

# The Return Of The King - Tony Blair And The Magically Disappearing Blood

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Region: [Europe](#)

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How many war crimes does a western leader have to commit before he is deemed *persona non grata* by the corporate media and the establishment? Apparently there is no limit, if we are to judge by the prevailing reaction to Tony Blair's return to the political stage.

On July 11, it was [announced](#) that Blair would be 'contributing ideas and experience' to Labour leader Ed Miliband's policy review. He will apparently provide advice on how to 'maximise' the economic and sporting legacies of the 2012 London Olympics.

The Guardian described the announcement mildly as a 'controversial move'; not necessarily in the country at large, the paper claimed, but 'perhaps especially within the Labour party'. One Guardian headline declared ['Return of the king'](#).

The 'left-wing' John Harris did his bit in the Guardian [to smooth Blair's path](#):

'He's only 59, the picture of perma-tanned vitality and keen to "make a difference". Could a fourth stint in No 10 even be on the cards? We shouldn't rule it out.'

Harris declared 'that for all his mistakes, transgressions and howling misjudgments, there remains something magnetic about his talents.'

When Blair appeared at a Labour fundraising dinner at Arsenal's Emirates stadium, Harris noted that:

'He was greeted by the obligatory crowd of protesters, still furious about his role in the Iraq war.'

That's the curious thing about peace protesters; endlessly 'furious' about the country being dragged into an illegal war that led to the deaths of around one million people, created four million Iraqi refugees, devastated Iraq's infrastructure, generated untold suffering and burned obscenely huge sums of public money in times of 'austerity'. Perhaps we Brits should simply display that famed stiff upper lip and move on. Certainly that's what Richard Beeston, foreign editor of The Times, suggested in 2009:

'All this happened six years ago. Get over it.' ('The war went wrong. Not the build-up. Stop obsessing about the legality of invading Iraq. The campaign itself was the real disaster', The Times, February 26, 2009.)

A recent Times editorial welcomed Blair's return:

'Labour is coming together, drawing on its best available talent and starting to get serious again. (Editorial, 'A year in politics', The Times, July 14, 2012)

The second coming of Blair was launched by a [friendly chat](#) on the BBC's Andrew Marr show. Marr, of course, is well-known as a totally [impartial political analyst](#) and a '[congenial and knowlegable \[sic\] interviewer](#)' (to quote a cable from the US embassy in London to Hillary Clinton).

The PR onslaught continued when London's Evening Standard published an [interview](#) with the former PM on the day he 'guest-edited' the paper. Would he like to be prime minister again one day? 'Sure', he replied. A supportive Financial Times [interview](#) with editor Lionel Barber proclaimed:

'Five years after leaving power, Tony Blair wants back in. He is ready for a big new role. But what exactly is driving him? And can he persuade the world to listen?'

Unnamed 'friends' and 'allies' were quoted, no doubt passing on the Blair-approved message:

'Friends say he is desperate to play a bigger role, not because he has any ambition to run for high office but because he wants to be part of the argument. "He would really like to be the centre of attention again," says one long-time ally.'

A Guardian [editorial](#) did its bit to help:

'he seems to have mellowed a touch since his book ['A Journey', published in 2011]; maybe he's even learnt a little respect for international law.'  
(*'Unthinkable? Tony Blair for PM again.'*)

The paper continued:

'Besides, this is no time to fret about the policy details - there is the showbiz to consider. In 2007 John Major likened Mr Blair's long goodbye to Nellie Melba; the coming comeback must demonstrate he is more like Sinatra and Elvis. There can only be one true heir to Tony Blair, and that is Tony Blair II.'

Could the vanguard of British liberal journalism really be making an editorial call for the return of Blair? It shouldn't be a total surprise. Recall that even in the wake of the [supreme international crime](#) of invading [Iraq](#), the Guardian *still* [called](#) for its readership to re-elect Blair at the 2005 general election.

### **The Self-Deprecating War Criminal**

Last month, the Guardian [promoted](#) the diaries of Alastair Campbell, Blair's warmonger-in-chief, with one extract recounting a meeting with 'Britain's famous Swedes', Sven Göran Eriksson and Ulrika Jonsson, and another describing the former PM's liking for olive oil. It was left to John Pilger to [make the point](#) that in the diaries:

'Campbell tries to splash Iraqi blood on the demon Murdoch. There is plenty to drench them all.'

The Guardian's Andrew Brown, editor of the 'Belief' section of Comment is Free, steered clear of the blood to [tell](#) readers that at a recent debate with Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Blair was 'funny, and sometimes self-deprecating'. Brown gave an example of Blair's modest humour:

'I once wrote a pamphlet about why a human rights act in Britain would be a thoroughly bad idea - then, as prime minister, I introduced one.'

Perhaps it is useful to be reminded that even war criminals can be 'funny' and 'self-deprecating'.

In contrast, Independent columnist Matthew Norman made clear his [disdain for Blair](#):

'Call it an atrocious strategic misjudgment, a dementedly misguided Neocon experiment, a war crime or whatever, it is perfectly well understood in these child-like terms: Mr Blair did a truly terrible thing, with unspeakably terrible consequences for the people of Iraq, the troops killed and maimed in prosecuting his folly, and those who died and were injured here in retaliatory bombings in July 2005, the morning after the 30th Olympiad was hereby awarded to the city of London.'

He continued:

'Tony Blair is no wrongly dishonoured prophet but a pariah in his own land. He is a pariah because he colluded in an act of abundant wickedness, and untold hundreds of thousands died and millions more suffered monstrously in consequence.'

