24. The War in Iraq

This chapter focuses on the Iraq war of 2003–11 and the troubles in the Middle East. George W. Bush’s advisers, led by Dick Cheney and Don Rumsfeld, had been considering an attack on Iraq well before 9/11. At the same time, many experts within the government pointed to the lack of any evidence for Iraqi-sponsored terrorism directed against the United States. The threats to US national security were outlined to Bush in a briefing just prior to his inauguration; these threats came primarily from al-Qaeda’s terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The chapter first considers the US decision to invade Iraq, before discussing the war, taking into account the US’s Operation Iraqi Freedom and the war’s costs to the US and to Iraq. It also examines the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and concludes with an assessment of the ‘Arab Spring’. 