

Blair: Bombing Iraq Better. Again

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[Media Lens](#)

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [US NATO](#)

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Over the weekend, the British media was awash with the blood-splattered Tony Blair's self-serving attempts to justify the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003. The coverage was sparked by a new [essay](#) in which Blair claimed that the chaos in Iraq was the 'predictable and malign effect' of the West having 'watched Syria descend into the abyss' without bombing Assad. Blair advocated yet more Western violence, more bombing:

'On the immediate challenge President Obama is right to put all options on the table in respect of Iraq, including military strikes on the extremists...'

Par for the course, the liberal wing of the corporate media, notably the Guardian and BBC News, led with Blair's sophistry. (See [image](#), courtesy of [News Unspun](#)).

Blair [told](#) Andrew Marr on BBC1 that:

'washing our hands of the current problem would not make it go away'.

The choice of phrase is telling. The image of Blair attempting to wash away the blood of one million Iraqis is indelible.

The Guardian's editors performed [painful contortions](#) to present an illusion of reasoned analysis, declaring that Blair's essay was both 'thoughtful' and 'wrong-headed'. Robert Fisk's [response](#) to Blair was rather different:

'How do they get away with these lies?'

In the Guardian [editorial](#), titled 'a case of blame and shame', the key phrase was:

'If there has to be a hierarchy of blame for Iraq, however, it must surely begin with Saddam.'

Of course, 'surely'! But only if the Guardian's editors feel compelled to keep selling one core ideological message to its audience. Namely, that, although mistakes do happen, such as 'deficiencies' in the West's occupation of Iraq, US-UK foreign policy is basically well-intentioned. That, in a nutshell, is why the Guardian is part of the liberal establishment bedrock.

The Guardian forgot to mention that Saddam Hussein achieved power with the assistance of the CIA. They forgot to mention that the West supported him through his worst crimes, supplying the technology that allowed him to launch chemical weapons attacks during the Iran-Iraq war, protecting him in the United Nations and the press, and so on.

Like an addict unable to let go of just one more fix, the paper [said](#):

‘The situation may not demand, but it certainly invites, intervention.’

The Independent, that other great white hope of British liberal journalism, was no better. An editorial asked: ‘Would intervention now work?’, adding that it ‘may become inevitable because of the threat to Israel and Turkey, a Nato ally.’ The paper [bemoaned](#), outrageously, that it had come to this because ‘some sort of decisive Western action in Syria, famously defeated in the House of Commons, might have prevented [Isis](#) from gaining the strength it has.’ In fact, bombing Assad would have massively empowered Isis, one of his major enemies.

The editors complained that there was now:

‘no appetite for intervention anywhere, no matter how compelling the arguments.’

The pathetic hand-wringing continued:

‘Our failures in Iraq have inoculated Western electorates against any desire to repeat the experiment, no matter that an invasion of Iraq now could be more truthfully termed a “liberation” for the Iraqi people, and an act to save many more lives throughout the Middle East, than the one Mr Blair and Mr Bush presided over 11 years ago. Their failures do mean we cannot act now.’

Ah, this time it really *will* be a ‘liberation’, whereas last time, as even London mayor Boris Johnson [notes](#):

‘It looks to me as though the Americans were motivated by a general strategic desire to control one of the biggest oil exporters in the world...’

Johnson, who voted for the war and describes it as merely a ‘tragic mistake’, is concerned not with the criminality and bloodshed but the ability to sell wars in future:

‘Blair is now undermining the very cause he advocates - the possibility of serious and effective intervention.’

Amol Rajan, the Independent’s editor, [boasted](#) of ‘our proud record on coverage of Iraq’.

We [responded](#):

‘Sorry, we have analysed the Independent’s performance closely. Your record

was and is shameful. Where to start?’

We could do worse than by reminding him of his own paper’s editorial at the war’s launch (when Simon Kelner was the editor):

‘The debate about...this war is over...the time has come “to support our troops”.’ (‘When democracies do battle with a despot, they must hold on to their moral superiority’, Independent, March 20, 2003)

The Eternally Open ‘Option’

BBC News [reported](#) Obama as saying that the US government was looking at ‘all options’, including military force, to ‘help fight Islamist militants’. The reality of the US empire, regardless of who sits in the president’s chair, is that the military ‘option’ is always ‘open’.

