

Status in Iraq

Student Handout: Looking Back

Background: Within days of the attacks on September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration discussed the prospect of war with Iraq as part of the war on terror. By November of that year, war plans were being developed at the Defense Department and the White House. Soon events escalated as the Administration made the case that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction posed a threat and needed to be stopped. President Bush's February 2002 State of the Union address identified Iraq as one of the countries that composed an "axis of evil." Though controversial now, the message at the time was clear to many Americans, as the president stated, "By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger...the price of indifference would be catastrophic... America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's security." In October of 2002, the president received support from Congress authorizing the use of military force in Iraq. In November, through President Bush's urging, the UN passed Resolution 1441 which stated Iraq was in "material breach" of its obligations to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors. The resolution also provided Iraq "a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations" and "that it will face serious consequences" as a result of continued violations. In the early months of 2003, intense pressure was placed on Iraq and the U.N. by the United States to take action. By March, final war plans were put in place and a "coalition of the willing" was ready for war. On the morning of March 20th the bombs began to fall on Baghdad and other strategic areas in Iraq and soon coalition forces stationed in Kuwait began the invasion of Iraq.

Historians interpret history by looking back on original documents and public writings that provide the facts of an event but also the feelings and analysis surrounding the event. In this activity, you will review a series of *Washington Week* programs with between January 8, 2002 and March 21, 2003 to chronicle the events that led to war. The intent is to provide you with an actual "look back in time." Working in your group, you will record the events as they unfolded and analyze their significance and impact at the time they occurred. Then your class will construct a timeline to record the events and assess their impact on the final outcome.

Directions:

1. Review the handout "Looking Back" in your group.
2. Go to the Washington Week website you have been assigned from the list below (Part A) and review the transcript. Scroll down to find the correct program segment. You can also download streaming video of the segment by clicking on the "Watch this week's show" link in the upper right hand corner of the transcripts page then clicking the corresponding video segment which is named in the website description below.
3. Take notes following the note-taking guide below (Part B) as you review the program segment.
4. In full class, review your findings by presenting your one or two sentence summary on a large timeline developed by the class.
5. Review the discussion questions below (Part C) with the entire class.

Part A: Program Segments from *Washington Week*

1. question will the U.S. go to war unilaterally?

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/washingtonweek/transcripts/transcript030214.html>

Video stream: “Blix Reports to UN on Iraq Inspections” parts 1 & 2

2. **Tough sell on war with Iraq:** air date February 21, 2003; The devil is in the details; a second resolution that won’t quite come together. Turkey: the latest stubborn ally and protests around the world.

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/washingtonweek/transcripts/transcript030221.html>

Video Stream: “United States, Britain Encounter UN Roadblocks”

3. **Diplomacy is just about exhausted:** air date March 7, 2003; President Bush conducts a prime-time news conference saying he will forge ahead regardless of what happens at the UN. <http://www.pbs.org/weta/washingtonweek/transcripts/transcript030307.html>

Video stream: “United States Imposes Tight Deadline on Iraq” parts 1 & 2

4. **Diplomacy fails:** air date March 14, 2003 The United States withdraws the second resolution for authorizing war with Iraq and plans a meeting with British and Spanish leaders to discuss going to war with Iraq without U.N. sanction.

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/washingtonweek/transcripts/transcript030314.html>

Video stream: “Bush Moves Forward on Iraq Without United Nations Part 2” and “Bush Moves to Rally the World”

5. **By land, by sea and by air, it is war:** air date: March 21, 2003; the United States and coalition forces launch an attack on Iraq to bring down the regime of Saddam Hussein.

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/washingtonweek/transcripts/transcript030321.html>

Video stream: “Inskeep Reports from Qatar,” War in Iraq Covers Unfamiliar Territory” and Embedded Reporters Change Face of War.”

Part B: Note-taking Guide:

- What is the central topic of the segment you reviewed?
- What was the main event or announcement that occurred?
- What was the analysis of the correspondents discussing this event or announcement?
- What facts or statements did you find interesting or unusual?
- Summarize your findings in a sentence or two that incorporates information you gathered to answer questions on this list.

Part C: Debriefing Questions:

1. In his January 29, 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush declared Iraq part of an “axis of evil” that seeks weapons of mass destruction to harm the U.S. and its allies. He went further to state the United States would act aggressively to defend itself against this threat. What message did this send to its intended targets (the axis of evil states) and how did the message perhaps “over reach” the European allies? What are the implications of this over reach and why do you think the message wasn’t understood by the Europeans as President Bush had intended?

