Document 1: The President's Ultimatum to Iraq and Opposition to It, Speech by President George W. Bush

On March 17, 2003, President George W. Bush issued an ultimatum to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Following is an excerpt of the speech Bush made explaining the ultimatum.

For more than a decade, the United States and other nations have pursued patient and honorable efforts to disarm the Iraqi regime without war. That regime pledged to reveal and destroy all its weapons of mass destruction as a condition for ending the Persian Gulf war in 1991....Peaceful efforts to disarm the Iraqi regime have failed again and again because we are not dealing with peaceful men. Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised....

The danger is clear. Using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapons, obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country or any other....For the last four and a half months, the United States and our allies have worked within the Security Council to enforce that council’s longstanding demands. Yet some permanent members of the Security Council have publicly announced that they will veto any resolution that compels the disarmament of Iraq. These governments share our assessment of the danger, but not our resolve to meet it....The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours....

Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Their refusal to do so will result in military conflict, commenced at a time of our choosing... Many Iraqis can hear me tonight in a translated radio broadcast. And I have a message for them. If we must begin a military campaign, it will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you. As our coalition takes away their power we will deliver the food and medicine you need. We will tear down the apparatus of terror. And we will help you to build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free....

The terrorist threat to America and the world will be diminished the moment that Saddam Hussein is disarmed. Our government is on heightened watch against these dangers. Just as we are preparing to ensure victory in Iraq, we are taking further actions to protect our homeland....

The cause of peace requires all free nations to recognize new and undeniable realities. In the 20th century some chose to appease murderous dictators whose threats were allowed to grow into genocide and global war. In this century when evil men plot chemical, biological and nuclear terror, a policy of appeasement could bring destruction of a kind never before seen on this earth. Terrorists and terrorist states do not reveal these threats with fair notice in formal declarations. And responding to such enemies only after they have struck first is not self-defense, it is suicide. The security of the world requires disarming Saddam Hussein now....

Unlike Saddam Hussein, we believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty. And when the dictator has departed, they can set an example to all the Middle East of a vital and peaceful and self-governing nation....The power and appeal of human liberty is felt in every life and every land. And the greatest power of freedom is to overcome hatred and violence, and turn the creative gifts of men and women to the pursuits of peace. That is the future we choose. Free nations have a duty to defend our people by uniting against the violent. And tonight, as we have done before, America and our allies accept that responsibility.
Document 2: Speech by Senator Robert Byrd

On March 19, 2003, Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia delivered a speech on the floor of the U.S. Senate that opposed the march to war.

I have watched the events of recent months with a heavy, heavy heart. No more is the image of America one of strong, yet caring peacekeeper. The image of America has changed. Around the globe, our friends mistrust us, our word is disputed, our intentions are questioned.

Instead of reasoning with those with whom we disagree, we demand obedience or threaten retaliation. Instead of isolating Saddam Hussein, we seem to have isolated ourselves. We proclaim a new policy of prevention (of terrorism) which is understood by few and feared by many. We say that the United States has the right to turn its firepower on any corner of the globe which might be suspect in the war on terrorism. We declare that right without the permission of any international body. As a result, the world has become a much more dangerous place. We flaunt our superpower status with arrogance. We treat UN Security Council members like ingrates who offend our princely dignity by lifting their heads from the carpet. Valuable alliances are split.

The case this Administration (President Bush) tries to make to justify its fixation with war is tainted by charges of falsified documents and circumstantial evidence. We cannot convince the world of the necessity of this war for one simple reason.

There is no credible information to connect Saddam Hussein to 9/11. The twin towers fell because a worldwide terrorist group, Al Qaeda, with cells in over 60 nations, struck at our wealth and our influence by turning our own planes into missiles, one of which would likely have slammed into the dome of this beautiful Capitol except for the brave sacrifice of the passengers on board.

But, this Administration has directed all of the anger, fear, and grief which emerged from the ashes of the twin towers and the twisted metal of the Pentagon towards a tangible villain, one we can see and hate and attack. And villain he is. But, he is the wrong villain. And this is the wrong war.... The general unease surrounding this war is not just due to "orange alert." There is a pervasive sense of rush and risk and too many questions unanswered. How long will we be in Iraq? What will be the cost? What is the ultimate mission? How great is the danger at home?.

