

## Iran may be the greatest crisis of modern times

By [John Pilger](#)

Global Research, April 12, 2007

New Statesman 12 April 2007

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

*In a cover piece for the New Statesman, John Pilger evokes the memory of Germans 'looking from the side' at Bergen-Belsen to describe the challenge facing us in the West as the Bush/Blair 'long war' becomes 'perhaps the greatest crisis of modern times'.*

The Israeli journalist Amira Hass describes the moment her mother, Hannah, was marched from a cattle train to the Nazi concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen. "They were sick and some were dying," she says. "Then my mother saw these German women looking at the prisoners, just looking. This image became very formative in my upbringing, this despicable 'looking from the side'."

It is time we in Britain and other Western countries stopped looking from the side. We are being led towards perhaps the most serious crisis in modern history as the Bush-Cheney-Blair "long war" edges closer to Iran for no reason other than that nation's independence from rapacious America. The safe delivery of the 15 British sailors into the hands of Rupert Murdoch and his rivals (with tales of their "ordeal" almost certainly authored by the Ministry of Defence - until it got the wind up) is both a farce and a distraction. The Bush administration, in secret connivance with Blair, has spent four years preparing for "Operation Iranian Freedom". Forty-five cruise missiles are primed to strike. According to Russia's leading strategic thinker General Leonid Ivashov: "Nuclear facilities will be secondary targets... at least 20 such facilities need to be destroyed. Combat nuclear weapons may be used. This will result in the radioactive contamination of all the Iranian territory, and beyond."

And yet there is a surreal silence, save for the noise of "news" in which our powerful broadcasters gesture cryptically at the obvious but dare not make sense of it, lest the one-way moral screen erected between us and the consequences of an imperial foreign policy collapse and the truth be revealed. John Bolton, formerly Bush's man at the United Nations, recently spelled out the truth: that the Bush-Cheney-Blair plan for the Middle East is "an agenda to maintain division and ethnic tension". In other words, bloodshed and chaos equals control. He was referring to Iraq, but he also meant Iran.

One million Iraqis fill the streets of Najaf demanding that Bush and Blair get out of their homeland - that is the real news: not our nabbed sailor-spies, nor the political danse macabre of the pretenders to Blair's Duce delusions. Whether it is treasurer Gordon Brown, the paymaster of the Iraq bloodbath, or John Reid, who sent British troops to pointless deaths in Afghanistan, or any of the others who sat through cabinet meetings knowing that Blair and his acolytes were lying through their teeth, only mutual distrust separates them now. They knew about Blair's plotting with Bush. They knew about the fake 45-minute "warning". They knew about the fitting up of Iran as the next "enemy".

Declared Brown to the Daily Mail: "The days of Britain having to apologise for its colonial history are over. We should celebrate much of our past rather than apologise for it." In *Late Victorian Holocausts*, the historian Mike Davis documents that as many as 21 million Indians died unnecessarily in famines criminally imposed by British colonial policies. Moreover, since the formal demise of that glorious imperium, declassified files make it clear that British governments have borne "significant responsibility" for the direct or indirect deaths of between 8.6 million and 13.5 million people throughout the world from military interventions and at the hands of regimes strongly supported by Britain. The historian Mark Curtis calls these victims "unpeople". Rejoice! said Margaret Thatcher. Celebrate! says Brown. Spot the difference.

Brown is no different from Hillary Clinton, John Edwards and the other warmongering Democrats he admires and who support an unprovoked attack on Iran and the subjugation of the Middle East to "our interests" – and Israel's, of course. Nothing has changed since the US and Britain destroyed Iran's democratic government in 1953 and installed Reza Shah Pahlavi, whose regime had "the highest rate of death penalties in the world, no valid system of civilian courts and a history of torture" that was "beyond belief" (Amnesty).

Look behind the one-way moral screen and you will distinguish the Blairite elite by its loathing of the humane principles that mark a real democracy. They used to be discreet about this, but no more. Two examples spring to mind. In 2004, Blair used the secretive "royal prerogative" to overturn a high court judgment that had restored the very principle of human rights set out in Magna Carta to the people of the Chagos Islands, a British colony in the Indian Ocean. There was no debate. As ruthless as any dictator, Blair dealt his coup de grâce with the lawless expulsion of the islanders from their homeland, now a US military base, from which Bush has bombed Iraq and Afghanistan and will bomb Iran.

In the second example, only the degree of suffering is different. Last October, the *Lancet* published research by Johns Hopkins University in the US and al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad which calculated that 655,000 Iraqis had died as a direct result of the Anglo-American invasion. Downing Street officials derided the study as "flawed". They were lying. They knew that the chief scientific adviser to the Ministry of Defence, Sir Roy Anderson, had backed the survey, describing its methods as "robust" and "close to best practice", and other government officials had secretly approved the "tried and tested way of measuring mortality in conflict zones". The figure for Iraqi deaths is now estimated at close to a million – carnage equivalent to that caused by the Anglo-American economic siege of Iraq in the 1990s, which produced the deaths of half a million infants under the age of five, verified by Unicef. That, too, was dismissed contemptuously by Blair.