2. In August of 2002, the Bush administration began to publicly talk of going to war with Iraq. At that time what was the justification for such a war and how well was this justification being received by allies and the American public? Why do you feel the public reacted to the call for war in this way? What seemed to be lacking in the Administration's message for going to war? Explain why it was important at this time that the Administration made a solid, convincing case for going to war with Iraq?
3. On September 13, 2002 President Bush spoke before the UN General Assembly about Iraq. Review the effect of the 9/11 attacks on the public's perception of America's role in the war on terror. How did this view of America's role change as the administration began to call for a war in Iraq? Why do you think this change occurred? How did this change affect the president's efforts to gain world support for a war against Iraq? What are your thoughts on some of the questions raised by the allies and the American public?
4. On October 10th Congress voted by a sizable margin to authorize the president to take military action against Iraq. How was President Bush able to gain some Democrats' support on this resolution? Why do you feel there were people in the House and Senate against giving the president such authority? Why do you think so many Americans seemed undecided about going to war with Iraq?
5. In November of 2002, the United Nations Security Council focused its attention on Iraq and how to deal with the issue of weapons of mass destruction. Explain the difference in tolerance between other countries of the UN and President Bush regarding Iraq's compliance with the UN resolution. How does this difference in tolerance levels relate to the difference in timeline expectations between the UN and the President? Can these differences be explained as diplomatic rhetoric or does this difference constitute a fundamental disagreement between the UN and the President? What is the reason for this disagreement?
6. On January 28, 2003, President Bush gave his State of the Union address presenting evidence which described Iraq's nuclear weapons program. This evidence later became highly controversial regarding its credibility. Explain the double-edged message President Bush gave in his State of the Union address. Describe the different positions held between the President and other members of the Security Council regarding action against Iraq for its non-compliance with UN resolutions. Why do you think a struggle going emerged between the US and European countries and the issues of inspection that surround it?
7. On February 5, 2003 Secretary of State Colin Powell presented evidence of Iraq's WMD program before the UN Security Council. On what points was he successful in convincing members of the Security Council about the Iraqi threat and on what points was he not? How had Secretary Powell's presentation signaled a change in the Administration's reasoning for using military force? Do you believe the U.N. should have joined in with the U.S. supporting "regime change" in Iraq based on the evidence Secretary Powell presented? Explain your answer.
8. On February 14, 2003 UN weapons inspector Hans Blix made his report to the U.N. What was the main point of this report and how did it compare with the presentation given earlier by Secretary Powell the previous week? Was Blix's report conclusive either way? Where did Secretary Powell seem to fall short in his presentation according to the

weapons inspectors? At this time was there enough Security Council support for a resolution to go to war? What do you think the U.S. Administration should have done at this time?

9. By late-February of 2003 the Administration was discovering taking military action against Iraq was a tough sell in the Security Council. Why was the U.S. seeking a second resolution on Iraq? What did they want the resolution to say? How did the U.S. go about getting the votes it needed to get a resolution passed? What pressures were weighing on the administration to get a resolution passed quickly?
10. On March 6, 2003 President Bush gave a prime-time news conference, his first since right after September 11. The president said that no matter what the UN does he will forge ahead to disarm and remove Saddam Hussein. How had the Administration altered its tactics in trying to sway Security Council member countries to their way of thinking? What was the significance of a March 17th deadline regarding the role of the UN and the U.S. policy of preemption? What connection was President Bush making in his March 6th news conference between Iraq and the war on terror?
11. On March 14, the U.S. decided to withdraw second UN resolution for a war against. What factors were in place that caused the US to withdraw its second resolution which would authorize the use of force in Iraq? What were the circumstances surrounding the other countries on the Security Council that led to this decision? What is “soft power” and why did the Administration have so much difficulty using it to pressure other countries on the Security Council to vote for the second resolution the President wanted? With this change in conditions, what were the Administration’s plans and attitude at this point? If the prospect of a second UN resolution was lost, how should the president have explained to the American public and the world that the US is going to war with Iraq without UN approval?
12. On March 20, 2003 the United States began its attack on Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power. In what ways was this assault on Iraq different than past U.S. military operations? What were the reasons for this? How was technology and “shock and awe” warfare used to subdue the enemy quickly? How successful did this war tactic turn out to be? How had imbedded reporters provided a never-seen-before view of the war effort? What effect do you think these reporters had on the public viewing the war’s progression? Do you feel embedded reporters are a positive or negative aspect of war news coverage?