

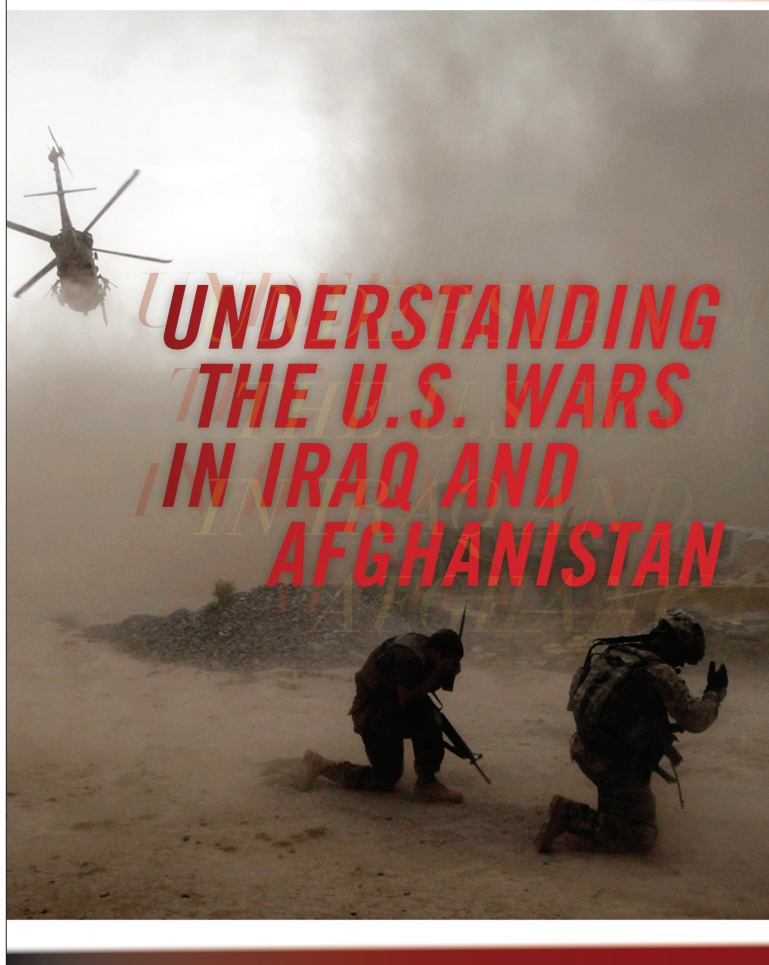
UNDERSTANDING THE U.S. WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

AUTHORED BY JOHN WORSENCROFT AND SILKE ZOLLER

Edited by

BETH BAILEY *and*
RICHARD H. IMMERMANN



Understanding the United States' wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is essential to understanding the United States in the first decade of the new millennium and beyond. These wars were pivotal to American foreign policy and international relations. They were expensive: in lives, in treasure, and in reputation. They raised critical ethical and legal questions; they provoked debates over policy, strategy, and war-planning; they helped to shape American domestic politics. And they highlighted a profound division among the American people: While more than two million Americans served in Iraq and Afghanistan, many in multiple deployments, the vast majority of Americans and their families remained untouched by and frequently barely aware of the wars conducted in their name, far from American shores, in regions about which they know little.

Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan gives us the first book-length expert historical analysis of these wars. It shows us how they began, what they teach us about the limits of the American military and diplomacy, and who fought them. It examines the lessons and legacies of wars whose outcomes may not be clear for decades.

In 1945 few Americans could imagine that the country would be locked in a Cold War with the Soviet Union for decades; fewer could imagine how history would paint the era. **Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan** begins to come to grips with the period when America became enmeshed in a succession of "low intensity" conflicts in the Middle East.

