



# Changing Rationales

*A Timeline of Bush Administration Quotes on Iraq*

Bryan Thomas and Rudy deLeon  
May 2008

## **APRIL 15, 1994—Former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney**

QUESTION: "Do you think that U.S. or UN forces should have moved into Baghdad?"

CHENEY: "No. Because if we'd gone to Baghdad we would have been all alone, there wouldn't have been anyone else with us. It would have been a U.S. occupation of Iraq. None of the Arab forces that were willing to fight with us in Kuwait were willing to invade Iraq. Once you got to Iraq and took it over, took down Saddam Hussein's government, then what are you going to put in its place? That's a very volatile part of the world, and if you take down the central government of Iraq, you can easily end up seeing pieces of Iraq fly off, part of it—the Syrians would like to have to the west, part of eastern Iraq the Iranians would like to claim, they fought over it for eight years. In the north you've got the Kurds, and if the Kurds spin loose and join with the Kurds in Turkey, then you threaten the territorial integrity of Turkey. It's a quagmire if you go that far and try to take over Iraq. The other thing was casualties. Everyone was impressed with the fact we were able to do our job with as few casualties as we had. But for the 146 Americans killed in action, and for their families, it wasn't a cheap war. And the question for the president, in terms of whether or not we went on to Baghdad, took additional casualties in an effort to get Saddam Hussein, was how many additional dead Americans is Saddam worth? And our judgment was, not very many, and I think we got it right."<sup>1</sup>

## **1999—George H. W. Bush, and Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, "A World Transformed"**

FORMER PRESIDENT GEORGE H. W. BUSH: "I firmly believed that we should not march into Baghdad. Our stated mission, as codified in UN resolution, was a simple one—end the aggression, knock Iraq's forces out of Kuwait, and restore Kuwait's leaders. To occupy Iraq would instantly shatter our coalition, turning the whole Arab world against us, and make a broken tyrant into a latter-day Arab hero. It would have taken us way beyond the imprimatur of international law bestowed by the resolutions of the Security Council, assigning young soldiers to a fruitless hunt for a securely entrenched dictator and condemning them to fight in what would be an unwinnable urban guerrilla war. It could only plunge that part of the world into even greater instability and destroy the credibility we were working so hard to reestablish.

FORMER PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH AND LT. GEN. BRENT SCOWCROFT, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR 1989–1993: "Trying to eliminate Saddam, extending the ground war into an occupation of Iraq, would have violated our guideline about not changing objectives in midstream, engaging in 'mission creep,' and would have incurred incalculable human and political costs. Apprehending him was probably impossible ... We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq. The coalition would instantly have collapsed, the Arabs deserting it in anger and other allies pulling out as well. Under the circumstances, there was no viable 'exit strategy' we could see, violating another of our principles ... Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land. It would have been a dramatically different—and perhaps barren—outcome."<sup>2</sup>

# CHANGING RATIONALES

## A Timeline of Bush Administration Quotes on Iraq

WE PROVIDE THIS TIMELINE AND ANTHOLOGY as a reference for debate on the current war in Iraq. After five years of combat and the expenditure of considerable American treasure, particularly the lives of her sons and daughters, it is an important exercise to recount the words and pledges that were offered during the origins of the current conflict.

A grateful American people acknowledge the service and sacrifice of the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States, their spouses, children, and parents. They have served, and are serving with great distinction. To these soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and coast guardsmen, their fellow Americans acknowledge with much appreciation the tremendous burden they have carried.

Looking back at these words, we do not challenge the intent or integrity of those we quote. But the references remind us that no responsibility is greater than the decision to take a country to war. That commitment must be rooted not in easy politics and a promise of a quick mission accomplished, but instead in hard, shared sacrifice and awareness of the path ahead. This is our American challenge as we seek a new direction and an end to the war in Iraq.

The timeline and text is organized in four sections.

- I. Reasons for War
- II. Planning and Execution
- III. Cost of War
- IV. Defining Victory

An expanded version of this timeline can be found at [www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/05/iraq\\_timeline.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/05/iraq_timeline.html).

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Center for American Progress  
May 2008

REASONS FOR WAR

Early Calls for War

DECEMBER 16, 1998  
U.S. and UK forces launch Operation Desert Fox, bombing to destroy nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs in Iraq.

