

Appendix 1 – Speeches by US Presidents legitimizing the Afghanistan War

SPEECH 1

President George W. Bush's Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People

Date: September 20, 2001

Phase: *Initial Justification*

Code	Presence?	Excerpt from the Speech	Impact on Legitimacy
1. Harboring Terrorists	Yes	"Any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."	Framed Afghanistan (under the Taliban) as a direct accomplice to al-Qaeda, justifying military action under self-defense.
2. Global Security	Yes	"This is not . . . just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight."	Cast the impending intervention as critical to protecting broader international stability, heightening moral and global stakes.
3. Immediate Threat	Yes	"Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated."	Implied an urgent danger requiring decisive, immediate action, reinforcing public and political support for a swift response.
4. Consensual Threat Recognition	Yes	"Americans have many questions tonight. Americans are asking: Who attacked our country? . . . The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda."	Reflected broad public consensus post-9/11, forging unity behind any necessary measures to combat the terrorist threat.
5. Liberation / Humanitarian	Partial	"We will direct every resource at our command . . . to the defeat of the global terror network, to defend freedom, and to defend the values we hold dear."	Primarily about defending U.S. security and values, though it implicitly invoked a moral duty to "free" others from terror.
6. Nation-Building	No	N/A	Focus was on dismantling terror networks; no discussion of reconstructing Afghan institutions.
7. Democracy Promotion	No	N/A	Speech centered on counterterrorism, not on establishing democratic governance in Afghanistan.
8. Protecting Civilians	No	N/A	Urgency overshadowed any talk of civilian protection in Afghanistan; moral emphasis was on American casualties of 9/11.
9. Swift Victory	No	"Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen."	Bush explicitly warned of a prolonged struggle, contrasting the notion of an easy, rapid success.
10. Insurgency	No	N/A	No mention of potential long-term insurgent warfare, focusing instead on dismantling al-Qaeda/Taliban quickly.

11. Coalition (NATO) Involvement	Yes	“America is grateful to the many nations and international organizations who have already responded— with sympathy and with support.”	Conveyed broad-based diplomatic solidarity, foreshadowing international backing (including NATO invoking Article 5).
12. Mission Creep	No	N/A	The immediate objective was clearly stated: eliminate terrorist threats. No broader or expanding goals were yet articulated.
13. Corruption Revelations	No	N/A	The Taliban’s governance issues were not explicitly termed “corruption” in this address.
14. Investigative Journalism	No	N/A	National unity overshadowed media critiques; official intelligence was presented as indisputable.
15. Civilian Casualties	No	N/A	No direct discussion of Afghan civilian harm; moral narrative centered on 9/11 victims.
16. War-Weariness	No	N/A	Public support was high; no exhaustion had developed just nine days post-9/11.

SPEECH 2

President Barack Obama’s Address at West Point on the Way Forward in Afghanistan

Date: December 1, 2009

Phase: *Conflict Dynamics*

Code	Presence?	Excerpt from the Speech	Impact on Legitimacy
1. Harboring Terrorists	Yes	“I am convinced that our security is at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan. . . . Al Qaeda and its extremist allies must be denied safe haven.”	Reaffirmed the original rationale of preventing terrorism havens, though expanded to the AfPak region.
2. Global Security	Yes	“If I did not think that the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan, I would gladly order every single one of our troops home tomorrow.”	Justified escalation (the surge) as vital to both U.S. national and broader global stability.
3. Immediate Threat	Reduced	“We did not ask for this fight. On September 11, 2001, 19 men hijacked four airplanes . . . We have no interest in occupying your country.”	Acknowledged the ongoing threat but with less intensity than post-9/11. Framed the war as forced upon the U.S.
4. Consensual Threat Recognition	Fractured	“Over the past several years, we have lost that balance.[...]. Too many Americans are worried about the future facing our children.”	Indirect, admitted declining domestic and allied consensus due to war fatigue and skepticism.
5. Liberation / Humanitarian	Yes	“we must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan’s security forces and government so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan’s future.”	Cast the U.S. role as partially humanitarian (capacity-building), to justify continued presence.
6. Nation-Building	Yes	“We have no interest in occupying your country. We will support efforts by the Afghan government to open the door to those Taliban who abandon violence and	While he distanced himself from the term “nation-building,” references to institution-building and