368 PAGES

PAPER • 978-1-4798-2690-2

Introduction

By Beth Bailey and Richard H. Immerman

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How did the attacks of 9/11 change the political dynamics of America's foreign relations?
- Why has it historically been easier to wage war against a state than against a non-state?
- The authors of this introduction suggest that historians may someday judge that the year 1979 exercised greater influence on the future of global politics than 1989, when the Berlin Wall collapsed and the Cold War ended. What might be the basis for that judgment?
- A recent trend in the writing of history is the increased attention historians pay to the ways emotions can contribute to individual, group, and state behavior. Do you consider emotions important to understanding the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? In what ways might they play a role?
- Do you see the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as watershed events that ushered in a new era in U.S. history? If so, what has changed? If not, what would you identify as the continuities?
- What connects the Global War on Terror, the war in Afghanistan, and the war in Iraq? Were all of these conflicts wars of necessity? Were any of them wars of choice?
- Americans often consider themselves exceptional among the nations of the world. What values do they point to as evidence of exceptionalism? Do you think that, compared to other nations, the United States is exceptional? That the American people are exceptional?
- Does it serve the U.S. national interest to seek to spread its ideals and institutions around the world? Those attempts often depend on the belief that desire for the American way of life is universal. Do you think that this belief is valid?
- Should the U.S. engage in nation-building? Can it?
- Winston Churchill, among others, is credited with having defined history as "one damn fact after another." Beth Bailey and Richard Immerman claim that the purpose of this book goes beyond stringing together names and events. What is that purpose?

The War's Entangled Roots: Regional Realities and Washington's Vision

By Michael A. Reynolds

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- According to Michael Reynolds, what have been the two major forces for change in the Middle East since the early twentieth century? Why have these catalysts caused social disruption instead of cohesion?
- Both Socialists and Islamists sought to reform Afghanistan from the 1970s to the 1990s. What were their respective goals?
- What were Osama bin Laden's primary motives for founding al Qaeda?
- Reynolds provides insight regarding how the Taliban, an organization named after the Pashtun word for "students," came to exercise political authority in Afghanistan. How did that process evolve?
- An expert on the Middle East, Reynolds stresses the relationships among the Middle Eastern nations and the region's balance of power. Why, in his view, did the success of the Iranian Revolution so dramatically affect those relations and the balance of power?
- Alliances among the regional powers in the Middle East shifted between the Iran/Iraq War in the 1980s and the 1991 Gulf War. What factors contributed to this shift?
- Reynolds argues that Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and other American policymakers formulated a coherent vision for America's role in the world in the aftermath of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet empire. What was this role, and what sort of commitments in the Middle East did it require?
- In contrast to most histories of the Iraq and Afghanistan War, Reynolds's narrative includes Turkey. Why?
- Although we now know that Iraq's Saddam Hussein did not conceal a cache of Weapons of Mass Destruction after the Gulf War, the United States was certain that he did. Why was the United States so mistaken? And why did Saddam Hussein fail to convince American policymakers that he did not possess WMD, and had not restarted his effort to build nuclear weapons?
- How does this chapter provide greater understanding of the reasons that United States policymakers, from the George H. W. Bush to the George W. Bush administrations, perceived Iraq as such a grave threat to America's vital interests?

9/11: Bush's Response

By Terry H. Anderson

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- According to Terry Anderson, how well did the measures taken by the Bush administration to protect the American public in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 align with existing U.S. law?
- Anderson argues that the term “Global War on Terror” is ambiguous and counterproductive. What are the bases of that argument?
- Anderson assesses Operation Enduring Freedom more favorably than Operation Iraqi Freedom. Why? What does he identify as the shortcomings of Operation Iraqi Freedom?
- What were the roles of the CIA, the U.S. Army, the Northern Alliance, and America’s allies (both NATO and non-European) in Operation Enduring Freedom?
- How does Anderson explain the U.S. decision to imprison captured al Qaeda and associated “terrorists” at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba? From his perspective, what are the key legal issues surrounding that decision?
- How did the Bush administration “sell” the Iraq War to the American and global publics from September 2002 until the invasion? How successful were the administration’s efforts?
- Whereas the Bush administration argued that preemptive action in Iraq was justified by America’s right to self-defense, Anderson calls the War in Iraq “unnecessary.” Evaluate these starkly contrasting points of view.
- Are you persuaded that the Bush decision to invade Iraq was the “greatest foreign policy blunder in American history”? What is your assessment of the decision?

