written by John McCain and published on March 2003 in the *New York Times*; "Hussein's Brutality" published in May 2003, as well as "A tyrant 40 years in the making" published on March 14, 2003 just to mention a few. These headlines were designed to begin creating a negative viewpoint on Saddam Hussein and his regime in the minds of the public. US citizens read these headlines and for some they definitely influenced their opinions on going to war in Iraq.

As Western argues, newspapers as well as other media sources have a major impact on individuals in today's day and age. Most people are too busy to even pay attention to know the details of their country's foreign policy. "Because most citizens rarely have the time, inclination, or expertise to form independent opinions on national security matters, their perceptions of the costs and stakes involved in a particular crisis are routinely influenced principally by the information presented to them" (Western, 2005, pg. 108). They will often rely on and trust what they read in newspapers or see on

the news. This is not too surprising because according to media theories newspapers and the press in general are meant to serve an important function to citizens of a country during times of crises and democracies more generally, namely to provide citizens with both sides of the story, and allow the public to make their own decisions (Willnat et al., 2006, pg. 535). Citizens rely on the media for objective, correct, and well-researched news stories.

This was not the case leading up to the 2003 war in Iraq as newspapers headlines were based on the government's policy agenda towards Iraq. More specifically, media coverage during the weeks leading up to the Iraq War was full of speculations that Iraq was ready to deploy weapons of mass destruction and that they had possible links to the terrorist organization Al Qaeda (Ibid.). US Headlines and news stories published during that time were formulated in a particular way. Specifically, the headline of an article along with the first couple of paragraphs was designed to create a sense of urgency for US citizens (Western, 2005, pg. 128). Only by reading further into the text of these articles was it revealed that there was still an on-going intelligence debate over Iraq's nuclear program (Ibid.). Most individuals in today's busy world do not have the time to read entire articles and tend to rely on headlines to do them justice. They tend to simply read the headline and come to a pre-conceived assessment on what they expect the article to be about. The Bush administration was able to take advantage of this by making sure that journalists understood their views and that the headlines would be written in their favour.

Indeed, as Western has found, many journalists prior to the Iraq War relied heavily on their inside government sources for news stories and headlines. They refused

to publish news stories criticizing the US government because they knew they would lose access to their sources (Ibid.). This was also a time when US citizens were caught up in American Patriotism, and the media followed suit: “Many journalists, publishers and broadcasters were caught up in the wave of patriotism that followed September 11 and were more deferential to the president and his representations of the threats facing the United States” (Ibid.).

The newspaper headlines in the *New York Times* during this period fell in line with the evidence of earlier studies mentioned above. The *New York Times* was a skeptic of military action, but took the side of the US government after Colin Powell’s UN Security Council address. It reported that intelligence information was found that Iraq possesses and continues to procure WMDs in Iraq. The *New York Times* came to the conclusion that Colin Powell “may not have produced a smoking gun, but he left little question that Mr. Hussein had tried hard to conceal one” (Ibid.). After the presentation by the Secretary of State on February 6, 2003 to the UN Security Council, it is interesting to note that the percentage of Americans that supported the US invading Iraq jumped from 58% to 63% in just two days (Ibid., pg. 119). “The New York Times, in the key months of decision accepted with little question administration claims regarding Saddam Hussein’s intentions and capabilities” (Logevall, 2010, pg. 109). Other headlines in the *New York Times* during this period include “US Says Hussein Intensifies Quest for A-Bomb Part” (Western, 2005, pg. 127) and “Why We Know Iraq is Lying” (Hersh, 2004, pg. 233). This showcases that newspaper headlines during this time displayed the views of US government officials because journalists relied on official government sources.

Moreover, journalists relied on another questionable source for their news stories, namely members of Iraq's exile community. As Western reminds us, journalists "continued to rely extensively on either US government sources or on members of the Iraqi exile and dissident community, all of whom had significant biases in favor of overthrowing Saddam Hussein" (2005, pg. 136). Against this backdrop, it is clear that during the time before the US invaded Iraq, news stories were in favour of the US government to invade. The Media had quite an effect on the US public, as the majority of Americans were in favour of how the US government wanted to handle Saddam Hussein and Iraq: "Right after 9/11 a mere 6 percent believed that bin Laden had collaborated with Saddam Hussein; by the eve of war that figure had risen to 66 percent. A majority now even believed that Iraqis had been among the hijackers" (Logevall, 2010, pg. 111). During this period it seemed as though "Congress, the press, and the American public were mostly content to go along, unwilling to raise the tough questions that might have halted or slowed the rush to war" (Ibid., pg. 89). The country was focused on eliminating Saddam Hussein and nobody was questioning the Bush administration's decision to attack.

