

# Why We Are In Iraq

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I love America.

Italy is a beautiful country, but I'm glad my grandparents came here 100 years ago. I truly believe America is one of the best countries the world has ever known. That is why it is so tragic what the policies of this administration have done to the image and reputation of United States of America.

Seventeen months ago, there were demonstrations around the world in support of the United States in the wake of September 11. Thousands of people gathered in hundreds of cities to express their support for the US. There were one million people in the streets of Tehran—in favor of the US. It is appalling how quickly this administration has squandered this support and sympathy for the United States.

You heard previous speakers quote famous authors, such as Thoreau. I would like to quote The Matrix. One of my favorite scenes in the movie, is when Morpheus, played by Laurence Fishburne, is trying to teach Neo, played by Keanu Reeves, not just how to fight Kung-fu, but how to understand that the reality that he sees, feels and touches, is a false reality. It is a computer-generated virtual reality. Morpheus gives Neo a kick that sends him flying, and he wins their first match. He goes over to Neo and asks, "How did I beat you?" Neo replies, "You were faster than me," "Really?" says Morpheus, "Do you think my muscles had anything to do with my speed, here, in this world? Do you think that's air that you're breathing?" Keanu Reeves starts to get it. He gives that puzzled look—the only look he really has—and he starts to understand that the reality he knows is not true.

I am not saying that the people in the White House are evil machines out to take over the world. However, they have constructed a false reality for us, a reality that we have bought into. Maybe not the people in this room, but we as a country. It is a reality where war equals peace. Invasion equals liberation. Military rule equals democracy. And Saddam Hussein equals Osama bin Laden.

Half the people in this country think that Hussein was directly responsible for September 11. There is not a shred of evidence that that is true. But it was a critical part of the campaign to convince us that it was urgent to take action. They had to convince America that Saddam was a terrorist, that Saddam has operational links to al Qaeda. No serious intelligence analyst believes that to be the case, but the President has repeated it over and over. Like "Drink Coca-Cola." Iraq equals al Qaeda. Until now half of the American public believe it to be true. We're thirsty—we reach for a Coke. We want to strike back at al Qaeda, so we strike Iraq. This is a false reality. But only a part of the false reality.

You have heard a great deal of talk of weapons of mass destruction. What you may not realize is that this administration has now overturned fifty years of American policy and strategy on weapons of mass destruction. For fifty years the policy has been to eliminate the nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The belief has been that as long as these weapons exist, someone is going to use them. This is why President Kennedy warned in 1960 that if we did not do something, 15, 20 or 25 countries would have nuclear weapons by the end of that decade. But Kennedy did something. He started negotiating a treaty—the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. He couldn't finish the job, Lyndon Johnson did and Richard Nixon signed the treaty. Democrats and Republicans working together, side by side, with a bi-partisan consensus to eliminated these weapons.

That treaty has worked. There are still too many weapons; there are still too many countries, but instead of 15 or 25 countries, now we have eight. There are fewer nuclear weapons in the world now than there were ten years ago. There are fewer countries with WMD programs than there were ten years ago. We are making progress. This is also why Richard Nixon in 1969, unilateral destroyed all of our biological weapons. *We* had the best biological weapons in the world. We had enough toxins to kill every man, woman and child and most food crops in the world. Nixon decided that this was not in our best national security interest. He negotiated the Biological Weapons Convention—which most countries in the world have now signed—to ban these evil weapons. So that no one would have them, no way, no time, no how.

George H. W. Bush agreed. In 1991 he adopted the strategy that weapons had to be eliminated. He negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention. When I was in the House of Representatives and working on the staff of the Armed Services Committee, we had debates on the late 1980s on an Army plan to build a new chemical weapon—a binary bomb. It would combine two chemicals in flight, forming a poison gas that would kill enemy troops. We had to have it, the Army said. Soldiers would die, if we did not deploy it. It was vital to US national security. But by 1991, George Bush was saying no one should have chemical weapons. We have now begun to destroy our 30,000 tons of chemical weapons. The Russians are destroying their 40,000 tons of chemical weapons. Over 145 countries have signed this treaty, which states that no one should have chemical weapons, nowhere, no how, no time. These are evil weapons and have no place in our world.

That was the strategy, a bipartisan strategy: focus on the proliferation of mass destruction weapons. President George Bush has now changed our strategy. In his recent State of the Union Address he amended the formula. Now, the danger is weapons of mass destruction *in the hands of outlaw regimes*. We have shifted from eliminating *weapons* to eliminating *regimes*. It is a strategy of picking and choosing. It's okay that Israel has 100 nuclear weapons—it's not okay that Iraq has nuclear weapons. Its okay that India has nuclear weapons—it's not okay that North Korea has nuclear weapons. Its okay that we have nuclear weapons—it's not okay that Iran does. It's a strategy of good guys and bad guys, a double standard.

This is a deeply flawed policy; it cannot be sustained. One reason is that the good guys and bad guys keep changing. Saddam Hussein is a monster. Did you hear anyone here support him? Do we have any appeasers here in this room? Did you hear anyone say that Saddam should stay in power? The world will be far better off when Saddam is gone, when his brutal regime passes into history. We all want to see him go.