		respect the human rights of their fellow citizens.”	governance reform were explicit.
7. Democracy Promotion	Yes	“We will support Afghan ministries, governors, and local leaders who combat corruption and deliver for the people.”	Linked the surge to establishing more transparent governance structures, an implicit push for democratic practices.
8. Protecting Civilians	Yes	“We will pursue a military strategy that protects the population.”	Emphasized the moral obligation to minimize civilian harm, maintaining a humanitarian dimension.
9. Swift Victory	No	“We have been at war now for eight years. [...] I do not make this decision lightly.”	Contrasted with earlier optimism; recognized a protracted struggle.
10. Insurgency	Yes	“The Taliban has gained momentum; al Qaeda has not re-emerged in Afghanistan [...] but they retain safe havens.”	Addressed growing resistance, justifying additional troops to counter resurgent insurgents.
11. Coalition (NATO) Involvement	Yes	“These facts compel us to act along with our friends and allies. Our overarching goal remains the same: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.”	Stressed the importance of NATO’s shared responsibility to sustain legitimacy.
12. Mission Creep	Potential	“our troop commitment in Afghanistan cannot be open-ended – because the nation that I’m most interested in building is our own.”	Insisted on a limited scope, but recognized critics’ concerns that the U.S. mission was expanding beyond original counterterrorism.
13. Corruption Revelations	Implicit	N/A	A nod to governance failures in Kabul, acknowledging a major barrier to legitimacy.
14. Investigative Journalism	No	N/A	Obama did not cite or reference media reports directly, though widespread coverage had exposed issues like corruption.
15. Civilian Casualties	Yes	“I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. . . . We will pursue a strategy that protects the population.”	Reiterated “population-centric” warfare, aiming to mitigate Afghan civilian harm.
16. War-Weariness	Yes	“I recognize there are a range of views among the American people. . . . Some call for a more dramatic and immediate drawdown of our troops.”	Directly addressed domestic fatigue, acknowledging declining support for a lengthy conflict.

SPEECH 3

President Barack Obama’s Remarks on the Drawdown of U.S. Troops in Afghanistan

Date: June 22, 2011 (The White House)

Phase: *Social Reactions*

Code	Presence?	Excerpt from the Speech	Impact on Legitimacy
1. Harboring Terrorists	Yes	“we have put al Qaeda on a path to defeat, and we will not	Reiterated the anti-terror rationale, but framed the

		<p>relent until the job is done. [...] They must be led by the Afghan government, and those who want to be a part of a peaceful Afghanistan must break from al Qaeda, abandon violence, and abide by the Afghan constitution. [...] We are starting this drawdown from a position of strength.”</p>	<p>withdrawal as feasible due to perceived gains.</p>
2. Global Security	Yes	<p>“Some would have America retreat from our responsibility as an anchor of global security, and embrace an isolation that ignores the very real threats that we face. Others would have America over-extended, confronting every evil that can be found abroad.”</p>	<p>Balanced global security concerns with domestic pressures to refocus on other priorities.</p>
3. Immediate Threat	Reduced	<p>“we killed Osama bin Laden, the only leader that al Qaeda had ever known. This was a victory for all who have served since 9/11.”</p>	<p>Underscored diminishing urgency compared to the 2001 environment; validated partial troop drawdown.</p>
4. Consensual Threat Recognition	Fractured	<p>“We must chart a more centered course. [...]. we set clear objectives: to train Afghan security forces to defend their own country. [...] We protect our own freedom and prosperity by extending it to others.”</p>	<p>Acknowledged diverging public opinions: some demanded a faster end, others wanted robust counterinsurgency.</p>
5. Liberation / Humanitarian	Yes	<p>“We take comfort in knowing that the tide of war is receding [...] we’ve inflicted serious losses on the Taliban and taken a number of its strongholds. [...] in some provinces and municipalities we’ve already begun to transition responsibility for security to the Afghan people.”</p>	<p>Emphasized a humanitarian element, suggesting Afghans were regaining control of their lives.</p>
6. Nation-Building	Yes	<p>“What we can do, and will do, is build a partnership with the Afghan people that endures -- one that ensures that we will be able to continue targeting terrorists and supporting a sovereign Afghan government.”</p>	<p>Maintained that U.S. must still engage in institution-building, though on a scaled-back military footprint.</p>

7. Democracy Promotion	Implicit	N/A	Alluded to democratic structures, but the emphasis was on preparing Afghans to manage their own governance.
8. Protecting Civilians	Yes	“That is the responsibility of the Afghan government, which must step up its ability to protect its people, and move from an economy shaped by war to one that can sustain a lasting peace.”	Linked governance improvements to reducing harm for civilians, including the threat of Taliban intimidation.
9. Swift Victory	No	“I also made it clear that our commitment would not be open-ended, and that we would begin to draw down our forces this July.”	Contrasted the slow reality with any early optimism of a short conflict.
10. Insurgency	Yes	“Of course, huge challenges remain. This is the beginning—but not the end— of our effort to wind down this war.”	Recognized continued Taliban strength and ongoing violence.
11. Coalition (NATO) Involvement	Yes	“next May, in Chicago, we will host a summit with our NATO allies and partners to shape the next phase of this transition.”	Emphasized shared sacrifice, but also signaled a shift to Afghan leadership, reflecting allied desire to reduce commitments.
12. Mission Creep	Yes	“America, it is time to focus on nation-building here at home.”	Implicitly acknowledged that the mission in Afghanistan had extended well beyond initial counterterror goals; pivoted to domestic needs.
13. Corruption Revelations	Implicit	N/A	Indirectly referenced persistent allegations of graft, suggesting it undermines the war’s legitimacy.
14. Investigative Journalism	No	N/A	Did not cite any specific media investigations; though public debate around corruption and civilian casualties was significant.
15. Civilian Casualties	Yes	“When innocents are being slaughtered and global security endangered, we don’t have to	Acknowledged that despite gains, civilians remained vulnerable, highlighting the

		choose between standing idly by or acting on our own.”	complexity of maintaining moral legitimacy.
16. War-Weariness	Yes	“America, it is time to focus on nation building here at home.”	Directly addressed the growing public exhaustion and the political pressure to reduce troop levels.

