Rationale for the Iraq War

The rationale for the Iraq War (i.e. the 2003 invasion of Iraq and subsequent hostilities) has been a contentious issue since the Bush administration began actively pressing for military intervention in Iraq in late 2001. The primary rationalization for the Iraq War was articulated by a joint resolution of the U.S. Congress known as the Iraq Resolution.

The U.S. stated that the intent was to remove "a regime that developed and used weapons of mass destruction, that harbored and supported terrorists, committed outrageous human rights abuses, and defied the just demands of the United Nations and the world". Additional reasons have been suggested: "to change the Middle East so as to deny support for militant Islam by pressuring or transforming the nations and transnational systems that support it." For the invasion of Iraq the rationale was "the United States relied on the authority of UN Security Council Resolutions 678 and 687 to use all necessary means to compel Iraq to comply with its international obligations".

In the lead-up to the invasion, the U.S. and UK emphasized the argument that Saddam Hussein was developing "weapons of mass destruction" and thus presented a threat to his neighbors, to the U.S., and to the world community. The U.S. stated "on November 8, 2002, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1441. All fifteen members of the Security Council agreed to give Iraq a final opportunity to comply with its obligations and disarm or face the serious consequences of failing to disarm. The resolution strengthened the mandate of the UN Monitoring and Verification Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), giving them authority to go anywhere, at any time and talk to anyone in order to verify Iraq's disarmament. Throughout late 2001, 2002, and early 2003, the Bush Administration worked to build a case for invading Iraq, culminating in then Secretary of State Colin Powell's February 2003 address to the Security Council. Shortly after the invasion, the Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, and other intelligence agencies largely discredited evidence related to Iraqi weapons as well as links to Al-Qaeda, and at this point the Bush and Blair Administrations began to shift to secondary rationales for the war, such as the Hussein government's human rights record and promoting democracy in Iraq. Opinion polls showed that the population of nearly all countries opposed a war without UN mandate, and that the view of the United States as a danger to world peace had significantly increased. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan described the war as illegal, saying in a September 2004
interview that it was "not in conformity with the Security Council."

Accusations of faulty evidence and alleged shifting rationales became the focal point for critics of the war, who charge that the Bush Administration purposely fabricated evidence to justify an invasion it long planned to launch. [10] Supporters of the war claim that the threat from Iraq and Saddam Hussein was real and that this has later been established. The U.S. led the effort for "the redirection of former Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) scientists, technicians and engineers to civilian employment and discourage emigration of this community from Iraq." [11]

Other critics have noted that the Iraq War has several similarities with the Korean War and Vietnam War. [12]

The United States officially declared its combat role in Iraq over on August 31, 2010, although several thousand troops remained in the country until all American troops were withdrawn from Iraq by December 2011; between that time American troops also engaged in combat with Iraqi insurgents.

**Background**

The 1991 Gulf War never fully ended, as there was no armistice formally ending the war. As a result relations between the United States, the United Nations, and Iraq remained strained, although Saddam Hussein issued formal statements renouncing his invasion of Kuwait and made reparations payments for Kuwait. The U.S. and the United Nations maintained a policy of "containment" towards Iraq, which involved economic sanctions, Iraqi no-fly zones enforced by the United States, the United Kingdom and France, and ongoing inspections of Iraqi weapons programs. In 2002, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441 demanding that Iraq "comply with its disarmament obligations" and allow weapons inspections. Iraq war critics such as former weapons inspector Scott Ritter claimed that these sanctions and weapons inspections policies, supported by both the Bush and Clinton administrations, were actually intended to foster regime change in Iraq. [13]

U.S. policy shifted in 1998 when the United States Congress passed and President Bill Clinton signed the "Iraq Liberation Act" after Iraq terminated its cooperation with U.N. weapons inspectors the preceding August. The act made it official U.S. policy to "support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power..." although it also made clear that "nothing in this Act shall be construed to authorize or otherwise speak to the use of United States Armed Forces." [14] This legislation contrasted with the terms set out in United Nations Security Council Resolution 687, which made no mention of regime change.

One month after the passage of the "Iraq Liberation Act," the U.S. and UK launched a bombardment campaign of Iraq called Operation Desert Fox. The campaign’s express rationale was to hamper the Hussein government’s ability to produce chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, but U.S. national security personnel also reportedly hoped it would help weaken Hussein’s grip on power. [15]

The Republican Party’s campaign platform in the 2000 election called for "full implementation" of the Iraq Liberation Act and removal of Saddam Hussein; and key Bush advisers, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and Rumsfeld’s Deputy Paul Wolfowitz, were longstanding advocates of invading Iraq, and contributed to a September 2000 report from the Project for the New American Century that argued for using an invasion of Iraq as a means for the U.S. to "play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security..." [16] After leaving the administration, former Bush treasury secretary Paul O'Neill said that "contingency planning" for an attack on Iraq was planned since the inauguration and that the first National Security Council meeting involved discussion of an invasion. Retired Army Gen. Hugh Shelton, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he saw nothing to indicate the United States was close to attacking Iraq early in Bush’s term.

Despite key Bush advisers' stated interest in invading Iraq, little formal movement towards an invasion occurred until the September 11, 2001 attacks. According to aides who were with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in the National Military Command Center on September 11, Rumsfeld asked for: "best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit Saddam Hussein at same time. Not only Osama bin Laden." The notes also quote him as saying, "Go
massive", and "Sweep it all up. Things related and not."

In the days immediately following 9/11, the Bush Administration national security team actively debated an invasion of Iraq. A memo written by Sec. Rumsfeld dated Nov 27, 2001 considers a US-Iraq war. One section of the memo questions "How start?", listing multiple possible justifications for a US-Iraq War. That administration opted instead to limit the initial military response to Afghanistan. In January 2002, President Bush began laying the public groundwork for an invasion of Iraq, calling Iraq a member of the Axis of Evil and saying that "The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons." Over the next year, the Bush Administration began pushing for international support for an invasion of Iraq, a campaign that culminated in Secretary of State Colin Powell's February 5, 2003 presentation to the United Nations Security Council. After failing to gain U.N. support for an additional UN authorization, the U.S., together with the UK and small contingents from Australia, Poland, and Denmark, launched an invasion on March 20, 2003 under the authority of UN Security Council Resolutions 660 and 678.

Iraq War Resolution

The October, 2002, U.S. congress Iraq War Resolution cited many factors to justify the use of military force against Iraq:

- Iraq's noncompliance with the conditions of the 1991 ceasefire agreement, including interference with U.N. weapons inspectors.
- Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction, and programs to develop such weapons, posed a "threat to the national security of the United States and international peace and security in the Persian Gulf region."
- Iraq's "brutal repression of its civilian population."
- Iraq's "capability and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction against other nations and its own people".
- Iraq's hostility towards the United States as demonstrated by the 1993 assassination attempt on former President George H. W. Bush and firing on coalition aircraft enforcing the no-fly zones following the 1991 Gulf War.
- Members of Al-Qaeda, an organization bearing responsibility for attacks on the United States, its citizens, and interests, including the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, are known to be in Iraq.
- Iraq's "continuing to aid and harbor other international terrorist organizations," including anti-United States terrorist organizations.
- Iraq paid bounty to families of suicide bombers.
- The efforts by the Congress and the President to fight terrorists, including the September 11th, 2001 terrorists and those who aided or harbored them.
- The authorization by the Constitution and the Congress for the President to fight anti-United States terrorism.
- The governments in Turkey, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia feared Saddam and wanted him removed from power.
- Citing the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, the resolution reiterated that it should be the policy of the United States to remove the Saddam Hussein regime and promote a democratic replacement.

