

How did the U.S. government lead its people to war?

Rhetoric and Spin

Verbal Sleights of Hand

There were a number of subtle, rhetorical techniques that the Bush administration used to influence the public and gain support for the war.

They often used words to distort or misrepresent the facts – leading the listener to false impressions and erroneous conclusions.

Video: VERBAL SLEIGHTS OF HAND #1



RICE: No one is trying to make an argument **at this point** that Saddam Hussein somehow had operational control of what happened on September 11th. So we don't want to push this too far. But this is **a story that is unfolding**. And **it is getting clearer**, and **we're learning more**.

Rice knew with certainty that Hussein had no operational control of, or connection to, the 9/11 attacks. Fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudi; the rest were Egyptian, Emirati and Lebanese – none of them had any ties to the Iraqi government. For Rice to say (one year after 9/11) that no one is trying to make an argument "at this point" that Saddam had operational control of the 9/11 attacks, but that the story is "unfolding" and "getting clearer" – implying that there may be a connection between the two – is misleading the public by suggesting that such connections might come to light in the future.

Video: VERBAL SLEIGHTS OF HAND #2

A Mechanism for War

Rhetoric and Spin

Epic Struggle

An 'Either/Or' World

Iraq, Al-Qaeda and 9/11

There is No Doubt

Using Uncertainty as a Tool to Generate Fear

Spinning Agreement Where There's

Disagreement

● Verbal Sleights of Hand

Empty Promises

"The War on Terror"

Enemy Motives

Caves and Shadows

"Peace" and "Freedom"

War Through Rose-Colored Glasses

Abuses and Misuses of Intelligence

A Mythic Reality

Items of Note

Bush Administration Claims vs. The Facts

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Again, **I want to separate out 9/11 from the other relationships between Iraq and the al-Qaeda** organization. But there is a **pattern of relationships**, going back many years.

Here Cheney implicitly – albeit in a convoluted manner – connects Iraq to 9/11 (“separate out 9/11 from the other relationships”). At the same time, he suggests there is a shared history of connections between Iraq and al-Qaeda (“a pattern of relationships”).

These innuendos and half-truths about the connections between Hussein and 9/11 were *never corrected* by Bush officials before the war. Long after the war began, when the administration finally conceded that Hussein was not involved in 9/11, they explicitly denied ever having promoted this connection – even going so far as to blame “lazy” reporters for this confusion (Cheney on NBC’s *The Today Show*, 6/18/2004).

Video: VERBAL SLEIGHTS OF HAND #3

GENERAL MYERS: One of the things we learned from September 11th was that the intent of the **terrorists**, and **those who would supply them with weapons of mass destruction**, is very, very clear. They’re to **wipe out our way of life**.

“...Those who would supply [terrorists] with weapons of mass destruction” refers to Iraq, and Myers ascribes the same intent to both the terrorists and Iraq. Whatever the intent of the terrorists, there’s no evidence that Iraq had any plan or intention – let alone the capacity – to “wipe out our way of life.”

Video: VERBAL SLEIGHTS OF HAND #4

PRESIDENT BUSH: But I meant what I said. This is the **last phase of diplomacy. A little bit more time**, Saddam Hussein has had **12 years to disarm**.

This comment is from a March 6, 2003 press conference. In fact, it had only been 4 months since the U.N. passed Resolution 1441, and only 3 1/2 months since inspectors had returned to Iraq – not much time for Bush to declare the “last phase of diplomacy” had arrived.

Bush knew it wouldn’t be convincing to say, “Hussein has had 4 months to disarm, and we shouldn’t give him a few more months.” So he twists the facts, using a clever slight of hand to say that Hussein has already had “12 years” to disarm, when in fact there had been extensive and successful U.N. weapons inspections and disarmament in Iraq from 1991-1998.

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