What is happening to this country? When did we become a nation which ignores and berates our friends? When did we decide to risk undermining international order by adopting a radical and doctrinaire approach to using our awesome military might? How can we abandon diplomatic efforts when the turmoil in the world cries out for diplomacy?

Why can this President not seem to see that America's true power lies not in its will to intimidate, but in its ability to inspire?
Statements From Other Nations

Many governments around the world opposed Bush’s declaration, and the United Nations refused to back it, arguing that the disarming of Iraq could be achieved through peaceful means.

Excerpts from a joint statement on March 5 of the foreign ministers of France, Germany, and Russia:

Our common objective remains the full and effective disarmament of Iraq....We consider that this objective can be achieved by the peaceful means of inspections. We moreover observe that these inspections are producing increasingly encouraging results: The destruction of the Al Samoud missiles has started and is making progress. Iraqis are providing biological and chemical information. The interviews with Iraqi scientists are continuing.... We firmly call for the Iraqi authorities to cooperate more actively with the inspectors to fully disarm their country. These inspections cannot continue indefinitely. We consequently ask that the inspections now be speeded up....the inspectors have to present without any delay their work program accompanied by regular progress reports to the Security Council. This program could provide for a meeting clause to enable the Council to evaluate the overall results of this process. In these circumstances we will not let a proposed resolution pass that would authorize the use of force.

Excerpt from a statement by French President Jacques Chirac on March 18:

The United States has just issued an ultimatum to Iraq. Whether...it's a matter of necessary disarmament of Iraq or of the desirable change of regime in that country , there is no justification for a unilateral decision to resort to war....It is a grave decision, at a time when Iraq's disarmament is under way and the inspections have proved to be a credible alternative method of disarming that country. It is also a decision that jeopardizes future use of methods to resolve peacefully crises linked to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Iraq does not today present an immediate threat warranting an immediate war.
"Iraq both poses a continuing threat to the national security of the United States and international peace and security in the Persian Gulf region and remains in material and unacceptable breach of its international obligations by, among other things, continuing to possess and develop a significant chemical and biological weapons capability, actively seeking a nuclear weapons capability, and supporting and harboring terrorist organizations....

Further delay in taking action against Iraq will only serve to give Saddam Hussein's regime additional time to further develop weapons of mass destruction to use against the United States, its citizens, and its allies. The United States and the UN have long demanded immediate, active, and unconditional cooperation by Iraq in the disarmament of its weapons of mass destruction. There is no reason to believe that Iraq will disarm and cooperate with inspections to verify such disarmament, if the U.S. and the UN employ only diplomacy and other peaceful means....

The use of force against Iraq will directly advance the war on terror, and will be consistent with continuing efforts against international terrorists residing and operating elsewhere in the world....

In the circumstances described above, the President of the United States has the authority--indeed, given the dangers involved, the duty--to use force against Iraq to protect the security of the American people and to compel compliance with Security Council resolutions."

"....until this administration it had been possible to believe that by upholding the policies of my President I was also upholding the interests of the American people and the world. I believe it no longer. The policies we are now asked to advance are incompatible not only with American values but also with American interests. Our fervent pursuit of war with Iraq is driving us to squander the international legitimacy that has been America's most potent weapons of both offense and defense since the days of Woodrow Wilson. We have begun to dismantle the largest and most effective web of international relationships the world has ever known. Our current course will bring instability and danger, not security....

This administration has chosen to make terrorism a domestic political tool....We spread...terror and confusion in the public mind, arbitrarily linking unrelated problems of terrorism and Iraq....We should ask ourselves why we have failed to persuade more of the world that a war with Iraq is necessary....Have we indeed become blind, as Russia is blind in Chechnya, as Israel is blind in the Occupied Territories, to our own advice, that overwhelming military power is not the answer to terrorism?....Why does our President condone the swaggering, contemptuous approach to our friends and allies this administration is fostering, including among its most senior officials? ... I am resigning because I have tried and failed to reconcile my conscience with my ability to represent the current U.S. administration.