The Resolution required President Bush's diplomatic efforts at the U.N. Security Council to "obtain prompt and decisive action by the Security Council to ensure that Iraq abandons its strategy of delay, evasion, and noncompliance and promptly and strictly complies with all relevant Security Council resolutions." It authorized the United States to use military force to "defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat
posed by Iraq; and enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions regarding Iraq.”

**Weapons of mass destruction**

Throughout the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, George Bush and Tony Blair were explicit that they were concerned about a "single question" from the chief UN weapons inspector: Has the Iraqi regime fully and unconditionally disarmed, as required by Resolution 1441, or has it not? The U.S. government based their allegations that Iraq was developing Weapons of Mass Destruction, including nuclear weapons, upon documents that the CIA and others believed were unreliable.

George Bush, speaking in October 2002, said that "The stated policy of the United States is regime change… However, if [Hussein] were to meet all the conditions of the United Nations, the conditions that I have described very clearly in terms that everybody can understand, that in itself will signal the regime has changed.” Similarly, in September 2002, Tony Blair stated, in an answer to a parliamentary question, that "Regime change in Iraq would be a wonderful thing. That is not the purpose of our action; our purpose is to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction…” In November of that year, Tony Blair further stated that "So far as our objective, it is disarmament, not regime change - that is our objective. Now I happen to believe the regime of Saddam is a very brutal and repressive regime, I think it does enormous damage to the Iraqi people... so I have got no doubt Saddam is very bad for Iraq, but on the other hand I have got no doubt either that the purpose of our challenge from the United Nations is disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, it is not regime change.” At a press conference on January 31, 2003, George Bush stated: “Saddam Hussein must understand that if he does not disarm, for the sake of peace, we, along with others, will go disarm Saddam Hussein.” As late as February 25, 2003, Tony Blair said to the House of Commons: "I detest his regime. But even now he can save it by complying with the UN’s demand. Even now, we are prepared to go the extra step to achieve disarmament peacefully."

As Secretary of State Powell summarized in his February 5, 2003 presentation to the U.N. Security Council, "the facts and Iraq's behavior show that Saddam Hussein and his regime are concealing their efforts to produce more weapons of mass destruction."[22] On April 10, 2003, White House press secretary Ari Fleischer reiterated that, "But make no mistake -- as I said earlier -- we have high confidence that they have weapons of mass destruction. That is what this war was about and it is about. And we have high confidence it will be found.” Despite the Bush Administration's consistent assertion that Iraqi weapons programs justified an invasion, former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz later cast doubt on the Administration's conviction behind this rationale by saying in a May 2003 interview: "For bureaucratic reasons, we settled on one issue - weapons of mass destruction - because it was the one reason everyone could agree on."

After the invasion, despite an exhaustive search led by the Iraq Survey Group involving a more than 1,400 member team, no evidence of Iraqi weapons programs was found. On the contrary, the investigation concluded that Iraq had destroyed all major stockpiles of WMDs and ceased production in 1991 when sanctions were imposed.[23] The failure to find evidence of Iraqi weapons programs following the invasion led to considerable controversy in the United States and worldwide, including claims by critics of the war that the Bush and Blair Administrations
deliberately manipulated and misused intelligence to push for an invasion.

**U.N. inspections before the invasion**

Between 1991 and 1998, the United Nations Security Council tasked the United Nations Special Commission on Disarmament (UNSCOM) with finding and destroying Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. In 1996, UNSCOM discovered evidence of continued biological weapons research and supervised destruction of the Al Hakam biological weapons production site—allegedly converted to a chicken feed plant, but retaining its barbed wire fences and antiaircraft defenses. In 1998, Scott Ritter, leader of a UNSCOM inspection team, found gaps in the prisoner records of Abu Ghraib when investigating allegations that prisoners had been used to test Anthrax weapons. Asked to explain the missing documents, the Iraqi government charged that Ritter was working for the CIA and refused to cooperate further with UNSCOM.

On August 26, 1998, approximately two months before the U.S. ordered United Nations inspectors withdrawn from Iraq, Scott Ritter resigned from his position rather than participate in what he called the "illusion of arms control." In his resignation letter to Ambassador Butler, Ritter wrote: "The sad truth is that Iraq today is not disarmed... UNSCOM has good reason to believe that there are significant numbers of proscribed weapons and related components and the means to manufacture such weapons unaccounted for in Iraq today ... Iraq has lied to the Special Commission and the world since day one concerning the true scope and nature of its proscribed programs and weapons systems." On September 7, 1998, in testimony to the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committee, Scott Ritter was asked by John McCain (R, AZ) whether UNSCOM had intelligence suggesting that Iraq had assembled the components for three nuclear weapons and all that it lacked was the fissile material. Ritter replied: "The Special Commission has intelligence information, which suggests that components necessary for three nuclear weapons exists, lacking the fissile material. Yes, sir."

On November 8, 2002, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1441, giving Iraq "a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations" including unrestricted inspections by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Saddam Hussein accepted the resolution on November 13 and inspectors returned to Iraq under the direction of UNMOVIC chairman Hans Blix and IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei. Between that time and the time of the invasion, the IAEA "found no evidence or plausible indication of the revival of a nuclear weapons programme in Iraq"; the IAEA concluded that certain items which could have been used in nuclear enrichment centrifuges, such as aluminum tubes, were in fact intended for other uses. UNMOVIC "did not find evidence of the continuation or resumption of programmes of weapons of mass destruction" or significant quantities of proscribed items. UNMOVIC did supervise the destruction of a small number of empty chemical rocket warheads, 50 liters of mustard gas that had been declared by Iraq and sealed by UNSCOM in 1998, and laboratory quantities of a mustard gas precursor, along with about 50 Al-Samoud missiles of a design that Iraq claimed did not exceed the permitted 150 km range, but which had travelled up to 183 km in tests. Shortly before the invasion, UNMOVIC stated that it would take "months" to verify Iraqi compliance with resolution 1441.

**Formal search after the invasion**

After the invasion, the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), headed by American David Kay, was tasked with searching for WMD. The survey ultimately concluded that Iraqi production of WMD ceased and all major stockpiles were destroyed in 1991 when economic sanctions were imposed, but that the expertise to restart production once sanctions were lifted was preserved. The group also concluded that Iraq continued developing long range missiles proscribed by the U.N. until just before the 2003 invasion.

In an interim report on October 3, 2003, Kay reported that the group had "not yet found stocks of weapons", but had discovered "dozens of WMD-related program activities" including clandestine laboratories "suitable for continuing CBW [chemical and biological warfare] research", a prison laboratory complex "possibly used in human testing of
BW agents", a vial of live C. botulinum Okra B bacteria kept in one scientist's home, small parts and twelve-year-old documents "that would have been useful in resuming uranium enrichment", partially declared UAVs and undeclared fuel for Scud missiles with ranges beyond the 150 km U.N. limits, "$[p]lans and advanced design work for new long-range missiles with ranges up to at least 1000 km", attempts to acquire long range missile technology from North Korea, and document destruction in headquarters buildings in Baghdad. None of the WMD programs involved active production; they instead appeared to be targeted at retaining the expertise needed to resume work once sanctions were dropped. Iraqi personnel involved with much of this work indicated they had orders to conceal it from U.N. weapons inspectors.

After Charles Duelfer took over from Kay in January 2004, Kay said at a Senate hearing that "we were almost all wrong" about Iraq having stockpiles of WMD, but that the other ISG findings made Iraq potentially "more dangerous" than was thought before the war.\(^{27}\) In an interview, Kay said that "a lot" of the former Iraqi government's WMD program had been moved to Syria shortly before the 2003 invasion, albeit not including large stockpiles of weapons.

