

BLAIR'S WAR: "ACT NOW, EXPLAIN LATER"

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History is often encapsulated in a few memorable words uttered by leaders confident they have the world by the horns. The disastrous Iraq war has now gained its own memorable words: "Act now, explain later." The confident talker of these words was Tony Blair, the British prime minister who had struck a "special relationship" with US President George W. Bush. With a 12-volume special report on how the UK slid into war in Mesopotamia now published, Mr. Blair's callous advice to his American colleague has claimed its permanent place in history.

Conducted under the direction of Sir John Chilcot, a retired senior civil servant, the 2.3 million-word Report of the Iraq Inquiry, commissioned in 2009, is now [on-line](#) for all to see and download. A quick perusal of its 150-page long Executive Summary shows a level of detail rarely seen in similar endeavors (the closest equivalent to this British effort is the multivolume *Pentagon Papers*, the enormous record of the Vietnam War now available in its entirety with no redactions at the [Web site of the U.S. National Archives](#)). The Iraq report is shocking evidence of how governments and individual politicians can drag their countries into calamitous wars out of arrogance, ignorance, hubris, and personal visions of ill-conceived grandeur -- not to mention the wish to feed a personal image of "determination" and "ability" that transforms into an ill-begotten goldmine after retirement from politics. Mr. Blair has [reached](#) this goldmine level of achievement already; and he will continue to thrive despite being delivered to the world as a liar and a cheat whose handiwork has had incalculable consequences for millions of people.

It is now accepted that invading Iraq achieved no strategic purpose. Toppling Saddam Hussein created a violent chaotic vacuum that consumed whatever political, economic, and social stability Iraq enjoyed (always according to Middle East not-too-liberal standards). It elevated [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi](#), a video-store clerk and small-time crook, to the status of Iraq's *jihad* supreme leader and enabled Al Qaeda to gain a firm foothold in the country; it mobilized Iran's ayatollahs and deepened the murderous sectarian hatred between Shia and

Sunni; it spawned innumerable tribal militias battling it out to this day; and offered the fertile ground for the first seeds of ISIS-ISIL-Daesh, whose murderers control territory in Iraq and Syria and have extended their tentacles into North and Sub-Saharan Africa.

“Act now, explain later” offers a chilling four-word statement of the confounded “strategy” Mr. Blair had in mind when he counseled for war. The eye-popping carelessness of these words proves that the prime minister did not understand what to do with “post-conflict” Iraq or he had weighed the implications of destroying something with nothing at hand to replace it. Mr. Blair, like the other protagonists of the Iraq war, was not a deep thinker on Middle East affairs and the ways of Arabia. And like *all protagonists* of the war, he stumbled into a catastrophe he could not foresee or control once it broke out with a vengeance.

War is nasty business. In this era of the connected world and instant communication warmongers have enormous reach to make their often bogus case for “just and humanitarian intervention.” The Iraq war has registered in history as a not-too-subtle play of lies and deception to push for “regime change” in Baghdad and thus usher Iraq, as if by magic wand, into its own epoch of Jeffersonian democracy (see, for example, [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#)). While historians will continue to argue for many years to come the political and social dynamics that push great powers into military intervention, the Chilcot report has put together one of the strongest cases *against* such intervention to ever come out from official Western sources after 1945. But even such an enormous and painstaking undertaking is drawing [criticism](#) for what *it did not* answer.

As for Mr. Blair, he reacted in a predictable manner. He announced that he takes “full responsibility” for launching the war as if this acceptance corrects any of the disasters caused by the invasion. Mr. Blair expressed “more regret than you can ever know” and he claimed that the world is a “better place” without Saddam Hussein. His fellows in the Labour Party weren’t amused: the current leader, Jeremy Corbyn, himself a divisive figure under attack by his own MPs as of this writing, [described](#) Iraq as a “stain” on the party and apologized for Labour’s role in invading Iraq.

Governments, even in the most advanced Western democracies, are not in the business of admitting mistakes. Their best in this effort for “transparency” and “accountability” is to offer circumspect explanations of what *could be construed* as having gone wrong -- and deliver reluctant and innocuous slaps on the wrist even to those weighed by overwhelming evidence of malfeasance and wrongdoing.

Mr. Blair could not be an exception to this rule since his “value” as an international statesman is established on the back of a massive network of “admirers” and supporters with the deepest possible pockets. It is thus left to those who have suffered irreparable loss [to hit him](#) in *his* pocket absent any other method available to punish him. But if this method is the only recourse left open in pursuing Mr. Blair and the likes of him for making the world “better” via wars ala Iraq 2003, we need to redefine Western democracy and how to defend against ***and punish*** those who make their lives’ aim to undermine, manipulate, and exploit it for gain other than that of the Common Good.