It wasn't until fifteen months into the US invasion in Iraq that someone spoke up. The *New York Times* ombudsman, Daniel Okrent, broke the news to the public that before the war his newspaper's reporting was indeed in favour of the government's views and faulty. He noted that "To anyone who read the paper between September 2002 and June 2003, the impression that Saddam Hussein possessed, or was acquiring, a frightening arsenal of W.M.D. seemed unmistakable" (Okrent, 2004). Okrent further admitted that "Some of The Times's coverage in the months leading up to the invasion of

Iraq was credulous; much of it was inappropriately italicized by lavish front-page display and heavy-breathing headlines” (Ibid.). As for the impact the headlines and news stories had on the public, and how much the public relies on headlines, Okrent succinctly noted that

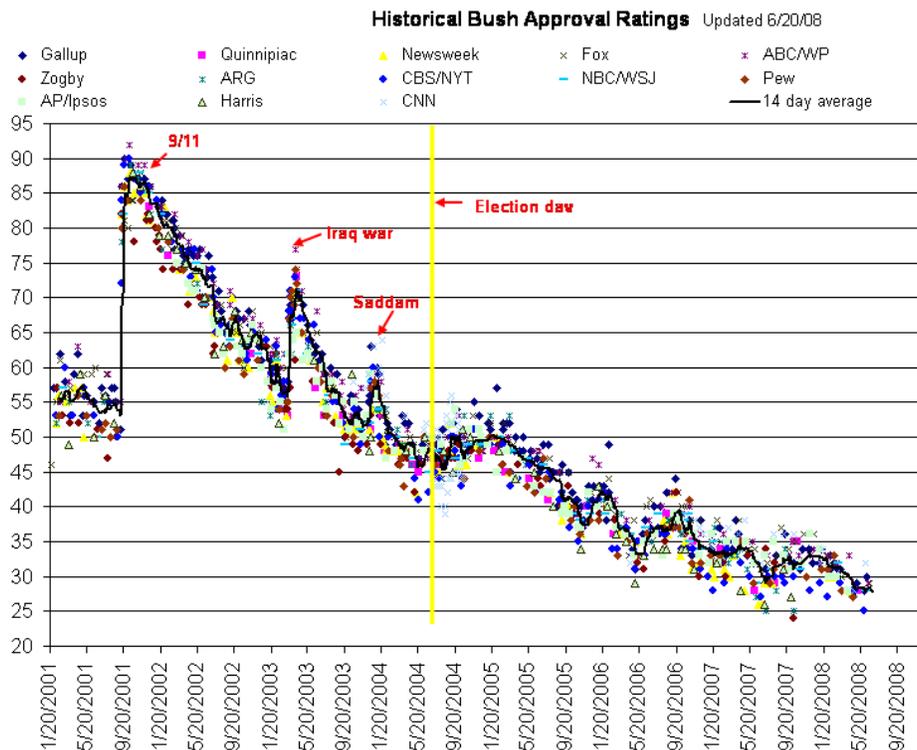
War requires an extra standard of care, not a lesser one. But in *The Times's* W.M.D. coverage, readers encountered some rather breathless stories built on unsubstantiated "revelations" that, in many instances, were the anonymity-cloaked assertions of people with vested interests. *Times* reporters broke many stories before and after the war -- but when the stories themselves later broke apart, in many instances *Times* readers never found out. Some remain scoops to this day (Okrent, 2004).

Editors for the *New York Times* also admitted that they had “found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been. In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged” (The *Times* and Iraq, 2004). The editors felt that they should have been challenging reporters and their stories rather than rushing to put the latest scoop about Saddam Hussein into the paper (Ibid.). Ultimately, the *New York Times* writers and editors failed to properly research news stories and in 2003 publicly apologized for their coverage in the lead up to the invasion (Logevall, 2010, pg. 109).

In spite of this, during the pre-war timeframe the support by US citizens to invade Iraq never dropped below 52% and in March 2003 elevated to one of its strongest points at 64% (Western, 2005, pg. 119). Approval ratings for President Bush, established through polling a sample of the population to see how a political figure is handling his

job, began to climb in the lead up to the invasion in Iraq. This trend line is shown in the chart below produced by the history department at the University of Minnesota in 2008. It reveals that the public was pleased with how Bush was handling his role as President and seemed to agree with his decisions. After 9/11 President Bush's approval rating began to drop, and it was not until the lead up to the Iraq invasion that they began to climb again. After the invasion the approval rate once again began to drop but climbed up once Saddam Hussein was captured. The speeches and newspaper headlines cannot be underestimated as to how big a role they played in the spike of approval ratings. The rise in approval ratings can be attributed to the Bush administration's abilities to instill fear into the public, which in turn lead to the public's support of President Bush and his securitization of Saddam Hussein.

Chart 1: Historical President Bush Approval Ratings Chart



Source: History Department at the University of Minnesota, 2008.

If the *New York Times* headlines and stories were biased in favour of the US government, it is hard to imagine that other newspapers across the US were not doing the same in their reporting. Based on these findings above, there is a strong and more general argument to be made for how newspapers along with other media sources misled the American public when it came to the securitization of Saddam Hussein, which also helped to boost approval ratings for President Bush.

Even after the newspapers had apologized for not providing the US public with the complete truth about Saddam Hussein and his WMDs program, the US government did not have the same idea in mind. In fact, as Logevall argues, “The official US position, elaborated in speech after speech, both before the invasion and since, is that Saddam bore full responsibility for what occurred, because he defied the UN over the WMD issue and because he misled the world into believing he still possessed the weapons” (2010, pg. 111).