On September 30, 2004, The ISG, under Charles Duelfer, issued a comprehensive report. The report stated that "Iraq's WMD capability ... was essentially destroyed in 1991" and that Saddam Hussein subsequently focused on ending the sanctions and "preserving the capability to reconstitute his weapons of mass destruction (WMD) when sanctions were lifted". No evidence was found for continued active production of WMD subsequent to the imposition of sanctions in 1991, though "[b]y 2000-2001, Saddam had managed to mitigate many of the effects of sanctions".

The report concluded in its Key Findings that: "Saddam [Hussein] so dominated the Iraqi Regime that its strategic intent was his alone... The former Regime had no formal written strategy or plan for the revival of WMD after sanctions. Neither was there an identifiable group of WMD policy makers or planners separate from Saddam. Instead, his lieutenants understood WMD revival was his goal from their long association with Saddam and his infrequent, but firm, verbal comments and directions to them." The report also noted that "Iran was the pre-eminent motivator of [Iraq's WMD revival] policy... The wish to balance Israel and acquire status and influence in the Arab world were also considerations, but secondary." A March 2005 addendum to the report stated that "[B]ased on the evidence available at present, ISG judged that it was unlikely that an official transfer of WMD material from Iraq to Syria took place. However, ISG was unable to rule out unofficial movement of limited WMD-related materials."

On January 12, 2005, U.S. military forces abandoned the formal search. Transcripts from high level meetings within Saddam Hussein's government before the invasion are consistent with the ISG conclusion that he destroyed his stockpiles of WMD but maintained the expertise to restart production.

**Discovery of degraded chemical weapons**

During the post-invasion search for WMD, U.S. and Polish forces located some decayed chemical weapons that dated to the Iran-Iraq war. These discoveries led former senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) and representative Peter Hoekstra (R-MI) to claim that the U.S. had indeed found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

These assertions were directly contradicted by weapons experts David Kay, the original director of the Iraq Survey Group, and his successor Charles Duelfer. Both Kay and Duelfer made clear that the chemical weapons found were not the "weapons of mass destruction" that the U.S. was looking for and that their discovery did not suggest a broader chemical weapons stockpile or an ongoing weapons program under Saddam Hussein. Kay added that experts on Iraq's chemical weapons are in "almost 100 percent agreement" that sarin nerve agent produced in the 1980s would no longer be dangerous and that the chemical weapons found were "less toxic than most things that Americans have under their kitchen sink at this point". In reply, Hoekstra said "I am 100 percent sure if David Kay had the opportunity to look at the reports.. he would agree.. these things are lethal and deadly." Discussing the findings on NPR's *Talk of the Nation*, Charles Duelfer described such residual chemical munitions as hazardous but not deadly.
What we found, both as UN and later when I was with the Iraq Survey Group, is that some of these rounds would have highly degraded agent, but it is still dangerous. You know, it can be a local hazard. If an insurgent got it and wanted to create a local hazard, it could be exploded. When I was running the ISG – the Iraq Survey Group – we had a couple of them that had been turned in to these IEDs, the improvised explosive devices. But they are local hazards. They are not a major, you know, weapon of mass destruction.[28]

The degraded chemical weapons were first discovered in May 2004, when a binary sarin nerve gas shell was used in an improvised explosive device (roadside bomb) in Iraq. The device exploded before it could be disarmed, and two soldiers displayed symptoms of minor sarin exposure. The 155 mm shell was unmarked and rigged as if it were a normal high explosive shell, indicating that the insurgents who placed the device did not know it contained nerve gas. Earlier in the month, a shell containing mustard gas was found abandoned in the median of a road in Baghdad.

In July 2004, Polish troops also found evidence of degraded chemical weapons when they discovered insurgents trying to purchase cyclosarin gas warheads produced during the Iran-Iraq war. In their efforts to thwart insurgents acquiring these weapons, Polish troops purchased two rockets on June 23, 2004. The U.S. military later determined that the two rockets had only trace elements of sarin that were so small and deteriorated as to be virtually harmless and would have "limited to no impact if used by insurgents against coalition forces"[29]

Conclusions

The failure to find stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq caused considerable controversy, particularly in the United States. U.S. President George W. Bush and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Tony Blair defended their decision to go to war, alleging that many nations, even those opposed to war, believed that the Hussein government was actively developing WMDs.

Critics such as Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean charged that the Bush and Blair administrations deliberately falsified evidence to build a case for war.[30] These criticisms were strengthened with the 2005 release of the so-called Downing Street Memo, written in July 2002, in which the former head of British Military Intelligence wrote that "the intelligence and facts were being fixed [by the U.S.] around the policy" of removing Saddam Hussein from power.

While the Downing Street Memo and the yellowcake uranium scandal lend credence to claims that intelligence was manipulated, two bipartisan investigations, one by the Senate Intelligence Committee and the other by a specially appointed Iraq Intelligence Commission chaired by Charles Robb and Laurence Silberman, found no evidence of political pressure applied to intelligence analysts.[31] An independent assessment by the Annenberg Public Policy Center found, however, that Bush Administration officials did misuse intelligence in their public communications. For example, Vice President Dick Cheney's September 2002 statement on Meet the Press that "we do know, with absolute certainty, that he (Saddam) is using his procurement system to acquire the equipment he needs in order to enrich uranium to build a nuclear weapon" was inconsistent with the views of the intelligence community at the time.

A study coauthored by the Center for Public Integrity found that in the two years after September 11, 2001 the president and top administration officials had made 935 false statements, in an orchestrated public relations campaign to galvanize public opinion for the war, and that the press was largely complicit in its uncritical coverage of the reasons adduced for going to war.[32][33] PBS commentator Bill Moyers had made similar points throughout the run up to the Iraq War, and prior to a national press conference on the Iraq War Moyers correctly predicted "at least a dozen times during this press conference he [the President] will invoke 9/11 and Al Qaeda to justify a preemptive attack on a country that has not attacked America. But the White House press corps will ask no hard questions tonight about those claims." Moyers later also denounced the complicity of the press in the administration's campaign for the war, saying that the media "surrendered its independence and skepticism to join with [the U.S.] government in marching to war," and that the administration "needed a compliant press, to pass on their propaganda as news and cheer them on."
Many in the intelligence community expressed sincere regret over the flawed predictions about Iraqi weapons programs. Testifying before Congress in January 2004, David Kay, the original director of the Iraq Survey Group, said unequivocally that "It turns out that we were all wrong, probably in my judgment, and that is most disturbing." He later added in an interview that the intelligence community owed the President an apology.

In the aftermath of the invasion, much attention was also paid to the role of the press in promoting government claims concerning WMD production in Iraq. Between 1998 and 2003, The New York Times and other influential U.S. newspapers published numerous articles about suspected Iraqi rearmament programs with headlines like "Iraqi Work Toward A-Bomb Reported" and "Iraq Suspected of Secret Germ War Effort." It later turned out that many of the sources for these articles were unreliable, and that some were tied to Ahmed Chalabi, an Iraqi exile with close ties to the Bush Administration who was a consistent supporter of an invasion.