1998 — JANUARY 26, 1998

“... 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, or 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 ... In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power.”<sup>3</sup>

*Neoconservative group sends letter to President Clinton calling for regime change in Iraq. The group included Elliott Abrams, Richard L. Armitage, William J. Bennett, Jeffrey Bergner, John Bolton, Paula Dobriansky, Francis Fukuyama, Robert Kagan, Zalmay Khalilzad, William Kristol, Richard Perle, Peter W. Rodman, Donald Rumsfeld, William Schneider, Jr., Vin Weber, Paul Wolfowitz, R. James Woolsey and Robert B. Zoellick.*

JANUARY 29, 2002

“Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade ... States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

*In a famous and foreshadowing passage, President Bush says Iraq is part of “axis of evil” during State of the Union address.*

Weapons of Mass Destruction, Regime Change, and Liberation

NOVEMBER 8, 2002  
United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 1441 giving Iraq a final opportunity to comply with orders to disarm.

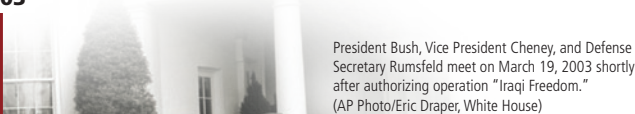
AUGUST 26, 2002

“There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us. And there is no doubt that his aggressive regional ambitions will lead him into future confrontations with his neighbors.”<sup>5</sup>

*Vice President Cheney says Americans will liberate Iraqis and eliminate Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction at Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention.*

FEBRUARY 5, 2003

“There can be no doubt that Saddam Hussein has biological weapons and the capability to rapidly produce more, many more. And he has the ability to dispense these lethal poisons and diseases in ways that can cause massive death and destruction.”<sup>6</sup>



President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld meet on March 19, 2003 shortly after authorizing operation “Iraqi Freedom.” (AP Photo/Eric Draper, White House)

*In major address to the United Nations, Secretary of State Colin Powell lays out the evidence—which he insists is verified through extensive intelligence—of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction programs.*

“The terrified and brutalized people of Iraq will rejoice at the downfall of Saddam Hussein. And when we finally smash his evil regime suddenly those countries that doubt us will have their eyes opened.”<sup>7</sup>

*Pentagon Adviser Richard Perle writes American Enterprise Institute Piece on regime change.*

MARCH 19, 2003  
President Bush launches invasion of Iraq.

MARCH 16, 2003

“We know (Saddam has) been absolutely devoted to trying to acquire nuclear weapons, and we believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons ... Now, I think things have gotten so bad inside Iraq, from the standpoint of the Iraqi people, my belief is we will, in fact, be greeted as liberators.”<sup>8</sup>

*On Meet the Press, Vice President Cheney says Iraq probably has nuclear weapons.*

“We know where (the weapons of mass destruction) are. They’re in the area around Tikrit, and Baghdad, and east, west, south and north somewhat.”<sup>9</sup>

*On ABC’S This Week, Secretary Rumsfeld says the American government is confident in the existence of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and their precise location.*

The WMD Argument Unravels

DECEMBER 14, 2003  
U.S. forces capture Saddam Hussein in Tikrit.

MAY 29, 2003

“We found the weapons of mass destruction. We found biological laboratories.... And we’ll find more weapons as time goes on. But for those who say we haven’t found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they’re wrong, we found them.”<sup>10</sup>

*In Polish TV station interviews, President Bush says the United States has found the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, though the located laboratories were ultimately determined not to be related to weapons of mass destruction.*

JUNE 23, 2003

“I don’t know anybody that I can think of who has contended that the Iraqis had nuclear weapons.”<sup>11</sup>

*At a press conference, Secretary Rumsfeld says no one in the administration ever asserted that Iraq had nuclear weapons, though Vice President Cheney had made such an assertion on March 16.*

JUNE 16, 2004  
Public opinion poll shows that 92% of Iraqis see the coalition forces as occupiers, while only 2% see them as liberators and 3% see them as peacekeepers. Additionally 41% said coalition forces should leave Iraq immediately.