More abstractly, the empirical evidence above suggests that journalists become lazy when the information to explain a particular event or policy is provided to them, which in turn speaks to the importance of public relations officers working on behalf of government for the production of news stories. More specifically, this information is often provided by so-called elite sources and most journalists do not seem to check the information they were given, or to start an investigation and fact checking mission on their own: “When there is a consensus among the elite sources, the likelihood that journalists will investigate an issue and push for answers is rather low” (Dimitrova &

Stromback, 2005, pg. 403). In a sense, it is not journalists that set the headlines in newspapers, it is actually elite government sources. This was exactly the case with the Bush government's push to get public support on their side to invade Iraq.

Meanwhile, in today's day and age, journalists have access to a far greater amount of resources than ever before. They have, for example, access to international news stories from other countries outside of their country of origin, government views from different countries, and documents released by various businesses and organizations, governmental or otherwise. Even with all this information available, it seems that before the Iraq war American journalists chose to neglect those sources. As Dimitrova & Stromback put it succinctly, "There seems to be continuity in the relationship between the media and the government/political elite during times of crisis" (2005, pg. 406).

Moreover, with the media selecting to focus on certain aspects of an international conflict, it ends up limiting the public's understanding of the full story. This could result in a situation where "the public in one country may acquire quite different beliefs and attitudes toward the event compared with the public in another country exposed to different media coverage" (Ibid., pg. 413). With the US newspapers only focusing on the US government views that Iraq had an active nuclear program, it made the public nervous and insinuated that something had to be done to remove Saddam from power. These are the key ingredients for a successful speech act.

Based on the evidence provided above, it is safe to conclude that the faulty intelligence used by the US government influenced the media beyond a single newspaper like *The New York Times*. Above all, the media became reliant on government sources for

information and then misled the public with headlines that fell in line with the government policy agenda of the time. As Wilnat et al. put it succinctly, “Not only did Bush rely on the public trust, he may also have abused it” (2006, pg. 535). The US government seemed to be on a mission to invade Iraq and topple the Saddam regime. They went to great lengths to make their case known and heard, and were able to do so with the information released through the NIE report from the NIC.

President Bush and his government are not the only ones to blame for using faulty evidence to invade Iraq. The media played just as big of a role by not presenting a greater variety of news stories from sources available in other countries or analysts. Had a greater number of articles been printed in US newspapers representing views counter to what the US government thought, maybe there would have been larger anti-war rallies, causing more anti-war news articles. These articles could then go on to affect other citizens and perhaps change their views and how they thought of the war.

The US government, along with its questionable intelligence information about Hussein maintaining an active nuclear program was able to use the media to sell the war on Iraq to its citizens. In a democratic country such as the US, journalists and news reporters have a greater duty to more thoroughly question the information that is provided and to find other sources that can offer a different understanding of the issue. On controversial issues it may not be enough to simply trust governmental sources; more research is required so that citizens can view both sides of the argument and essentially make up their own mind. When it came to the Iraq war, headlines and news articles in the *New York Times* and in other US newspapers only presented the US government side of the argument giving people only one option, which was to agree with their government.

In sum, the Bush administration was able to complete a successful securitization of Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Speeches from The President's cabinet and he himself had a large impact on the American public, and led the public to support the war. Newspapers relied on inside governmental sources to create their headlines and they chose not to argue against the President. But at the end of the day, as Singer concludes, the President of the United States and his administration "mislead Congress, his own citizens, and governments and people all over the world, in order to start a war that killed thousands of people, including at least 3,000 civilians, and maimed and wounded, or made homeless, tens of thousands more" (2004, pg. 166).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper applied securitization theory to the Bush administration's discourse on going to the war in Iraq and ousting its President, Saddam Hussein. More specifically, it examined how the Bush administration, through its speech acts and using the media, was able to make Saddam Hussein seem as though he was a major threat to the United States of America. President Bush and his administration played the role of the securitization actor looking for opportunities to securitize Saddam Hussein. They used speech acts as well as the media for their securitizing move to get the government's message across to the audience. This securitization move was not an easy one, and on numerous occasions the Bush administration had to reach out to the public to try to convince fellow Americans of how big of a security threat Saddam Hussein was to US national security. Some would even argue that certain individuals that had dealt with Saddam in 1991 wanted the securitization of Saddam Hussein to occur more so than did President George W. Bush. Their audience in this case was the American public that they

wanted to garner support from. Strong speech acts and the media relying on inside governmental sources for information allowed for a successful securitization to occur, and approval ratings for President George W. Bush to climb up in the lead up to the war in Iraq. The Bush administration was successful to get its audience to accept their securitizing move, which allowed for the securitization of Saddam Hussein to occur.

In short, this essay showed just how effective speech acts are. It also discussed the tools that the US government can use (e.g. major newspapers like *The New York Times*) to report the government's view, to shape the media's interpretations on major policies and political decisions more generally, and how to convince their audience.

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