He's been a monster for 30 years. The reason he stayed in power for so long is because he used to be *our* monster. We put the Baath Party in power. The CIA supported the coup that overthrew the pro-Soviet ruler of Iraq, General Abdel Karim Kassem, and brought the Baathists to power in 1963. Our CIA operatives liked the cut of Saddam's jib. We encouraged his rise when he became vice-president. When he took over as president in 1979, we didn't say a word when he liquidated the core of his own party's leadership. *We* sold him the chemicals that he used to build his chemical weapons. *We* sold him the biological agents that he used to build his biological weapons.

Did he build them? Absolutely. Was it a crime against humanity? Absolutely. Was it a crime that he killed 50,000 Iranians with chemical attacks in the Iran-Iraq War? Yes. Did the Reagan Administration do anything to stop it? No, we did not. We wanted to kill Iranians, and Saddam was doing just that. We sent Donald Rumsfeld to seal the deal in 1983 and again in 1984 (during Iraq's chemical attacks on Iranian troops), to restore relations with Saddam's regime and make sure that Saddam and the US were in close coordination on policy. Did those good relations help us stop him when he gassed 10,000 Kurds in Halabja in 1988? They did not. We did not even try. We had sold him the helicopters he used to spray the poison gas.

*We* kept him in power. Now he has changed, now he's evil and has to go. I believe he has to go. But that is the problem with the good guy/bad guy strategy. Now, we want democracy in Iran. Iran use to have a democracy - *we* over threw it in 1954. We put the Shah of Iran in power. We supported that evil dictatorship and kept him in power. We sold the Shah his first nuclear reactor. When the people in Iran did then what some say they should do now, when they rose up and overthrew the dictatorship, we did not like the results and we have been campaigning against the new Iranian government ever since. Is it an undemocratic government? Yes. Would I like to see us invade Iran next? No. Yet some people in this administration are in favor of invading Iran. That is the next country on their "To Do" list.

The reason there is no exit strategy for Iraq is because some of these guys do not want to leave. Remember the Powell Doctrine? One, use overwhelming force—we may have that. Two, clear political objectives—sorry, do not see that. Three, support of the American people—well, today, maybe, but it has been up and down all year. Fourth and finally, there is no exit strategy. You heard Bobby Mueller talk about this. You need to understand that Iraq is apart of a grander strategy. This is not about WMD, it not about terrorism. It's about seeing that the US, the most powerful nation that the world has every known, uses its power to transform the world.

Some people are advocating this with noble intentions. They want to do good in the world, but they want to do it through the use of military power. They want to start with Iraq, and then they believe that Iraq will let off a “democratic tsunami” in the region. They believe that with US help we can topple the government of Syria, breaking the Syrian grip on Lebanon, eliminating the operating bases for Hamas and Hezbollah, and thus improving the security situation for Israel. In this process we will transform the Palestinian Authority into a democratic organization, giving the Israelis a reliable negotiation partner for a final peace settlement. The reason this president has not spent more than two hours on Middle East peace is that for him the road to Jerusalem goes through Baghdad. We will also deal with our problem in Saudi Arabia by moving the bases from Saudi Arabia to Iraq. We will establish a pro-American regime that can host our troops and consolidate a permanent American presence in the Gulf.

You think that I am making this up?

Go read the 2002 National Security Strategy for the United States, which holds that our defense "will require bases and stations within and beyond Western Europe and Northeast Asia." Or come to Carnegie Non-Proliferation web site ([www.ProliferationNews.org](http://www.ProliferationNews.org)). You can find on our site all the documents arguing for this strategy going back ten years. Read the 2000 report from the neo-conservative Project for the New American Century signed by many current administration officials. The report says, "The U.S. has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in the 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."

When did the planning of this war begin? It began the day President Bush stopped the 1991 war. There were some people in that Administration that never wanted to stop. Paul Wolfowitz sat in the corner in a huff, according to reporters. He never wanted to stop the war. Neo-conservatives thought that we had not finished the job; they wanted us to begin the war again. So they planned and organized. They started with the Wolfowitz draft Defense Policy Guidelines in 1992. There, he talked about establishing the permanent supremacy of US power in the world. No one should be allowed to challenge our power, he wrote. Not regionally, not globally. He advocated adopting a policy of pre-emption. He wrote of being prepared for a war with Iraq—in 1992. When that plan was leaked to the *New York Times*, (thank god for leakers) it was considered so outrageous, so extreme, they were forced to withdraw the draft and rewrite it. “Pre-emption” was replaced with “containment.”

They thought they would get another try with the strategy plans next year, but the American people voted them out of power. Some guy from Arkansas became president, and they were furious. They spent their years in exile well. They learned, studied and organized, and now as a group they have entered the government and have key positions in the State Department and in the Defense Department, and now have a hammerlock on the national security policy apparatus of the US. For them, Iraq is just the beginning. As one of the official said to me “we have a long ‘to do’ list.”

We have failed to stop this war. It is an unnecessary war. Inspections could have worked; they could have done the job. It was not necessary to go to war at this time, in this place with a Potemkin coalition with no international organization behind us. But that does not mean we have failed. This battle is just beginning.

If you're a student, this is a wonderful time to be a student. Before you the most important political experiment of our time is being conducted. Study it, learn from it, organize around it.

And make sure that this never happens again.

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