JANUARY 28, 2004

“It turns out that we were all wrong, probably in my judgment, and that is most disturbing.”<sup>13</sup>

*The administration’s expert on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, David Kay, testifies to the Senate Armed Services Committee and admits that there are none to be found.*

JULY 14, 2003

“I think the intelligence I get is darn good intelligence. And the speeches I have given were backed by good intelligence. And I am absolutely convinced today, like I was convinced when I gave the speeches, that Saddam Hussein developed a program of weapons of mass destruction, and that our country made the right decision.”<sup>12</sup>

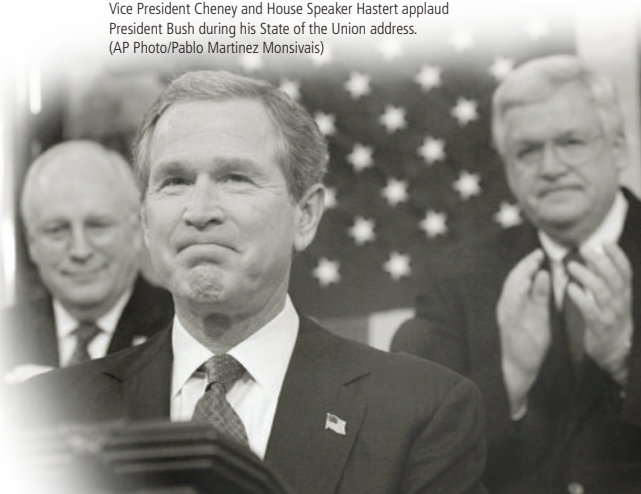
*At a press conference, the President insists that the intelligence on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq had been sound.*

Vice President Cheney and House Speaker Hastert applaud President Bush during his State of the Union address. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

A Shift to Nation Building

“The United States has no right, no desire, and no intention to impose our form of government on anyone else. That is one of the main differences between us and our enemies. They seek to impose and expand an empire of oppression, in which a tiny group of brutal, self-appointed rulers control every aspect of every life. Our aim is to build and preserve a community of free and independent nations, with governments that answer to their citizens, and reflect their own cultures.”<sup>14</sup>

*President Bush says the coalition’s aim is to build “a community of free and independent nations” at the State of the Union.*



JANUARY 12, 2005  
Search for weapons of mass destruction called off.

FEBRUARY 2, 2005

New Mission to Secure Iraq from Terrorists and Expand Nation Building

OCTOBER 23, 2005  
A secret British military poll shows that 67% of Iraqis feel less secure because of the occupation and 82% are strongly opposed to the presence of coalition forces.

OCTOBER 19, 2005

“Our political military strategy has to be clear, hold, and build—to clear areas from insurgent control, to hold them securely, and to build durable national Iraqi institutions.”<sup>15</sup>

*Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice redefines the mission in Iraq.*

NOVEMBER 29, 2005

“Please, let me just stop right there. Anyone who takes those three words and thinks it means the United States should clear and the United States should hold and the United States should build doesn’t understand the situation.”<sup>16</sup>

*At a press conference, Secretary Rumsfeld rebuffs Rice’s statement of mission.*

DECEMBER 30, 2006  
Saddam Hussein executed by hanging.

JANUARY 31, 2006

“Abroad, our nation is committed to an historic, long-term goal—we seek the end of tyranny in our world... Democracies replace resentment with hope, respect the rights of their citizens and their neighbors, and join the fight against terror. Every step toward freedom in the world makes our country safer—so we will act boldly in freedom’s cause.”<sup>17</sup>

*At the State of the Union, President Bush says he will commit the United States to development of democracy abroad.*



PLANNING AND EXECUTION

Pre-War Notions of Iraq and Proper Use of Military

1999

SEPTEMBER 23, 1999

“Conversations I had with leaders in the region afterwards, they all supported the decision that was made not to go to Baghdad. They were concerned that we not get into a position where we shifted, instead of being the leader of an international coalition to roll back Iraqi aggression, to one in which we were an imperialist power willy-nilly moving into capitals in that part of the world taking down governments.”<sup>19</sup>

*On the campaign trail, Vice Presidential candidate Dick Cheney reiterates his justification for not attempting regime change in the Persian Gulf War.*