Some controversy also exists regarding whether the invasion increased or decreased the potential for nuclear proliferation. For example, hundreds of tons of dual-use high explosives that could be used to detonate fissile material in a nuclear weapon were sealed by the IAEA at the Al Qa'qaa site in January 2003. Immediately before the invasion, UN Inspectors had checked the locked bunker doors, but not the actual contents; the bunkers also had large ventilation shafts that were not sealed. By October, the material was no longer present. The IAEA expressed concerns that the material might have been looted after the invasion, posing a nuclear proliferation threat. The U.S. released satellite photographs from March 17, showing trucks at the site large enough to remove substantial amounts of material before U.S. forces reached the area in April. Ultimately, Major Austin Pearson of Task Force Bullet, a task force charged with securing and destroying Iraqi ammunition after the invasion, stated that the task force had removed about 250 tons of material from the site and had detonated it or used it to detonate other munitions. Similar concerns were raised about other dual use materials, such as high strength aluminum; before the invasion, the U.S. cited them as evidence for an Iraqi nuclear weapons program, while the IAEA was satisfied that they were being used for permitted industrial uses; after the war, the IAEA emphasized the proliferation concern, while the Duelfer report mentioned the material's use as scrap. Possible chemical weapons laboratories have also been found which were built subsequent to the 2003 invasion, apparently by insurgent forces.

On August 2, 2004, President Bush stated "Knowing what I know today we still would have gone on into Iraq.... The decision I made is the right decision. The world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power."

Iraqi links to terrorist organizations

Along with Iraq's alleged development of WMDs, another justification for invasion was the purported link between Saddam Hussein's government and terrorist organizations, in particular Al-Qaeda. In that sense, the Bush Administration cast the Iraq war as part of the broader War on Terrorism. As with the argument that Iraq was developing biological and nuclear weapons, evidence linking Hussein and Al-Qaeda was discredited by multiple U.S. intelligence agencies soon after the invasion of Iraq.

Al-Qaeda

In asserting a link between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, the Bush Administration focused special attention on alleged ties between Hussein and Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who Secretary of State Powell called a "collaborator of Osama bin Laden." Soon after the start of the war, however, evidence of such ties was discredited by multiple U.S. intelligence agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Defense Department's Inspector General's Office. A CIA report in early October 2004 "found no clear evidence of Iraq harboring Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," More broadly, the CIA's Kerr Group summarized in 2004 that despite "a 'purposely aggressive approach' in conducting exhaustive and repetitive searches for such links... [the U.S.] Intelligence Community remained firm in its assessment that no operational or collaborative relationship existed." Despite these findings, U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney has continued to assert that a link existed between Al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which has drawn criticism from members
of the intelligence community and leading Democrats. As of the invasion, Bush's own State Department listed 45 countries, including the United States where Al Qaeda was active. Iraq was not one of them.

The eventual lack of evidence linking the Hussein government and Al Qaeda led many war critics to allege that the Bush Administration purposely fabricated such links to strengthen the case for the invasion. These claims were supported by the July 2005 release of the so-called Downing Street Memo, in which Richard Dearlove (then head of British foreign intelligence service MI6) wrote that "the intelligence and facts were being fixed [by the U.S.] around the policy" of removing Saddam Hussein from power. In addition, in his April 2007 report Acting Inspector General Thomas F. Gimble found that the Defense Department's Office of Special Plans—run by then-Undersecretary of Defense Douglas J. Feith, a close ally of Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—purposely manipulated evidence to strengthen the case for war. The Inspector General's report also highlighted the role of members of the Iraqi National Congress, a group headed by Ahmad Chalabi in providing false intelligence about connections with al-Qaeda to build support for a U.S. invasion.

**Other terrorist organizations**

In making its case for the invasion of Iraq, the Bush Administration also made mention of Saddam Hussein's relationships with terrorist organizations other than al Qaeda. It is reported that Hussein provided financial assistance to the families of Palestinians killed in the conflict— including as much as $25,000 to the families of suicide bombers, some of whom were working with militant organizations in the Middle East such as Hamas.

**Human rights**

Aftermath of Saddam Hussein's Use of chemical weapons at Halabja

The U.S. has cited the United Nations in condemnation of Hussein's human right abuses as one of several reasons for the Iraq invasion.

As evidence supporting U.S. and British claims about Iraqi WMDs weakened, the Bush Administration began to focus more upon the other issues that Congress had articulated within the Iraq Resolution such as human rights violations of the Hussein government as justification for military intervention. That the Hussein government consistently and violently violated the human right of its people is in little doubt. During his more than twenty-year rule, Hussein killed and tortured thousands of Iraqi citizens, including gassing and killing thousands of Kurds in northern Iraq during the mid-1980s, brutally repressing Shia and Kurdish uprisings following the 1991 Gulf War, and a fifteen-year campaign of repression and displacement of the Marsh Arabs in Southern Iraq. In the 2003 State of the Union Address, President Bush mentions Saddam's government practices of obtaining confessions by torturing children while their parents are made to watch, electric shock, burning with hot irons, dripping acid on the skin, mutilation with electric drills, cutting out tongues, and rape. Hussein's brutal human rights record notwithstanding, war critics have severely questioned its use as rationale for military intervention.

Many critics have argued, despite its repeated mention in the Joint Resolution, that human rights was never a principal justification for the war, and that it became prominent only after evidence concerning WMDs and Hussein's links to terrorism became discredited. For example, during a July 29, 2003, hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz spent the majority of his testimony discussing Hussein's human rights record, causing Senator Lincoln Chafee (R-RI) to complain that "in the months leading up to
the war it was a steady drum beat of weapons of mass destruction, weapons of mass destruction, weapons of mass destruction. And, Secretary Wolfowitz, in your almost hour-long testimony here this morning, once -- only once did you mention weapons of mass destruction, and that was an ad lib."[51]

Leading human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International further argued that even had human rights concerns been a central rationale for the invasion, military intervention would not have been justifiable on humanitarian grounds. As Human Rights Watch's Ken Roth wrote in 2004, despite Hussein's horrific human rights record, "the killing in Iraq at the time was not of the exceptional nature that would justify such intervention."[52]

More broadly, war critics have argued that the U.S. supported the Hussein regime during the 1980s, a period of some of his worst human rights abuses, thus casting doubt on the sincerity of claims that military intervention was for humanitarian purposes. Documents from the National Security Archive released in 2003 show that the U.S. provided considerable military and financial support during the Iran-Iraq war with full knowledge that the Hussein government was regularly using chemical weapons on Iranian soldiers and Kurdish insurgents.[53] Following along this line, critics of the use of human rights as a rationale, such as Columbia University Law Professor Michael Dorf, have pointed out that during his first campaign for president Bush was highly critical of using U.S. military might for humanitarian ends.[54] Others have questioned why military intervention for humanitarian reasons was justified in Iraq but not in other countries where human rights violations were even greater, such as Darfur.

**United Nations**

In the end, by Article 1 of the UN Charter, the United Nations has the responsibility: "To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."[55] By UN Charter Article 39, the responsibility for this determination lies with the Security Council although every UN member has the right to bring these human rights issues before the Security Council, none have.

**Ending sanctions**

U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, who called the sanctions "the most intrusive system of arms control in history", cited the breakdown of the sanctions as one rationale for the Iraq war. Accepting a controversial large estimate of casualties due to sanctions, Walter Russell Mead argued on behalf of such a war as a better alternative than continuing the sanctions regime, since "Each year of containment is a new Gulf War." However, economist Michael Spagat "argue[s] that the contention that sanctions had caused the deaths of more than half a million children is [as were WMD claims] very likely to be wrong."

**The Neoconservative Rationale**

Two respected conservatives, Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, argue in their 2004 book, "America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order, that long-standing neoconservative beliefs and the neoconservatives' ascension to power underlie the origins of the Iraq War, but the neoconservatives chose to obscure their rationale for that war.

