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memo is just the latest evidence that shows that invading Iraq was inevitable for Bush. All the talk about this war being a last resort was a lie. The seemingly genuine concern for the mission of the United Nations was a fabrication. The buildup to the war was an elaborately choreographed charade.

Congress could have stopped him but didn't. In 2002, then-Congressman John Baldacci and First District Rep. Tom Allen voted against the Iraq resolution. U.S. Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins voted to allow Bush to start the war without having to come back to Congress. In March 2003, Snowe repeated Bush's line about "being in the final phase of diplomacy." Collins was also quoted as saying, "I still believe that we should pursue diplomatic measures until the final hour."

I wonder if Snowe and Collins still believe that Bush was genuinely interested in a diplomatic solution.

A recent poll by the Washington Post and ABC News suggests that a lot of Americans have reservations about Iraq: 58 percent

believe the war was not worth fighting and 65 percent believe we have gotten bogged down. The tragic consequences of the war are crystal-clear.

Bush's attempted manipulation of the U.N. Security Council has fueled distrust of our government, making us less able to lead on the world stage.

Bush's "spinning" of intelligence information has confirmed the worst suspicions of cynics about our government: in particular, that everything in Washington is "political."

Almost 1,700 American soldiers are dead, including nine Mainers.

The financial cost of this war is so great that Washington simply cannot afford to spend more money on any other problems. The federal government spends \$4.1 billion a month on Iraq. Our aggregate spending stands at \$204 billion.

According to the National Priorities Project, the Iraq war has cost Maine \$589.4 million. The war has cost Lewiston alone \$12.9 million.

It should be noted that Snowe and Collins have played positive roles in pushing recent intelligence reform in Washington. However worthy these efforts were, they missed the major

point. The fundamental problem was how the Bush administration misused the intelligence.

Last weekend, Snowe spoke to the graduating seniors of Edward Little High School in Auburn. She said that challenges can be answered "the old-fashioned way — with cooperation, compromise, consensus and collaboration. It embraces reasoned thinking. It respects divergent views and ends with leadership." She is absolutely right. It's too bad that Bush did not adopt those principles when he implemented his Iraq policy.

Our whole political system is about accountability. President Bush is fundamentally wrong when he implied that the last presidential election "settled" the issue of the Iraq. If that were true, then the "end" (Bush winning the election) justifies the "means" (using deception to bolster the case for war). That doesn't sound like the America I know.

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