“The problem comes with open-ended deployments and unclear military missions. In these cases we will ask, ‘What is our goal, can it be met, and when do we leave?’ ... We will encourage our allies to take a broader role. We will not be hasty. But we will not be permanent peacekeepers, dividing warring parties. This is not our strength or our calling.”<sup>18</sup>

*During his “A Period of Consequences” speech to The Citadel, Gov. Bush criticizes the Clinton administration for the Bosnian effort, saying it constituted an open-ended deployment.*

Misjudging the Enemy, Poor Planning for War

2000

AUGUST 27, 2000

2002

FEBRUARY 25, 2003

“I would say that what’s been mobilized to this point, something on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers ... Assistance from friends and allies would be helpful.”<sup>21</sup>

*General Eric Shinseki, chief of staff of the U.S. Army, testifies to the Senate Armed Services Committee, saying that the Iraq war effort might take hundreds of thousands of soldiers.*

NOVEMBER 15, 2002

“The idea that it’s going to be a long, long, long battle of some kind I think is belied by the fact of what happened in 1990 ... Five days or five weeks or five months, but it certainly isn’t going to last any longer than that.”<sup>20</sup>

*Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on Infinity Radio says the war will not last even half a year.*

2003

FEBRUARY 27, 2003

“Some of the higher-end predictions that we have been hearing recently, such as the notion that it will take several hundred thousand U.S. troops to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq, are wildly off the mark.”<sup>22</sup>

*Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz testifies to the House Committee on the Budget that Gen. Shinseki’s two-days earlier testimony was “wildly off the mark.”*

MARCH 19, 2003

MARCH 16, 2003

President Bush launches invasion of Iraq.

“To suggest that we need several hundred thousand troops there after military operations cease, after the conflict ends, I don’t think is accurate. I think that’s an overstatement.”<sup>23</sup>

*On Meet the Press, Vice President Cheney says the war will go quickly and require few troops in the long run.*

Descending into the “Quagmire”

2003

AUGUST 26, 2003

“(Insurgents) pose no strategic threat to the United States or to the coalition forces ... I keep reading stories about it’s a country in chaos. This is simply not true. It is not a country in chaos, and Baghdad’s not a city in chaos.”<sup>24</sup>

*In a Washington Post interview, Coalition Provisional Authority Head Paul Bremer says the insurgency is unimportant and under control.*

2004

OCTOBER 5, 2004

“We paid a big price for not stopping it because it established an atmosphere of lawlessness. We never had enough troops on the ground.”<sup>25</sup>


*Former CPA head Paul Bremer changes position about the situation on the ground in Iraq, saying the coalition was unprepared for violence in Iraq.*

APRIL 5, 2004

United States launches four-day offensive in Fallujah in response to killings and mutilations of four American contractors, before being ordered to cease fire without taking the city.

AUGUST 20, 2003

U.N. special representative and 21 others killed in attack on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad.



L. Paul Bremer, the top U.S. administrator in Baghdad, talks to reporters outside the White House. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

Recognizing a Failed Strategy

2005

FEBRUARY 2, 2005

“We will not set an artificial timetable for leaving Iraq, because that would embolden the terrorists and make them believe they can wait us out. We are in Iraq to achieve a result: A country that is democratic, representative of all its people, at peace with its neighbors, and able to defend itself. And when that result is achieved, our men and women serving in Iraq will return home with the honor they have earned.”<sup>26</sup>

*In opposition to what he insisted during the 2000 presidential campaign, President Bush says he will not set an “artificial timetable” at the State of the Union.*

2006

APRIL 30, 2006

“I have always been one who favored a larger military presence in an operation to make sure that you can deal with the unforeseen, but in the case of the aftermath of the fall of Baghdad, you had institutions being destroyed, you had ministries being burned down, and I have said on many occasions I don’t think we had enough force there at that time to impose order. That’s what we were responsible for, because when you have taken out a government, a regime, then you become responsible for the country.”<sup>28</sup>

*Speaking to press about Iraq planning, Secretary of State Colin Powell says he tried to convince President Bush and other war planners to use more troops from the outset.*

JANUARY 5, 2006

AUGUST 3, 2006

More than 140 people killed in Iraq in a single day.