**Neoconservative Foreign Policy**

The authors describe the neoconservatives as a "political interest group"[59] and do not believe there was any conspiracy. Instead, the authors accuse the neo-conservatives of not openly stating their rationale for the war, understating the scope of what they wanted to accomplish, and minimizing what it would cost to secure Iraq:
The evidence is already at hand that the prime advocates of the Iraq war - notably the neo-conservatives who had been advocating this course since the end of the first Gulf War - did not level with the American people. They offered the image of a "cakewalk," keeping quiet about the true dimensions of their objectives, which involved a vast project for reengineering the political, cultural, economic, and religious face of the Middle East: Iraq at the beginning, with Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia to follow. Instead of putting this case to the American people and seeking their support, they spun a web of deception with a reason "du jour" being offered other than the truth. Wolfowitz would later acknowledge that Iraq's supposed supply of WMD had never been the most compelling case for war: "For bureaucratic reasons we settled on one issue, weapons of mass destruction, because it was the one reason everyone could agree on." \(^{202}\)

Partly based on views that Paul Wolfowitz presented in an interview with the Jerusalem Post, Halper and Clarke interpret the "neoconservative unspoken agenda" in the following way:

The Middle East is a region of great strategic interest to the U.S. The security of Israel is a core commitment of the U.S. and access to Middle East energy resources is a vital strategic interest. Yet the region is highly unstable and successive attempts at intervention by past American administrations have come to nothing. Our friends in Israel tell us that the Palestinian intifada is exacting an insupportable economic and human burden. Our friends in Saudi Arabia tell us that they are sitting on a fundamentalist powder keg. The status quo is not an option. Imaginative new approaches are needed. The unelected governments comprising the Arab League must be persuaded to reform, to embrace democratic pluralism, by force if necessary. The second step will be a reinvigoration of the peace process. \(^{22}\)

In discussing the neoconservatives beliefs the authors interpret the "fatal neo-conservative flaw" as "conceptual overreach and the absence of pragmatism." \(^{22}\).

**Opportunity to Act**

The attack on 9/11 provided the opportunity the neo-conservatives had been waiting for to act on their beliefs:

In the tumultous days following 9/11, the neo-conservatives were ready with a detailed, plausible blueprint for the nation's response. They were not troubled that their plan had been in preparation for over a decade for different reasons, in a different context, and in relation to different countries and, as such, did not in any way represent a direct response to the events themselves. They were motivated only to ensure its adoption. …

Thus, unlike Pearl Harbor in 1941 or the 1948 collapse of British power in the eastern Mediterranean …, the nation was not provided a policy that responded directly to the crisis at hand. Instead, the neo-conservatives succeeded in having their preexisting agenda adopted - one that, as we show below in terms of its terrorism fighting qualities, leaves the nation more dangerously exposed to terrorism and brings numerous deleterious consequences in other fields…Hijack may be a harsh word, but there is no better description for what occurred. \(^{138-139}\)

**Ultimate Rationale**

On page 309, Halper and Clarke address the question, "Why has this proposed policy not been fully detailed by the administration?" :

The answer is found in their suspicion that Americans would be unwilling, if they knew the real agenda, to restructure the Middle East, to spend the hundreds of billions of dollars and countless lives in such an unprecedented undertaking. Leaving aside the fallacy of believing that outsiders can restructure local cultures, the methods chosen to do so have brought, as have seen, little but disapproval and isolation and a region no less combustible than at the neo-conservative point of entry. Were they to reveal their true agenda, not only would it be rejected as fantastic and impossible, but the neo-conservatives would find themselves out of office. \(^{309}\)
Key Players Enabling Action

Finally, the authors argue that neoconservative foreign policy could not have been enacted if key neoconservatives had not been in positions of power and influence at the time of 9/11; these individuals included the following:

Chief of Staff to Vice-President I. Lewis Libby; Special Advisor to the President, Elliott Abrams; Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul D. Wolfowitz; State Department officials John R. Bolton and David Wurmser … Richard Perle and Elliott A. Cohen on the Defense Policy Board; in the academy Yale professor Donald Kagan, Princeton professors Bernard Lewis and Aaron Friedberg, Pepperdine professor James Q. Wilson and others; in the media Weekly Standard editor William Kristol, Washington Post columnist Charles Krauthammer, and most foreign policy editorialists on the Wall Street Journal editorial pages and the Fox News Channel; in business former CIA Director James Woolsey, among others; and in research institutions Max Boot at the Council on Foreign Relations, Norman Pohoretz and Meyrav Wurmser at the Hudson Institute, any member of the Project for the New American Century, and most foreign or defense studies scholars at the American Enterprise Institute....

Vice-President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who would be better described as American nationalists than as neo-conservatives, have found that many of their deeply held beliefs about American exceptionalism and unilateralism parallel neo-conservative thought and have been decisive in their support for the underlying neo-conservative ideological thrust.¹⁴

Oil

Oil not a factor in the Iraq war

Tony Blair stated the theory the Iraq invasion was "somehow to do with oil" was a "conspiracy theory"; "Let me first deal with the conspiracy theory that this is somehow to do with oil...The very reason why we are taking the action that we are taking is nothing to do with oil or any of the other conspiracy theories put forward."

Then Australian Prime Minister John Howard has dismissed on multiple occasions the role of oil in the Iraq Invasion: "We didn't go there because of oil and we don't remain there because of oil." In early 2003 John Howard stated, "No criticism is more outrageous than the claim that United States behaviour is driven by a wish to take control of Iraq's oil reserves."⁵⁶

2008 Republican Presidential Candidate John McCain was forced to clarify his comments suggesting the Iraq war involved U.S. reliance on foreign oil. "My friends, I will have an energy policy that we will be talking about, which will eliminate our dependence on oil from the Middle East that will prevent us from having ever to send our young men and women into conflict again in the Middle East," McCain said. To clarify his comments, McCain explained that "the word 'again' was misconstrued, I want us to remove our dependency on foreign oil for national security reasons, and that's all I mean."⁵⁷

Oil a factor in the Iraq war

Bush's Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill said that Bush's first two National Security Council meetings included a discussion of invading Iraq. He was given briefing materials entitled "Plan for post-Saddam Iraq," which envisioned peacekeeping troops, war crimes tribunals, and divvying up Iraq's oil wealth. A Pentagon document dated March 5, 2001 was titled "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield contracts," and included a map of potential areas for exploration.

In July 2003, the Polish foreign minister, Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz, said, "We have never hidden our desire for Polish oil companies to finally have access to sources of commodities." This remark came after a group of Polish firms had just signed a deal with Kellogg, Brown and Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton. Cimoszewicz stated that access to Iraq's oilfields "is our ultimate objective."⁵⁸
One report by BBC journalist Gregory Palast citing unnamed "insiders" alleged that the U.S. "called for the sell-off of all of Iraq's oil fields" and planned for a coup d'état in Iraq long before September 11. It was also alleged by the BBC's Greg Palast that the "new plan was crafted by neo-conservatives intent on using Iraq's oil to destroy the OPEC cartel through massive increases in production above OPEC quotas", but in reality Iraq oil production decreased following the Iraq War.

Chuck Hagel, the current United States Secretary of Defense, while speaking at the Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law in 2008 defended Greenspan's comments with, "People say we're not fighting for oil. Of course we are." General John Abizaid, CENTCOM commander from 2003 until 2007, said of the Iraq war during a round table discussion at Stanford University in 2008, "Of course it's about oil, we can't really deny that."

