Rumsfeld's View

I have admired Rumsfeld. He seemed intelligently clear in his press briefings and was able to use humor appropriately. Yet many in the military were scathingly critical of him and pushed for his resignation. He was deemed to squelch criticism and dissent, and ignore basic principles of war in spite of warnings. It was my curiosity to understand this disconnect that made me anxious to read his memoir *Known and Unknown*.

I realize that such a publication shows the writer's viewpoint and many will deem it a whitewash before even reading it. Churchill was quoted "History will be kind to me for I intend to write it." Rumsfeld mused over many of his own mistakes, but was direct in addressing shortcomings in the handling of the Iraq war.

At the center of the problem was friction between the State Department under Colin Powell and Rumsfeld's Department of Defense(DoD). When Paul Bremer was appointed as CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority- Rumsfeld thoughtfully included a list of acronyms at the end) in Iraq after the initial military campaign ended, he was supposed to be under the DoD, yet he communicated more directly with Rice and felt he had direct access to the president without going through his immediate supervisor which on paper was Rumsfeld. He issued articles in the WSJ and made numerous statements without clearance from Rumsfeld, and often in opposition to the policies as Rumsfeld understood them. When Rumsfeld pushed to have him report to state rather than DoD he was rebuffed.

The military felt less inclined or qualified to build institutions, schools and other sorts of infrastructure that distracted from the intense focus required of combat operations. General Franks and others felt other departments

would handle this better.

Rumsfeld felt that Condoleeza Rice's background in academics with very little practical government experience was a handicap. Rumsfeld, in contrast, had experience in government going back to the sixties. He was the youngest Secretary of Defense under Ford and the oldest under W. Rice felt the need to bridge differences rather than highlight them. Her intense loyalty to the president may have shielded him from debates and points that Rumsfeld felt he should have heard.

And there were repeated instances of major intelligence failures; beyond just the missing WMDs. The infrastructure in Iraq, for example, was in much worse shape that they expected.

Yet Rumsfeld did not doubt or question the capability or commitment of any of his colleagues. Bush had secured some very experienced and capable department heads, but Bush ultimately had to manage them and coordinate their missions and address their disagreements. It appears that too many critical differences were left to linger and take care of themselves.

Harmful leaks to the press were not addressed. And the press itself just got so much plainly wrong; many of these misinformed stories had serious consequences. Foremost was the story about the abuse of the Koran by flushing it down the toilet at Guantanamo. The source recanted his story, but not until Time Magazine made it the focus of the demonization of the prison facility.

Rumsfeld memoir is extraordinarily well documented. It would serve as an excellent case study in executive management, and it does an excellent job of documenting the complexities of the administration. For those who are trying to get an accurate picture of the facts and problems we encountered in the Iraq misadventure, beyond the mindless demonization of

the media and pundits, you may not find all the answers in this volume; but you will find Rumsfeld’s front line perspective to be an essential piece.