

BUY THESE BOOKS OR ORDER AT LIBRARY

"I have in the past made inquiries/requests at the Public Library re some progressive books, and I believe they have ordered some from my suggestions. It might be a good idea if others did the same--with more requests, they're more likely to order. Coralie"

For an informed peace, justice, and ecology movement.

AFRICA

French, Howard. *A Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa*. Knopf, 2004. On post-1994 villains in Rwanda, Mali, Congo, Liberia, Nigeria. Blames U.S. as the real enemy, esp. in Rwanda. Rev. NYTimes (4-25, 2004) 25.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Cockburn, Alexander, and Jeffrey St. Clair, eds. *The Politics of Anti-Semitism*. AK Press, 2004. Essays by Edward Said, Robert Fisk, et al.

APOCALYPSE, ARMAGEDDON

LaHaye, Tim, and Jerry Jenkins. *Glorious Appearing*. The latest in the best-selling Christian "Left Behind" series. The authors claim the books appeal to "God hunger." Some critics find the series "glorifies violence and war."

BUSH AND IRAQ (see: Middle East, Imperialism, Iraq)

Woodward, Bob. *Plan of Attack* (see reviews below)

Ungar, Craig. *House of Bush, House of Saud* (see review below)

Singer, Peter. *The President of Good and Evil: The Ethics of George W. Bush*. Dutton, 2004. A preeminent philosopher of animals' moral rights turns to the president: "Bush's views are not intellectually defensible, and his behavior shows he doesn't believe in them anyway." Rev. in NYTimes Book Review (4-25-04) 17.

Prados, John. *Hoodwinked: The Documents That Reveal How Bush Sold Us a War*. New P, 2004. Key documents compiled and annotated.

CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALIST RIGHT WING

Blaker, Kimberly, ed. *The Fundamentals of Extremism: The Christian Right in America*.

New Boston Books, 2003. Rev. Skeptic 10.4 2004. Warns of the danger of the US slipping into a fundamentalist mode like Islamic fundamentalism.

CHURCH- STATE SEPARATION

DeFattore, Joan. *The Fourth R: Conflicts Over Religion in America's Public Schools*. Yale UP, 2004. On prayers and Bible reading. Rev. N. Y. Times Education Life section (April 25, 2004).

CONSUMERISM

Dawson, Michael. *The Consumer Trap: Big Business Marketing in American Life*. U Illinois P, 2003. Rev. Monthly Review (Feb. 2004): "the source of the disease, big business and its marketing apparatus" (see: the film *Affluenza*).

Linn, Susan. *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*. New P, 2004. The \$15 billion marketing maelstrom aimed at our children and how we can stop it.

CORPORATIONS

Hightower, Jim. *Thieves in High Places: They've Stolen Our Country and It's Time to Take It Back*. Viking, 2003. Rev. Z Magazine (May 2004). The "corporate highjacking of our country."

DOGMATISM (Musical CD)

"Beware of Dogma," CD produced by Dan Barker with 16 songs. Freedom From Religion Foundation, 2004. Includes Mark Twain's classic "War Prayer" set to music, Irving Berlin's "Pack Up Your Sins and Go to the Devil," "YBSA," about Boy Scout discrimination.

ECOLOGY (see: Endangered Plants)

Gillard, Spring. *Diary of a Compost Hotline Operator: Edible Essays on City Farming*. Tales from the trenches of the urban horticulture avant-garde, it deals with all manner of gardening lore -- such as: The essentials of composting, Alternatives to pesticides, Organic and edible landscapes, Garden tours and compost teas, Green building and drug-free lawns, Rainwater harvesting. Scroll down a bit when visiting <http://www.simpleliving.org/catalog/Food.html>

ECONOMICS

Kotlikoff, Laurence, and Scott Burns. *The Coming Generational Storm: What You Need to Know About America's Economic Future*. MIT P, 2004. Bush's tax cuts, etc.

ENDANGERED PLANTS

Souza, D. M. ???

(Ages 10-12) Hundreds of species of plants around the world are threatened or endangered. This book explores the role these disappearing plants play in our ecosystems and what we can do to save them. Full color. 65 pp. \$9. EP  
<http://www.simpleliving.org/catalog/Children2.html#EndangeredPlants>  
Or scroll down a bit when visiting  
<http://www.simpleliving.org/catalog/Children2.html>

ENVIRONMENT AND LABOR MOVEMENT

Obach, Brian. *Labor and the Environmental Movement: The Quest for Common Ground*. MIT P, 2004.

