

# Why go to War

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As our TV screens, radio reports and newspapers are being flooded with information about preparations for the "possible" war in Iraq, it's all too clear that everyone is only telling us what they want to. Tony Blair is suddenly pointing out that an attack on Britain is pretty much inevitable, while others are saying it's only a war over who controls our oil supplies. Thousands flocked to London to demonstrate against the war but what really are the facts supporting war and what are the realistic alternatives?

We are all aware that Iraq is very likely to be in the process of creating if not already possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). The threat of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons being in control of a human rights violator as severe as Saddam Hussein is something that the world cannot risk. Iraq has been leading technological advances in the Arab world for many years, the concern is with who is at risk when the arms force is strong. Prior to the threatened war there did not appear to be any immediate threat from Iraq to use its WMDs yet the risk of target crosses Iraq's own diverse populations, the country's Arab and Israeli neighbours and the entire world. A war on Iraq may be able to destroy the capability of Iraq to create these weapons and destroy existing stores.

Al Qaeda and Iraq have not previously been linked as they represent opposing sects of Islam. Yet now that both groups are "enemies" of the West there appears to be some evidence that the two are compromising their beliefs to work against us. Coupling Iraq's WMDs with Al Qaeda's severe anti Americanism could result in dangerous effects. There are strong arguments that the war on terror cannot be won without changes to leadership in the Arab world. Some even argue that whether or not WMDs are found in Iraq the war would serve as a useful entry in beginning to change the Arab world. Furthermore, the Western world would have some influence on decisions made in constructing a new government.

Saddam Hussein and his regime are severe violators of human rights. They have committed unimaginable crimes against humanity. He operates a superficial democracy with oppressive dictatorship and the international community has an obligation to free innocent citizens from his tyranny.

There are many groups which believe that the proposed war in Iraq is only stemmed from the hold that the country has on the world's oil reserves. Iraq is currently an unstable country to trade with, and a new western friendly Iraqi regime would likely result in cheaper oil. Yet it is feared that Saddam is not likely to fall without leaving a mass of destroyed oil reserves behind him.

As we're currently sitting on the brink of war, and it seems that getting this far and then not going to war would leave a perception by the world that the US and UK are weak and indecisive. If we do not project our power it will alter the way that other Arab regimes relate to us. If they view us as weak, they may continue to make decisions which support Al Qaeda and threaten the economic and social security of the US and UK.

If we do not carry out war now, it will only be more difficult in the future. Waiting to go to war will mean that we will not have access to an important military base in Saudi Arabia, and this may affect our strength. Furthermore, if France and Russia begin to trade with Iraq as is expected it will strengthen Saddam's leadership and make him far more difficult to overthrow later. This indicates that France and Russia are avoiding the war due to their own economic interests.

So what are the alternatives? To address the WMD in Iraq we could continue to monitor any developments, leaving weapons inspectors to gather intelligence and report back to the UN. The UN could be put in charge of Iraqi oil until WMDs are confirmed destroyed.

To address Saddam Hussein's regime we could offer an alternative "retirement package" which involves him saving face and coercing him to step down. We could deliver aid to the people of Iraq, improving our relationship with them and support internal democratic movements in the country, i.e. freedom for individuals to voice their opinion and freedom to vote.

To ensure security in the Western world and good trade links with Iraq, we could provide education and training in the people of Iraq. Lack of access to free education leads many children to go to schools sponsored by religious fundamentalists. By making human rights and democracy the guiding principals of foreign policy with the Arab world we can build relations and improve links.

So there it is. A brief outline of the supporting factors for a second gulf war and some of the best alternatives. In my opinion war should always be avoided where possible but in this case leaving Saddam in power is leaving innocent people to suffer under his control.