"This Labour government, which includes Gordon Brown as much as it does Tony Blair," wrote Richard Horton, editor of the *Lancet*, "is party to a war crime of monstrous proportions. Yet our political consensus prevents any judicial or civil society response. Britain is paralysed by its own indifference."

Such is the scale of the crime and of our "looking from the side". According to the *Observer* of 8 April, the voters' "damning verdict" on the Blair regime is expressed by a majority who have "lost faith" in their government. No surprise there. Polls have long shown a widespread revulsion to Blair, demonstrated at the last general election, which produced the second lowest turnout since the franchise. No mention was made of the *Observer's* own contribution to this national loss of faith. Once celebrated as a bastion of liberalism that stood against

Anthony Eden's lawless attack on Egypt in 1956, the new right-wing, lifestyle Observer enthusiastically backed Blair's lawless attack on Iraq, having helped lay the ground with major articles falsely linking Iraq with the 9/11 attacks – claims now regarded even by the Pentagon as fake.

As hysteria is again fabricated, for Iraq, read Iran. According to the former US treasury secretary Paul O'Neill, the Bush cabal decided to attack Iraq on "day one" of Bush's administration, long before 11 September 2001. The main reason was oil. O'Neill was shown a Pentagon document entitled "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts", which outlined the carve-up of Iraq's oil wealth among the major Anglo-American companies. Under a law written by US and British officials, the Iraqi puppet regime is about to hand over the extraction of the largest concentration of oil on earth to Anglo-American companies.

Nothing like this piracy has happened before in the modern Middle East, where Opec has ensured that oil business is conducted between states. Across the Shatt al-Arab waterway is another prize: Iran's vast oilfields. Just as non-existent weapons of mass destruction or facile concerns for democracy had nothing to do with the invasion of Iraq, so non-existent nuclear weapons have nothing to do with the coming American onslaught on Iran. Unlike Israel and the United States, Iran has abided by the rules of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, of which it was an original signatory, and has allowed routine inspections under its legal obligations. The International Atomic Energy Agency has never cited Iran for diverting its civilian programme to military use. For the past three years, IAEA inspectors have said they have been allowed to "go anywhere". The recent UN Security Council sanctions against Iran are the result of Washington's bribery.

Until recently, the British were unaware that their government was one of the world's most consistent abusers of human rights and backers of state terrorism. Few Britons knew that the Muslim Brotherhood, the forerunner of al-Qaeda, was sponsored by British intelligence as a means of systematically destroying secular Arab nationalism, or that MI6 recruited young British Muslims in the 1980s as part of a \$4bn Anglo-American-backed jihad against the Soviet Union known as "Operation Cyclone". In 2001, few Britons knew that 3,000 innocent Afghan civilians were bombed to death as revenge for the attacks of 11 September. No Afghans brought down the twin towers. Thanks to Bush and Blair, awareness in Britain and all over the world has risen as never before. When home-grown terrorists struck London in July 2005, few doubted that the attack on Iraq had provoked the atrocity and that the bombs which killed 52 Londoners were, in effect, Blair's bombs.

In my experience, most people do not indulge the absurdity and cruelty of the "rules" of rampant power. They do not contort their morality and intellect to comply with double standards and the notion of approved evil, of worthy and unworthy victims. They would, if they knew, grieve for all the lives, families, careers, hopes and dreams destroyed by Blair and Bush. The sure evidence is the British public's wholehearted response to the 2004 tsunami, shaming that of the government. Certainly, they would agree wholeheartedly with Robert H Jackson, chief of counsel for the United States at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders at the end of the Second World War. "Crimes are crimes," he said, "whether the United States does them or whether Germany does them, and we are not prepared to lay down a rule of criminal conduct which we would not be willing to have invoked against us."

As with Henry Kissinger and Donald Rumsfeld, who dare not travel to certain countries for fear of being prosecuted as war criminals, Blair as a private citizen may no longer be untouchable. On 20 March, Baltasar Garzón, the tenacious Spanish judge who pursued

Augusto Pinochet, called for indictments against those responsible for “one of the most sordid and unjustifiable episodes in recent human history” – Iraq. Five days later, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, to which Britain is a signatory, said that Blair could one day face war-crimes charges.

These are critical changes in the way the sane world thinks – again, thanks to the Reich of Blair and Bush. However, we live in the most dangerous of times. On 6 April, Blair accused “elements of the Iranian regime” of “backing, financing, arming and supporting terrorism in Iraq”. He offered no evidence, and the Ministry of Defence has none. This is the same Goebbels-like refrain with which he and his coterie, Gordon Brown included, brought an epic bloodletting to Iraq. How long will the rest of us continue looking from the side?

The original source of this article is New Statesman  
Copyright © [John Pilger](#), New Statesman, 2007

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [John Pilger](#)

### About the author:

John Pilger is an award-winning journalist and filmmaker whose articles and documentaries have been published worldwide. For more information on John Pilger, visit his website at [www.johnpilger.com](http://www.johnpilger.com)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)