“I believe that the sectarian violence is probably as bad as I’ve seen it, in Baghdad in particular, and that if not stopped, it is possible that Iraq could move toward civil war.”<sup>29</sup>

*Gen. John Abizaid, Commander of U.S. Central Command, admits that the situation in Iraq may be approaching civil war during testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee.*

AUGUST 19, 2006

Iraq war surpasses length of U.S. involvement in World War II.

NOVEMBER 8, 2006

Secretary Donald Rumsfeld resigns.



Secretary of State Colin Powell speaks to reporters at the the State Department in Washington. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

A New Strategy...

2007

OCTOBER 12, 2007

“After more than fours years of fighting, America continues its desperate struggle in Iraq without any concerted effort to devise a strategy that will achieve victory in that war-torn country or in the greater conflict against extremism. Continued manipulations and adjustments to our military strategy will not achieve victory. The best we can do with this flawed approach is stave off defeat.”<sup>32</sup>

*Lt. General Ricardo Sanchez, who had been the top American commander in Iraq, says war leadership has been incompetent.*

2008

MARCH 19, 2008

“I think it’s gone on—insurgency lasted longer than I would have anticipated.”<sup>34</sup>

*ABC News interview with Vice President Cheney*

JANUARY 10, 2007

JULY 8, 2007

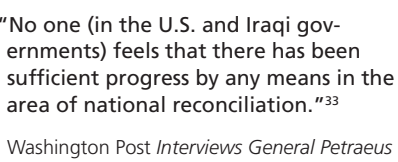
President Bush begins escalation of 30,000 troops into Iraq.

“I tried to avoid this war. I took him through the consequences of going into an Arab country and becoming the occupiers.”<sup>31</sup>

*Former Secretary of State Colin Powell*

APRIL 14, 2008

Iraqi government dismisses 1,300 policemen and soldiers for refusing to fight in Basra.



Washington Post Interviews General Petraeus

COST OF WAR

Officials Insist Low Cost for Iraq

"Iraq is a very wealthy country. Enormous oil reserves. They can finance, largely finance the reconstruction of their own country. And I have no doubt that they will."

Pentagon adviser Richard Perle on PBS

2002

JULY 11, 2002

SEPTEMBER 2002

"The likely economic effects would be relatively small ... Under every plausible scenario, the negative effect will be quite small relative to the economic benefits."

Washington Times Interview with White House Aide Lawrence Lindsey

"It is unimaginable that the United States would have to contribute hundreds of billions of dollars and highly unlikely that we would have to contribute even tens of billions of dollars."

Kenneth M. Pollack

"It will generate billions of dollars a year in cash flow if they get back to their production of roughly three million barrels of oil a day, in the relatively near future. And that flow of resources, obviously, belongs to the Iraqi people, needs to be put to use by the Iraqi people for the Iraqi people and that will be one of our major objectives."

Vice President Cheney insists that the Iraq war will be almost self-financing on Meet the Press.

2003

MARCH 16, 2003

MARCH 19, 2003  
President Bush launches invasion of Iraq.

MARCH 27, 2003

"There is a lot of money to pay for this that doesn't have to be U.S. taxpayer money, and it starts with the assets of the Iraqi people. We are talking about a country that can really finance its own reconstruction and relatively soon."

Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz

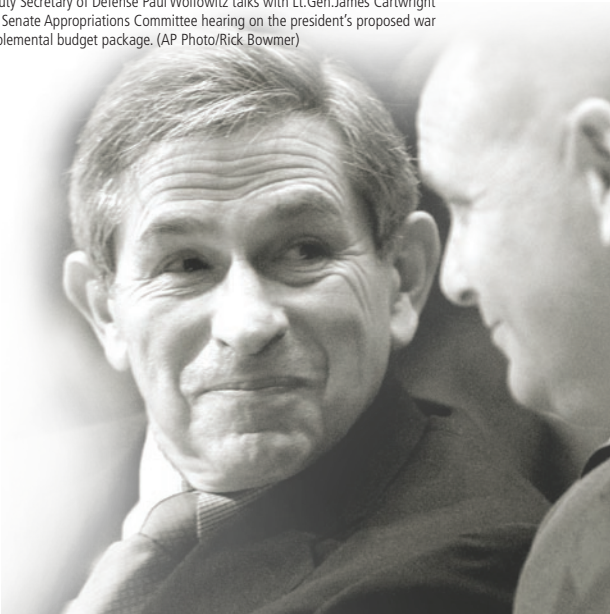
APRIL 16, 2003  
President Bush signs the first Iraq war supplemental spending bill of \$79 billion.

