

Bush Must Be Held Accountable for the Catastrophe in Iraq

Ron Kramer

What's the worst thing a president could do? Journalist Bill Press argues that, "the worst thing a president could ever do is take this country to war on false pretenses." And that's exactly what George W. Bush did.

Over one thousand US soldiers have now been killed in Bush's war on Iraq. Not a single one of them should have died. This war was unnecessary. It was not a war for Iraqi liberation. It was a war for American domination.

As Kalamazoo College's Gary Dorrien points out in his new book, *Imperial Designs*, the invasion and occupation of Iraq was planned by the neoconservatives in the Bush administration as the first step in their grand geopolitical strategy to enhance US imperial domination of the world. Their specific goals were to project American power, control Iraqi oil, build military bases inside Iraq, protect Israel and change the political culture of the Middle East.

The Bush administration knew, however, that the American people would never sacrifice the lives of their children and drain the treasury (the cost of the war is now around \$200 billion) to achieve this pipe dream of empire. Thus, they created a massive propaganda campaign, based on fear and filled with lies and distortions, to build support for the war.

The 9-11 tragedy gave the neocons the political opportunity they were seeking to market the war, and they shamelessly exploited it. Even though there was no credible evidence that Iraq had anything to do with 9-11, Al Qaeda, or any recent terrorism, the President implied these connections at every turn. And even though there was no evidence that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction that threatened the US, that claim was endlessly hyped.

The truth was that Saddam Hussein posed absolutely no threat to the US. The Bush administration's own Iraq Survey group has recently confirmed that Iraq did not possess any weapons of mass destruction. Years of economic sanctions and weapons inspections had eroded Iraq's military capability. Despite the fact that Saddam was contained and deterred, despite the overwhelming opposition of most of the world, and despite the presence of UN inspectors in Iraq at the time, President Bush carried out a war of aggression against Iraq in flagrant violation of international law.

As Richard Falk argues, "war is too serious a matter to allow it to be declared on one basis and justified after the fact on another." But that's what Bush did. When the claims of weapons of mass destruction and ties to terrorism were revealed as false, the president switched his rationale. The real purpose of the war, he said, was to liberate the Iraqi people from the brutal tyrant Saddam Hussein. Given the past support some administration officials had provided to Saddam's regime, and given the neocon's imperial designs, that wasn't true either.

But even if it had been true, the end in this case did not justify the means. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “You can’t achieve good ends through evil means.” A war that was not remotely the last resort, a war that killed over ten thousand innocent Iraqi civilians, a war that resulted in the torture at Abu Ghraib prison, is morally wrong.

Furthermore, the invasion and occupation of Iraq has drained resources away from the fight against Al Qaeda, created outrage against the US across the Arab and Muslim worlds, recruited hundreds more terrorists to Osama bin Laden’s jihad, and has all but guaranteed further terrorist attacks on American soil.

President Bush recently said that his war in Iraq was a “catastrophic success.” He got the first part right. This unnecessary, illegal, immoral war, that has made us less safe and killed over one thousand brave American soldiers, has been a catastrophe from the very beginning. Both the CIA and the International Institute for Strategic Studies have recently concluded that Iraq is in chaos and bordering on civil war. And the men responsible for this disaster, the men who lied us into war, George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, must be held accountable. We can start to hold them accountable on November 2nd.

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