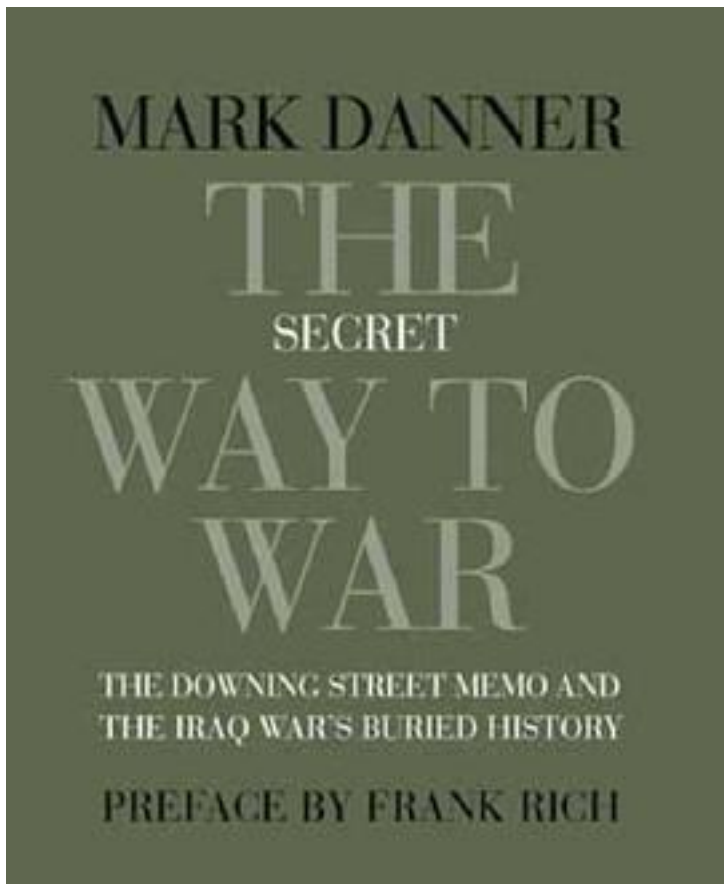


The Secret Way to War



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著者:Danner, Rk

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The United States went to war in Iraq to eliminate the threat from Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction—which turned out not to exist. As the war drags on, the strange case of the weapons that were not there remains a matter of bitter debate, for it underscores the fact that the goals and the motivations of the Bush administration officials who argued for war are still largely obscure. Yet in fact there exists crucial and

little-publicized evidence that lets us understand the secretive, even deceptive, way that the the US launched a war of choice in the Middle East in March 2003.

At the beginning of May 2005, just before the British elections, the London Times published the "Downing Street Memo," the leaked secret minutes of a July 2002 meeting of senior British intelligence, foreign policy, and security officials. The memo made clear that eight months before the invasion of Iraq, President Bush had already decided on war. The British officials who attended the meeting were told that the "intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy," that the US wanted to avoid consulting the UN, and that few plans were being made for the aftermath of war.

Largely ignored in the US press for weeks afterward, The New York Review of Books published the memo in its entirety with an extensive commentary by award-winning journalist Mark Danner. Danner explains how the memo clarifies the broader—and largely concealed—history of the events leading up to the Iraq war. He shows that the Bush and Blair administrations advocated the resumption of UN weapons inspections as a means not to avoid war but to ensure it. Most importantly, Danner argues that in the face of the memo's clear evidence of deception, the press, public, and Congress still have not held the administration responsible.

The Secret Way to War, with a preface by by Frank Rich, includes Mark Danner's strongly argued analysis of the Downing Street Memo as well as the complete text of the memo and seven other leaked British documents. Collectively, the documents show the members of Tony Blair's government and their counterparts in Washington struggling to find legal and political rationales and strategies for regime change in Iraq.

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