

**Uncovering the Rationales for the War on Iraq: The Words of the Bush Administration,
Congress, and the Media from September 12, 2001 to October 11, 2002**

by

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Abstract

For the first time, a research project took an in-depth look at the words of the Bush administration, Congress, and the media and mapped out the road to war on Iraq and the rationales for that war. This research examined, over three separate phases of time from September 2001 to October 2002, the words of President Bush, certain Bush administration officials and four Congressional senators, the Congressional Record, and articles from the *New York Times* in order to find out why the U.S. went to war with Iraq. Though not all of the statements for some officials could be found, this project analyzed every statement from President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz (more than 150 remarks and interviews containing the topic “Iraq”) during the months chosen for review.

The results showed that twenty-seven rationales for the war on Iraq were used at one time or another, twenty-three of which can be attributed to the administration. Five rationales were prominent in all three phases: the war on terror, the desire to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the lack of inspections, the desire to remove the Hussein regime, and the fact that Saddam Hussein was an evil dictator. One rationale surfaced initially and gained favor over time: the interest in liberating the people of Iraq. One other rationale emerged later and became very important to official sources and the media: the imminent threat that Iraq posed, though the words “imminent threat” did not appear in official statements of the administration but became the catch-phrase in the media and the public. The other twenty rationales can be classified as secondary and remaining rationales. Thus, the war on Iraq was broad and its rationales encompassed a wide array of topics and concerns, from terrorism to oil, from protecting peace and freedom to finishing unfinished business.

Following the described campaign, the war on Iraq began in March of 2003. President Bush declared the war on Iraq a victory only a couple of months after combat operations commenced. However, troops still fight and die daily in Iraq, more than a year after the initial invasion. No weapons of mass destruction have been found, the imminent threat was not quite so imminent, and the streets of Iraqi cities are violent and chaotic places. Yet, Saddam Hussein no longer despotically rules the nation, and Iraq no longer poses a threat to the world. The question remains, why did we go to war with Iraq? There has been a lot of speculation around this question but few definitive answers, until now. A look back in time reveals how the results of the war line up with the given rationales.

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