Intelligence and the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

By Richard H. Immerman

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Where does Richard Immerman position intelligence within the U.S. foreign policy process? What is its function?
- How does Immerman characterize and assess the overall role of intelligence in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq?
- What are the three primary intelligence-gathering methods available to the CIA? Why did the CIA use different methods in Iraq and Afghanistan? How did these differences constrain intelligence gathering in both countries?
- The Bush administration and the CIA held differing opinions on whether Iraq or al Qaeda posed the largest threat to U.S. national security. Describe and contrast their different stances.
- Immerman connects the CIA's covert actions in Afghanistan following the 1979 invasion with the emergence of both al Qaeda and the Taliban. What is that connection, and do you judge it to be a linear one?
- Why does Immerman criticize the CIA's intelligence-gathering and analytic tradecraft in the run-up to Operation Iraqi Freedom? Is he convincing?
- Immerman focuses heavily on the behavior of Saddam Hussein, on the one hand, and America's Intelligence Community, on the other, to explain the IC's assumptions in 2002 and 2003. What does Immerman identify as the key drivers of those assumptions? In your opinion, were those assumptions reasonable even if they were incorrect?
- To what extent did the Intelligence Community's reports and estimates influence preparations for the Iraq War?
- What factors explain the different perceptions held by the US public about the CIA's efforts in Iraq and in Afghanistan? Did the public's perceptions matter?
- This chapter traces a growing "militarization" of the CIA. What changes did this shift entail? Is Immerman's evaluation of this transformation positive or negative, and why?

Assessing Strategic Choices in the War on Terror

By Stephen Biddle and Peter D. Feaver

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Why do Stephen Biddle and Peter Feaver reject the prevalent 90/10 decision-making interpretation? What do they argue is a more accurate percentage, and why?
- What are the advantages and shortcomings of using counterfactuals to explain policy decisions?
- What is Grand Strategy, and how does it provide a framework for this chapter?
- In contrast to some scholars, Biddle and Feaver argue that U.S. policymakers pursued a coherent Grand Strategy after the Cold War. What do they identify as the pillars of this strategy?
- How did the Bush administration connect terrorism to U.S. Grand Strategy after 9/11? What were the consequences for American military, economic, and cultural power?
- Biddle and Feaver present two counterfactual scenarios concerning the role of terrorism in U.S. Grand Strategy. How does each scenario change the course of U.S. foreign policy? Compare and contrast the two.
- How do Afghani domestic and international politics complicate Biddle and Feaver's counterfactuals about the American invasion of Afghanistan?
- Biddle and Feaver specifically avoid discussing individual U.S. policymakers and the political context within which those policymakers made their choices. From your perspective, would the inclusion of these variables affect their conclusions? If so, how and why?
- What suggestions do the authors make for improving U.S. policy options in the long term?
- Biddle and Feaver are political scientists, and rely strongly on models and theories to shape this chapter. Compare their methods with those of historians such as Michael Reynolds, Terry Anderson, and Conrad Crane, who rely on empirical evidence, stress contingency, and examine the influence of change over time. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches?