FUNDAMENTALISM (see: Christian)

HEALTH CARE

Gordon, Colin. *Dead on Arrival: The Politics of Health Care in Twentieth Century America*. Princeton UP, 2003. Rev. Z Magazine (May 2004)

HUMAN VALUE: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence.

Oliver, Mary. *Why I Wake Early: New Poems*. Beacon, 2004.

Peterson, Paula. *Women in the Grove: Stories*. Beacon, 2004

IMPERIALISM (see: Middle East)

Landau, Saul. *The Pre-Emptive Empire: A Guide to Bush's Kingdom*. Pluto, 2004. Rev. Monthly Rev. (Feb. 2004).

Kolko, Gabriel. *Another Century of War?* New P, 2002.

INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM (see: Moyers)

McChesney, Robert, and Ben Scott, eds. *Our Unfree Press: 100 Years of Radical Media Criticism*. New P, 2004. Words of irreverent journalists and wake-up call to the kept press.

IRAQ: BUSH'S EARLY PLAN TO ATTACK (see reviews below; see Bush above)

LABOR AND ENVIRONMENT (see: Environment)

LEFT VIEWS

Barsamian, David, interviewer. *Louder Than Bombs: Interview from "The Progressive" Magazine*. South End, 2004.

MIDDLE EAST AND USA

Khalidi, Rahsid. *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East*. Beacon, 2004. US policies ignore the lessons of the past.

## MOYERS

Moyers, Bill. *Moyers on America*. New P, 2004. For informed citizens in a democracy.

POVERTY (see: Working Poor)

POWER (see: World Control)

## PRISONS

Herivel, Tara, and Paul Wright, eds. *Prison Nation: The Warehousing of America's Poor*. Routledge, 2004. Rev. *Monthly Review* (Feb. 2004).

## RACISM

Packard, Jerrrold. *American Nightmare: The History of Jim Crow*. St. Martin's, 2002.

Postma, Johannes. *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. Greenwood, 2003. For high school seniors, junior college students, and general public.

RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS (see Church-State)

SOCIAL JUSTICE (see: Prisons, Working Poor)

SPECIES DESTRUCTION (see: Endangered Plants)

## STALIN

Montefiore, Simon. *The Court of the Red Tsar*. Knopf, 2004. Rev. *Harper's* (May 2004): "a social history of hell."

## WORLD CONTROL

Monbiot, George, *Manifesto for a New World Order*. New P, 2004.

Describes how a handful of men in the richest nations use the global powers they have assumed to make decisions regarding war, peace, debt, development and the balance of trade to tell the rest of the world how to live.

<http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=04/04/30/1441243>

## WORKING POOR

Shipler, David. *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*. Knopf, 2004. Rev. *The Morning News* 5-2: the human beings and "the social forces that trap [them] in a dead end."

## WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Wallach, Lori, and Patrick Woodall. *Whose Trade Organization? A Comprehensive Guide to the WTO*. Case-by-case accounts of WTO's nine-year record, with steps towards a democratic, accountable alternative.

## REVIEWS

### BUSH AND SAUDI ARABIA

Craig Unger, *House of Bush, House of Saud*

The Bushes and Saudi Arabia

By John Freeman

Special to The Denver Post

On Sept. 13, 2001, the U.S. imposed a nationwide no-fly zone, and yet more than 140 individuals were not only exempt from this rule, they also were permitted to leave the country.

Nearly all were Saudi, and roughly two dozen were kin to the man who had

just

orchestrated the Sept. 11 attacks: Osama bin Laden. What kind of

intelligence

failure allowed this to happen? Were these individuals seriously questioned?

Who allowed them to leave? Given that 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi,

what

was the rush in squandering what may have been a potential intelligence

mother

lode?

Craig Unger first reported this story in *Vanity Fair*. In "House of Bush, House of Saud," he places this incredible scenario in the context of a

decades-old relationship between the ruling family of Saudi Arabia and America's pre-eminent political dynasty: the Bush family. In a year when the president will campaign as tough on terror and homeland security, Unger's book makes essential reading. Not only does it pose disturbing questions about Saudi involvement in 9/11, but it also presents a frighteningly believable case that the Bush administration's cozy relationship with the royal house of Saud precipitated this catastrophe.

