

Going to War: Tony Blair's "Contract in Blood"

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Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

"This is one of the most astonishing documents I have ever read."

-David Davis, Mail on Sunday, Oct 17, 2015

It reads like a whodunit document behind a failed criminal enterprise. As it should – it figured as a vital step behind the invasion of Iraq in 2003. And it was found in a stash of previously secret correspondence on former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's private server.

The Colin Powell memorandum in preparation for the Crawford summit of April 2002 (yes, that Powell, who has undertaken some considered Pilate handwashing ever since), was more damning than most. It outlined what the British role behind justifying an imminent war with shoddy grounds would look like. More importantly, it provides ample carrion for the prosecution against Tony Blair for that often discounted charge of crimes against peace.

Ever since becoming prime minister of Britain, the greatest public relations machine to disgrace Westminster went into service for the US cause. Blair's role was deemed indispensable to providing the right colouration for what was coming: regime change in Iraq.

"He [Blair] will present to you [Bush] the strategic, tactical and public affairs lines that he believes will strengthen the global support for our common cause." In return for such stitching, Powell advised that Bush made Blair look "big" on the world stage.

Such bargaining evangelism is never attractive; evangelism in the service of war on behalf of another power? We let the most critical of juries decide that one. Former conservative shadow home secretary, David Davis, has already made his mind up on the implications of the memorandum: "Judging from this memorandum, Blair signed up for the Iraq War even before the Americans themselves did. It beggars believe." [1]

In various fora, Blair has claimed that no deal was done with Bush to go into Iraq well in advance of the 2003 attack – in this case, a year prior. Before Sir John Chilcot's inquiry in November 2009, he suggested that nothing of the sort had been planned at the time – Britain's position only shifted after the private Crawford meeting in April 2002. In his spruced memoirs heavy with mendacity, Blair reiterated the position: the diplomatic solution was still in swing.

It was evident at the Crawford discussion that the two men wanted to be alone, or at the very least free of British advisors. Britain's ambassador to Washington at the time, Sir Christopher Meyer, gave evidence that he "took no part in any of the discussions and there was a large chunk of that time when no advisor was there." As the two men were "alone in the ranch" at the time, Meyer could not be clear "what degree of convergence (on Iraq policy) was signed in blood, if you like, at the Crawford ranch." [2]

That said, the meeting heralded the conflation of threats: that of al-Qaeda and the supposed “global war on terror”, with regime change in Iraq. It was in the immediate aftermath of the Crawford gathering that Blair began to express a view that the Bush administration was pushing with simultaneous enthusiasm: Saddam had to go.

Furthermore, this stance on Blair’s part took place despite public assertions that he was in the diplomacy business – a resolution avoiding war with Iraq was always being considered. But notwithstanding that, he is noted as putting Britain’s war machine at the service of Washington without reservations. “On Iraq, Blair will be with us should military operations be necessary. He is convinced on two points: that the threat is real; and success against Saddam will yield more regional success.”

Powell’s memorandum notes domestic opposition at all levels, including that of the UK Parliament. At that particular point, the prime minister’s office had marginalised those in the UK Defence and Foreign ministries, effectively annexing Britannia’s strategic purpose to that of the White House.

“A sizeable number of his MPs remain at present opposed to military action against Iraq... some would favour shifting from a policy of containment of Iraq if they had recent (and publicly usable) proof that Iraq is developing WMD/missiles... most seem to want to some sort of UN endorsement for military action.”

There is also awareness that Britain’s own interests were taking a battering, not merely in the potential leveraging in blood in such theatres as Afghanistan, but ongoing economic disputes over tariffs in the steel industry. In Powell’s words, Blair was ready to “insulate our broader relationship from this and other trade disputes.” Those keen to see Blair as pet and poodle to the White House will have what they want, a grotesque act of fawning that effectively undercut British sovereignty.

The Powell memorandum has cleared the air to a degree, though at this point, it is unlikely to delay the release of the long overdue Chilcot report. It was not that Blair could ever be trusted with upholding the values of international law. It was far more fundamental than that: he could not be entrusted with the sovereignty of his own state.

In holding parliamentary will, including members of his own cabinet, and that of anti-war sentiment in contempt, the memorandum goes some way in confirming Blair’s views ahead of the fateful invasion that not merely destabilised Europe, but unleashed a religious conflagration in the Middle East.

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Notes

[1]

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3277403/DAVID-DAVIS-stunning-memo-proves-Blair-signed-Iraq-Americans.html>

[2]

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/11938716/Tony-Blair-agreed-to-act-as-Iraq-war-cheerleader-according-to-newly-released-US-memo.html>

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