

Media Camouflage: Seventh Anniversary of the War On Iraq

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Spotty Coverage, A Few Protests, and A Desire to “Move On” To Make It All Disappear

American media loves anniversaries of major events. They become ideal “news pegs” to do follow-up stories. You would think that they would have pulled out the stops for the seventh anniversary of the US war on Iraq, a war that was described by the Pentagon in its first days as a “cake walk” and designed as a quick intervention modeled after the in-out combat of Operation Desert Storm ending Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.

Not only didn’t it work out that way, but the news commitment faded and in the process, as one would expect, so did public attention. The networks went from ‘all the war all the time,’ to withdrawing its troops long before the military did.

As a result, the situation was uniformly described as “quiet” with no real assessment offered on the costs, casualties and consequences of what just about everyone considers a botched and failed mission– one from which Washington still seems unable to end despite the campaign promises of its new President.

In Iraq, the focus is on election results. It seems as if the votes are really being counted and, so far, the results have been surprising. A see-saw Florida-like drama in which a President who heads a religious party is being challenged by a former leader who is fighting for a non-sectarian future. The unexpected real victor so far is Moqtada Al Sadr who has not even been in the country, and who was known for battling the Americans as well as those Iraqis pols working with them. There is no love lost between his supporters and the Baghdad government or its foreign sponsors.

In short, whatever happens, in what is certain to be proclaimed as a ‘victory for Democracy,’ continuing conflict in Iraq seems assured with the pro war crowd in the US largely silent and fearing for the worst. They may have fragmented the Iraqis while at the same time uniting them—against them!

Unreported is what the US seems to have learned from the Serb war on Bosnia (even as it nominally opposed the ethnic cleansers of Belgrade.) The Iraq war quickly turned into an ethnic war aimed at fracturing the unity of a multi-ethnic Iraq, however brutally maintained by Saddam Hussein, once an American darling.

Our media seems to have forgotten it was the US strategy to divide the Sunnis and the Shia, building walls and fostering divisions between neighbors even when we joined in the celebration of the fall of the wall in Berlin. We played the old game of divide and rule. It is the logic of occupation.

The Boston Globe quoted an educator exposing this but then he was prominently identified by his tribe, "Failure is the word that should be linked with the US war," said Mohammed Thabit, a retired teacher from Hussein's hometown of Tikrit. (DS: (ie he is a Sunni)

"The Americans brought people to power, but those people are specialized in reprisals, blackmail, inflaming sectarianism, and robbing."

How true is his claim? None of the journalists I read bothered to assess or investigate.

The anniversary was also low key in the USA where attention is focused on the health care issue and where a new domestic war has broken out between a resurgent right and the Democratic center. In some quarters, President Obama is being demonized as a Hitler in much the same way that Saddam Hussein was. Reforming health care may be our issue du-jure but what is really at stake is an attempt by Republicans to roll back the 2008 election.

"This is about November, not a vote this week, " says Jesse Jackson, the civil rights leader. "The Republicans have a "pre-existing condition," a determination to revenge the election they lost." He calls the fever-pitch polarization in our politics "a new civil war."

Only this time it is sections of the media that is enflaming it, not reporting it.

The one story that has been getting attention has been fraud in Iraq on a gigantic scale with \$50 billion reported missing recently in various war contacting scams. The focus on these financial frauds avoids the fraudulent character of the war itself. At the same time, frauds that helped bring down Wall Street are barely covered even as many experts believe that the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan must be counted in any assessment of why our economy is still in collapse mode. These trillions are usually not factored in.

The failure to "connect the dots" here is not, unfortunately, an anomaly. There are still protests underway—there were vigils in Boston, and a protest largely against the fighting in Afghanistan planned for Washington next week—but the mass anti-war movement which mobilized millions before the war erupted seems to have run out of gas. The media barely covers what protest remains, much of it largely fired up by former soldiers confessing to crimes they say they committed. When "our troops" were dying, they were honored; now that many turned on the war, they are ignored.

And as for journalism, it is the alternative media and "citizen journalists" who still shine light on what seems like a war without end, along with international broadcasters especially Al Jazeera.

Most US media outlets have moved on, preferring to forget and downplay what happened and their role in it.

Here's a comment from "Tony B" on the site Gather.com:

"There's a temptation as we begin to end our combat presence in Iraq to search for the happy ending. Newsweek, for example, recently ran [a cover photo of President Bush with the infamous "Mission Accomplished" banner in the background, declaring that now; finally, we have "Victory At Last."](#)

But that's an awful revision of history. We have an obligation to insist on uncompromising truth rather than the versions that make us feel better about ourselves. Tens of thousands of dead people demand it. No "mission" was accomplished in Iraq because we went to war on false pretenses. We failed the moment we invaded."

One website, Truthout.com adds, "We are still shocked. We were never awed. We have not adjusted. The senseless waste of our blood and treasure, our honor and our reputation continue. Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom – the latter unleashed seven years ago today – have morphed into a single Operation Enduring Occupation, set to bankrupt this country financially as well as morally, to destroy our own security as it has that of the over 31 million people who populate Iraq."

What more is there to say?

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