To begin, Unger takes us back to the late 1950s and early 1960s, when George H. W. Bush was an oilman in Texas whose early success included drilling the first offshore well for a tiny Middle Eastern country called Kuwait. Bush got out of oil in 1966 to get in politics, and wound up head of the CIA just as Saudi businessmen close to the royal family, including the head of Saudi Arabia's most corrupt bank, began investing in Bush's home state. They bought up real estate and purchased planes. They bought a bank in Houston with former Texas governor John Connolly. They developed a skyscraper known as Texas Commerce Tower, which housed Texas Commerce Bancshares, the bank started by the grandfather of James A. Baker, Bush's right-hand man.

What emerges from Unger's narrative is a portrait of how under Bush senior's watch, the U.S. developed a way of doing business with the world's worst thugs that was duplicated, and transplanted to other regions with staggering naiveté. Our allegiance with the Saudis had proved so convenient that it was again used to prop up the mujahadeen in Afghanistan, who were fighting the Soviet army. Saudis matched our support dollar for dollar, and a scion of the family closest to the Saudis was sent over to fight and to build roads: Osama bin Laden.

Saudi Arabia, a country built upon a schism between its fabulously wealthy royal family and the generally poor Wahhabi populace, gained extraordinary credibility by supporting bin Laden. The Saudis helped set up and fund Muslim charities, which in turn supported Bin Laden. They funded madrasa schools that taught militant extremism and then failed to provide jobs for the students when they graduated. The U.S., happy with its ability to make covert war with the Saudis and keep oil prices down, looked the other way at such impoverished conditions. The mujahadeen, however, never turned their backs to the U.S. As early as 1983, a CIA deputy was sent to Peshawar, Pakistan, to find out if they were selling weapons rather than using them in battle. A tribal chief responded quite frankly: "Yes," he said, "we are. We do sell your weapons. We are doing it for the day when your country decides to abandon us, just as you abandoned Vietnam and everyone else you deal with."

The real payoff began when Bush senior left office and began working for the Carlyle Group, an access capitalism investment firm that used its contacts in government to buy defense contractors on the cheap, secure lucrative contracts, including enormous ones in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and then sell them at a high profit. In addition to Bush, the Carlyle group once had George W. Bush on its board, and counted among advisers Baker and Frank Carlucci, who had served during the Reagan administration. It goes without saying that Saudis also invested directly in Carlyle funds.

The Bush administration didn't steer away from Saudis, even though a Saudi was public enemy No. 1. In his 2000 campaign, George W. Bush courted the Arab-American vote by bringing up the need to stop the use of secret evidence in detaining Arab-Americans, as well as racial profiling at airports. The result was positive for Bush. According to one exit poll Unger cites, 91 percent of Muslims in Florida voted for Bush. Or, to put it this way, 55,000 Arab-Americans

voted for Bush in that state alone. Bush's margin of victory, remember, was just some 500 votes. As Unger puts it: "Without the mobilization of the Saudi-funded Islamic groups, George W. Bush would not be president today." Unger avails himself of recent publications to fill in a story that is as disturbing as it is urgent. In June 2001, the American embassy announced a Visa Express program, which allowed Saudis to get a visa to the U.S. without actually appearing at the consulate in person. This disastrous policy allowed some of the 9/11 hijackers to enter the country, Unger says. One month before the hijacking, as news of an imminent attack traveled even up to the White House, George Bush took the longest presidential vacation in 32 years - a month-long retreat to his Crawford ranch. The Bush administration was not just soft on terrorism pre 9/11, "House of Bush, House of Saud" makes clear; it was asleep. So what was the Bush administration focusing on at this time? It was busy repairing a Saudi-American split over some comments President Bush had made criticizing the proposal to create a Palestinian state. Bush immediately reversed his position, but his reward was short-lived. It seems likely that "House of Bush, House of Saud" will be labeled conspiracy theory, but Unger's research is too cautious, too elemental to support that claim. Most of his footnotes refer to articles in The New York Times, The New Yorker and other esteemed publications. Not surprisingly, former President Bush and Baker declined interviews. Still, what Unger has done here is synthesize these scattered reports into a narrative that is as chilling as it is gripping. The book builds a momentum of discovery that makes this book impossible to stop reading. Will the American people carry these concerns into the election? Only time will tell. To borrow a line from Billy Crystal's Oscar-night hosting, one thing is for sure. Craig Unger better be preparing for his tax audit.