In Syria, the ‘Islamist militants’ are ‘rebels’ who are on ‘our’ side because they oppose the ‘tyrannical’ Assad. In Iraq, the ‘Islamist militants’ are ‘insurgents’ because they oppose the US-implanted and supported ‘democracy’ there. BBC News maintains the required warmongering narrative by [asking](#) loaded questions such as:

‘Iraq: How can US help combat insurgents?’

Frank Gardner, in his role as “security” correspondent, can be relied upon to explain how the US can ‘help’.

The corporate media find nothing strange in the idea that the blood-drenched perpetrators of the vast war crime of 2003 are preparing to return to the scene of their crime in 2014 to administer more of the same catastrophic ‘medicine’. That the US and the West, and their client state Israel, are the prime movers of chaos, violence and instability in the Middle East is not part of the back-story.

Sometimes BBC reporting becomes so extreme that the term ‘Orwellian’ isn’t sufficiently strong to describe the madness of a BBC journalist calling for military action. Consider that ‘diplomatic correspondent Jonathan Marcus [‘reported’](#) that the Iraqi government ‘needs to bring rapid firepower to bear and quickly’ to reclaim territory ‘seized’ by ‘Isis-led fighters’.

When the corporate media descends to this depth, we are truly in the grip of societal madness.

‘A Curious Perspective’

Earlier, Marcus had written one of those ‘background’ pieces that the BBC publishes in times of crisis in order to present the required context and history. The article was titled ‘Six things that went wrong for Iraq’. It had at least one glaring omission which prompted us to email Marcus on June 12 as follows:

Hello Jonathan,

Your new [article](#) for the BBC News website is titled ‘Six things that went wrong

for Iraq'. Not one of these six items is the appalling [UN sanctions regime](#) that, according to Unicef, resulted in the deaths of an estimated [half a million children under five](#) and likely well [over one million people](#) in total.

In 1998, Denis Halliday, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, resigned his post in protest at what he called '[genocidal](#)' sanctions. These sanctions were maintained at the particular behest of Washington and London, and involved [huge propaganda efforts](#) to obscure the truth. Halliday's successor, Hans von Sponeck, likewise resigned in 2000.

Imagine if a foreign journalist had written a piece about this country titled, 'Six things that went wrong for the UK'. Imagine that this journalist had not mentioned that around two million British people [i.e. proportional in respect of the relative populations of the UK and Iraq] had died as a result of UN sanctions policy in the 1990s. You might well regard such a journalist as a propagandist.

You must surely be aware of the facts, and yet you choose to airbrush them from Iraqi history. Why?

David Cromwell

The same day, Marcus sent a response of sorts:

Dear Mr Cromwell

I am sorry that you did not find anything useful in the piece.

As ever you choose to see things entirely from your own organisation's curious perspective.

Thank you for troubling to write.

The BBC man's haughty and evasive dismissal totally blanked the appalling tragedy of UN sanctions on Iraq. As the playwright Harold Pinter said in his [acceptance speech](#) for the 2005 Nobel Prize in Literature:

'It never happened. Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening it wasn't happening. It didn't matter. It was of no interest.'

But in the mind of a senior BBC correspondent, to be challenged about journalistic silence on a major international crime committed by the West is a 'curious perspective'.

SUGGESTED ACTION

The goal of Media Lens is to promote rationality, compassion and respect for others. If you do write to journalists, we strongly urge you to maintain a polite, non-aggressive and non-abusive tone.

Write to:

Paul Royall, editor of BBC News at Ten, and BBC News at Six
Email: paul.royall@bbc.co.uk

Twitter: [@paulroyall](#)

Jonathan Marcus, BBC diplomatic correspondent

Email: jonathan.marcus@bbc.co.uk

Amol Rajan, Independent editor

Email: a.rajan@independent.co.uk

Twitter: [@amolrajan](#)

Please blind-copy us in on any exchanges or forward them to us later at:

editor@medialens.org

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