Learning and Adapting Under Fire at Home and in the Field

By Conrad C. Crane

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Conrad Crane argues that the U.S. Army changed its mission, force levels, and tactics between the Gulf War and 9/11. What concepts did U.S. military and civilian leaders use to justify these changes? How did the Bush administration's "Shock and Awe" strategy reflect earlier U.S. military concepts?
- Why does Crane call the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan a "catastrophic success"?
- Explain the differences between Phase III and Phase IV of the U.S. CENTCOM's campaign planning against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Why did CENTCOM and the Department of Defense disagree during the planning process?
- To what extent did the U.S. transformation from combat to occupational troop structures in 2003-04 facilitate sectarian strife in Iraq?
- The 2006 Army/Marine Corps counterinsurgency (COIN) manual tailored U.S. military strategy to more accurately fit conditions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Which problems did it address, and what were its main premises? Were U.S. forces successful in implementing and carrying out the manual's fundamental guidance?
- Contrary to conventional accounts of a single "surge" in Iraq, Crane presents four separate "surges" in 2007. Why does he draw these distinctions?
- Contrast the 2011 surge in Afghanistan with the 2007 surge in Iraq. Which factors in Afghanistan complicated the 2011 surge for U.S. military planners?
- Identify some of the main supporters and critics of counterinsurgency doctrine. What are their arguments in favor of or against this doctrine?
- Based on what you have read in this chapter, are you a supporter or a critic of counterinsurgency doctrine? Why?
- What difficulties do researchers on contemporary military strategy face when seeking information? Do you think academics should write and publish on these issues, even if their sources and conclusions may be contested later?

Human Rights as a Weapon of War

By Jonathan Horowitz

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How does Jonathan Horowitz, the author of the chapter, define human rights?
- What do America's founding documents have to say about human rights? In his discussion of the United States and the world, what reasons does the author give for why Americans may not always live up to the ideals enshrined in these documents and sentiments?
- In Horowitz's judgment, which kinds of rights does the United States tend to support globally, and which kinds does it tend not to support?
- In what ways did the language of human rights abuses in pre-war Iraq and Afghanistan bolster the United States' case for war with those countries?
- How are humanitarian relief operations incorporated into the U.S. military's overall strategies?
- Discuss how the U.S. military's approach to relief operations evolved during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. How do these operations affect the missions of NGOs to provide aid to war-torn countries?
- What is the "rule of law" and what role did this idea play in counterinsurgency strategy? What were some of the major hurdles to imposing the rule of law in Afghanistan?
- How does the legal system in Afghanistan function from the perspective of the U.S. military? From the perspective of the Afghan government? From that of its people?
- What does Horowitz identify as the primary drivers of the human rights abuses at Abu Ghraib? What impact did those incidents have on the U.S. war effort in Iraq and the wider GWOT?
- Horowitz makes his case that the U.S. military should not be involved in conducting relief and humanitarian missions. Why, and do you agree with his assessment? Does the United States employ human rights as a weapon of war?

The Combatants' Experiences

By Lisa Munday

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- According to Lisa Munday, what are the consequences of fighting two major wars with an all-volunteer force? While the costs seem clear, do you see any potential benefits?
- What does the term “stop-loss” mean? Why was it invoked, and what impact did it have on the troops?
- What were the demographic characteristics of the All-Volunteer Force after 9/11? What can this demographic information tell us about America in a time of war, especially when the burden of fighting is shouldered by so few?
- Why do factors such as when and where a service member served dramatically affect the kinds of experiences he or she would have?
- What is a “Fobbit” and how was his/her experience different from that of an infantryman? Why does the author judge this distinction important to include in this chapter?
- How did the “unconventional” nature of these wars shape service members’ experiences?
- What are IEDs and why were they so effective in Iraq and Afghanistan?
- What are some ways that combat in Afghanistan differed from that in Iraq?
- How has the Internet and social media changed service members’ experiences in wartime?