John Freeman is a writer in New York.  
REVIEWS of PLAN OF ATTACK by Bob Woodward.

Review No. 1  
BUSH/PNAC EARLY FANATIC PLAN TO INVADE IRAQ

Updated: 11:40 AM EDT  
Bush Secretly Ordered Iraq War Plan, Book Says  
War Plan on Iraq Drawn Up Soon After U.S. Forces Entered Afghanistan  
By CALVIN WOODWARD and SIOBHAN McDONOUGH, AP  
AP President Bush announces attacks on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in October 2001.  
WASHINGTON (April 16) -- President Bush secretly ordered a war plan drawn up against Iraq less than two months after U.S. forces attacked Afghanistan and was so worried the decision would cause a furor he did not tell everyone on his national security team, says a new book on his Iraq policy.

Bush feared that if news got out about the Iraq plan as U.S. forces were fighting another conflict, people would think he was too eager for war, journalist Bob Woodward writes in "Plan of Attack," a behind-the-scenes account of the 16 months leading to the Iraq invasion.

The Associated Press obtained a copy of the book, which will be available in book stores next week.

"I knew what would happen if people thought we were developing a potential war plan for Iraq," Bush is quoted as telling Woodward. "It was such a high-stakes moment and ... it would look like that I was anxious to go to war. And I'm not anxious to go to war."

"I knew what would happen if people thought we were developing a potential war plan for Iraq."  
-President Bush, as quoted in "Plan of Attack"

Bush and his aides have denied accusations they were preoccupied with Iraq at the cost of paying attention to the al-Qaida terrorist threat before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. A commission investigating the attacks just concluded several weeks of extraordinary public testimony from high-ranking government officials. One of them, former counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke, charged the Bush administration's determination to invade Iraq undermined the war on terror.

Woodward's account fleshes out the degree to which some members of the administration, particularly Vice President Dick Cheney, were focused on Saddam Hussein from the onset of Bush's presidency and even after the terrorist attacks made the destruction of al-Qaida the top priority.

Woodward says Bush pulled Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld aside Nov. 21, 2001 - when U.S. forces and allies were in control of about half of Afghanistan - and asked him what kind of war plan he had on Iraq. When Rumsfeld said it was outdated, Bush told him to get started on a fresh one.

The book says Bush told Rumsfeld to keep quiet about it and when the defense secretary asked to bring CIA Director George Tenet into the planning at some point, the president said not to do so yet.

Even Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, was apparently not fully briefed. Woodward said Bush told her that morning he was having Rumsfeld work on Iraq but did not give details.

In an interview two years later, Bush told Woodward that if the news had leaked, it would have caused "enormous international angst and domestic speculation."

The Bush administration's drive toward war with Iraq raised an international furor anyway, alienating long-time allies who did not believe the White House had made a sufficient case against Saddam. Saddam was toppled a year ago and taken into custody last December. But the central figure of al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden, remains at large and a threat to the west.

The book says Gen. Tommy Franks, who was in charge of the Afghan war as head of Central Command, uttered a string of obscenities when the Pentagon told him to come up with an Iraq war plan in the midst of fighting another conflict.

Woodward, a Washington Post journalist who wrote an earlier book on Bush's anti-terrorism campaign and broke the Watergate scandal with Carl Bernstein, says Cheney's well-known hawkish attitudes on Iraq were frequently decisive in Bush's decision-making.

Cheney pressed the outgoing Clinton administration to brief Bush on the Iraq threat before he took office, Woodward writes.

In August 2002, when Bush talked publicly of being a patient man who would weigh Iraqi options carefully, the vice president took the administration's Iraq policy on a harder track in a speech declaring the weapons inspections ineffective. Cheney's speech was viewed as the beginning of a campaign to undermine or overthrow Saddam. Woodward said Bush let Cheney make the speech without asking what he would say.

The vice president also figured prominently in a protracted decision March 19, 2003, to strike Iraq before a 48-hour ultimatum for Saddam Hussein to leave the country had expired.

