

# Upcoming Tenth Anniversary of Illegal Invasion of Iraq. Her Majesty's Government: "Don't Mention the War"

By [Lesley Docksey](#)

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*Why is it, just when you think the British Government can sink no lower and visit no more embarrassment and shame upon the country they are supposedly there to represent, that within a week or less one of the Ministers will open his mouth or put pen to paper and demonstrate just how arrogant and useless they are? Arrogant because they believe that whatever they say will be accepted as the final word on the subject; useless because they apparently can't foresee how their statements will be received.*

Foreign Secretary William Hague, who makes a career of talking down to people, has excelled himself. According to the [Guardian](#), with the 10-year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq approaching, he has written to all his fellow Ministers and asked them not to discuss the case for, or the legality of, the Iraq war. A truly Basil Fawlty moment\*.

According to a source close to Hague: 'The foreign secretary has written to colleagues to remind them that the agreed position of the coalition government is not to comment on the case or justification for the war until Chilcot has reported. This is about allowing the inquiry to reach its conclusion, not having the government prejudge them.' Has Hague forgotten why the long-awaited Chilcot Inquiry cannot deliver its report?

In November 2011 we were told that the report would be [delayed](#) until the summer of 2012 because Whitehall departments were continuing to block the disclosure of documents about the circumstances surrounding the invasion of Iraq. Chilcot's panel, having read all these classified documents, knew how important it is that they are made public. And unless they are, it is very difficult for them to produce an accurate, evidence-based judgement on why this country invaded Iraq, and the lessons that need to be learned from this disastrous error of judgement.

In July 2012 we were told the report had been [delayed](#) again, when we learned that the Inquiry panel were 'deeply frustrated 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 papers still kept secret include those relating to MI6 and the government's electronic eavesdropping centre, GCHQ'. Chilcot's letter to David Cameron referred to the 'sharp exchanges' with the former cabinet secretary Gus O'Donnell over disclosing details 'of correspondence and conversations between Blair and Bush....which would illuminate Mr Blair's position at critical points in the runup to war.'

In late 2012 there was news of a further [delay](#) as the issue about disclosing the documents was still being fought over by the Inquiry and the Cabinet Office. Publication is now

postponed until late 2013 or even sometime in 2014. It is not as if the interested public, with good reason, doesn't already have a pretty accurate idea of what those documents contain. And it is clear from much of the evidence given to the Chilcot Inquiry how deals were made, legal advice ignored and vital people were kept out of the discussions. It was certainly clear to Chilcot and his panel; they had to recall several people, Tony Blair among them, as much of their previous evidence had been rubbished by other witnesses. And how about this for two-handed dealing? Gus O'Donnell, the cabinet secretary, told the inquiry that the cabinet should have been told of the Attorney General's doubts about the legality of invading Iraq before Blair went to war. Sir Gus, before he retired, was the one blocking the much sought after publication of the classified documents. Diss Blair with one hand and protect with the other.

Hague wants to block all meaningful discussion on the justifications and the 'legal' basis for invading Iraq until Chilcot has delivered his report, while at the same time the Government, including Hague's own Ministry, are busy blocking the very action Chilcot needs from them in order to finalise his report. But Hague goes further. His letter to the cabinet made clear that 'not prejudging Chilcot should not prevent [ministers] acknowledging the sacrifices of the armed forces'. However, an honest confronting of the illegality of the invasion would necessarily have to acknowledge that the armed forces did not die in defence of this country but were sacrificed on the altar of Blair's delusional ambitions.

Why should the Conservatives support Hague's letter? Because to a man - and occasional woman, as the Conservatives, looking at their record, also support gender inequality - they voted to go to war. Labour can comfort itself in a small way with the thought that some Labour MPs disobeyed their Prime Minister and voted against the invasion. But most of them will keep their heads down. And the LibDems? They have suddenly discovered their principles again after recently having one MP found guilty of perverting the course of justice and facing prison, and their former chief executive accused of sexual harassment while Nick Clegg, our deputy Prime Minister prevaricated about knowing of the abuse. So Hague's letter has allowed Clegg to climb back on his rather small soapbox to deliver a speech sometime before the anniversary. For the LibDems were in theory all against the invasion - until we invaded and then of course they had to 'support our brave troops' and the sacrifices 'our boys' were making etc. So William Hague can rest easy; very few of those in Parliament really want to discuss the war. It brings up too much embarrassment. It is too much of a reminder that they were and are a very active part of Perfidious Albion.

\*One of the best [episodes](#) of Fawlty Towers, a British sitcom about a small hotel run by Basil Fawlty, played by John Cleese. As some German guests have checked in, he tells his wife, "Don't mention the war!"

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Articles by: **Lesley Docksey**

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