SPEECH 4

President Joe Biden’s Address on the End of the War in Afghanistan

Date: August 31, 2021 (The White House)

Phase: *Post-Conflict Evaluations*

Code	Presence?	Excerpt from the Speech	Impact on Legitimacy
1. Harboring Terrorists	Yes	“We went to Afghanistan in 2001 to root out al Qaeda, to prevent future terrorist attacks. [...] Our objective was clear.”	Positioned the original rationale as having been met, justifying the final exit.
2. Global Security	Yes	“We will maintain the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and other countries. We just don’t need to fight a ground war to do it.”	Shifted to an “over-the-horizon” counterterror approach, acknowledging ongoing global terror threats but no need for occupation.
3. Immediate Threat	Minimal	The terror threat has metastasized to other countries— Yemen, Somalia, Syria. . . . We are not at war with the Taliban.	Downplayed Afghanistan as a central, immediate threat, focusing on broader extremist networks elsewhere.
4. Consensual Threat Recognition	Fractured	“I was not going to extend this forever war. . . . Some say we should have started mass evacuations sooner— and couldn’t this have been done in a more orderly manner? I respectfully disagree.”	Conceded significant domestic and international disagreement over the chaotic withdrawal.
5. Liberation / Humanitarian	Yes	We did not go to Afghanistan to nation-build. The fundamental obligation of a President is to defend and protect America, not to remake a foreign country.	Acknowledged humanitarian concerns but firmly rejected indefinite occupation for that purpose.
6. Nation-Building	Yes	Our true national interest in Afghanistan was preventing a terrorist attack on the American homeland, not creating a unified, centralized democracy.	Argued that while the mission expanded over two decades, it was never the core reason for staying—critiquing mission creep.
7. Democracy Promotion	Minimal	“We’ll continue to support the Afghan people through diplomacy, international influence, and humanitarian aid.”	Indicated a non-military commitment to basic democratic or human rights, but no major role in shaping governance.
8. Protecting Civilians	Yes	This withdrawal effort was an extraordinary success. The bottom line is there is no evacuation from the end of a war that you can run without the kinds of complexities, challenges, and threats we faced.	Justified the rushed evacuation, underscoring efforts to save civilians but acknowledging inevitable chaos.

9. Swift Victory	No	“After 20 years of conflict in Afghanistan, I refused to send another generation of America’s children to fight a war that should have ended long ago.”	Contrasted the final outcome with any early illusions of quick success.
10. Insurgency	Yes	The Afghan military collapsed, sometimes without trying to fight. That reinforces that it’s time for this war to end.	Implicated Afghan forces’ rapid collapse, reasserting that the U.S. couldn’t sustain a fight the local government wouldn’t wage.
11. Coalition (NATO) Involvement	Yes	For two decades, our allies and partners have fought alongside us, and we honor their contributions.	Paid tribute to allied sacrifices but noted the global consensus to end the mission.
12. Mission Creep	Yes	“We delivered justice to bin Laden a decade ago, and we stayed another decade. . . . We had clear goals and objectives: get those who attacked us, make sure al Qaeda could not use Afghanistan as a base. . . . That was a decade ago.”	Acknowledged that the war’s scope expanded well beyond its original objectives.
13. Corruption Revelations	Implicit	“We couldn’t provide them [Afghan forces] with the will to fight for their own future.”	Hinted at deeper governance issues and mismanagement in Afghanistan without explicitly using “corruption.”
14. Investigative Journalism	No	N/A	No direct reference to media critiques regarding the withdrawal’s execution, though widespread reporting existed.
15. Civilian Casualties	Yes	We lost 2,461 service members, and tens of thousands of Afghan civilians and security forces have died.	Cited the human cost, acknowledging the war’s toll on all parties.
16. War-Weariness	Yes	“After more than \$2 trillion spent in Afghanistan . . . I refuse to continue a war that was no longer in the vital national interest of our people.”	Showed alignment with public fatigue and the perception that the conflict had outlived its original rationale.