Many critics have focused upon administration officials' past relationship with energy sector corporations. Both the President and Vice President were formerly CEOs of oil and oil-related companies such as Arbusto, Harken Energy, Spectrum 7, and Halliburton. Before the 2003 invasion of Iraq and even before the War on Terror, the administration had prompted anxiety over whether the private sector ties of cabinet members (including National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, former director of Chevron, and Commerce Secretary Donald Evans, former head of Tom Brown Inc.) would affect their judgment on energy policy. None of these officials, however, were in a position to benefit from energy policy decisions; all of the relationships had been severed before taking office.

News outlets in mid-2000-2002 carried articles about Saddam's efforts to sell oil on markets exclusively in Euros. This may have been viewed as a push to influence other OPEC states to challenge the reserve currency status in oil trading of the USD. This may have been an unacceptable outcome in the global economy with respect to the flow of petrodollars through the region.

Prior to the war, the CIA saw Iraqi oil production and illicit oil sales as Iraq's key method of financing increasing WMD capability. The CIA's October 2002 unclassified white paper on "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs," states on page 1 under the "Key Judgments, Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs" heading that "Iraq's growing ability to sell oil illicitly increases Baghdad's capabilities to finance WMD programs."

**Private oil business**

Iraq holds the world's second-largest proven oil reserves, with increasing exploration expected to enlarge them beyond 200 billion barrels (3.2×10^10 m^3) of "high-grade crude, extraordinarily cheap to produce." In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Energy, Iraq contains 112 billion barrels (1.78×10^10 m^3) of proven oil reserves, along with roughly 220 billion barrels (3.5×10^10 m^3) of probable and possible resources. For comparison, Saudi Arabia—the largest source of oil in the world—has 260 billion barrels (4.1×10^10 m^3) of proven oil reserves. Organizations such as the Global Policy Forum (GPF) have asserted that Iraq's oil is "the central feature of the political landscape" there, and that as a result of the 2003 invasion, "'friendly' companies expect to gain most of the lucrative oil deals that will be worth hundreds of billions of dollars in profits in the coming decades." According to GPF, U.S. influence over the 2005 Constitution of Iraq has made sure it "contains language that guarantees a major role for foreign companies."

However, those reasons seem very unlikely since Iraq held two oil auctions in June and December 2009. Great beneficiaries were non-American oil companies, notably Chinese and Russian, US main strategic rivals. Besides them, some western European oil companies got contracts, but their countries played minor roles in the invasion compared to the U.S. (Britain, Netherlands, and Italy), or they even opposed it like France. Also, contracts are not lucrative at all for foreign companies if they are compared to contracts in other countries in which oil companies have much bigger share of profit.
Rationale for the Iraq War

Strategic importance of oil

Oil exerts tremendous economic and political influence worldwide, although the line between political and economic influence is not always distinct. The importance of oil to national security is unlike that of any other commodity:

"Modern warfare particularly depends on oil, because virtually all weapons systems rely on oil-based fuel – tanks, trucks, armored vehicles, self-propelled artillery pieces, airplanes, and naval ships. For this reason, the governments and general staffs of powerful nations seek to ensure a steady supply of oil during wartime, to fuel oil-hungry military forces in far-flung operational theaters. Such governments view their companies’ global interests as synonymous with the national interest and they readily support the companies’ efforts to control new production sources, to overwhelm foreign rivals, and to gain the most favorable pipeline routes and other transportation and distribution channels."[74]

Critics of the Iraq War contend that U.S. officials and representatives from the private sector were planning just this kind of mutually supportive relationship as early as 2001, when the James Baker III Institute for Public Policy and the Council on Foreign Relations produced "Strategic Energy Policy: Challenges for the 21st Century," a report describing the long-term threat of energy crises such as blackouts and rising fuel prices then playing havoc with the state of California. The report recommended a comprehensive review of U.S. military, energy, economic, and political policy toward Iraq "with the aim to lowering anti-Americanism in the Middle East and elsewhere, and set the groundwork to eventually ease Iraqi oil-field investment restrictions."[75] The report’s urgent tone stood in contrast to the relatively calm speech Chevron CEO Kenneth T. Derr had given the Commonwealth Club of California two years earlier, before the California electricity crisis, where he said:

"It might surprise you to learn that even though Iraq possesses huge reserves of oil and gas — reserves I’d love Chevron to have access to — I fully agree with the sanctions we have imposed on Iraq."[76]

Oil and foreign relations

Post-Iraq invasion opinion polls conducted in Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, and Turkey showed that the majority in each country tended to "doubt the sincerity of the War on Terrorism," which they characterized instead as "an effort to control Mideast oil and to dominate the world."[77] Although there has been disagreement about where the alleged will to control and dominate originates, skeptics of the War on Terror have pointed early[78] and often[79] to the Project for a New American Century, a neoconservative think tank established in 1997 by William Kristol and Robert Kagan. The organization made plain its position on oil, territory, and the use of force in series of publications, including:

- a 1998 letter to President Bill Clinton:

  "It hardly needs to be added that if Saddam does acquire the capability to deliver weapons of mass destruction, as he is almost certain to do if we continue along the present course, the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel and the moderate Arab states, and a significant portion of the world’s supply of oil will all be put at hazard. [...] The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing."[80]

- a September 2000 report on foreign policy:
"American forces, along with British and French units...represent the long-term commitment of the United States and its major allies to a region of vital importance. Indeed, the United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein."[81]

- a May, 2001 call to "Liberate Iraq":
  "Twice since 1980, Saddam has tried to dominate the Middle East by waging wars against neighbors that could have given him control of the region's oil wealth and the identity of the Arab world."[82]

- a 2004 apologia:
  "His clear and unwavering ambition, an ambition nurtured and acted upon across three decades, was to dominate the Middle East, both economically and militarily, by attempting to acquire the lion's share of the region's oil and by intimidating or destroying anyone who stood in his way. This, too, was a sufficient reason to remove him from power."[83]


**Combating terrorism**

In addition to claiming that the Hussein government had ties to Al-Qaeda, the Bush Administration and other supporters of the war have argued for continued involvement in Iraq as a means to combat terrorism. President Bush consistently referred to the Iraq war as the "central front in the war on terror."[85]

In contrast with this rationale, a few intelligence experts claim that the Iraq war has actually increased terrorism, even though no acts of terrorism have occurred within the US. London's conservative International Institute for Strategic Studies concluded in 2004 that the occupation of Iraq had become "a potent global recruitment pretext" for jihadists and that the invasion "galvanized" al-Qaeda and "perversely inspired insurgent violence" there.[86]

Counter-terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna has called the invasion of Iraq as a "fatal mistake" that has greatly increased terrorism in the Middle East.[87] The U.S. National Intelligence Council concluded in a January 2005 report that the war in Iraq had become a breeding ground for a new generation of terrorists; David B. Low, the national intelligence officer for transnational threats, indicated that the report concluded that the war in Iraq provided terrorists with "a training ground, a recruitment ground, the opportunity for enhancing technical skills.... here is even, under the best scenario, over time, the likelihood that some of the jihadists who are not killed there will, in a sense, go home, wherever home is, and will therefore disperse to various other countries." The Council's Chairman Robert L. Hutchings said, "At the moment, Iraq is a magnet for international terrorist activity." And the 2006 National Intelligence Estimate, which outlined the considered judgment of all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, held that "The Iraq conflict has become the 'cause celebre' for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of US involvement in the Muslim world and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement."[88]