Norman rightly noted that Blair is 'armed with a cabal of loyalist ultras in the press.' This, coupled with his protection by a largely supportive establishment, means that 'perhaps no force on earth can penetrate his titanium shell.'

But a vital component of the 'titanium shell' protecting Blair is that 'mainstream' journalists refrain from describing the actions of the former PM and his co-conspirators as war crimes. Matthew Norman himself floundered when he wrote with loss of nerve:

'Call it an atrocious strategic misjudgment, a dementedly misguided Neocon experiment, a war crime or whatever.'

As for the 'cabal of loyalist ultras in the press', Norman supplied no names. But they include senior editors at Norman's own newspaper, the Independent; not to mention at least one of his colleagues at the Independent on Sunday, the Blair hagiographer [John Rentoul](#). Just as Matthew Norman will not step over a line in the sand, so too Simon Jenkins of the Guardian when he [argues](#) that 'an act of grovelling atonement would salvage the ex-prime minister's reputation.' Glaring by its omission is any call for Blair and his accomplices to stand trial in The Hague and face charges of war crimes.

As Pilger rightly [says](#) of the West's war of aggression against Iraq:

'recognition that the respectable, liberal, Blair-fawning media were a vital accessory to such an epic crime is omitted and remains a singular test of intellectual and moral honesty in Britain.'

As well as the titanium shell of the corporate media, Blair is also being [protected](#) by ‘fierce opposition in Whitehall to the disclosure of key documents relating to the invasion of Iraq, notably records of discussions between himself and George Bush.’ This has meant that the Chilcot inquiry into the Iraq war will now not publish its report until sometime in 2013. Former Cabinet Secretary Lord O’Donnell reportedly told Chilcot that releasing Blair’s notes would damage Britain’s relations with the US and would not be in the public interest. This is code for ‘the establishment must protect itself’.

## **Fixing Intelligence And Facts For Iran**

On The Real News Network, Annie Machon and Ray McGovern [remind](#) us that it is almost exactly ten years since Blair met at Downing Street with senior ministers and top military and intelligence officials for a briefing on how the US planned to ‘justify’ attacking Iraq. Sir Richard Dearlove, the head of MI6, had just returned from the US where he had met with his counterpart, CIA Director George Tenet.

The famous ‘[Downing Street Memo](#)’, the official minutes of the briefing on July 23 in 2002, reveals what Dearlove told Blair and those present about what he had heard from Tenet; namely, that Bush had decided to remove Saddam Hussein by launching a war that would be ‘justified by the conjunction of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.’

[Dearlove explained](#) how it was being done: ‘The intelligence and facts are being fixed around the policy.’ This followed the agreement in April 2002 between Bush and Blair when the British prime minister stayed at the president’s Texas ranch in Crawford. Blair pledged UK support for invading Iraq.

Machon and McGovern [recall](#) the propaganda campaign to which the public was then subjected:

‘In late summer 2002, the synthetic threat from Iraq was “sexed-up” by a well-honed US-UK intelligence-turned-propaganda machine. The spin was endless: headlines screaming “45 minutes from doom”; the lies about Saddam reconstituting Iraq’s nuclear weapons program; and yellow journalism about the “yellowcake” uranium Iran was said to be seeking from darkest Africa.

‘UK citizens were spoon-fed the fake intelligence of the September Dossier and then, just six weeks before the attack on Iraq, the “Dodgy” Dossier, based on a 12-year old PhD thesis culled from the Internet, together with unverified, raw intelligence that turned out to be false — all presented by spy and politician alike as hot, ominous intelligence.

‘So was made the case for war. All lies; hundreds of thousands dead, wounded, maimed, and millions of Iraqi refugees; yet no one held to account.’

Rather than being held to account, some of the perpetrators have been rewarded:

‘Sir Richard Dearlove, who might have prevented all this had he the integrity to speak out, was allowed to retire with full honours and became the Master of a Cambridge college. John Scarlett, who as chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee signed off the fraudulent dossiers, was rewarded with the top spy job at MI6 and knighthood. George W. Bush gave George Tenet the Presidential Medal of Freedom — the highest civilian award. Shameless.’

Machon and McGovern argue that intelligence is once again being fixed; this time in support

of a possible attack on Iran:

'Just last week [Sir John] Sawers, who succeeded Scarlett as head of MI6 three years ago, gave a remarkable speech in which he not only bragged about MI6's operational role in thwarting Iran's alleged attempt to develop a nuclear weapon, but also asserted that Iran would have the bomb by 2014. Shades of MI6's pandering to policy in 2002.'

And yet, the consensus – even amongst US and Israeli agencies – is that Iran has [not](#) made a decision to build a nuclear weapon since its programme came to a halt in 2003. Media professionals seemingly cannot grasp this basic fact. A Robert Fisk [article](#) on Syria in the Independent on Sunday yesterday had a subtitle making an unqualified assertion about Iran and 'its nuclear weapons'. Presumably this was written by one of the paper's subeditors. Will Fisk go straight to his editor and complain about this misrepresentation?

But Iran's lack of nuclear weapons has not prevented the country being [lined up](#) for western 'intervention'. It is worth referring once again to the testimony of General Wesley Clark, the former Nato chief, when he [recalled](#) a conversation with a Pentagon general in 2001, a few weeks after the September 11 attacks:

'He reached over on his desk. He picked up a piece of paper. And he said, "I just got this down from upstairs" — meaning the Secretary of Defense's office — "today." And he said, "This is a memo that describes how we're going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran."'

It seems that journalists simply cannot help themselves in ignoring such inconvenient facts. And so, unless the public demands otherwise, corporate editors and journalists will continue to perform their usual obedient role in the service of power.

## **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.

Please write to:

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