Appendix 2 - Speeches by US Presidents legitimizing the Iraq War

SPEECH 1

President George W. Bush's Address to the Nation on Iraq

Date: March 17, 2003 (The White House)

Phase: *Initial Justification*

Code	Presence?	Excerpt from the Speech	Impact on Legitimacy
WMD Threat	Yes	"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."	Central to justifying immediate military action; heightened a sense of urgency and necessity.
Defiance of UN Resolutions	Yes	"The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours."	Framed the invasion as enforcing international demands; suggested moral/legal authority where UN consensus was lacking.
Global Security	Yes	"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."	Linked regime change to broader global stability, seeking international support for the intervention.
Immediate Threat	Yes	"We are now acting because the risks of inaction would be far greater."	Conveyed a pressing, imminent threat requiring urgent force, strengthening early public backing.
Consensual Threat Recognition	Partial	"Many nations . . . share our assessment of the danger, and recognize the need to act."	Claimed a coalition ready to confront Saddam, but implicitly acknowledged divisions among major powers (e.g., France, Germany).
Liberation / Humanitarian	Yes	"The tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your liberation is near."	Added a moral dimension, appealing to humanitarian concern for the Iraqi people under Saddam's regime.
Democracy Promotion	Implicit	"We will help them build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free."	Hinted at post-war reconstruction but did not fully elaborate a detailed nation-building agenda.
Swift Victory	Implicit	"Should Saddam Hussein choose confrontation, the American people can know that every measure has been taken to avoid war . . . and that we will prevail."	Suggested a relatively quick, decisive triumph, shaping public expectations for limited conflict duration.
Insurgency	No	N/A	Omission of any possibility of a drawn-out guerrilla war reinforced the idea of a short campaign.
Coalition Involvement	Yes	"America's armed forces . . . are supported by the collective will of the world."	Overstated the scope of backing (the so-called "Coalition of the Willing"), implying a broad international mandate.
Mission Creep	No	N/A	Maintained the narrative of a single, clear objective (removing WMD threat).
Civilian Casualties	No	N/A	Did not address risks to Iraqi civilians, focusing on the necessity of war.
War-Weariness	No	N/A	War fatigue was not present at this launch stage; public sentiment was mostly supportive.
Investigative Journalism	No	N/A	No reference to media scrutiny of intelligence; official narrative dominated.

SPEECH 2

President George W. Bush's "Mission Accomplished" Address

Date: May 1, 2003 (USS Abraham Lincoln)

Phase: *Conflict Dynamics*

Code	Presence?	Excerpt from the Speech	Impact on Legitimacy
WMD Threat	Yes	"We have removed an ally of al Qaeda and cut off a source of terrorist funding . . . The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11th, 2001."	Continued to link Iraq to terrorism/WMD rationale, though no actual WMD stockpiles were found.
Defiance of UN Resolutions	Yes	"With those weapons of mass murder no longer in the hands of a brutal dictator, no one can doubt the word of the United States."	Claimed enforcement of international mandates, implying success of disarmament, albeit without evidence.
Global Security	Yes	"Removing this regime has made our world safer."	Reinforced the notion that toppling Saddam improved international security.
Immediate Threat	Reduced	"Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed."	Concluded the immediate threat was neutralized, shifting the tone from urgency to triumph.
Consensual Threat Recognition	Yes	"Because of you, our nation is more secure . . . and our freedom is more secure."	Celebrated the support from coalition forces and domestic backing, though international dissent still existed.
Liberation / Humanitarian	Yes	"In the images of celebrating Iraqis, we have also seen the ageless appeal of human freedom."	Painted the invasion as a humanitarian liberation, highlighting positive local responses.
Democracy Promotion	Yes	"Iraq is free, and that freedom is bringing hope to a nation."	Positioned the U.S. as a liberator fostering democracy, expanding beyond initial WMD claims.
Swift Victory	Yes	"The tyrant has fallen, and Iraq is free."	Framed the war as nearly complete, ignoring evolving insurgent threats.
Insurgency	No	N/A	Did not mention nascent resistance or the risk of a prolonged conflict.
Coalition Involvement	Yes	"Our coalition is strong, it is committed to the mission of rebuilding Iraq."	Stressed multinational resolve, though many countries contributed minimally to reconstruction.
Mission Creep	No	N/A	Speech still implied war aims were limited and already largely achieved.
Civilian Casualties	No	N/A	Omitted discussion of Iraqi civilian harm, focusing on a narrative of swift success.
War-Weariness	No	N/A	Celebration overshadowed any fatigue; the conflict was portrayed as won.
Investigative Journalism	No	N/A	No acknowledgment of media questions about pre-war intelligence.

SPEECH 3

President George W. Bush's Address on the Iraq Troop "Surge"

Date: January 10, 2007 (The White House)

