

# “Open Government”, “Open War” against Iraq: Britain’s War Against the Truth

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“I think most people who have dealt with me think I am a pretty straight sort of guy, and I am.” (Tony Blair, November 2007.)

In the last several days, the shreds of Britain’s threadbare claim to democracy have been ripped away.

The refusal by the current Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government to disclose documents integral to the decision to join the US in invading, occupying, destroying and dismantling the entire civil authority, and infrastructure of the very State of Iraq, follows their Labour predecessors, the invasion’s co-architects.

The Iraq Inquiry findings under Sir John Chilcot’s Chairmanship will now be delayed for over another year.

Sir John and his distinguished team will at least have learned one thing that lesser mortals ascertained long ago: When it comes to dodging, diving, weaving and circumventing the truth, no one does it better than top British politicians of all political hues.

On Friday (27th July 2012) the Guardian noted: “The Foreign Office (FCO) is appealing against a Judge’s ruling that extracts of a conversation between Tony Blair and George W. Bush days before the invasion of Iraq must be disclosed”, adding: “The FCO has now sought leave to appeal against the decision with an “Upper Tribunal” made up of more senior Judges ...” (i)

This related to the vital papers of the Cabinet discussions under Tony Blair’s Premiership, between March 13th-17th 2003. The Iraq invasion began on 19th-20th March (depending on geographic region.)

The documents had been ordered released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) due to the dogged persistence, through legal channels, of Stephen Plowdon of The Nonviolent Radical Party, an NGO with Consultative Status at the UN Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) since 1995.

Ironically, the Freedom of Information Act was introduced by the Blair government, in Blair’s headlong embrace of all things American, from open shirts, to “open government”, to open war.

Blair is now a vociferous FOI critic, recently harshly criticized by a Parliamentary Committee for failing to appear before their investigation in to the impact of the FOI Act. The Justice Select Committee deplored his decision not to be questioned by them.

Their Report in fact, states that FOI laws have been a: “significant enhancement of democracy” and are not harming government, notes the Guardian.

However, it transpires that the crucial notes pertaining to the decisions on the destruction of Mesopotamia are, in a legal sleight of hand, **not to be released for thirty years.**

According again to the Guardian: “The Information Commissioner is disappointed that the Ministerial veto has been used to override his recent decision notice concerning the minutes of two Cabinet meetings held immediately prior to the commencement of military action in Iraq in 2003.

“His view is that the significant public interest in this matter justified an exception to the general rule that such information should not be disclosed before the usual due date for the release of Cabinet material.” (ii) This refers to the “thirty year” rule freed up by the FOI Act.

Sir John Chilcot expressed in a letter to David Cameron his fellow panel Members deep frustration by Whitehall’s refusal to release papers, including those that reveal which Ministers **legal advisers and officials were excluded from discussions on military action. The inquiry panel has seen the classified documents in dispute but is being prevented from publishing them.** (Emphasis mine.)

In a letter to David Cameron released on Monday (30th July 2012) Sir John Chilcot cites unresolved disputes over: “a number of particularly important categories of evidence” relating to: “the discussions between (Prime Minister Blair) and heads of state or government of other nations” and “the treatment of discussions in the Cabinet and Cabinet Committees”.

Chilcot cites communications with previous Cabinet Secretary Lord O’Donnell over his blocking of details of correspondence and conversations between Blair and Bush in the lead up to the invasion. Disclosure would: “illuminate Mr Blair’s position at critical points”, Chilcot explained to O’Donnell last year.

O’Donnell, in telling Sir John that releasing Blair’s notes would damage Britain’s relations with the US, clearly confirms for many that little Britain is now a fully fledged US satellite and the extra Star on the US flag is only a matter of time. That the now Cabinet Secretary, Sir Jeremy Heywood shares O’Donnell’s views regarding release of the documents cements these views.

The all, in spite of the fact that the former Attorney General during the Blair government, Lord Peter Goldsmith told the Chilcot Inquiry that Blair’s suggestion in January 2003 that Britain could attack Iraq without further UN backing had not been compatible with his legal advice.

Further, despite his refusal to release the Blair-Bush papers, O’Donnell said in evidence to the Inquiry that the Cabinet should have been told of Goldsmith’s doubts about the legality of invading Iraq before Blair went to war.

“The Ministerial code is very clear about the need, when the Attorney General gives written advice, the full text of that advice should be attached (to Cabinet papers)”, O’Donnell confirmed.

“We went to war on a sheet of A4”, eminent international law expert Philippe Sands, concluded memorably.

In the post-Blair government of the dour, neurotic, nail biting Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the then Attorney General Jack Straw also denied, in 2009, access to the run up to war “discussion” papers and Blair-Bush decisions and conversations. Now, his successor, Conservative Attorney General Dominic Grieve again over-ruled (31st July) release of the papers which would throw light on one of modern history’s supreme illegalities.

The shameful silence of the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party, Nick Clegg, now Deputy Prime Minister, who ran on an anti-invasion ticket, is not alone deafening, it would bring down houses.

One man has accidentally spoken the truth on modern day UK politics.

Another smarmy, dodger and diver to make Charles Dicken’s “Artful Dodger”, in his classic “Oliver Twist”, memorably depicted in the musical “Oliver”, look like a beginner: Prime Minister David Cameron. “We’re all in it together” he declared of another crisis. Indeed they are.

## Notes

(i) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jul/27/disclosure-bush-blair-iraq-conversation>

(ii) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jul/16/chilcot-report-iraq-delayed-evidence>

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