

Seventh Anniversary: The Objective of the War on Iraq was to Destroy the State

The Targeted Killings of Academics

By [Lieven De Cauter](#)

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While the anniversary of the war waged on Iraq is approaching, I think of what I wrote seven years ago: that this illegal invasion had nothing to do with the war on terror but was planned well in advance and was not about democracy but about the destruction of Iraq. I was openly taunted for it. At best, I was considered endearing or pathetic in my anger, but not on the level when it came to world politics.

In preparation for an evening on the occasion of this seventh anniversary on March 20, I am reading a book: Cultural Cleansing in Iraq. Why museums were looted, burned libraries and academics murdered. The basic thesis is, believe it or not, that the purpose of the war was from the onset the destruction of the Iraqi state. But there is more: cultural cleansing, tolerating the looting of museums, the burning of libraries and the murder of academics was part of the war strategy, the authors argue. State ending will certainly become established as a concept, alongside genocide and its derivatives, such as urbicide (destruction of cities), sociocide (destruction of social fabric) mnemocide (destruction of collective memory). We do hope so, because unfortunately these concepts and their intertwinement do not only apply to Iraq.

There was a lot of press coverage about the looting of the museums, albeit press reports didn't put responsibility with the occupying powers, as the international laws of war stipulate; and without identifying it as a strategy of "mnemocide". In contrast, all these years a deafening silence has reigned on the hundreds of academics who have been victims of targeted assassinations in Iraq. Strange. In the first three months of the occupation 250 academics were killed. The BRussels Tribunal has now a list of 437 casualties, a list that serves as a worldwide reference. Because the professors who documented these killings and disappearances have been killed or forced to flee the country, it is increasingly harder to keep this list up to date. According to the Christian Science Monitor, by June 2006 already 2500 academics were killed, kidnapped or driven out of the country. Nobody knows how many have been murdered until today. We do know that thousands have been threatened — often by envelopes containing bullets — and fled. Alongside academics also media professionals, doctors, engineers and spiritual leaders have been targets of intimidation, kidnapping and murder. It is important to know that, in the case of academics, it's not about sectarian killing, because statistics show that there is no pattern in the murders. Professors in leading positions have especially been targeted, and not just Baathists.

These murders have never being investigated, the culprits never found let alone prosecuted.

How come? Perhaps because both the occupiers and the new rulers in Iraq thought it was not important. Or maybe because death squads are part of their strategy, like formerly in El Salvador. That is what the book claims: the murder of academics was and is part of the “Salvador Option”.

Conclusion of the authors? The goal was to liquidate the intellectual class, which would naturally be the basis for a new democratic state. It is that sinister. So sinister that it is difficult to believe. And yet it is true: the elimination of academics and other professionals from the middle class served the first and highest war aim: the destruction of the Iraqi state. “State-ending” instead of “nation building”. According to the editors of the book, this war objective was a decision taken when three parties aligned: the neoconservatives who wanted permanent bases in a geopolitical strategy of military domination; Israel that did not want a powerful state in its backyard; and the oil industry that wanted to lay its hands on one of the largest oil reserves in the world. This I have also written seven years ago. Now it’s there, in black and white, with many footnotes, well documented in a book published by an internationally renowned publishing house (Pluto Press). Perhaps the world will now finally start to realise the truth.

Worldwide protests from the academic community would be nice. But one minute of silence for their murdered colleagues will not suffice. Because, and that makes it so overwhelming, all this is just the tip of the iceberg: the children who are born severely deformed by the use of white phosphorus and depleted uranium, the lack of potable water, electricity and healthcare, the destruction of the educational system which results in a lost generation, the 1.2 million deaths and five million refugees — all these things combined make the Iraq war the biggest war crime and the largest man-made humanitarian catastrophe in decades. And it continues. There is little or no hope of improvement, especially not after the recent elections. Add to this the countless bombings and the sectarian disintegration of the country and you have a picture of hell. And we, we all look more and more the other way. Because we are sick and tired of Iraq after seven years? It leaves a bitter taste in my mouth to see that I have been proven right with my thesis about the destruction of Iraq, that so many thought was absurd. Even Bush has been proven right with his famous show on the deck of the USS Lincoln that first May of 2003: “Mission accomplished”. Indeed, Iraq is destroyed.

Lieven De Cauter is a philosopher and president of the BRussels Tribunal

See also www.brusselstribunal.org for the list of assassinated academics and media professionals

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