Fighting (Against) the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

By David Farber

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- In David Farber's analysis, how did the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan contribute to the election of Barack Obama as president?
- Contrast world opinion on the United States' decision to invade Afghanistan with response to its decision to invade Iraq. What about the opinions of the American people? Did global public opinion influence American public opinion?
- The debate over the Iraq War divided conservatives and liberals within their respective parties. Examine, for example, the statements of Democratic senators Robert Byrd and John Kerry on the eve of the Iraq War. How did each man invoke the specter of Saddam Hussein? Whose statements were more in line with the mainstream of his party?
- Why, according to Farber, did public protests and demonstrations against the war quickly taper off once the invasion began?
- Why was the Iraq War initially so popular among the American people? Why did that support quickly decline?
- What broad need did internet blogging sites fulfill for many people on the progressive left? What effect did this internet activism have on individual Democratic candidates? On Democratic Party fundraising? On American politics in general?
- How did opposition to the war in Iraq unify Democrats after their loss in the 2004 presidential election? How did opposition to the war in Iraq affect the 2006 congressional elections?
- Evaluate President Obama's record as an antiwar candidate and his later record as Commander-in-Chief. Which campaign promises did he keep, which did he break, and to what effects?
- Many Americans viewed the Iraq War through the historical lens of the Vietnam War. How does David Farber draw on parallels to that earlier conflict to explain the politics of Iraq?
- On matters of war and national security, should the United States government listen to the opinions of the American people? What about the opinions of the rest of the world's population? Why or why not?

Limited War in the Age of Total Media

By Sam Lebovic

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Sam Lebovic argues that, in the information age, the media has failed to produce an informed public. He offers both “supply-side” and “demand-side” explanations for this failure. What do those terms mean? Do you find one explanation or the other more compelling?
- From where do news journalists collect most of their information? What are some major problems with such practices? What do such practices suggest about the “objectivity” of news reporting?
- What is the “indexing” theory of news coverage? How does this theory apply to the Vietnam War? To the Iraq War?
- Lebovic argues that government and military officials commanded an outsized voice in the media before and during the Iraq War. What impact did this have on the range of debate over the decision to invade? Should officials be interviewed simply because of their positions?
- Describe the practice of “embedding” reporters into combat units. How, according to Lebovic, did this practice affect the way the wars were reported at home? Do you think that the government should be able to control journalists’ movements in war zones or censor the content of their reporting?
- What happened in Firdos Square in Baghdad on April 9, 2003? How did the U.S. media report this event? What effect did that coverage have on subsequent war reporting?
- Based on your own knowledge and experience, do you agree with Lebovic’s argument that the prevalence of violence in the media desensitizes the viewing public?
- Where do you get your news and information about the United States and the world? Do you think your choices of media outlets affect your perceptions of current events? If so, how?
- Can journalists be objective in a time of war? Should they be?

*“Watching War Made Us Immune”:
The Popular Culture of the Wars*

By Andrew C. McKeivitt

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How did popular culture contribute to blurring the lines between fact and fiction in the American public’s understanding of the broader Global War on Terror (GWOT)?
- According to Andrew McKeivitt, why was the GWOT so well suited to the fantasy genre in films, television, video games, and books?
- Why did more realistic portrayals of the wars in film do so poorly at the box office? Why was *The Hurt Locker* so successful when other Iraq War films were not?
- What lessons from Vietnam War films does McKeivitt draw on to explain the lack of enthusiasm for Iraq War films?
- Why, according to the author, did the Dixie Chicks receive so much ridicule and scorn for their antiwar views when other country singers, such as Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard—who both openly criticized the war—received relatively little?
- How were Americans asked to show their patriotism and their support for the GWOT after 9/11?
- According to McKeivitt, how has popular culture reflected, or perhaps encouraged, Americans’ ambivalence toward the use of torture? Do you think popular culture has such powerful effects on its viewers?
- What does McKeivitt mean when he writes, “Video games taught the millennial generation a new visual rhetoric of war?”
- At a time when less than 1% of the population serves in the military, why in your judgment are so many millennials drawn to hyper-realistic combat video games? Conversely, what effect did these games have on those veterans who saw combat?