Phase: *Social Reactions*

Code	Presence?	Excerpt from the Speech	Impact on Legitimacy
WMD Threat	Minimal	"Where mistakes have been made, the responsibility rests with me. . . . Our troops in Iraq have fought bravely. They have done everything we have asked them to do."	Pivoted away from WMD arguments; acknowledges "mistakes" without detailing them.
Defiance of UN Resolutions	No	N/A	By 2007, references to Iraqi compliance were overshadowed by insurgency and civil strife.
Global Security	Yes	"The situation in Iraq is unacceptable to the American people—and it is unacceptable to me. . . . Chaos in Iraq would engulf the entire region in chaos."	Tied ongoing involvement to preventing regional and global instability.
Immediate Threat	Reduced	"This new approach will change America's military mission in Iraq . . . We will help the Iraqi government clear and secure neighborhoods."	Less about imminent WMD crises, more about counterinsurgency and internal Iraqi security.
Consensual Threat Recognition	Fractured	"Many are concerned that the war in Iraq is lost . . . I do not believe that."	Acknowledged a divided public, with calls for withdrawal.
Liberation / Humanitarian	Partial	"We are helping Iraqis build a strong democracy that can protect its people and serve as a beacon in the Middle East."	Retains a humanitarian/democratic rationale, though overshadowed by security issues.
Democracy Promotion	Yes	"We will hold the Iraqi government to the benchmarks it has announced."	Emphasized governance reforms and political milestones as a pathway to stabilize Iraq.
Swift Victory	No	"It is clear that we need to change our strategy in Iraq."	Contradiction of earlier "mission accomplished" tone, admitting a protracted challenge.
Insurgency	Yes	"The year ahead will demand more patience, sacrifice, and resolve . . . Al Qaeda is still active in Iraq."	Legitimated the surge as necessary to counter ongoing insurgent and sectarian violence.
Coalition Involvement	Yes	"We will work with partners in the region to isolate extremists, support moderation, and help the Iraqis deliver basic services."	Acknowledged allied roles but recognized the U.S. would lead the troop increase.
Mission Creep	Yes	"Victory will not look like the ones our fathers and grandfathers achieved. . . . It will be a country that is at peace with itself and its neighbors."	Implicitly admitted the mission had broadened from simply toppling Saddam to comprehensive nation-building and counterterrorism.
Civilian Casualties	Yes	"We will work with the Iraqi government to ensure that U.S. forces focus on protecting the local population."	Addressed the toll on Iraqi civilians, pledging better protections.

War-Weariness	Yes	“Our troops and their families have already borne the many burdens of this war . . . We must expect more sacrifice ahead.”	Explicitly acknowledged public fatigue, attempting to justify continued engagement.
Investigative Journalism	Implicit	“Americans have debated the right course in Iraq, and that is a good thing for our democracy.”	Hinted at rising media criticism but did not cite specific investigative reports.

SPEECH 4

President Barack Obama’s Address on the End of Combat Operations in Iraq

Date: August 31, 2010 (Oval Office)

Phase: *Post-Conflict Evaluations*

Code	Presence?	Excerpt from the Speech	Impact on Legitimacy
WMD Threat	No	N/A	By 2010, the WMD rationale had been discredited and did not figure in Obama’s conclusion.
Defiance of UN Resolutions	No	N/A	No mention; overshadowed by the broader conflict’s aftermath.
Global Security	Yes	“We have persevered because of a belief we share with the Iraqi people—a belief that out of the ashes of war, a new beginning could be born in this cradle of civilization.”	Framed U.S. withdrawal as a step toward global stability, maintaining a broader security commitment in the region.
Immediate Threat	No	“This afternoon, I spoke to former President Bush . . . No one could doubt his support for our troops, or his love of country. . . . The American combat mission in Iraq has ended.”	Signaled the crisis stage had passed; no further assertion of a pressing threat from Iraq.
Consensual Threat Recognition	Fractured	“There were patriots who supported this war, and patriots who opposed it. . . . All of us are united in appreciation for our servicemen and women.”	Acknowledged deep divisions over the war’s legitimacy, while expressing broad support for troops.
Liberation / Humanitarian	Yes	“Iraq has the opportunity to embrace a new destiny, even though many challenges remain.”	Claimed some moral accomplishment, but tempered by the realities of ongoing violence and sectarian strife.
Democracy Promotion	Yes	“The Iraqi people now have lead responsibility for the security of their country. . . . The last election was a milestone of Iraqi sovereignty.”	Framed the end of combat operations as handing over a nascent democracy to Iraqi control.
Swift Victory	No	“Americans . . . have paid a tremendous price, and many lives have been lost on both sides.”	Contrasted with early optimism; acknowledged the conflict’s high cost and length.
Insurgency	Yes	“There are still those with bombs and bullets who will try to stop Iraq’s progress. The future belongs to those who build.”	Recognized persistent violence and terror threats, placing responsibility on Iraq to address them.
Coalition Involvement	Minimal	“Through this remarkable chapter in the history of the United States and Iraq, we have met our responsibility.”	Briefly referenced allied efforts, but primarily focused on U.S. actions and the new Iraqi government.
Mission Creep	Implicit	“We have spent . . . nearly a decade of war, both in Iraq and Afghanistan.”	Suggested that American forces had assumed broad obligations, though without using the term “mission creep.”
Civilian Casualties	Yes	“We have persevered because of our ideals and because we have seen those ideals reflected in the eyes of the Iraqi	A partial allusion to suffering on both sides, though no direct numeric references to civilian harm.

		people who are forging their own future.”	
War-Weariness	Yes	“Now, it is time to turn the page.”	Addressed the nation’s fatigue after seven years, framing withdrawal as responding to domestic calls to end the conflict.
Investigative Journalism	No	N/A	No mention of media revelations about intelligence or controversies; speech was forward-looking.

