

[How did the U.S. government lead its people to war?](#)

## A Mechanism for War



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The Bush administration devised a carefully-constructed mechanism to lead the U.S. to war with Iraq.

First, they **manufactured a problem**, declaring that Iraq was a grave danger to the United States:

- Arguing that Iraq was a **threat** to America and to the peace of the world, through its alleged arsenal of weapons of mass destruction and ties to terrorist networks.
- Asserting there was a **grave and growing danger** from Iraq, thus there was an urgency to act.
- Cultivating widespread anxiety by propagating **fear stories** about enemies seeking to do the American people great harm.
- **Demonizing** Hussein as someone so evil and irrational that there was a moral imperative for action.

Next, they had to **dismiss other policy options** that could have avoided war:

- Arguing that **containment** – an effective strategy during the Cold War – couldn't work with Iraq.
- Attacking the efficacy of U.N. **weapons inspections** (which, ironically, had successfully disarmed Iraq from 1991-1998).
- Declaring that there would be **no negotiations** or discussions with Iraq.

Finally, they stated that **"we have no choice"** – the U.S. did not want war but was being forced to act:

- **It is Saddam's choice** to go to war. The U.S. argued that Hussein must disarm. If he did not comply by turning over his weapons of mass destruction, he was choosing war.
- **If the U.N. refuses to act, then the U.S. would have to act.**
- They argued that **war is our last option**, even though the U.S. actively blocked every other viable policy. In this way, the U.S. made war *the only option*.

Subjected to this sustained campaign, the majority of Americans came to support the war, which began on March 19, 2003.

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