

Beastly Behavior

One by one, the justifications mouthed by the makers of the Iraq War have been stripped away, revealed as tissues of lies

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So now we are down to the raw meat at last. One by one, the justifications mouthed by the makers of the Iraq War have been stripped away, revealed as gossamer tissues of lies and obfuscation: weapons of mass destruction, Iraqi involvement in Sept. 11, reducing terrorism and, of course, bringing democracy to the Iraqi people. This last rag has been the one clutched most fiercely of late by the warlords in Washington and London, but now it too has been cast aside. All that's left is the naked, slathering beast of power, imposing its will on a conquered land — and blaming its victims, even as it chews them to pieces.

This past week saw an astounding display of hypocrisy and bad faith by those twin towers of the U.S. establishment: the government (or rather, the unconstitutional military junta fronted by President George W. Bush) and the corporate media. Together they made it abundantly clear that the elite now regard Iraqis as ungrateful, useless trash, unfit to choose their own leaders — and unworthy of the “great sacrifice” America has made in looting and savaging their country in an unprovoked war of aggression.

First the junta dispatched hit-gal Condi Rice, with her gormless valet Jack Straw in tow, to expedite the removal of Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the man selected as prime minister in the “democratic process” established by the Bush faction. The cover story is that al-Jaafari has not been vigorous enough in suppressing the Shiite militias. But this is an odd criticism indeed, considering that it was the occupation coalition that brought many of these deadly sectarian gangs — including the notorious “Wolf Brigade” — into the Iraqi government in the first place, as The Times of London and The Wall Street Journal, among many others, report.

No, the real reason for the frost job is that al-Jaafari is insufficiently enthusiastic about the Bush gang's long-running project to impose their own sectarian dogma on Iraq; that is, their extremist faith in the “free market,” by which of course they mean a market controlled by handful of foreign fat-cats operating without any restraints. They much preferred the man al-Jaafari defeated, by one vote, to become premier: current Iraqi Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi.

In February 2005, Mahdi, then finance minister, endeared himself to the Bush regime by openly declaring — in front of the National Press Club in Washington, no less — that Iraq would throw its oil fields wide open to foreign investment. This offer, placing the world's second-largest oil reserves in a few private hands, will be “very promising to the American investors and to American enterprise, certainly to oil companies,” Mahdi announced. What's not to love about this guy?

But then those ungrateful wretches chose al-Jaafari — an open admirer of Noam Chomsky, for God's sake! — over the regime's favorite. Such uppityness was not to be borne. From then on, al-Jaafari's every step toward forming a government was hobbled by American sniping and backroom maneuvering, with the petulant Bushists perfectly willing to let the country slide into anarchy and civil war while they schemed to get Mahdi or some other pliant tool into the catbird seat. After all, what are a few more thousand dead Iraqis at this point? Who's counting?

For it's not just oil at stake, of course. Over the past three years, the Bushists have quietly forced a vast program of economic shock therapy on Iraq, policies that have "administered a series of death blows to locally based enterprises" by allowing foreign companies to take full control of Iraqi businesses, then ship the loot out of the country, as professor Michael Schwartz of Stony Brook University reports on TomDispatch.com. This despoliation — with the resultant poverty and unemployment — has been one of the primary causes driving Iraqi discontent, Schwartz notes; early peaceful protests by ordinary citizens about the effects of the Bushist rapine were met with such savage repression that thousands joined the nascent insurgency.

But the dogma of the free fat-cat market must be preserved at all costs. So Rice and Straw were sent to Baghdad to slip the shiv into the bumbling al-Jaafari's back and sternly chide Iraqis for their failure to form a government that will permanently enshrine the economic rape program and finalize a new petroleum law that will activate the dozens of exploitation deals already signed with foreign oil companies, as the Houston Chronicle reports. Rice berated the Iraqis for their ingratitude, noting that America has put "a lot treasure, a lot of human treasure" on the line for them, The New York Times reports. No doubt her hosts — who have seen 100,000 of their civilians killed and at least \$9 billion looted from their treasury to pay for the occupation of their own country — were deeply chastened.

But The New York Times surpassed the stern Condi in haranguing the Arab ingrates. In an astonishing turn from a paper that more than any other helped sway mainstream opinion in favor of Bush's criminal invasion, a Times editorial blasted Iraqis for letting their nation sink into a shameful state of violence, chaos and repression, and declared that if the hapless al-Jaafari were allowed to stay in power, then the whole damn place should be written off as unworthy of U.S. "protection." Dripping with contempt, the editorial clearly signaled the emerging conventional wisdom of the American establishment on the war: We tried to do good, but as always, the darkies let us down.â"Then again, isn't that the American establishment's standard reaction to all its bloody misadventures?

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