Al-Qaeda leaders have also publicly cited the Iraq war as a boon to their recruiting and operational efforts, providing both evidence to jihadists worldwide that America is at war with Islam, and the training ground for a new generation of jihadists to practice attacks on American forces. In October 2003, Osama bin Laden announced: "Be glad of the good news: America is mired in the swamps of the Tigris and Euphrates. Bush is, through Iraq and its oil, easy prey. Here is he now, thank God, in an embarrassing situation and here is America today being ruined before the eyes of the whole world."[89] Echoing this sentiment, Al-Qaeda commander Seif al-Adl gloated about the war in Iraq, indicating, "The Americans took the bait and fell into our trap."[90]
Atiyah Abd al-Rahman found in Iraq among the rubble where al-Zarqawi was killed and released by the U.S. military in October 2006, indicated that al-Qaeda perceived the war as beneficial to its goals: "The most important thing is that the jihad continues with steadfastness ... indeed, prolonging the war is in our interest."[91]

**Other rationales**

**Bringing democracy to the Middle East**

One of the rationales that the Bush Administration employed periodically during the run-up to the Iraq war is that deposing Saddam Hussein and installing a democratic government in Iraq would promote democracy in other Middle Eastern countries.[92] The United States also proclaims that monarchies Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the military ruled Pakistan are allies of America, despite the human rights abuses and subversion of democracy attributed to them respectively. As Vice President Dick Cheney argued in an August 2002 speech to the annual Veterans of Foreign Wars convention, "When the gravest of threats are eliminated, the freedom-loving peoples of the region will have a chance to promote the values that can bring lasting peace."[93] At a 2003 Veterans Day address, President Bush stated:

"Our mission in Iraq and Afghanistan is clear to our service members -- and clear to our enemies. Our men and women are fighting to secure the freedom of more than 50 million people who recently lived under two of the cruellest dictatorships on earth. Our men and women are fighting to help democracy and peace and justice rise in a troubled and violent region. Our men and women are fighting terrorist enemies thousands of miles away in the heart and center of their power, so that we do not face those enemies in the heart of America."

**Establishing long term Middle East military presence**

U.S. General Jay Garner, who was in charge of planning and administering post-war reconstruction in Iraq, compared the U.S. occupation of Iraq to the Philippine model in a 2004 interview in National Journal: "Look back on the Philippines around the turn of the 20th century: they were a coaling station for the navy, and that allowed us to keep a great presence in the Pacific. That's what Iraq is for the next few decades: our coaling station that gives us great presence in the Middle East", "One of the most important things we can do right now is start getting basing rights with (the Iraqi authorities)", "I hope they're there a long time.... And I think we'll have basing rights in the north and basing rights in the south... we'd want to keep at least a brigade", Garner added.[94] Also, the House report accompanying the emergency spending legislation said the money was "of a magnitude normally associated with permanent bases".[95]

**Divine inspiration**

Nabil Shaath told the BBC that according to minutes of a conference with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, Bush said, "God inspired me to hit al Qaeda, and so I hit it. And I had the inspiration to hit Saddam, and so I hit him." *Haaretz* provided a similar translation of the minutes. When an Arabist at the *Washington Post* translated the same transcript, Bush was said to have indicated that God inspired him to, "end the tyranny in Iraq," instead.[96] In a 2003 interview, Jacques Chirac, President of France at that time, affirmed that President George W. Bush asked him to send troops to Iraq to stop Gog and Magog, the "Bible's satanic agents of the Apocalypse." According to Chirac, the American leader appealed to their "common faith" (Christianity) and told him: "Gog and Magog are at work in the Middle East…. The biblical prophecies are being fulfilled…. This confrontation is willed by God, who wants to use this conflict to erase his people's enemies before a New Age begins."[97][98]
**Purported Iraqi intelligence plots**

David Harrison claims in the *Telegraph* to have found secret documents that purport to show Russian President Vladimir Putin offering the use of assassins to Saddam's Iraqi regime to kill Western targets on November 27, 2000. This story has disappeared from the media since it was first reported in April 2003; the documents themselves have never materialized.

**Alleged Russian involvement**

Romanian intelligence defector Ion Mihai Pacepa alleged that an operation for the removal of chemical weapons was prepared by the Soviet Union for Libya, and that he was told over thirty years ago by Romanian President Nicolae Ceauşescu, KGB chairman Yury Andropov, and later, Yevgeny Primakov, about the existence of a similar plan for Iraq. It is "perfectly obvious", wrote Pacepa, that the Russian GRU agency helped Saddam Hussein to destroy, hide, or transfer his chemical weapons prior to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. "After all, Russia helped Saddam get his hands on them in the first place."[13]

John Loftus, director of The Intelligence Summit, said in the November 16, 2007 issue of FrontPage Magazine that many documents from Iraq point to WMD being transferred to other countries such as Syria: "As stated in more detail in my full report, the British, Ukrainian and American secret services all believed that the Russians had organized a last minute evacuation of CW and BW stockpiles from Baghdad to Syria." His researchers allegedly found a document ordering the concealment of nuclear weapons equipment in storage facilities under the Euphrates River a few weeks before the invasion.[14]

**Syria**

Iraqi general Georges Sada claimed that in late summer 2002, Saddam had ordered all of his stockpiles to be moved to Syria. He appeared on Fox News' Hannity & Colmes in January 2006 to discuss his book, Saddam's Secrets: How an Iraqi General Defied and Survived Saddam Hussein. Anticipating the arrival of weapon inspectors on November 1, Sada said Saddam took advantage of the June 4 Zeyzoun Dam disaster in Syria by forming an "air bridge", loading them onto cargo aircraft and piloting them out of the country.

They were moved by air and by ground, 56 sorties by jumbo, 747, and 27 were moved, after they were converted to cargo aircraft, they were moved to Syria.[15]

In January 2004, Nizar Nayuf, a Syrian journalist who moved to Western Europe, said in a letter to the Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf that he knows the three sites where Iraq's weapons of mass destruction are kept inside Syria. According to Nayuf's witness, described as a senior source inside Syrian military intelligence he had known for two years,[16] Iraq's WMD are in tunnels dug under the town of al-Baida near the city of Hama in northern Syria, in the village of Tal Snan, north of the town of Salamiya, where there is a big Syrian air force camp, and in the city of Sjnjsjar on the Syrian border with the Lebanon, south of Homs city. Nayouf also wrote that the transfer of Iraqi WMD to Syria was organized by the commanders of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Republican Guard, including General Shalish, with the help of Assef Shawkat, Bashar Assad's cousin. Shoakat is the CEO of Baha, an import/export company owned by the Assad family.[17]

October 12, 2002 - Newsmax wrote that CNSNews correspondent Jeff Johnson reported US Senator Spector wanted a probe of the Oklahoma City bombing link to Iraq after receiving 22 sworn affidavits by Oklahoma residents identifying 8 Middle Eastern men, including a former Iraqi Republican Guard (Hussain Al-Hussaini) from former KFOR-TV reporter Jayna Davis. Jayna Davis had theorised on the purported links between Oklahoma City (OKC) bombing and Iraq as well OKC bombing to Al-Qaeda.[101]

Abdul Rahman Yasin, a suspect detained shortly after the 1993 US World Trade Center Bombing attacks, fled upon release into Iraq. Shortly after release, the FBI had discovered evidence linking him to the creation of the bomb. After the invasion, Iraqi government official documents translated from Arabic to English described Saddam's regime provided monthly payments to Yasin while in residing in the United States. Yasin is on the FBI's most
wanted terrorists list, and is still at large.\textsuperscript{102,103}

John Lumpkin, Associated Press Writer, consolidates statements made by Vice President Cheney concerning the 1993 WTC bombing and Iraq. Cheney indicated Saddam's Iraqi government claimed to have FBI Fugitive Yasin, alleged participant in the mixing of the chemicals making the bomb used in the 1993 WTC attack, in an Iraqi prison. During negotiations in the weeks prior the invasion of Iraq, Saddam refused to extradite him.

