

The Politics of Delusion and Crisis Denial

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“If people say there has been an energising of the jihadist movement through the protracted war in Iraq— well, that’s pretty obvious.” General Peter Cosgrove, former Australian Defence chief

“As democracy is perfected, the office of president represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart’s desire at last and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.” H.L. Mencken, American journalist, 1880-1956

On May 1, 2003, President George W. Bush stood on an aircraft carrier off the coast near San Diego, California. In order to take full advantage of the plethora of TV crews present (even the education network PBS was there), his propaganda machine had erected a large sign behind him that said “Mission Accomplished”. Bush II had decided that the “major combat operations in Iraq are over.” The American politician had invaded another country illegally, and used military force at his own discretion, with the potential of hundreds of thousands of deaths, and he was crowing about it. In fact, even though Bush did not realize it at the time, Iraq could turn out to be to the United States what Afghanistan was to the Soviet Union, from 1979 to 1988, i.e. a colossal failure.

Indeed, more than three years later, Bush’s “mission”, whatever that means, was far from being “accomplished” and he was stubbornly digging deeper into the hole of a bloody illegal occupation of a foreign country. He even generously admitted to planning to leave the Iraqi mess to his successor. And, lacking any democratic spirit, he announced that American soldiers would [not be leaving Iraq](#), presumably even if the legitimate and “elected” government of Iraq asked them to leave. This reminds one of the captain of the Titanic yelling “full speed ahead” with his ship caught in the middle of a field of icebergs. — A captain who does not change course in the presence of insurmountable obstacles is not ‘resolute’, he is showing myopic stupidity. More appropriately perhaps, the world is witnessing an “imperialistic” spirit, using words like “democracy” and “freedom” to masquerade a more sinister program. It is because Bush and his neocon advisers are too deeply engaged in the imperial project that they cannot consider changing their disastrous policy in the Middle East.

It is because Bush II is weak and [immature](#) that he cannot admit mistakes and cannot face reality. Last August 21 (2006), he said it in so many words: “*We’re not leaving [Iraq] so long as I’m the president. —That would be a huge mistake.*” It takes guts to admit a mistake. If Bush II were a real leader and a mature person, he would say: “We went to Iraq thinking we would find weapons of mass destruction. We did not find any. We were misinformed. Therefore, our invasion of Iraq was a [mistake](#). We apologize to the Iraqi people for all the

suffering and we will compensate the country of Iraq for the damage that has been wrought upon its people and its economy. Our military occupation will cease as soon as the Iraqi government asks us to leave, and as soon as a United Nations-led mandate of assistance to the Iraqi government can be established.”

But, don't hold your breath. Bush II is no [Winston Churchill](#) (1874-1965). Churchill said, in 1940: *“We failed. We lost. And we are going to have to change our policy.”* Moreover, Churchill did not initiate a war of aggression, and he knew what war was about when he said: *“Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter...”* —George W. Bush also could have profited if he had meditated on another Churchill quote, before his March 20 '03 war of aggression against Iraq: *“The statesman who yields to war fever...is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events.”* Churchill could also have told him: *“In war as in life, it is often necessary when some cherished scheme has failed, to take up the best alternative open, and if so, it is folly not to work for it with all your might.”*

Some may say that the reason Bush II is incapable of admitting a mistake is because he is “God-fearing”. Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder recently made public his personal apprehensions about the fact that religion seemed to be the driving force behind many of George W. Bush's [political decisions](#). Why, indeed, admit mistakes if you have ‘God’ on your side?

Meanwhile, the death toll in Iraq is getting to the catastrophic level. It is impossible to obtain a precise figure about [Iraqi deaths](#), considering the dislocations and devastation prevailing in the country, but credible assessments by public health researchers at Johns Hopkins University place the number of deaths directly and indirectly caused by the war at between 426,369 and 793,663. History will record this ill-advised and illegal war as a major man-made catastrophe. We are witnessing [war crimes](#) of great proportions. Those who engineered and launched such a [war of aggression](#) should be held accountable for the all-too-avoidable disasters they have created. This does not prevent Vice President [Dick Cheney](#), sitting in his Washington D.C. office, to rave and utter such nonsense as *“things are going remarkably well [in Iraq]!”* —He probably meant things are going well for [Halliburton](#) and the other war contractors who are raking in money by the truckloads.

The truth is that, at the end of the day, the American-led invasion of Iraq has produced the very contrary situation it was supposedly intended to bring about, i.e. a reduction of the threat of worldwide Islamist terrorism. In fact, as confirmed by the declassified April 2006 [National Intelligence Estimate \(NIE\)](#), the most important report produced by the American intelligence community, the bloody Iraq War has become a primary recruitment vehicle for Islamist terrorists in the Muslim world and has further isolated the United States, not only in the Middle East, but all over the world. —And, what is more, not all Americans are in the dark about the Iraq war. For instance, a recent [Zogby poll](#) revealed that about half of the U.S. population is now convinced that the Bush-Cheney administration has politically exploited the 9/11 events to justify an attack against Iraq. So did ‘terrorism’ have anything to do with this military adventure in the oil-rich Middle East? Of course not. ‘Terrorism’ was only the propaganda shield behind which the special interests of two big lobbies were dissimulated, i.e. the [oil Cartel](#) and the [pro-Israel Lobby](#).

In conclusion, this improvised and whimsical war for unmentionable reasons will turn out to

have been an unmitigated and complete [disaster](#). —Pardon the pun, but President George W. Bush is now between Iraq and a hard place. It was a fiasco all too predictable and all too avoidable.

In my book, [The New American Empire](#), I wrote that by attacking “an Arab country without visible provocation, instead of discouraging terrorism, the Bush administration actually encouraged Islamist terrorism against the U.S.— Was the risk worth it? For the [Richard] Perle-led super-lobby, it obviously was. It was even necessary: Iraq had to be completely disarmed and the Middle East had to be transformed into a huge oil-producing colony. The two objectives were interrelated “ (p.62). As Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz put it succinctly: “The road to Jerusalem goes through Baghdad.” Well, this was wishing thinking on the part of a [neocon crowd](#) too anxious to take advantage of a dangerously disconnected and willfully ignorant American president. They were aided by the fact that Bush is known to be prone to deny reality and ignore expert advice; he even boasts that he makes government decisions according to his [gut feelings](#). This is truly a clear demonstration of delusion and denial politics.

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