Veterans' Readjustments after the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars

By David Kieran

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What do you think of David Kieran's repeated claim that many of the problems facing Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans can be attributed to poor planning in the early years of the wars? What evidence does the author provide for this statement?
- What are some of the major problems facing the Veterans' Administration system? What has been the response from Congress? From veterans' organizations?
- Where, geographically, do most service members come from? How does this fact pose problems for returning veterans seeking care and assistance?
- What are some historical reasons that veterans have been denied benefits and various forms of care following their service?
- Describe the shortcomings of the Montgomery GI Bill. How did the Post-9/11 GI Bill rectify some of them?
- What hurdles do returning veterans face in pursuing higher education?
- David Kieran describes many problems veterans and their families face after deployments. What are some of the everyday adjustment issues they confront within the home?
- What institutional and cultural barriers stand in the way of identifying and treating instances of Military Sexual Trauma (MST)?
- In terms of casualties, how are the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan different from past wars? What implications does that difference have for the nation? For the Veterans Administration? For these men and women and for their families?
- In an era when the United States relies on a volunteer military to fight its wars, what does the nation owe its veterans for their service?
- Given the enormous burden placed upon the families of veterans, what, if anything, do you think Americans as a society owe to the families of service members?

The Lessons and Legacies of the War in Iraq

By Robert K. Brigham

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How did the Bush administration's beliefs about American values, ideals, and political systems lead them down the path to war in Iraq?
- Was the U.S. justified in invading Iraq?
- Robert K. Brigham argues that one of the the greatest lessons of the War in Iraq is that there is often "no political corollary to America's overwhelming power." What does he mean by "political corollary" in the context of this argument? Does he support his claim? Are you persuaded?
- To what extent did problems within Iraqi domestic politics and the Coalition Provisional Authority complicate the U.S. nation-building process in Iraq?
- How did domestic U.S. politics affect and change U.S. politicians' stances on the war in Iraq? To what extent do you think domestic politics should influence a war which the U.S. is conducting?
- What responsibilities does Brigham attribute to the Iraqi government regarding counterinsurgency on the one hand, and nation-building on the other? How does Brigham evaluate the actions of the Iraqi government? Do you agree with his assessment? Should the United States have played more (or less) of a role in nation-building in Iraq?
- Who is Muqtada al-Sadr, what was his response to changes in the Iraqi environment following the US surge, and why does Brigham argue that the U.S. drew the "wrong lesson" from that response?
- In what ways did the U.S. War in Iraq affect various segments of Iraqi society differently?
- The intense fighting in Iraq has produced a serious refugee problem. How effectively have the Iraqi government and the international community reacted to this humanitarian crisis? In your opinion, who should respond, and who should be held responsible?
- The introduction to this volume asked you to consider if American values were universal, and whether it was in the best interest of the United States to export them to other states and societies. After reading Brigham's chapter, do you think that U.S. efforts to introduce its values in Iraq were justified? Did it serve the American national interest? How has your thinking evolved since reading the introduction?

The Lessons and Legacies of the War in Afghanistan

By Aaron B. O'Connell

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What were the U.S. goals in waging war in Afghanistan? Where did they succeed, and where did they fail?
- Do you agree with O'Connell's assertion that the United States and its partners lost focus early in the war in Afghanistan and never recovered? How did the War in Iraq affect the U.S. mission in Afghanistan?
- In what ways was the war that Barack Obama inherited in 2009 different from the war that began in 2001?
- What resources did the United States invest and what costs did it bear in Afghanistan? In terms of financial costs, how much does O'Connell estimate the final dollar amount will be for the war once all of the indirect costs are paid?
- What effect has the war in Afghanistan had on al Qaeda?
- Does O'Connell think that the daily lives of the Afghan people are better or worse today than when the war began in 2001?
- Historically, what are the three sources of governing legitimacy in Afghanistan? How has that reality disadvantaged the United States?
- O'Connell points out that the United States wasn't the first nation to go to war in Afghanistan. What are the three reasons that he posits for Americans' disregard of the lessons of history in Afghanistan? Using what you learned from this book, which of these lessons do you think best explains the history that unfolded there?
- Thinking back to the framing questions that the editors pose in the Introduction to this book, especially those fundamental questions about America's behavior on the global stage, assess O'Connell's argument that Americans assumed that their own values were universal truths, and that this belief contributed to the outcomes in Afghanistan.
- O'Connell argues "that the American efforts were at best a wildly inefficient partial success and at worst a failure." Having read the essays in this book, would you emphasize the "at best" or the "at worst"? Why?