Fox News claimed that evidence found in Iraq after the invasion was used to stop the attempted assassination of the Pakistani ambassador in New York with a shoulder fired rocket.\textsuperscript{104}

U.S. government officials have claimed that after the invasion, Yemen and Jordan stopped Iraqi terrorist attacks against Western targets in those nations. U.S. intelligence also warned 10 other countries that small groups of Iraqi intelligence agents may be readying similar attacks.

After the Beslan school hostage crisis, public school layouts and crisis plans were retrieved on a disk recovered during an Iraqi raid and had raised concerns in the United States. The information on the disks was "all publicly available on the Internet" and U.S. officials "said it was unclear who downloaded the information and stressed there is no evidence of any specific threats involving the schools."\textsuperscript{105}

**Preemption of terrorist ties**

Promoters of the war often referenced the religion of Islam, which proponents claimed was likely to have produced a future alliance between Iraq and rogue terrorist elements, and claim this was sufficient case for the "preventative or preemptive war," as outlined in the "Just War" clause of the Bush Doctrine. Critics have charged that, in the absence of material reasons, the invasion of Iraq was a mistake, a fraud, or (as claimed by anti-War intellectuals and activists) a "crime of aggression," as defined in the Nuremberg Principles. As of 2006, as many as 76% of the American public has been polled as believing the war to be a "mistake."

**Pressuring Saudi Arabia**

The operations in Iraq came about as a result of the US attempting to put pressure on Saudi Arabia. Much of the funding for Al Qaeda came from sources in Saudi Arabia through channels left over from the Afghan War. The US, wanting to staunch such financial support, pressured the Saudi leadership to cooperate with the West. The Saudis in power, fearing an Islamic backlash if they cooperated with the US which could push them from power, refused. In order to put pressure on Saudi Arabia to cooperate, the invasion of Iraq was conceived. Such an action would demonstrate the power of the US military, put US troops near to Saudi Arabia, and demonstrate that the US did not need Saudi allies to project itself in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{106}

**Criticisms of the rationale for the Iraq war**

Despite these efforts to sway public opinion, the invasion of Iraq was seen by some including Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, Lord Goldsmith, British Attorney General,\textsuperscript{107} and Human Rights Watch\textsuperscript{108} as a violation of international law,\textsuperscript{109} breaking the UN Charter (see Legitimacy of the 2003 invasion of Iraq), especially since the U.S. failed to secure U.N. support for an invasion of Iraq. In 41 countries the majority of the populace did not support an invasion of Iraq without U.N. sanction and half said an invasion should not occur under any circumstances.\textsuperscript{110} In the U.S., 73 percent of Americans supported an invasion. To build international support the United States formed a "Coalition of the Willing" with the United Kingdom, Italy, Australia and several other countries despite a majority of citizens in these countries opposing the invasion. Massive protests of the war have occurred in the U.S. and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{111} At the time of the invasion UNMOVIC inspectors were ordered out by the United Nations. The inspectors requested more time because "disarmament, and at any rate verification, cannot be instant."
Following the invasion, no stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction were found, although about 500 abandoned chemical munitions, mostly degraded, remaining from Iraq's Iran-Iraq war, were collected from around the country. The Kelly Affair highlighted a possible attempt by the British government to cover-up fabrications in British intelligence, the exposure of which would have undermined the Prime Minister's original rationale for involvement in the war. The U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence found no substantial evidence for reputed links between Iraq and al-Qaeda. President George W. Bush has since admitted that "much of the intelligence turned out to be wrong". Although evidence of WMD was searched for by the Iraq Survey Group, their final report of September 2004 stated, "While a small number of old, abandoned chemical munitions have been discovered, ISG judges that Iraq unilaterally destroyed its undeclared chemical weapons stockpile in 1991. There are no credible indications that Baghdad resumed production of chemical munitions thereafter, a policy ISG attributes to Baghdad's desire to see sanctions lifted, or rendered ineffectual, or its fear of force against it should WMD be discovered." In the March 2005 Addendum to the Report, the Special Advisor furthermore went on to state that "ISG assesses that Iraq and Coalition Forces will continue to discover small numbers of degraded chemical weapons, which the former Regime mislaid or improperly destroyed prior to 1991. ISG believes the bulk of these weapons were likely abandoned, forgotten and lost during the Iran-Iraq war because tens of thousands of CW munitions were forward deployed along frequently and rapidly shifting battlefronts." (For comparison, the U.S. Department of Defense itself was famously unable in 1998 to report the whereabouts of "56 airplanes, 32 tanks and 36 Javelin command launch units"). ISG also believed that Saddam did not want to verifiably disarm Iraq of WMD, as required by U.N. resolutions, for fear of looking weak to his enemies.

Claire Short claims that in July 2002, UK government ministers were warned that Britain was committed to participating in a U.S. invasion of Iraq, and a further allegation was that "the decision by Blair's government to participate in the U.S. invasion of Iraq bypassed proper government procedures and ignored opposition to the war from Britain's intelligence quarters." Tony Blair had agreed to back military action to oust Saddam Hussein with an assessment regarding WMD, at a summit at President George W. Bush's Texas ranch. Also present at the meeting were three other British officials - Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) head Sir Richard Dearlove.

In Europe the peace movement was very strong, especially in Germany, where three quarters of the population were opposed to the war. Ten NATO member countries did not join the coalition with the U.S., and their leaders made public statements in opposition to the invasion of Iraq. These leaders included Gerhard Schroeder of Germany, Jacques Chirac of France, Guy Verhofstadt of Belgium, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey. Public perceptions of the U.S. changed dramatically as a consequence of the invasion.

Other possible U.S. objectives, denied by the U.S. government but acknowledged by retired U.S. General Jay Garner, included the establishment of permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq as a way of projecting power (creating a credible threat of U.S. military intervention) to the oil-rich Persian Gulf region and the Middle East generally. In February 2004, Jay Garner, who was in charge of planning and administering post-war reconstruction in Iraq, explained that the U.S. occupation of Iraq was comparable to the Philippine model: "Look back on the Philippines around the turn of the 20th century: they were a coaling station for the navy, and that allowed us to keep a great presence in the Pacific. That's what Iraq is for the next few decades: our coaling station that gives us great presence in the Middle East"; (see also Philippine-American War). Garner was replaced by Paul Bremer after reports came out of his position in SY Coleman, a division of defense contractor L-3 Communications specializing in missile-defense systems. It was believed his role in the company was in contention with his role in Iraq. The House Appropriations Committee said the report accompanying the emergency spending legislation was "of a magnitude normally associated with permanent bases." However, the United States House of Representatives voted in 2006 to not fund any permanent bases in Iraq.
Rationale for the Iraq War

[37] There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq (http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,1321538,00.html)
[42] Global Misinformation Campaign was Used to Build Case for War (http://www.commondreams.org/headlines04/0316-02.htm)
[47] Rumsfeld 'offered help to Saddam' (http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,866942,00.html)
[48] Conflict in Iraq (http://msnbc.msn.com/id/3294143/)
[56] Australia must protect oil supply: Howard (http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2007/s1970312.htm)
[57] McCain Clarifies Comments Suggesting Iraq War Was Fought Over Foreign Oil (http://www.foxnews.com/politics/elections/2008/05/02 mccain-says-100-years-in-iraq-ad-is-direct-falsification/)
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