APRIL 16, 2003

"This morning at the White House, I signed a \$79-billion wartime supplemental to cover the needs directly arising from Operation Iraqi Freedom and the reconstruction of Iraq."

President Bush marks the first emergency war supplemental of \$79 billion at speech in St. Louis.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz talks with Lt.Gen.James Cartwright at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing on the president's proposed war supplemental budget package. (AP Photo/Rick Bowmer)



"The United States is committed to helping Iraq recover from this conflict, but Iraq will not require sustained aid."

Office of Management and Budget Director Mitchell Daniels

APRIL 21, 2003

APRIL 23, 2003

Koppel: "When you talk about 1.7, you're not suggesting that the rebuilding of Iraq is gonna be done for \$1.7 billion?"

Natsios: "Well in terms of the American taxpayers contribution, I do, this is it for the U.S. ... They're going to get in \$20 billion a year in oil revenues. But the American part of this will be \$1.7 billion. We have no plans for any further-on funding for this... That is our plan and that is our intention. And these figures, outlandish figures I've seen, I have to say, there's a little bit of hoopla involved in this."

Ted Koppel interviews USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios, who says the total cost for Iraqi reconstruction from the United States will be \$1.7 billion.

Costs Begin to Mount

AUGUST 26, 2003

Bremer said Iraq will need "several tens of billions" of dollars to meet economic needs which he said are "almost impossible to exaggerate."

Just months after insistence that Iraq reconstruction costs would be minimal, Coalition Provisional Authority Director L. Paul Bremer says it will take tens of billions of dollars during a Washington Post interview.

"... the price that we've had to pay is not out of line, and certainly wouldn't lead me to suggest or think that the strategy is flawed or needs to be changed."

"And whatever the cost is, in terms of casualties or financial resources, it's a whale of a lot less than trying to recover from the next attack in the United States."

"We talk about \$87 billion. Yeah, that's a significant expense. No question about it. But it's going to be much more expensive down the road if we wait. And it'll be much more expensive—it's less money, frankly, than the events of 9/11 imposed on us here in the United States."

On Meet the Press, Vice President Cheney says the cost of war is insignificant compared to the cost of a possible future terrorist attack.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2003

2008

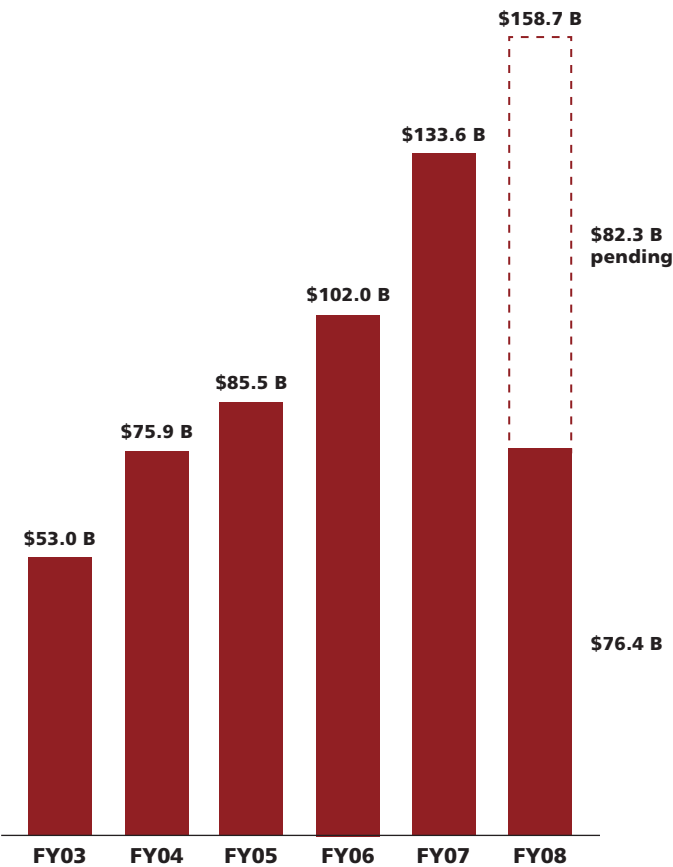
MARCH 19, 2008

"Obviously we've expended considerable public funds on this enterprise, and those are funds that could have been used for some other purpose."