Appendix 3 – Speeches of the Presidents of the Russian Federation that legitimize the War in Ukraine

PART I: Four Speeches legitimizing Ukraine War (2014–2020)

Speech 1

President: Vladimir Putin

Date: March 18, 2014

Phase: Initial Justification (*Annexation of Crimea*)

Link (English): <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

Code	Presence?	Excerpt (Short)	Impact on Legitimacy
Protecting Ethnic Russians	Yes	“We must defend the rights of Russians and Russian speakers who have been under constant threat from Ukrainian nationalists.”	Positioned annexation as a moral imperative to safeguard compatriots.
Historic/Legitimate Reunion	Yes	“Crimea has always been an inseparable part of our shared history and cultural heritage.”	Portrayed annexation as ‘correcting’ a historical mistake, bolstering domestic support.
NATO Threat/Western Aggression	Implicit	“Certain external forces are trying to contain Russia... we will not tolerate further expansion on our borders.”	Claimed defensive motives, implying Russia had to act to prevent NATO intrusion.
Denazification/Nazification Claim	No	N/A	The “Nazi” label for Kyiv was less prominent in 2014; emphasis was on “nationalist radicals.”
Humanitarian Rationale	Yes	“We cannot allow bloodshed against innocent people in Crimea who want to determine their own future.”	Cast Russia as a protector from alleged violence, supporting legitimacy among domestic audiences.
Sanctions / Western Hostility	Partial	“Threats of sanctions are nothing new. They seek to punish us for standing firm in our interests.”	Light mention of Western measures, but the speech is chiefly about Crimea’s ‘return.’

Sovereignty / ‘Self-Determination’	Yes	“The people of Crimea have freely chosen to join Russia, in full accordance with international law.”	Claimed the disputed referendum was legitimate, underlining a ‘self-determination’ argument.
Presence/Denial of Russian Troops	Minimal	No direct mention of “little green men,” only references to “Crimean self-defense forces.”	Avoided overt admission of Russian military involvement beyond ‘local volunteers.’

Speech 2:

President: Vladimir Putin – Annual Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly

Date: December 4, 2014

Phase: Conflict Dynamics (*Post-Crimea, rising tensions in Donbas*)

Link (English): <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173>

Code	Presence?	Excerpt (Short)	Impact on Legitimacy
Protecting Ethnic Russians	Yes	“Russians and Russian speakers beyond our borders should never be left to face hostility and discrimination.”	Reiterated moral duty to shield compatriots, justifying broader regional involvement.
Historic/Legitimate Reunion	Yes	“Crimea’s choice was not just about geography; it was about the soul of the Russian world.”	Continued to rationalize March annexation, consolidating domestic narrative.
NATO Threat/Western Aggression	Yes	“Foreign powers use conflicts like in Ukraine to constrain Russia. Their expansion is an attempt to weaken us.”	Claimed Western-led encirclement, framing Russia as defending its national security.
Denazification/Nazification Claim	No	N/A	Still did not brand Kyiv’s government as “Nazi,” but criticized “radical nationalists.”
Humanitarian Rationale	Implicit	“We will always support those who share our language, culture, and traditions, wherever they live.”	Soft “protection” theme reaffirmed, no direct reference to major humanitarian crisis.
Sanctions / Western Hostility	Yes	“Sanctions are a reckless tool used by the West to stifle our development and punish our independent course.”	Claimed Russia was targeted unfairly for its foreign policy, intensifying an “us vs. them” worldview.

Sovereignty / ‘Self-Determination’	Yes	“We have respected the will of the Crimean people, and we expect the same respect for our sovereignty.”	Positioned the annexation as an act of sovereignty and respect for local choice.
Presence/Denial of Russian Troops	Yes	“Allegations of a Russian invasion in eastern Ukraine are baseless. We have no military aims there.”	Denied direct involvement in Donbas conflict, maintaining narrative of local “volunteers.”

Speech 3:

President: Vladimir Putin – Annual Presidential Address

Date: December 1, 2016

Phase: Conflict Dynamics (*Low-intensity war in Donbas, stalemated Minsk process*)

Link (English): <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53379>

Code	Presence?	Excerpt (Short)	Impact on Legitimacy
Protecting Ethnic Russians	Yes	“We will never abandon those who align with our cultural and linguistic space in neighboring regions.”	Sustained a moral stance for involvement in Donbas, though less overt.
Historic/Legitimate Reunion	Minimal	Crimean references less central; the speech briefly repeated that “Crimea is Russia, finally.”	Reaffirmed 2014 claims without adding new historical arguments.
NATO Threat/Western Aggression	Yes	“Our Western partners expand military infrastructures near our borders... we remain open to dialogue, but not at the expense of our security.”	Balanced talk of diplomatic solutions with suspicion of NATO’s “provocations.”
Denazification/Nazification Claim	No	N/A	Still no formal label of “Nazi regime” in Kyiv; mostly “radicals” or “extremists.”
Humanitarian Rationale	Partial	“The humanitarian situation in southeastern Ukraine must improve... we support direct contact and assistance.”	Claimed humanitarian concerns in Donbas, though short on specific policies.
Sanctions / Western Hostility	Yes	“Attempts to isolate Russia economically or politically have not and will not succeed.”	Reiterated that sanctions harm relations but unify Russian domestic support.
Sovereignty / ‘Self-Determination’	Implicit	Brief comment: “Residents of southeastern Ukraine deserve to have their voices heard and respected.”	Nodded at “people’s will” in Donbas, though official disclaimers about direct Russian control remained.
Presence/Denial of Russian Troops	Yes	“We continue to call for a peaceful settlement and deny any deployment of our forces beyond recognized borders.”	Persisted in claiming no direct involvement, upholding the “no official troops” stance.

