

## Bush PR Campaign: Back to the Basics

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Removed from reality, self-consumed and desperate, the Bush administration went on another PR offensive, in what is considered the “third most major public relations effort” in the last year.

In his first of a series of speeches, the president spoke of a world where pre-emptive wars are crucial to prevent the encroachment of terrorists, that “abandoning” Iraq would leave Americans at risk, where the terrorists would operate “in the streets of our own cities.”

“The war we fight today is more than a military conflict,” he told a group of veterans at an American Legion convention in Salt Lake City on Aug. 31. “It is the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century.”

But five years after the gruesome massacre of Sept. 11, and three and a half years after the bloody and senseless war in Iraq — with death tolls that compound 9/11 many times over — the Bush administration must appreciate the enormity of its debacle. Instead of facing up to the mistakes, the administration has labored to lie about the initial motives, change the objectives whenever suitable, and play on the fear factor, adamantly trying to terrify an already vulnerable and fear-stricken public.

Just weeks after US tanks rolled into “liberated” Baghdad, the war went askew; war objectives shifted like desert sands: when no WMDs were found, the purpose of the invasion metamorphosed to that of imposing democracy; when the democracy pretence brought about sectarian politics, followed by a bloodbath, the democracy rhetoric was puffed-up to include the entire Middle East. It was meant as the perfect distraction scheme, which put Arab governments — ironically, mostly American allies to begin with — not the Bush administration, under international scrutiny.

Casting blame, shifting battlefields, and fiddling with rhetoric have served as the only definable strategy, consistently infused by the Bush administration to justify its horrible record, one that was ostensibly marred with letdowns and dishonesty, not only abroad, but also at home. (The disastrous federal response to the humanitarian crisis prompted by Hurricane Katrina was a clear indication of how little the administration values some American lives. A year after the heartbreaking disaster, New Orleans is still less inhabitable than Baghdad.)

If the crises into which the administration has plunged the nation took place in any other Western democracy, serious Cabinet reshuffles would have taken place years ago, and many policymakers and officials would have been held accountable. It’s terribly disturbing that American democracy has been robbed of its most fundamental elements of accountability to the public, and that the media has deviated from its historic role to

become a government propaganda tool, instead of the eyes and ears of the people.

It must be noted however that, from the outset, the ongoing publicity stunts are tailored in ways that are anything but haphazard. To the contrary, the emboldened rhetoric is concocted with clear logic and objectives, aimed at sending lucid messages to the wary public that:

First, there is a clear strategy and that the Bush administration is not a crisis management team, but a responsible presidency that is fighting a moral and decisive war, keeping to America's role as the leader of the free world.

Second, the terrorist threat is still very much real and if America quits Iraq, the terrorists could chase Americans back to their own streets.

Third, while the administration is determined to battle the terrorists wherever they may be, wary of the high cost that must be paid to rid the world of the "forces of darkness" holding peace and tranquility captive, Democrats are cast as spineless and their attitude deemed "appeasing" toward America's enemies. This same approach was also sought by Secretary Rumsfeld to induce painful memories of World War II, when the allies (led by Britain) were accused of appeasement to avoid a total war with Hitler. (It must be said that it was Israelis who invented the analogy prior to the war on Iraq, and now they provoke the same logic against Iran).

Finally — and in a related objective — the war against Al-Qaeda and the terrorists is equal in consequence, import and meaning to the greatest and bloodiest war ever fought, that against Fascism and Nazism.

When the president first introduced the term "Islamofascists" — immediately after the UK announced the thwarting of a terrorist plot to blow up several passenger jets on Aug. 10 — few expected that such an event would be the official introduction of a decided PR campaign, where a few cells united, even if loosely, by a medieval cleric, are equated with the largest ever-recorded threat to mankind. According to Bush, today's terrorists are "successors to Fascists, to Nazis, to Communists and other totalitarians of the 20th century."

This fantastic analogy, however contradictory to reality, is sure to send chills down the spines of many Americans, with the hope that they will huddle even closer to their tough, no nonsense president. Moreover, such an exaggerated objective, that of fighting the Islamofascist-Nazi-Communist threat will give even a greater mandate to the administration to go after Iran, if not Syria and perhaps Venezuela. The incessant description of Iran's President Ahmadinejad as the new Hitler — also an Israeli contribution — would make a war on Iran the more justifiable, morally speaking. (Israel insisted that the package of incentives offered to Iran to abandon its nuclear program was precisely equal to appeasing Hitler when he lashed out at his immediate neighbors and threatened a world war.)

Rumsfeld has accused the administration critics of not learning "history's lessons." The truth is that neither Rumsfeld nor his bosses seem to be aware of their historic mistakes. While shifting rhetoric might serve limited political objectives in the short run, it will hardly begin to redeem the awesome blunders that this administration has committed, ranging from crimes against humanity to entangling America in one of its most disastrous military engagements as of yet.

Indeed, WWII helped put America on the map as an unequalled superpower.

However, the Bush administration insists on spawning a third world war and if a fundamental change of course doesn't take place immediately it will surely undermine America's import, prestige and perhaps global relevance.

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