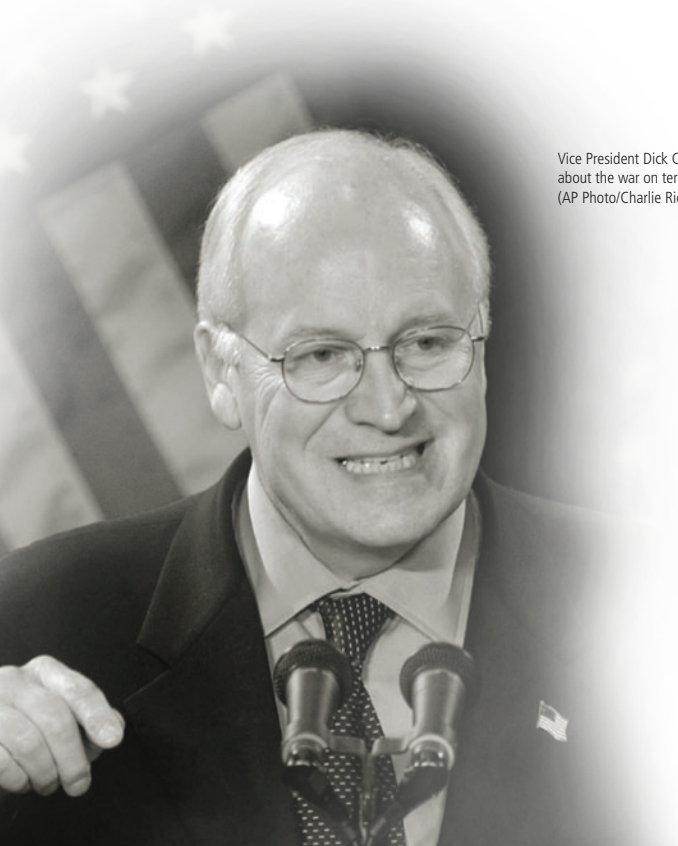
"We didn't have any way five years ago to estimate what the final cost would be."

ABC News interview with Vice President Cheney

IRAQ WAR FUNDING



Vice President Dick Cheney talks about the war on terrorism. (AP Photo/Charlie Riedel)





DEFINING VICTORY

The Mission Is Clear and Victory Is Tangible

1999

SEPTEMBER 23, 1999

“I will replace uncertain missions with well-defined objectives.”<sup>46</sup>  
  
Gov. Bush delivers “A Period of Consequences” speech to The Citadel.

“Our mission is clear in Iraq. Should we have to go in, our mission is very clear: disarmament.”<sup>47</sup>  
  
President Bush press conference

2003

MARCH 6, 2003

MARCH 16, 2003

“Our objective will be, if we go in, to defeat whatever forces oppose us, to take down the government of Saddam Hussein, and then to follow on with a series of actions such as eliminating all the weapons of mass destruction, finding where they are and destroying them, preserving the territorial integrity of Turkey. As I say, standing up a broadly representative government that’s preserving the territorial integrity of Iraq and standing up a broadly representative government of the Iraqi people. Those will be our objectives.”<sup>48</sup>  
  
Vice President Cheney on Meet the Press

MARCH 19, 2003  
President Bush launches invasion of Iraq.

MAY 1, 2003

“Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the Battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed.”<sup>49</sup>  
  
President Bush declares victory in “Mission Accomplished” speech on board the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2003

“We can do what we have to do to prevail in this conflict. Failure’s not an option.”<sup>50</sup>  
  
Vice President Cheney on Meet the Press

2004

JUNE 20, 2004

JANUARY 17, 2004  
500 U.S. troops have now died in Iraq.