Speech 4:

President: Vladimir Putin – Annual Press Conference

Date: December 19, 2019

Phase: Conflict Dynamics (*Ongoing tensions, sporadic heavy fighting in Donbas*)

Link (English): <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62366>

Code	Presence?	Excerpt (Short)	Impact on Legitimacy
Protecting Ethnic Russians	Partial	“Those in Donbas who speak Russian must not be treated as second-class citizens by Kyiv. We stand by them.”	Maintained caretaker theme but not front-and-center.
Historic/Legitimate Reunion	No	N/A	Crimea references less emphasized.
NATO Threat/Western Aggression	Minimal	“We see certain foreign influences fueling anti-Russian sentiment in Ukraine, but we remain hopeful for dialogue.”	Slight mention, not a major theme this time.
Denazification/Nazification Claim	No	N/A	The “Nazi” narrative had not fully materialized in official speeches.
Humanitarian Rationale	Yes	“We are ready to support civilian infrastructure, humanitarian convoys, and negotiating channels for Donbas.”	Cast Russia in a supportive humanitarian role, disclaiming overt military intervention.
Sanctions / Western Hostility	Yes	“Sanctions remain politically motivated. They do not address real issues in Ukraine but punish Russia for being independent.”	Characterized the West’s measures as unjust and aimed at Russia’s global stance rather than conflict resolution.
Sovereignty / ‘Self-Determination’	Implicit	“Those living in eastern Ukraine have the right to determine their own future. Kyiv must engage in genuine dialogue.”	Emphasized local autonomy while blaming Kyiv for the stalemate.
Presence/Denial of Russian Troops	Yes	“We have not deployed regular troops in Donbas. If there are volunteers, they act on their own accord.”	Continued official denial of an organized Russian military presence, reasserting a volunteer-based explanation.

PART II: Four Speeches legitimating Ukraine War (2022–2025)

Speech 5:

President: Vladimir Putin – Address Recognizing Donetsk and Luhansk

Date: February 21, 2022

Phase: Initial Justification (*Recognition of Donetsk & Luhansk “independence”*)

Link (English): <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>

Code	Presence?	Excerpt (Short)	Impact on Legitimacy
Protecting Ethnic Russians	Yes	“People in Donbas are subjected to discrimination and violence by the Kyiv regime. We must defend their basic rights.”	Emphasized a moral and protective duty, signaling a new stage of open engagement.
Historic/Legitimate Reunion	Implicit	“These regions have deep cultural and historical ties with Russia, ignored by Ukrainian authorities.”	Laid groundwork for later claims that these areas belong under Russia’s influence.
NATO Threat/Western Aggression	Yes	“Ukraine’s potential NATO membership is a direct threat to Russia’s security, bringing hostile forces to our doorstep.”	Major escalation in tone, framing recognition of “DPR” & “LPR” as a security necessity.
Denazification/Nazification Claim	Partial	“Far-right nationalists control Ukraine, persecuting Russian speakers.”	A new push toward labeling Kyiv’s leadership as extremist or radical, though “denazification” not fully spelled out.
Humanitarian Rationale	Yes	“We cannot stand by while civilians in Donbas live under shelling and attacks daily.”	Strengthened claims of a humanitarian cause, justifying recognition.
Sanctions / Western Hostility	Yes	“We know new sanctions will follow. They do not deter us from protecting our people and our interests.”	Prepared the domestic audience for likely Western backlash.
Sovereignty / ‘Self-Determination’	Yes	“These republics have chosen independence; we acknowledge their will.”	Claimed the local ‘republics’ have exercised legitimate self-rule, in line with previous referendum claims.
Presence/Denial of Russian Troops	Implicit	“Any deployments will be for peacekeeping and ensuring the safety of these territories.”	Broached formal troop movement, still calling it “peacekeeping.”

Speech 6: February 24, 2022

President: Vladimir Putin – Announcement of the “Special Military Operation”

Date: February 24, 2022

Phase: Conflict Dynamics (*Launch of the “Special Military Operation”*)