When the CIA and its Iraqi sources reported that Saddam's sons and other family members were at a small palace, and Saddam was on his way to join them, Bush's top advisers debated whether to strike ahead of plan.

Franks was against it, saying it was unfair to move before a deadline announced to the other side, the book says. Rumsfeld and Rice favored the early strike, and Secretary of State Colin Powell leaned that way.

But Bush did not make his decision until he had cleared everyone out of the Oval Office except the vice president. "I think we ought to go for it," Cheney is quoted as saying. Bush did.

U.S. forces unleashed bombs and cruise missiles, blanketing the compound but

missing the palace. Tenet called the White House before dawn to say the Iraqi leader had been killed. But his optimism was premature. Saddam was alive.

The 468-page book is published by Simon & Schuster. Woodward will be interviewed on CBS' "60 Minutes" Sunday night to promote the book.

## 2nd Review of Plan of Attack

April 19, 2004

BOOKS OF THE TIMES | 'PLAN OF ATTACK'

A Heady Mix of Pride and Prejudice Led to War

By MICHIKO KAKUTANI

In his engrossing new book, "Plan of Attack," Bob Woodward uses myriad details to chart the Bush administration's march to war against Iraq. His often harrowing narrative not only illuminates the fateful interplay of personality and policy among administration hawks and doves, but it also underscores the role that fuzzy intelligence, Pentagon timetables and aggressive ideas about military and foreign policy had in creating momentum for war. The chief of staff, Andrew H. Card Jr., describes the White House as trying to perform a circus trick of straddling two horses, the horse of war and the horse of diplomacy. It is a task, this book shows, that the White House did with difficulty and at times a good deal of disingenuousness, with the war rapidly outpacing the horse of diplomacy. It is also a White House committed to the "vision thing" in a big way (promoting risky, sweeping ideas like exporting democracy and pre-emptive war) and the avoidance of any perception of wimpiness, a White House in many ways determined to avoid accusations once hurled at the president's father.

"Plan of Attack" reveals that President George W. Bush asked Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld on Nov. 21, 2001, to start a war plan for Iraq, and to do so in secret because a leak could trigger "enormous international angst and domestic speculation." Among the first to express angst was Gen. Tommy Franks, who got the Iraq assignment while he was busy prosecuting the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The book also reveals that the director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, told President Bush in December 2002 that intelligence about Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction was "a slam dunk," but later told associates that he and the C.I.A. should have stated up front in that fall's National Intelligence Estimate and other reports that the evidence was not ironclad, that there was no smoking gun.

In addition "Plan of Attack" ratifies assertions made in two recent controversial books. It corroborates the observation made by the former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill (in Ron Suskind's book "The Price of Loyalty") that Iraq was high on the Bush administration's agenda before 9/11, in fact from its very first days in office. And echoing accusations made by the former counterterrorism czar Richard A. Clarke (in his book "Against All Enemies"), it contends that prior to 9/11 Mr. Bush was focusing on domestic issues and a large tax cut and had "largely ignored the terrorism problem."

In the wake of Mr. Woodward's best-selling 2002 book "Bush at War" - which presented a laudatory portrait of Mr. Bush as a fearless and determined leader after 9/11 - the president agreed to be interviewed in depth by the author about how and why he decided to go to war against Iraq. Mr. Woodward, an assistant managing editor of The Washington Post, says the president also made it clear that he wanted administration members to talk with him, and that he interviewed more than 75 key players.

Thanks to this wide access, "Plan of Attack" has a more choral-like narrative than many of the author's earlier books, which tended to spin scenes from the point of view of his most voluble sources. And while Mr. Woodward -

who has

long specialized in forward-leaning narratives that are long on details and scoops, and short on analysis - does not delve into the intellectual and political roots of the war cabinet, he does pause every now and then to put his subjects' actions and statements into perspective. The resulting volume is

his most powerful and persuasive book in years.

In reporting that General Franks said in September 2002 that his people had been "looking for Scud missiles and other weapons of mass destruction for 10

years and haven't found any yet," Mr. Woodward adds: "It could, and should, have been a warning that if the intelligence was not good enough to make bombing

decisions, it probably was not good enough to make the broad assertion, in public or in formal intelligence documents, that there was 'no doubt' Saddam

had WMD." Vice President Dick Cheney had done exactly that just days before.