“If you go back and look at what has been accomplished, I would say that we have (done) almost everything we set out to accomplish at liberation. (Bush and Blair) had a vision of an Iraq that was stable, pluralistic, democratic, at peace with itself—and we have accomplished most of that.”<sup>51</sup>  
  
TIME Interview with CPA Director L. Paul Bremer

JUNE 28, 2004  
United States transfers sovereignty to Iraq.

Elusive Victory

SEPTEMBER 7, 2004  
1,000 U.S. soldiers have now died in Iraq.

“The progress in the past year has been significant, and we have a clear path forward.”  
  
“Our strategy can be summed up this way: As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down.”<sup>52</sup>  
  
President Bush delivers speech at Fort Bragg

President Bush declares the end of major combat in Iraq as he speaks aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln on May 1, 2003. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

2005

JUNE 28, 2005

MARCH 3, 2005  
1,500 U.S. troops have now died in Iraq.

OCTOBER 15, 2005  
Voters approve a new constitution for an Islamic federal democracy.

“Our work in Iraq is difficult because our enemy is brutal. But that brutality has not stopped the dramatic progress of a new democracy. In less than three years, the nation has gone from dictatorship to liberation, to sovereignty, to a constitution, to national elections. At the same time, our coalition has been relentless in shutting off terrorist infiltration, clearing out insurgent strongholds, and turning over territory to Iraqi security forces. I am confident in our plan for victory. I am confident in the will of the Iraqi people. I am confident in the skill and spirit of our military. Fellow citizens, we are in this fight to win, and we are winning.”<sup>53</sup>  
  
President Bush delivers State of the Union address.

OCTOBER 26, 2005  
2,000 U.S. troops have now died in Iraq.

2006

JANUARY 31, 2006

JUNE 15, 2006  
2,500 U.S. troops have now died in Iraq.

A Redefinition of Victory

2007

JANUARY 10, 2007

Victory or Surrender

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

MAY 20, 2007

JUNE 7, 2007  
3,500 U.S. troops have now died in Iraq.

“I would lean forward and say to the world, ‘We are, by George, going to make sure that the allies of America and the forces of freedom win, and we are the most powerful nation in history, and we have more than enough assets to do this.’ And we ought to do what it takes to win, not tolerate legislating defeat.”<sup>55</sup>  
  
Former Speaker Newt Gingrich on Meet the Press

An Undefined Victory

2008

MARCH 27, 2008

MARCH 23, 2008  
4,000 U.S. troops have now died in Iraq.

“But there’s one thing that is consistent. No matter what shortcomings these critics diagnose, their prescription is always the same—retreat. They claim that our strategic interest is elsewhere, and that if we would just get out of Iraq, we could focus on the battles that really matter. This argument makes no sense.”<sup>57</sup>  
  
President Bush delivers speech at National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.

JUNE 4, 2007

“I think if we do the right things politically and economically with the right Iraqi leadership we could still salvage at least a stalemate, if you will—not a stalemate but at least stave off defeat. It’s also kind of important for us to answer the question ‘what is victory?’ and at this point I’m not sure America really knows what victory is.”<sup>56</sup>  
  
San Antonio Express News interview with Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez

“The Champagne bottle has been pushed to the back of the refrigerator. And the progress, while real, is fragile and is reversible.”  
  
Gen. David Petraeus testifies to Senate Armed Services Committee.  
  
“I said in September that I cannot guarantee success in Iraq. That is still the case, although I think we are now closer. I remain convinced that a major departure from our current engagement would bring failure.”<sup>58</sup>  
  
Amb. Ryan Crocker testifies to Senate Armed Services Committee.  
  
APRIL 8, 2008

APRIL 10, 2008

“The day will come when Iraq is a capable partner of the United States. The day will come when Iraq is a stable democracy that helps fight our common enemies and promotes our common interests in the Middle East. And when that day arrives, you’ll come home with pride in your success, and the gratitude of your whole nation.”<sup>59</sup>  
  
Addressing the troops directly during an address to the nation, President Bush drastically redefines victory in Iraq to mean that only when Iraq can fight common enemies in the Middle East that U.S. troops can return home.

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