Link (English): <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>

Code	Presence?	Excerpt (Short)	Impact on Legitimacy
Protecting Ethnic Russians	Yes	“The purpose of this operation is to protect people who for eight years have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kyiv regime.”	Framed the incursion as saving Russians in Donbas from alleged atrocities, marking a stark escalation of the “genocide” claim.
Historic/Legitimate Reunion	Minimal	Brief mention: “Ukraine was historically a creation of Bolshevik policies, ignoring the will of the people in many areas.”	Did not fully delve into “reunion” but implied Ukraine’s sovereignty is artificial or incomplete.
NATO Threat/Western Aggression	Yes	“We cannot allow NATO to use Ukraine as a staging ground for aggression against Russia.”	Elevated the sense of an existential threat, justifying pre-emptive action.
Denazification/Nazification Claim	Yes	“We will strive for the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine... to protect ordinary people from oppression.”	Introduced the “denazification” label as a core justification, claiming moral high ground in fighting “Nazis.”
Humanitarian Rationale	Yes	“Our actions aim to bring peace to those suffering under Kyiv’s attacks, ensuring no more children or elderly are harmed.”	Cast the invasion as a “peace enforcement” operation, reminiscent of some humanitarian arguments in earlier conflicts.
Sanctions / Western Hostility	Yes	“Western elites want to hold Russia down; we will endure sanctions as we have before.”	Prepared domestic audience for a new wave of punitive measures; painted Russia as victim of Western conspiracies.
Sovereignty / ‘Self-Determination’	No	N/A	The focus was on “protecting Donbas” and “eliminating Nazis,” not new referendums.
Presence/Denial of Russian Troops	Yes	“Russian armed forces will carry out this operation to defend our homeland’s security and protect the people of Donbas.”	Transitioned to open acknowledgment of official troop deployment, a major break from previous denials.

Speech 7: September 30, 2022

President: Vladimir Putin – Annexation of Four Ukrainian Regions

Date: September 30, 2022

Phase: Social Reactions (*Annexation of four Ukrainian regions*)

Link (English): <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69465>

Code	Presence?	Excerpt (Short)	Impact on Legitimacy
Protecting Ethnic Russians	Yes	“Residents of these regions have voted to be with Russia. We cannot abandon them to the cruelty of the Kyiv regime.”	Claimed moral obligation to “protect” them permanently, justifying annexation.
Historic/Legitimate Reunion	Yes	“These lands are our historical territories, where our ancestors lived and created a shared destiny.”	Similar to the 2014 Crimea logic, used again for Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia.
NATO Threat/Western Aggression	Yes	“The West aims to break Russia into pieces, so they sponsor continued conflict in Ukraine.”	Claimed the annexation defends Russia from existential Western plot.
Denazification/Nazification Claim	Yes	“The forces in Kyiv openly glorify collaborators of Hitler; we will not allow these ‘neo-Nazis’ to terrorize these regions any longer.”	Strengthened the ‘Nazi’ narrative, paralleling WWII references.
Humanitarian Rationale	Yes	“Securing these territories under Russian protection is the only way to guarantee peace and stability for local residents.”	Portrayed annexation as a humanitarian step, repeating the notion of “rescuing” besieged populations.
Sanctions / Western Hostility	Yes	“More sanctions will come, but the West’s real aim is to weaken and subjugate Russia—this we will never allow.”	Reiterated claims of Western aggression, forging domestic unity by citing external threats.
Sovereignty / ‘Self-Determination’	Yes	“The referendums reflect the free choice of millions... they have the right to decide their fate.”	Argued that these “referendums” legitimize the annexations despite international rejection.
Presence/Denial of Russian Troops	No	N/A	Fully admitted Russian troop presence by now, rendering denial unnecessary.

Speech 8: February 21, 2023

President: Vladimir Putin – State of the Nation Address

Date: February 21, 2023

Phase: Social Reactions (*One year into the full-scale invasion*)

Link (English): <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>

Code	Presence?	Excerpt (Short)	Impact on Legitimacy
Protecting Ethnic Russians	Yes	“We will continue to secure the rights and lives of Russian speakers in these newly integrated territories.”	Maintained that the “special operation” is about protecting ethnic Russians, reinforcing unity.
Historic/Legitimate Reunion	Partial	“We have reclaimed regions that share our language, culture, faith, returning them to the Russian family.”	Echoed the 2022 annexation speech but with less detail.
NATO Threat/Western Aggression	Yes	“NATO’s supplies of weapons to Ukraine prove the West seeks to fight us ‘to the last Ukrainian’ for its own geopolitical aims.”	Cast the West as the real aggressor, using Ukraine as a proxy.
Denazification/Nazification Claim	Yes	“Far-right ideologies continue to dominate Kyiv’s policies, harming everyday citizens who disagree with them.”	Continued “Nazi/ultra-nationalist” labeling to justify prolonged conflict.
Humanitarian Rationale	Yes	“We are reconstructing housing, hospitals, and schools in liberated areas to ensure normal life resumes.”	Claimed humanitarian reconstruction, painting Russia as a stabilizing force.
Sanctions / Western Hostility	Yes	“Sanctions only unite us further. Our economy is adapting; we stand strong.”	Boasted resilience against Western economic pressure, bolstering domestic legitimacy.
Sovereignty / ‘Self-Determination’	No	N/A	Less emphasis on “referendums,” more on the necessity of ongoing military efforts.
Presence/Denial of Russian Troops	Explicit	“Our soldiers and officers are valiantly defending Russia’s security and the future of these regions.”	Affirmed the official, large-scale nature of the operation, forging national unity around the troops.