Later Mr. Woodward observes that Secretary of State Colin Powell warned the president in January 2003 that military action against Iraq would leave the United States responsible for rebuilding the country and dealing with whatever global fallout the invasion might cause, but adds that the president never

asked his top diplomat for advice, and that Mr. Powell never volunteered any.

"Perhaps the president feared the answer," Mr. Woodward writes. "Perhaps Powell feared giving it. It would, after all, have been an opportunity to say he

disagreed. But they had not gotten to that core question, and Powell would not push."

In contrast Mr. Woodward describes Mr. Cheney as having been a "powerful, steamrolling force" for military intervention, "a rock," in President Bush's

words, who was "steadfast and steady in his view that Saddam was a threat to

America and we had to deal with him." The "self-appointed special examiner of worst-case scenarios," Mr. Cheney, who had been defense secretary during the

first gulf war in 1991, harbored "a deep sense of unfinished business about Iraq,"

Mr. Woodward writes, and in January 2001, before the inauguration, he passed

a message to the outgoing defense secretary, William S. Cohen, stipulating that Topic A in Mr. Bush's foreign policy briefing should be Iraq.

During the buildup to war, this book contends, tensions between Mr. Powell and Mr. Cheney grew so toxic that the two men "could not, and did not, have a sit-down lunch or any discussion about their differences." Mr. Powell is described as thinking that the vice president had an unhealthy fixation on Saddam Hussein and was constantly straining to draw (unproven) connections between

Al Qaeda and Iraq. As Mr. Woodward puts it: "Powell thought that Cheney took

intelligence and converted uncertainty and ambiguity into fact."

As for Mr. Cheney, he reportedly complains to hawkish friends - at a dinner party he and his wife gave on April 13, 2003, to celebrate the Marines' arrival in Baghdad - that Mr. Powell "always had major reservations about what we

were trying to do." He and his friends are described as chuckling about the secretary of state, whom Mr. Cheney characterizes as someone interested in his own poll ratings and popularity.

President Bush, the object of so much jockeying for position among cabinet members, emerges from this book as a more ambiguous figure than the commanding leader portrayed by Mr. Woodward in "Bush at War." In some scenes he is

depicted as genuinely decisive (as in his choice to go to United Nations in 2002). In others he seems merely childish (eyeing Gen. Henry Shelton's peppermint

during a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, until the general passed it

over.) Sometimes Mr. Bush comes across as instinctive and shrewd (dismissing a

C.I.A. presentation on weapons of mass destruction as "not something that Joe Public would understand or would gain a lot of confidence from").

Sometimes

he sounds petulant and defensive (saying of Mr. Powell, "I didn't need his

permission" to go to war). And sometimes he simply seems like someone trying to live up to the "Persona" outlined by his political adviser Karl Rove in a campaign brief: a "Strong Leader" with a penchant for "Bold Action" and "Big Ideas." Mr. Bush and the people around him - most notably Mr Rove, Mr. Cheney, Mr. Rumsfeld, the national security adviser Condoleezza Rice and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz - are constantly talking about the importance of showing resolve, of standing firm, of talking the talk and walking the walk. And as plans for war advance, this posture becomes part of the momentum toward war. As Mr. Bush himself says of the weeks leading up to the war: "I began to be concerned at the blowback coming out of America: 'Bush won't act. The leader that we thought was strong and straightforward and clear-headed has now got himself in a position where he can't act.' And it wasn't on the left. It was on the right" Adding to the war momentum was the growing buildup of troops in the Iraq theater, the approach of hot weather in the gulf (which would make military operations more difficult), promises made to allies like Saudi Arabia (Prince Bandar, Mr. Woodward reveals, was told of the president's decision to go to war before Colin Powell was) and risky C.I.A. operations in the region. In the final walkup to war, Mr. Bush repeatedly asks associates: "What's my last decision point?" "When have I finally made a commitment?" Mr. Rumsfeld eventually tells the president, "The penalty for our country and for our relationships and potentially the lives of some people are at risk if you have to make a decision not to go forward." By January 2003, this book reports, Mr. Bush had made up his mind to take military action, but the book also suggests that that decision was far from inevitable, given the many vagaries of intelligence findings, domestic and international politics, and the personalities and maneuverings of the people closest to the president.