

And I think we could have done the same thing with Iraq. I don't know that, I am no prophet, I can't tell you this would have worked; but I do know that we didn't try it. I think we could have said to Saddam Hussein by whatever diplomatic channel we chose to use, that in return for his evacuation of Kuwait we would agree to mediate his dispute with Kuwait, and if perhaps he didn't trust us, we would toss in the Secretary-General of the United Nations or the Secretary-General of the Arab League. But there was an ongoing and legitimate and serious and understandable diplomatic dispute going on between Kuwait and Iraq and it deserved to be solved, not by invasion and absorption, but by diplomacy. Bush, it seems to me, had this available if what he wanted to do was to avoid war.

There probably was another available course and that was to promise that in return for the evacuation of Kuwait we would get on with negotiations in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This was also rejected on the grounds that it would be a concession, but it was not really a concession because we have been saying this is our policy for twenty years and it didn't make much difference except as a matter of timing to announce that we were going into this new and more energetic effort to get negotiations going. Both of these would have been a way for Saddam to make certain claims of victory, certain claims of saving face, but we were determined that this was not admissible. The President made clear that it was important for him to humiliate Saddam Hussein. He also made clear that it was important to him to drive the man out of office. He wanted to destroy Saddam's war-making potential. He wanted to make sure that the United States emerged from all of this as the uncontested political power in the Gulf.

Well, I'm not sure that he humiliated Saddam Hussein. I spent much of the spring in Baghdad and the guy is still riding high. We certainly know that he didn't get him out of office. As far as his war-making potential is concerned, he's not a threat for the moment to much of the region, but we certainly have to acknowledge, and perhaps we know it only retrospectively, that Saddam only had his third-rate army and he was not in much of a position to become our rival in the Gulf no matter what.

Iran was on its heels, the Soviet Union for all practical purposes was no longer an element in the region, there was only Iraq. Perhaps we over-reacted, but we certainly