

The U.S. Mainstream Media’s One-Sided View of the Iraq War: “Iraq Is a Place Where Americans Suffered”

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The invasion of the major Iraqi city of Mosul by the Sunni militant group ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) has US reporters recalling the Iraq War—and showing once again how they see that deadly conflict mostly through the prism of US sacrifice and suffering.

On **ABC World News** (6/10/14), [Martha Raddatz](#) declared that “Mosul was once a focal point of America’s fight to bring peace and stability to this country.” It is hard to imagine many Iraqis would think of the Iraq invasion as an effort to bring peace, but this is not a new approach for **ABC**. When militants seized control of Fallujah in January, **ABC**’s Terry Moran spoke of “a decade of US-led war to plant democracy in Iraq” (**Extra!**, [2/14](#)).



US soldier bringing “peace and security” to Mosul (cc photo: DoD/Gregory Gieske)

Raddatz went on to talk about about how more than 200 Americans had “given their lives to secure this city,” and that Mosul “is just the latest city to spiral out of control after the US pulled out”—which might suggest that Iraqi cities were in fine shape when they were occupied by US troops.

Her report closed: “So 11 years after the US invaded Iraq—lost nearly 4,500 American lives and spent over \$730 billion—Iraq is in crisis.”

Iraq is in crisis not in spite of the US war, but *because* of it. And it's beyond perverse to frame the ongoing catastrophe in Iraq through the prism of US suffering, as if Iraqi lives are of secondary concern. According to the most comprehensive study (**PLOS Medicine**, [10/15/13](#)), approximately half a million Iraqis lost their lives as a result of the Iraq War—a hundred times the number of Americans killed there.

Still, US news programs tended to focus on US deaths, ignoring or downplaying the much larger number of Iraqis killed in the war the US launched. As **NBC Nightly News** anchor [Brian Williams](#) (6/10/14) put it, “After all the American lives there were lost, all those who came home grievously wounded, Iraq’s second-largest city, Mosul, has now fallen under the control of an Al-Qaeda offshoot. ” And **CBS Evening News** anchor [Scott Pelley](#) told viewers (6/10/14), “Another major piece of what America fought for in Iraq was lost today.”

And here’s **CNN** host [Wolf Blitzer](#) (6/10/14):

This is heartbreaking. The United States spent 10 years there. We assumed that Iraq would emerge a peaceful, stable democracy after the hundreds of billions of dollars the US invested, the 4,500 US troops killed, tens of thousands who came home without arms or legs or burned, post-traumatic stress, and look at this disaster.



CNN suggested that the trouble in Mosul started when the US “left the Iraqis on their own.” (cc photo DoD/Jason Robertson)

Blitzer was interviewing Peter Brookes of the right-wing Heritage Foundation, who refused to concede that the war was a mistake because Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction. “We didn’t know that at the time,” he told Blitzer—which of course depends on [who “we” are](#). But it’s not as if Brookes thinks US government should avoid blame—just not the Bush administration: “The real blunder is when the Obama administration got out in 2009 and left the Iraqis on their own.”

Brookes goes on to reject arguments about starting the Iraq War based on hindsight, since it’s clearly not fair to re-assess Iraq based on what politicians know now about how the war would go. At one point, Brookes says that predictions are difficult—it’s “especially hard about the future, right?”

But right before the Iraq War started, it wasn’t so hard. In fact, Brookes told **CNN** (3/5/03) that the Iraq War was “going to last a couple of weeks.”

He was wrong, of course—but he's still an Iraq expert in the corporate media.

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