

## Après Rove le Déluge

Can Bush survive in a post-Rove World?

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Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, October 24, 2005

[uruknet.info](http://uruknet.info) 24 October 2005



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Can Bush survive in a post-Rove world?

Not likely.

The Bush persona is mainly the invention of its author Rove; a careful stitching together of religious and western imagery, of pious moralizing and cowboy “straight-talk”. Originally, Bush was nothing more than a formless glob of clay that uber-advisor Rove tenderly sculpted and brought to life. In many ways Bush is nothing more than the political vehicle for the aspirations, ambitions, and objectives of his constituents. He wasn’t chosen as a presidential nominee for his abilities, but for his willingness to follow orders and carry out the corporate agenda without question. His utter lack of curiosity about anything beyond the range of his immediate experience has proved to be a real godsend in his new assignment. In fact, Bush may be the perfect candidate; a self-absorbed malingerer who flawlessly reflects the identity of the person whispering through his hidden ear-piece.

Rove is the stardust that animates the vacuous executive; the transformer that pumps a steady stream of electricity into the severed presidential-cortex. He’s not so much a puppet-master as he is an alter-ego; a Texas Cyrano creating the illusion of sincerity, warmth and

moral conviction where none exist. Simply put, he's a magician; turning a lumpen mass of protoplasm into a fully-operable world leader with moveable parts. Without the wily-professor Rove behind the curtain, the Bush façade would quickly dissipate and vaporize into thin air.

The system simply doesn't work without Rove. It goes beyond the symbiotic relationship between the two; it's the marriage of mind and muscle. Bush likes to play dress-up, and Rove, who has a keen grasp of American folklore, is forever extracting new, iconic identities from his bag-o-tricks. One day Bush appears as a "Mission Accomplished" action-figure in a shiny jumpsuit on the flight-deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln, then he's hammering man with rolled up sleeves and a contractor's nail-belt, and finally, its basic flannel for the requisite Ronald Reagan chain-saw photo-op. Whatever the occasion, our Betsy McCall president is always at the ready to slip on a costume, coif up the hairpiece, and take center stage. Rove's job is to ensure that Bush looks presidential whether waltzing with a plastic turkey in Baghdad or gadding about in a Navy flight-jacket surrounded by Marines.

The greatest tribute to Rove is the fact that 38% of the American people still believe that Bush is running the country. This is a remarkable feat, especially since the public relations smokescreen that traditionally shelters Bush from criticism has gotten increasingly threadbare.

In the last few weeks a number of articles have pointed out that Bush is totally outside of the policy making loop in his own administration. Apparently, the Pentagon's OSP (Office of Special Plans) and Cheney's WHIG (White House Iraq Group) made all of the major decisions related to the upcoming war in Iraq. Bush was either too busy developing a softer look for his scripted video-conferences or frolicking in the Crawford outback on his customized mountain bike. Wherever he was doing, his circumscribed role as performer-in-chief has never really been in doubt. He was enlisted to put a smiley-face on vile policies of torture, repression and war; and, he has done just that.

But, now, the system is teetering from the threat of indictments. If Rove goes down, the cracks and fissures in the White House parapets will appear fairly quickly. Bush depends on his podgy confidante more than people realize. He's the anchor that keeps the petulant president from drifting off into a post-alcoholic miasma. Without Rove, the country faces the prospect of an embattled executive left to his own devices, his jittery hands inching ever-closer to the Big Red Switch.

Not a pretty picture.

The Bush administration really isn't built on its high-minded ideology as many seem to believe. That stuff is pure mumbo jumbo. The regime rests entirely on the strengths and talents of a few key people, without whom the whole mechanism would grind to an abrupt standstill. Rove, Rumsfeld and Cheney are the indispensable cogs in the imperial jalopy. If any one of them is carted off to prison, the entire operation will unravel like a ball of yarn.

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