

100,000 plus dead. Mission Accomplished?

A British anarchist demolishes the 'more case' for the Iraq war

Anarcho

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Let's recap. It has been conclusively proven that Saddam not only did not have Weapons of Mass Destruction, he did not have WMD programmes. It has been conclusively proven that he had no links with 9/11 or al-Qaeda. So much for the initial lies and excuses for the war. What of the last one, the one tacked on when the public simply refused to believe the others: the so-called "moral" case for war.

Given its hypocrisy, it was easy to dismiss. The long practice of US-UK support for dictators like Saddam suggested that it was nonsense and subsequent events have proven this to be the case. Now the real human costs of the war are becoming known. According to **The Lancet**, the respected British medical journal, the invasion forces (mainly the US air force) killed at least 100,000 Iraqi civilians (most reportedly killed being women and children). This is significantly higher than previous estimates, based on media reports, of up to 16,000. Little wonder the US forces announced that it would not bother counting the numbers it killed — during and after the invasion.

So where does that leave the "moral" case for the war? Given that it is often alleged that Saddam's regime killed 300,000 civilians, this means that the US-UK have killed a third as many Iraqi civilians in a year and a half as Saddam did in nearly a quarter of a century. Even the 300,000 figure is unconfirmed as, so far, only 5000 or so persons have been found in the mass graves Blair used to justify his war (graves, incidentally, which date back to when Saddam was an ally to the US and UK or to after the first Gulf War when the US preferred him to a popular uprising). All of which is hardly very moral, no matter how you look at it or try to spin it.

The Lancet report is based on extensive household survey research in Iraq in September of 2004 and, significantly, excludes data from Fallujah (this was because it might have skewed the nationwide averages as it has been subject to so much US violence — it is being bombed now to soften it up for a future attack). While the methodology of the study is strong and is the standard used in such circumstances (and was used in Bosnia and Kosovo), it does involve extrapolating from a small number and so could be incorrect. However, there can be little doubt that the numbers killed are in the tens of thousands rather than around the ten thousand formally believed.

So, in summary, the war has confirmed the arguments of the anti-war movement. It was not about WMD or 9/11. It had nothing to do with democracy or freedom (after all, 18 months in and the Iraqi people are still occupied and have a puppet regime appointed by the ruling colonial

powers). It has caused immense suffering and death. It has not made Iraq, never mind the world, safer. The Bush Junta and its poddle have been al-Qaeda's best recruiting agent for ages (foreign fighters in Iraq have been reported as joining Iran, one of two the remaining "axis of evil" states, in preferring Bush). Nearly 400 tons of explosives have been looted in Iraq after US troops failed to secure them in their push for Baghdad. Given that this site, Al Qaqaa, had been listed by the CIA as a WMD site, this lack of concern shows how worried the Bush Junta was about the truth of their own pre-invasion propaganda. And let's not forget that many of the nuclear facilities were stripped bare too.

So, thanks to Bush, the most powerful high explosives in the world are now in hands of unknowns along nuclear related material. And the Bush Junta's defence? Well, it is to ignore all the evidence and blame either the Iraqi's (or the Russians!) who spirited it away before (or during!) the war or the troops on the ground (an interesting take on "support our troops"!). Bush's ineptitude and lying really does know few bounds.

So what was the real reason for this war? An insight can be gleaned from a recent report ("**Adventure Capitalism**", www.gregpalast.com) by investigative reporter Greg Palast (author of the excellent book "**The Best Democracy Money Can Buy**").

Palast acquired a 101-page U.S. State Department document entitled "**Moving the Iraqi Economy from Recovery to Growth**" which was part of a larger under-wraps program called "**The Iraq Strategy**." This plan for "liberated" Iraq was to completely rewrite its "*policies, laws and regulations*." The plan, which had obviously been begun years before the war, aimed to impose a new regime of low taxes on big business, and quick sales of "*ALL state enterprises*" to foreign operators. It also included a program for toughening the target nation's copyright laws while removing tariffs and slashing taxes. In other words, it wanted to reshape Iraq as a neo-liberal's and corporate lobbyist's wet-dream.

Blair, of course, insisted that the war had nothing to do with Iraq's oil (which explains why US troops managed to secure the Oil Ministry and not weapons sites like Al Qaqaa). The plan belies this as it, to quote Palast, "*leaves nothing to chance — or to the Iraqis*" and states that Iraq would have to "*privatise*" its "*oil and supporting industries*." Now given that Iraq was meant to become a democracy, how was the Bush Junta going to get this plan through when few, if any, Iraqis would have voted for it? Simple — do not allow them to vote until it is a done deal.

Hence the delay in elections and the occupation. Few remember now that the Bush Junta's first appointed ruler, General Jay Garner, promised elections in 90 days. But 90 days is not enough time to privatise a nation's oil industry nor redraft its trade and tax laws. Annex D of the Plan Garner was handed three months before the invasion stated lays out a strict 360-day schedule for the free-market makeover of Iraq and so elections would have to wait. Palast quotes corporate lobbyist Grover Norquist explaining that "*the right to trade, property rights, these things are not to be determined by some democratic election*."

Garner was quickly replaced. His successor, Paul Bremer, installed himself in Saddam's old palace and cancelled the scheduled meeting of Iraq's tribal leaders called to plan national elections and appointed the entire government himself. National elections would have to wait until 2005. More than enough time to lock in the laws, regulations and irreversible sales of assets required by the Economy Plan to make Iraq a free market paradise. Bremer issued exactly 100 orders to remade Iraq in its image and left behind nearly 200 American "experts" to make sure its stays that way. Corporate America (particularly Bush's supporters) was laughing all the way to the bank. Mission Accomplished.

18 months later, US and UK troops are still killing and being killed to ensure that taxes, property rights and regulations are determined by US capitalists, not the Iraqi people. Over 100,000 dead Iraqis? Over 1,000 dead, mostly poor, US and UK soldiers? Merely collateral damage in the pursuit of imperialist interest.

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